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Ten Years of Independently Searching for the Truth: 1997-2007

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ប្រវត្តិសាស្ត្រកម្ពុជាប្រជាធិបតេយ្យ (១៩៧៥-១៩៧៩)  
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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this book are those of the author only.

This text was submitted to the Government Working Commission to Review the Draft of the History of Democratic Kampuchea. On January 3, 2007, the Commission decided that, "the text can be used as supplementary discussion material [for teachers] and as a base to write a history lesson for high school students."

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# A HISTORY OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA (1975-1979)



**Cambodians working on an irrigation project. Dam "January 1st," Chinith River, Kampong Thom Province, 1976.**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

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## FOREWORD

Chinese diplomat Chou Ta-kuan gave the world his account of life at Angkor Wat eight hundred years ago. Since that time, others have been writing our history for us. Countless scholars have examined our most prized cultural treasure and more recently, the Cambodian genocide of 1975-1979. But with Khamboly Dy's *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*, Cambodians are at last beginning to investigate and record their country's past. This new volume represents two years of research and marks the first such text written by a Cambodian.

Writing about this bleak period of history for a new generation may run the risk of re-opening old wounds for the survivors of Democratic Kampuchea. Many Cambodians have tried to put their memories of the regime behind them and move on. But we cannot progress—much less reconcile with ourselves and others—until we have confronted the past and understand both what happened and why it happened. Only with this understanding can we truly begin to heal.

Intended for high school students, this book is equally relevant for adults. All of us can draw lessons from our history. By facing this dark period of our past, we can learn from it and move toward becoming a nation of people who are invested in preventing future occurrences of genocide, both at home and in the myriad countries that are today facing massive human rights abuses. And by taking responsibility for teaching our children through texts such as this one, Cambodia can go forward and mold future generations who work to ensure that the seeds of genocide never again take root in our country.

Youk Chhang  
Director  
Documentation Center of Cambodia

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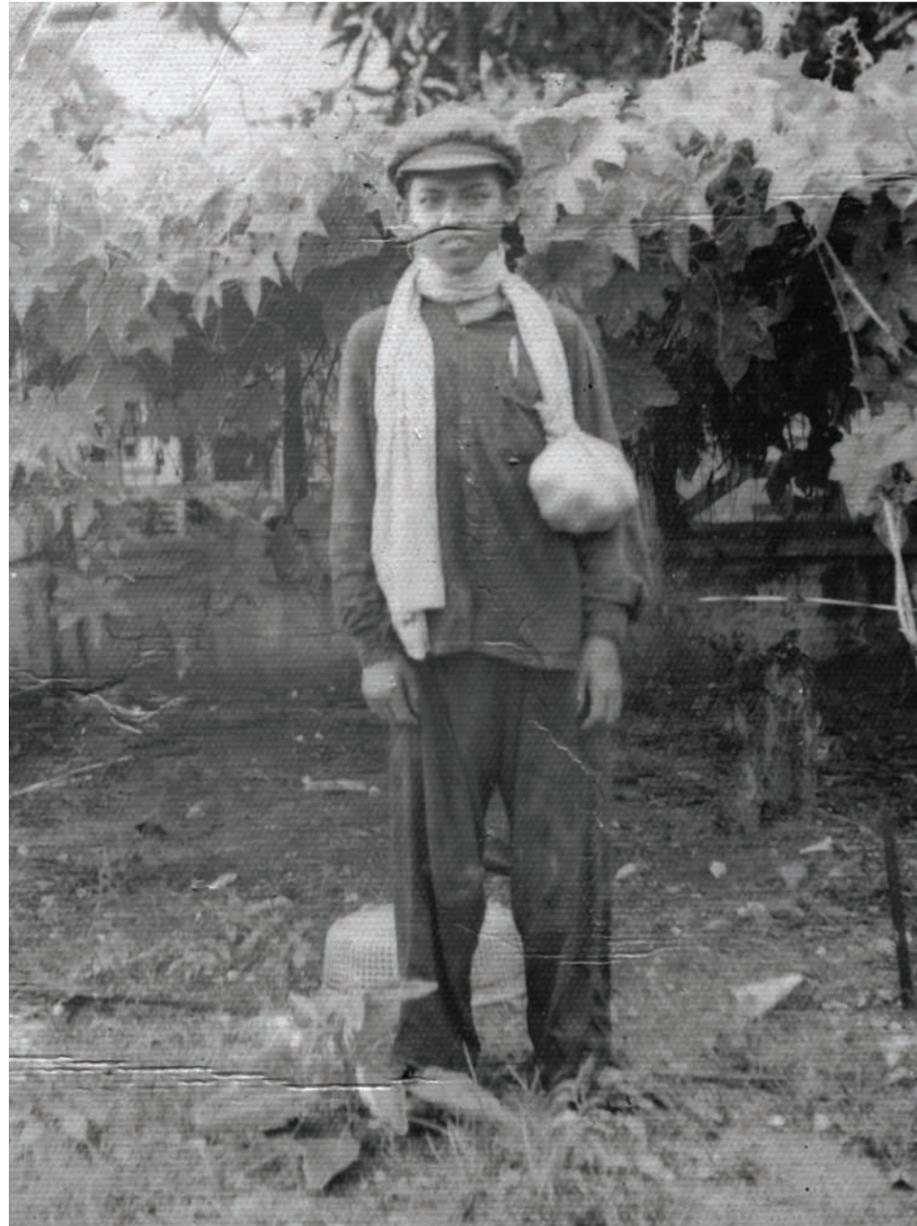
I am deeply indebted to DC-Cam's Director Youk Chhang, who taught me, encouraged me, and offered me the opportunity to write this history of Democratic Kampuchea. He supervised the project and reviewed the text for accuracy and validity, as did Wynne Cougill, the project's advisor and editor, who helped me in many ways during her stay at DC-Cam. Wynne made many useful comments to improve this text.

The text has been made credible through the critical reviews of both national and international historians who are expert in Cambodian history. I am most grateful to Professor David Chandler, who reviewed the text and worked closely with me to improve it. My special thanks also go to Professor Frank Chalk, an expert in genocide studies at Concordia University, both for his editorial reviews and helping me gain a good grasp of genocide when I audited his courses during my three-month visit to Canada. I would also like to extend my gratitude to US Ambassador to Cambodia Joseph A. Mussomeli. His recommendation letter for my internship at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and Voice of America enabled me to learn more about comparative genocide and how a museum is run.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the work of Professor Sambo Manara of the Royal University of Phnom Penh's History Department, who reviewed and made sensitive and useful comments on drafts of the text.

I am indebted to two of my colleagues at DC-Cam who were important contributors to this volume: Kalyan Sann and Sampeou Ros. Kalyan collected the stories of people who lived during Democratic Kampuchea and Khmer Rouge slogans that appear in the text, while Sampeou led tours of Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum to gauge Cambodian students' knowledge of Democratic Kampuchea and attitudes toward learning more about the regime. Their contributions have enriched the text and made it appropriate for the public, especially high school students, throughout Cambodia. My thanks are also extended to all my colleagues at DC-Cam, who helped me in many ways in producing this text.

Khamboly Dy  
Researcher



**A Khmer Rouge cadre carrying fruits in his *krama* (a traditional checkered scarf that can be used for various purposes).**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

<b>Angkar Padevat</b>	The leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea
<b>CGDK</b>	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
<b>CIA</b>	US Central Intelligence Agency
<b>CPK</b>	Communist Party of Kampuchea
<b>DK</b>	Democratic Kampuchea
<b>ICP</b>	Indochinese Communist Party
<b>KGB</b>	KGB: Komitet Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti (Soviet Secret Police)
<b>KPNLF</b>	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
<b>KR</b>	Khmer Rouge
<b>KPRP</b>	Khmer People's Revolutionary Party
<b>PRK</b>	People's Republic of Kampuchea
<b>RGC</b>	Royal Government of Cambodia
<b>UNTAC</b>	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
<b>WPK</b>	Workers' Party of Kampuchea



Youth at a conference in Siem Reap Province, March 23, 1973. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

“Khmer Rouge” was the name King Norodom Sihanouk gave to his communist opponents in the 1960s. Their official name was the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), which took control of Cambodia on April 17, 1975.

The CPK created the state of Democratic Kampuchea in 1976 and ruled the country until January 1979. The party’s existence was kept secret until 1977, and no one outside the CPK knew who its leaders were (the leaders called themselves “Angkar Padevat”).

A few days after they took power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge forced perhaps two million people in Phnom Penh and other cities into the countryside to undertake agricultural work. Thousands of people died during the evacuations.

The Khmer Rouge also began to implement their radical Maoist and Marxist-Leninist transformation program at this time. They wanted to transform Cambodia into a rural, classless society in which there were no rich people, no poor people, and no exploitation. To accomplish this, they abolished money, free markets, normal schooling, private property, foreign clothing styles, religious practices, and traditional Khmer culture. Public schools, pagodas, mosques, churches, universities, shops and government buildings were shut or turned into prisons, stables, reeducation camps and granaries. There was no public or private transportation, no private property, and no non-revolutionary entertainment. Leisure activities were severely restricted. People throughout the country, including the leaders of the CPK, had to wear black costumes, which were their traditional revolutionary clothes.

Under Democratic Kampuchea (DK), everyone was deprived of their basic rights. People were not allowed to go outside their cooperative. The regime would not allow anyone to gather and hold discussions. If three people gathered and talked, they could be accused of being enemies and arrested or executed.

Family relationships were also heavily criticized. People were forbidden to show even the slightest affection, humor or pity. The Khmer Rouge asked all Cambodians to believe, obey and respect only Angkar Padevat, which was to be everyone’s “mother and father.”

The Khmer Rouge claimed that only pure people were qualified to build the revolution. Soon after seizing power, they arrested and killed thousands of soldiers, military officers and civil servants from the Khmer Republic regime led by Marshal Lon Nol, whom they did not regard as “pure.” Over the next three years, they executed hundreds of thousands of intellectuals; city residents; minority people such as the Cham, Vietnamese and Chinese; and many of their own soldiers and party members, who were accused of being traitors.

Under the terms of the CPK’s 1976 four-year plan, Cambodians were expected to produce three tons of rice per hectare throughout the country. This meant that people had to grow and harvest rice all twelve months of the year. In most regions, the Khmer Rouge forced people to work more than twelve hours a day without rest or adequate food.

By the end of 1977, clashes broke out between Cambodia and Vietnam. Tens of thousands of people were sent to fight and thousands of them were killed.

In December 1978, Vietnamese troops and the forces of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea fought their way into Cambodia. They captured Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979.

**Secrecy was central to the operations of Democratic Kampuchea. The Khmer Rouge had a slogan: “Secrecy is the key to victory. High secrecy, long survival.”**



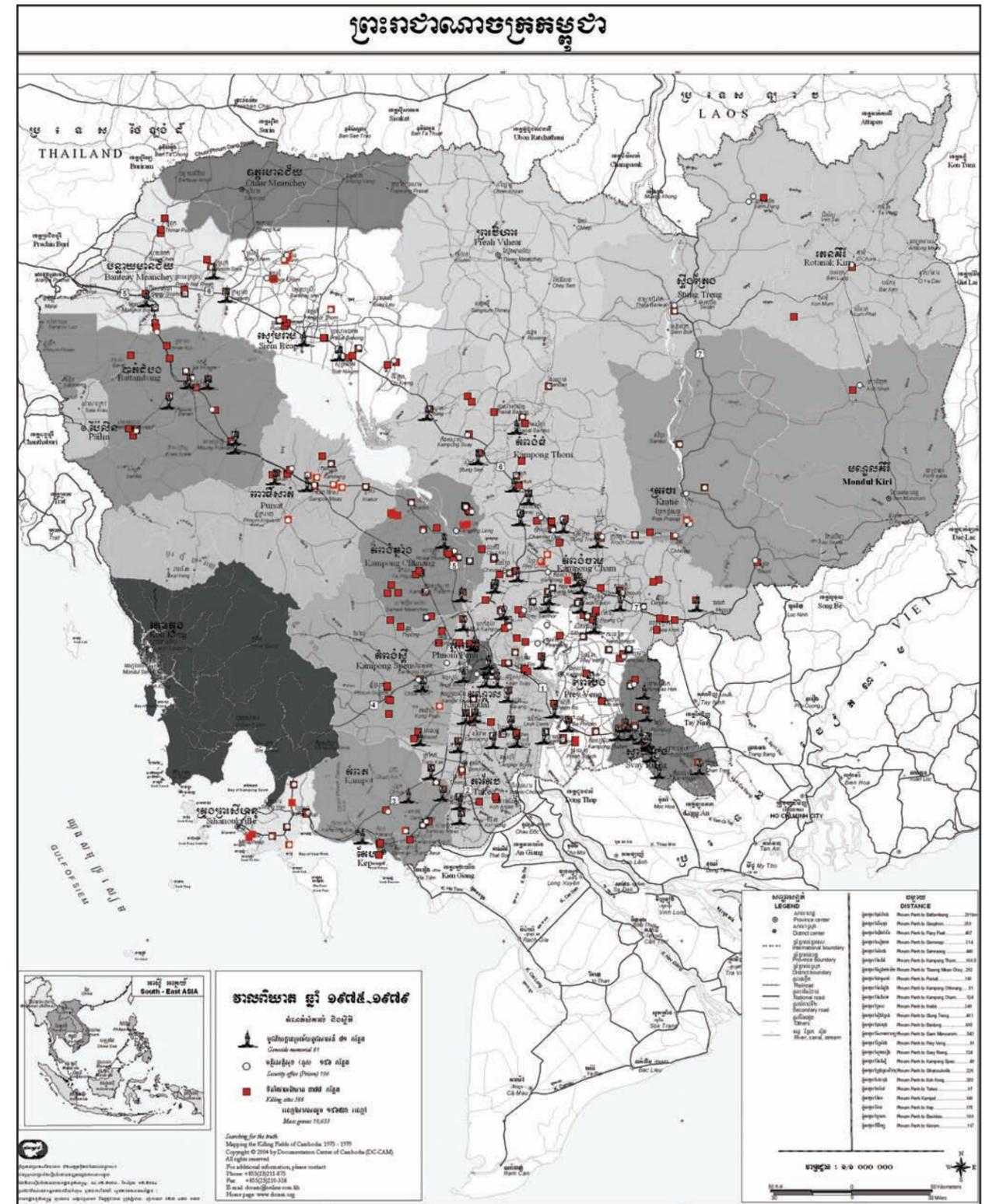
The Khmer Rouge leaders then fled to the west and reestablished their forces in Thai territory, aided by China and Thailand. The United Nations voted to give the resistance movement against communists, which included the Khmer Rouge, a seat in its General Assembly. From 1979 to 1990, it recognized DK as the only legitimate representative of Cambodia.

In 1982, the Khmer Rouge formed a coalition with Prince Sihanouk and the non-communist leader Son Sann to create the Triparty Coalition Government. In Phnom Penh, on the other hand, Vietnam helped to create a new government – the People’s Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)– led by Heng Samrin.

The Khmer Rouge continued to exist until 1999 when all of its leaders had defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), been arrested, or had died. But their legacy remains. Under DK, nearly two million Cambodians died from diseases due to a lack of medicines and medical services, starvation, execution, or exhaustion from overwork.<sup>1</sup> Those who lived through the regime were severely traumatized by their experiences.



“Escort of the Khmer Rouge leaders” in the Khmer Rouge controlled zone, 1973. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**Cambodia’s Killing Fields** The Documentation Center of Cambodia uses global satellite position mapping combined with fieldwork to document mass graves nationwide. To date, it has identified over 388 genocide sites containing more than 19,000 mass graves (these are defined as any pit containing 4 or more bodies, although some graves hold over 1,000) dating from the Khmer Rouge regime. In addition, the Center has documented 196 prisons from Democratic Kampuchea and 81 genocide memorials.



**Khmer Rouge leaders riding on a train.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 2

# WHO WERE THE KHMER ROUGE? HOW DID THEY GAIN POWER?

### 1. THE EARLY COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

The Cambodian communist movement emerged from the struggle against French colonization in the 1940s. In April 1950, during the first Indochina War,<sup>2</sup> 200 delegates assembled in Kampot province and formed the communist-led Unified Issarak Front, known as the Khmer Issarak. This group cooperated with Vietnam in struggling against the French.

The Front was led by Son Ngoc Minh (A-char Mien). He was a lay official at Unnalaom Pagoda. Chan Samay was the Front's deputy and Sieu Heng was its secretary. Almost all of the Front's members were Cambodians who spoke Vietnamese. Some of them became members of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), which

was created in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> Most of the Front's new members were peasants drawn to the revolutionary cause. Others were nationalist students who became communists while studying abroad.

Some of these students would later become leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). They included Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), Son Sen, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary. These men saw peasants and poor people throughout the world as enslaved and repressed by capitalism and feudalism. They thought a Marxist-Leninist revolution was the only way Cambodia could attain independence and social equality.

### 2. THE CREATION OF THE KHMER PEOPLE'S REVOLUTIONARY PARTY (KPRP)

In 1951, as fighting against the French intensified in Indochina, the Vietnamese communists guided the formation of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party.<sup>4</sup> The members of its secret Central Committee were:

- Son Ngoc Minh held the top position
- Sieu Heng was in charge of military affairs
- Tou Samouth (also known as A-char Sok, a former Buddhist monk from Kampuchea Krom) took charge of ideological training.
- Chan Samay was in charge of economic matters.

When the first Indochina War ended in 1954, French forces withdrew from Indochina and Viet Minh<sup>5</sup> combatants withdrew from Cambodia. However, some Vietnamese military personnel and advisors remained in Cambodia. Concerned about the revolution's security when the political system changed, Sieu Heng, Chan Samay and over a thousand KPRP cadres and activists fled to Vietnam, where they joined Son Ngoc Minh and others who had gone there earlier.

Sieu Heng soon returned to Cambodia accompanied by Nuon Chea (a member of the ICP who had been trained in Thailand and Vietnam) and other senior cadres. With the party's leader Son Ngoc Minh in Hanoi, the KPRP was run by a temporary Central Committee. Sieu Heng was secretary and Tou Samouth was his deputy. Nuon Chea ranked number three and So Phim (who became chief of the East Zone during Democratic Kampuchea) was the fourth member. The management of the party was in the hands of a Vietnamese

**POL POT**  
(original name Soloth Sar)  
Pol Pot was born in 1925  
(year of the Ox) in Kampong Thom province. His father was a prosperous landowner. At the age of six, he went to live with his brother, an official at the Royal Palace. In Phnom Penh, he was educated at a series of French language schools and as a Buddhist novice.

In 1949, he was awarded a scholarship to study in Paris, but failed to obtain a degree. While in Paris, Pol Pot became a member of the French Communist Party and devoted his time to political activity.

Upon returning to Cambodia in 1953, he taught history and geography at a private high school and joined the clandestine communist movement. He married Khieu Ponnaryin 1956. In 1960, he ranked number three in the then-Workers' Party of Kampuchea. He was named its second deputy secretary in 1961 and party secretary in 1963. He later led the Khmer Rouge army in its war against the Lon Nol regime.

Pol Pot became prime minister of Democratic Kampuchea in 1976 and resigned in 1979, but remained an active leader of the Khmer Rouge. He lived in exile, mainly in Thailand, until his death on April 15, 1998. His body was cremated on April 17, 1998.

cadre, Pham Van Ba, who lived in Cambodia and claimed that Vietnam should continue to control Cambodian communist movements.

Tou Samouth took charge of the organization's activities in urban areas, assisted by Nuon Chea and Saloth Sar, who had recently returned from studying in France. The communists in Phnom Penh used Pol Pot as their link to establish a legal party called the People's Party. This party contested the 1955 national election promised by the Geneva Agreements.<sup>6</sup> It was chaired by Keo Meas, a protégé of Tou Samouth.

Pol Pot helped to formulate the party's statutes and political program. He also made connections with the Democrat Party, which would compete with Prince Sihanouk's newly established Sangkum Reastr Niyum (the People's Socialist Community Party) in the 1955 election. Pol Pot believed that the Democrats, who had anti-feu-



**Khmer Rouge soldiers drinking coconut juice.** (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

dalist and anti-capitalist tendencies, would win the election and give the communists some political influence.

However, Pol Pot miscalculated badly. The Sangkum Reastr Niyum won all the seats in the National Assembly, while the People's Party won only 3%. Sieu Heng soon came to believe that the communist cause in Cambodia was hopeless, for nearly everyone strongly supported Prince Sihanouk's political programs rather than the idea of revolution. Moreover, some Issarak movements gave up their resistance and joined with Prince Sihanouk's government.

In 1956, Sieu Heng secretly contacted the Prince's Army Chief of Staff Lon Nol, who offered him guarantees of safety. In 1959, Sieu Heng defected to the Sihanouk's government, enabling authorities to pinpoint and arrest many clandestine KPRP cadres. According to Pol Pot, from 1955 to 1959, about 90% of the KPRP's members were arrested and killed. By the beginning of 1960, only about 800 cadres remained active and only 2 rural party branches were still functioning fully:

- The East Zone with its base in Kampong Cham province (led by So Phim) and
- The Southwest Zone with its base in Takeo province (chaired by Chhit Choeun alias Ta Mok).

Tou Samoth, Pol Pot and Nuon Chea continued to run the party's activities in Phnom Penh, with assistance from Ieng Sary and Son Sen, two other intellectuals educated in France.

### **3. THE WORKERS' PARTY OF KAMPUCHEA (WPK)**

A secret KPRP congress was held on the grounds of the Phnom Penh railroad station on September 28-30, 1960. It was attended by seven members from the organization's urban branches and fourteen from its rural branches. The congress reorganized the party, set up a new political line, and changed its name to the Workers' Party of Kampuchea (WPK). Tou Samouth became its secretary and Nuon Chea its deputy secretary. Pol Pot ranked number three at that time, and became second deputy secretary in 1961.

After Tou Samouth disappeared in 1962, the party held an emergency congress in February 1963.<sup>7</sup> It elected Pol Pot as secretary. Nuon Chea, who had a higher position in the party, was not chosen as secretary because he was

**NUON CHEA**  
(original name  
Runglert Laodi)  
Nuon Chea was born in  
1926 in Battambang  
province. In 1942 he  
attended high school in  
Bangkok, where he stayed  
in Benjamabopit Pagoda.  
In 1944 he studied law at  
Thammasat University in  
Bangkok, where he joined  
the Communist Party of  
Thailand.

He returned to Cambodia  
in 1950 and transferred his  
membership to the  
Indochinese Communist  
Party. He attended a training  
course in Hanoi in 1954  
and returned home in 1955.  
He was elected deputy secretary  
of the WPK in 1960.

During Democratic  
Kampuchea, Nuon Chea  
was appointed president of  
the People's Representative  
Assembly. He was also  
deputy secretary of the  
party's Central and  
Standing Committees. He  
played a key role in security  
matters and as the  
second-highest party member,  
was responsible for enforcing  
the harsh policies laid down  
by the Standing Committee.

He went into exile on the  
Thai-Cambodia border in  
1979 and defected with  
Khieu Samphan to the  
Royal Government of  
Cambodia after Pol Pot's  
death in 1998.

related by marriage to the defector Sieu Heng. Nuon Chea, moreover, was a loyal communist who wanted the WPK to be strong, so he did not compete with Pol Pot for the position. He remained deputy secretary and a powerful figure in the communist movement for over thirty years.

Soon after being named party secretary, Pol Pot took refuge at a Vietnamese military base in the northeast part of the country called "Office 100." In 1965, he walked up the Ho Chi Minh Trail to Hanoi for talks with the North Vietnamese. He also visited China and North Korea. Pol Pot was treated more cordially in China than in Vietnam and resented the idea that his party had to continue to be subservient to Vietnam.

#### 4. THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF KAMPUCHEA (CPK)

In September 1966, after coming home, Pol Pot changed the party's name to the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) because he wanted to lessen Vietnamese influence and strengthen relations with China. The Central Committee at this time consisted of Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Vorn Vet (a former teacher at Chamroeun Vichea High School in Phnom Penh), and Son Sen.

During the late 1960s, the CPK (whom Prince Sihanouk had dubbed the Khmer Rouge) gained more new members. Many of them lived along the Vietnamese border in remote areas out of the reach of the Prince's armed forces. The party's headquarters from 1966 to 1970 was in Ratanak Kiri province.



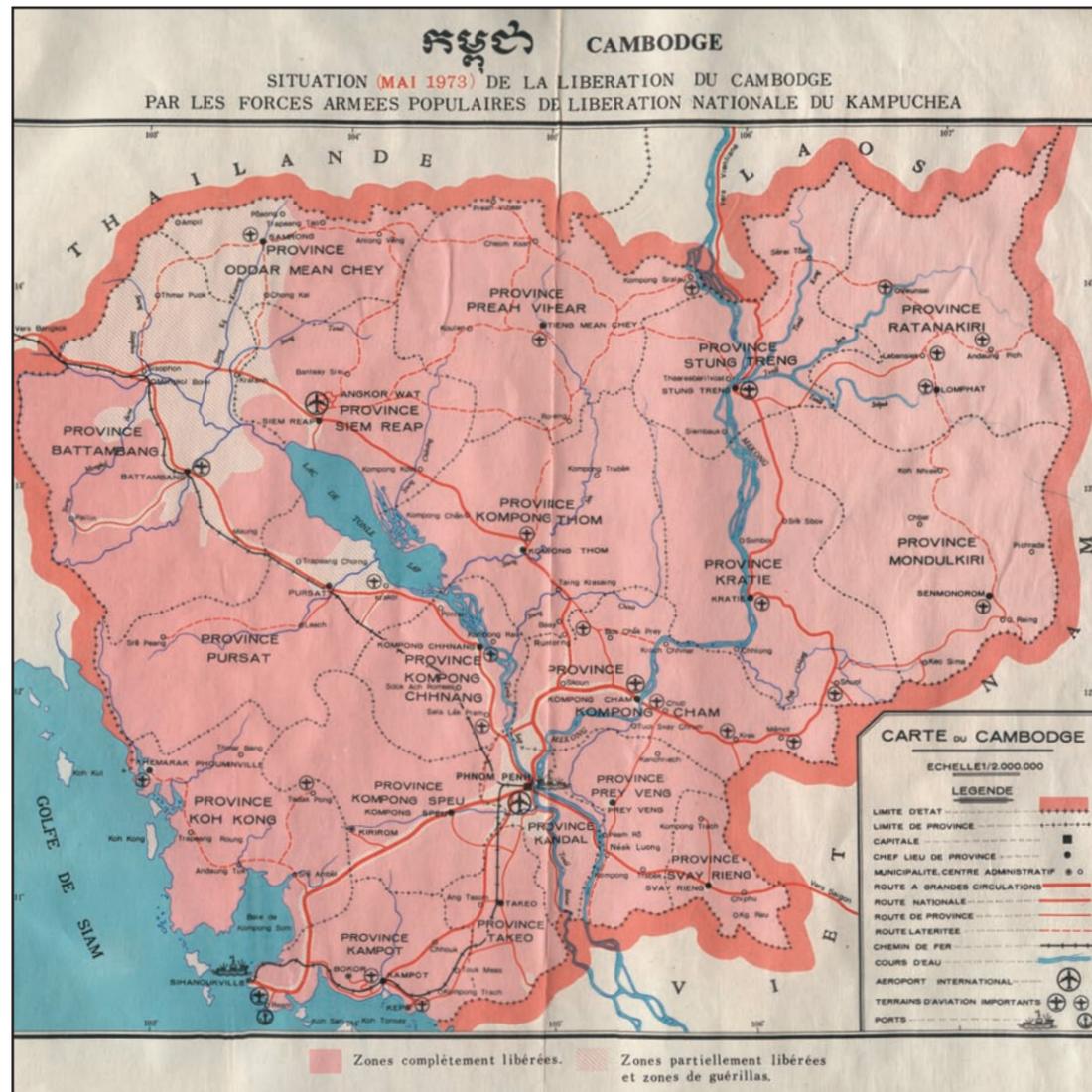
CPK Conference. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



Khmer Rouge liberated zone, May 1972. The dark pink areas denote the territory occupied by the Khmer Rouge, while the light pink areas represent territory still under the control of the Khmer Republic government. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

In March 1970 Marshal Lon Nol and his pro-American associates staged a successful coup to depose Prince Sihanouk as head of state. Soon after, the Viet Minh and Khmer Rouge gained control over much of the country. Tens of thousands of people refused to support the American-backed government—Lon Nol's Khmer Republic—and joined the Khmer Rouge to help restore Prince Sihanouk to power. At this time, Prince Sihanouk went into exile in China. With the encouragement and support of China, North Vietnam and the CPK, he formed a National United Front of Kampuchea and a government in exile called the Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea.<sup>8</sup> Members of the CPK were members of this government.

These developments created opportunities for the Khmer Rouge. North Vietnam and China supported them, and Prince Sihanouk appealed to the Cambodian people to run into the *marquis* (forests) to help overthrow the Lon Nol government. And the heavy bombing of communist supply lines and bases by the Khmer Republic



**Khmer Rouge liberated zone, May 1973.** The dark pink areas denote the territory occupied by the Khmer Rouge, while the light pink areas represent territory still under the control of the Khmer Republic government. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

government, with assistance from the US, created more support for the Khmer Rouge, whose armed forces were increasing in number.

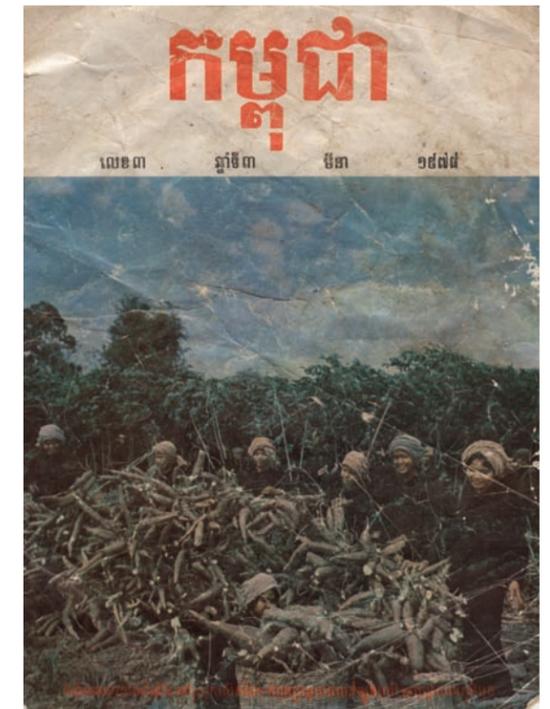
Vietnamese communist forces moved deep into Cambodia in 1970 and worked with the Khmer Rouge to recruit and train soldiers for the insurgent army, which grew from about 3,000 soldiers in 1970 to over 40,000 in 1973. Aided by the Vietnamese, the Khmer Rouge began to defeat Lon Nol's forces on the battlefields. By the end of 1972, the Vietnamese withdrew from Cambodia and turned the major responsibilities for the war over to the CPK, although several thousand Vietnamese remained behind as technical advisors.

From January to August 1973, the Khmer Republic government, with assistance from the US, dropped about half a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, which may have killed as many as 300,000 people. The

bombing postponed the Khmer Rouge victory, while many who resented the bombings or had lost family members joined their revolution.

Khmer Rouge soldiers were more active and disciplined than those of the Khmer Republic government, and they were able to withstand shortages of food and medicine. Moreover, some "Khmer-Hanois"<sup>9</sup> returned to Cambodia to assist the Khmer Rouge. These men and women were given junior positions throughout the country, but by 1973, after most of the Vietnamese advisors had returned home, they were secretly assassinated under orders from the CPK leadership, who wanted the party to be free of Vietnamese influence.

By early 1973, about 85% of Cambodian territory was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge, and the Lon Nol army was almost unable to go on the offensive. However, with US assistance, it was able to continue fighting the Khmer Rouge for two more years.



**Cover of the DK magazine, Kampuchea, March 1978.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**A performance in the Khmer Rouge liberated zone of Kratie province.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



Khmer Rouge officials and a foreign delegation inside the Royal Palace. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 3

# THE KHMER ROUGE COME TO POWER

### 1. THE KHMER ROUGE MARCH INTO PHNOM PENH

April 17, 1975 ended five years of foreign interventions, bombardment, and civil war in Cambodia. On this date, Phnom Penh fell to the communist forces.

Black and green-uniformed rebels entered the capital from every direction. The city's people crowded on the roads, cheering and waving white cloths. However, many hid in their houses for fear that they would be arrested or shot, for the Khmer Rouge soon declared over the radio that they did not come to talk to anybody and would execute high-ranking officials and military commanders from the former government.<sup>10</sup>

Hundreds of foreigners and some Cambodians sought refuge in the Hotel Le Phnom (now Hotel Le Royale), which the International Red Cross had declared as a neutral zone. But when the Khmer Rouge invaded the hotel, foreigners, journalists, and perhaps a hundred Cambodians fled to the French Embassy. The Khmer Rouge

ordered the Cambodian nationals taking shelter there to go to the countryside to work as peasants. Some 610 foreigners spent two more weeks in the embassy before they were taken to the Thai border by truck.

Soon after liberating Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge executed three senior leaders of the Khmer Republic government and hundreds of other officials and military officers. The three leading figures were Prime Minister Long Boret, Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, and Lon Non, brother of Lon Nol, who had left the country earlier with US \$1,000,000 as a pension. The United States had offered to take these three men to the US, but they refused to leave. Prince Sirik Matak wrote a letter to the US Embassy:

I thank you sincerely for your letter and your offer to transport me to freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have the sentiment of abandoning a people which have chosen liberty. You have refused us protection and we can do nothing about it.... I have only committed the mistake of believing in Americans. Please accept, Excellency, my dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments.

### 2. THE EVACUATION OF THE CITIES

Most of the people in Cambodia's cities believed they would live in peace under their new rulers, and that everyone would work together to reconcile the country. But a few hours after they captured Phnom Penh, Khmer Rouge soldiers began firing into the air as a signal to leave town.

The Khmer Rouge soon forced about two million Phnom Penh residents, including over a million wartime refugees, into the countryside. Within a week, the people of Phnom Penh and other cities that had been controlled by the Khmer Republic government were moved to rural areas to do agricultural work.

Sim Soth aka Koy, who was a cyclo driver in Phnom Penh, recalled what he saw during the evacuation:



Khmer Rouge cadre with Chinese advisors standing in front of Hotel Le Phnom. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**DK leaders meet with a foreign delegation.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

On April 17, 1975, I went out to earn a living as usual. A few hours later, I witnessed Khmer Rouge soldiers entering Phnom Penh. People came out, waving white cloths and white shirts, welcoming the Khmer Rouge. Suddenly, they fired into the air, ordering people to leave the town, alleging there would be American bombing. Like other people, I hastily departed at 10 o'clock with my brother, my colleagues from the pagoda and the monks. On the crowded road, I heard the voices of people asking for their parents and relatives, and the voices of hungry children asking for food. The Khmer Rouge confiscated people's belongings. Those who refused would be killed or taken away. While I was walking, a female Khmer Rouge soldier grabbed my collar and asked if I was a soldier. She pushed me backward when I told her I was a student. I continued my journey to Takhmau. On the way, I saw a lot of recently swollen dead bodies. After three days of walking, I reached Takeo province.

There were no exceptions to the evacuation. Hospitals were emptied of their patients. Thousands of the evacuees, especially the very young, old and sick, died while on the road. Many pregnant women died while giving birth with no medicine or medical services. Some children became separated from their parents. Most people had no idea of what was happening.

So Ry of Takeo province also recalled the evacuation of Phnom Penh. Her husband was a Lon Nol soldier

whose thigh was injured while fighting the Khmer Rouge. He was sent to a hospital in Phnom Penh:

The Khmer Rouge soldiers asked us to leave town. I said, "I cannot go because I am pregnant and my husband is seriously injured." They forcibly insisted that we had to go. We were crying a lot because my husband could not walk. Then we found a horse cart, so I carried my husband on to the cart. I tied the cart with my scarf, put the scarf around my neck and towed it. We wanted to go to Takeo, but the soldiers forced us to go forward on National Road 5. We passed Prek Kdam and stopped in order to cook rice. After eating, they told us to go forward. I towed the cart until my groin became inflamed. On the way, my husband was taken and killed. I cried a lot, but could do nothing. Finally, I arrived at Chamkar Leu district, Kampong Cham province. One month later, I gave birth to my daughter.



**At the Pochentong (Phnom Penh) airport, April 1975.**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

The Khmer Rouge gave a number of reasons for why they had to empty the cities. During the evacuation, they told people that American was going to bomb Phnom Penh, and that they need not lock their homes because they could return in two or three days.

DK's vice premier in charge of foreign affairs, Ieng Sary, later justified the evacuation in terms of the lack of facilities and transportation to bring food to the cities. Pol Pot, visiting China in October 1977, said that the evacuation was to break up an "enemy spy organization."

Most historians agree that the Khmer Rouge were determined to turn the country into a nation of peasants and workers in which corruption, feudalism, and capitalism could be completely uprooted. They felt that cities were evil and that only peasants in the countryside were pure enough for their revolution.

After the evacuation, Phnom Penh became a “ghost city,” with only about 40,000 inhabitants. Those who remained were administrative officers, soldiers and factory workers. The only shop in the city (Central Market) was a store that catered to diplomats. The Khmer Rouge isolated the country from the outside world. They did not allow any foreigners into the country and no Cambodians were allowed to leave.

A few days later, after Pol Pot and other CPK officials entered the empty city, the Khmer Rouge held a ceremony to pay homage to those who had died during the war. In Beijing, more than 10,000 people and many Chinese leaders celebrated the victory of the communist forces over the American-backed government.

However, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the figurehead leader of the insurgents, did not attend. He was at the bedside of his mother, Queen Sisowath Kossamak Neary Roth Serey Vattana, who was dying in Beijing. Prince Sihanouk had been in exile in Beijing since 1970, where the Chinese government had given him both political and emotional support, as well as a comfortable villa. The Prince later made a statement praising the Khmer Rouge victory.



**Khmer Rouge cadres in the field.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**DK leaders and members of the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). Facing forward from the left, Pol Pot (CPK Secretary and Prime Minister of Democratic Kampuchea), Nuon Chea (Deputy Secretary of the CPK and DK President of the People’s Representative Assembly), Ieng Sary (Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs), Son Sen (Deputy Prime Minister for Defense), and Vorn Vet (Deputy Prime Minister for Economy).**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 4 THE FORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA GOVERNMENT

### 1. THE ANGKAR<sup>11</sup>

Although the Khmer Rouge had fought against Lon Nol’s Khmer Republic for five years, very little was known about the movement or its leaders. The CPK maintained this secrecy for most of the time that it ruled Cambodia.

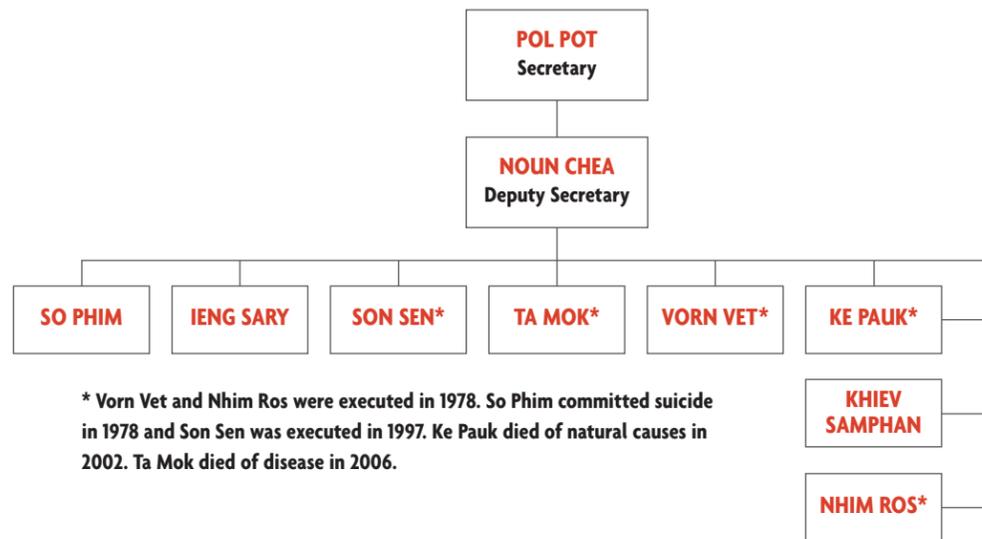
Angkar Padevat, “the revolutionary organization,” was made up of men and women who were members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. They were led from the shadows by Pol Pot.

In September 1975, the CPK’s Central Committee comprised Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, So Phim, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, Ta

Mok and Vorn Vet. In 1977, three other members (Nhim Ros, Khieu Samphan and Ke Pauk) were added to this committee. Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Son Sen and Khieu Samphan were educated in France, while Nuon Chea was educated in Thailand and Vietnam. The other members of the Central Committee, although literate, had less education.



### LEADERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF KAMPUCHEA, 1976-1978



## 2. PRINCE SIHANOUK RETURNS TO CAMBODIA

Until the end of 1975, the Khmer Rouge called itself the Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea (this was the organization that had been founded in Beijing in 1970 with Prince Norodom Sihanouk as head of state). By 1972, they controlled almost all the resistance, but for the sake of international recognition and internal support, they continued to operate behind the façade of Prince Sihanouk and his government in exile.

In July 1975, the Khmer Rouge invited the Prince, who was then living in exile in Pyongyang, North Korea, to come home. Before returning to Cambodia, he flew to Beijing to meet Chinese President Mao Zedong and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, who was in the hospital. He later said, "My decision to return to Cambodia did not express the fact that I agree with the Red Khmers, but I have to sacrifice myself for the honor of China and His Excellency Zhou Enlai, who helped Cambodia and myself so much."<sup>12</sup> He returned with his wife in early September, accompanied by Pen Nuth (premier of the Royal Government of the



Cover of the DK magazine, *Revolutionary Flag*, April 1978. (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)



A meeting with foreign officials. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

National Union of Cambodia), Khieu Samphan, Ieng Terith and some members of the royal family.

The Prince soon presided over a cabinet meeting, but was not allowed to speak. The title of chief of state the communist rulers had given him carried no power. Three weeks after his return, the Prince was sent to the United Nations to claim Cambodia's seat at the General Assembly. Inside the country, many of his supporters had vanished without a trace. About twenty members of Prince Sihanouk's family died during DK, and at least seven other members of the royal family were executed at Tuol Sleng.

## 3. THE CONSTITUTION

From December 15-19, 1975, the text of a constitution was approved by a 1,000-member National Congress in Phnom Penh and was promulgated on January 5, 1976. The country was officially renamed Democratic Kampuchea. The constitution established a 250-seat House of Representatives, with 150 members representing peasants, 50 representing laborers and other working people, and 50 representing the revolutionary

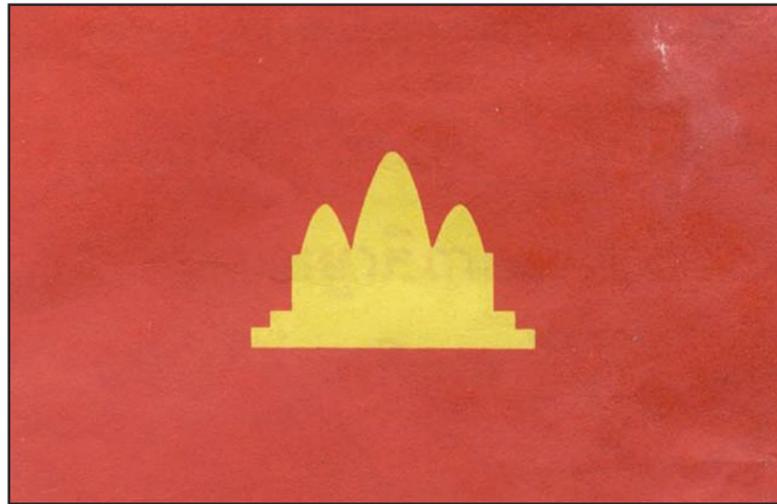
### DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA'S NATIONAL ANTHEM 17 APRIL, THE GREAT VICTORY

Glittering red blood which blankets the towns and countryside of the Kampuchean motherland! Blood of our splendid workers and peasants!

Blood of our revolutionary youth! Blood that was transmuted into fury, anger and vigorous struggle! On 17 April, under the revolutionary flag! Blood that liberated us from slavery!

Long life 17 April, the great victory! More wonderful and much more meaningful than the Angkar era! We unite together to build up Kampuchea and a glorious society, democratic, egalitarian, and just; Independent-master; absolutely determined to defend the country, our glorious land;

Long life! Long life! Long life new Kampuchea, democratic and gloriously prosperous; Determine to raise up the revolutionary red flag to be higher; build up our country to achieve the glorious Great Leap Forward!



**DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA'S FLAG**

Article 16 of the Constitution describes the design and meaning of the national flag: The background is red, with a yellow, three-towered temple in the middle. The red background symbolizes the revolutionary movement, the resolute and valiant struggle of the Kampuchean people for the liberation, defense, and construction of their country. The yellow temple symbolizes the national traditions of the Kampuchean people, who are defending and building the country to make it ever more prosperous.

army. The constitution said nothing about the CPK. The Assembly met only once in April 1976.

The new national anthem was called "17 April, the Great Victory." Its words were written by Pol Pot. The new national flag was red with a yellow three-towered image of Angkor Wat in the middle.

**4. PRINCE SIHANOUK RESIGNS AS HEAD OF STATE**

On March 11, 1976, the CPK's Standing Committee met to discuss the resignation of Prince Norodom Sihanouk. They agreed that they would accept his resignation, but they would not allow him to leave the country, to speak out, or to meet foreign diplomats. Cambodia's monarchy, which had existed for nearly two thousand years, had ended.

In April 1976, the Kampuchean People's Representative Assembly held its first and only session. The Assembly unanimously agreed to Prince Sihanouk's retirement request, giving him an annual \$8,000 pension that was never paid. He and his family were put under house arrest in a small villa in the Royal Palace compound. The Prince remained there until January 1979, just before the collapse of DK.<sup>13</sup>

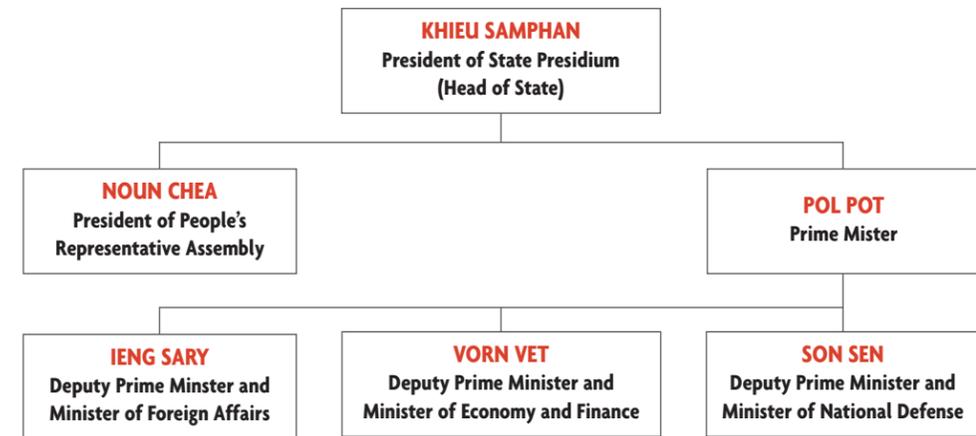
**5. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA**

The only active organization in Democratic Kampuchea was the concealed Communist Party of Kampuchea.



**NATIONAL EMBLEM** Article 17 describes the national emblem of Democratic Kampuchea: The national emblem consists of a network of dikes and canals, which symbolizes modern agriculture, and factories, which symbolize industry. These are framed by an oval garland of rice ears, with the inscription "Democratic Kampuchea" at the bottom.

**STRUCTURE OF THE STATE OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA**



The ministries with high volumes of work established in Phnom Penh included the Ministry of Foreign Affairs headed by Ieng Sary, the Ministry of Defense under Son Sen, the Ministry of Industry led by Cheng An, and the Ministry of Economy chaired by Vorn Vet. The only committee that had the authority to make decisions and government policies and statutes was the CPK's Standing Committee, with Pol Pot as the secretary and Nuon Chea his deputy. The CPK leaders never paid attention to the constitution or regulations that they themselves had adopted. Members of the Standing Committee and Central Committee also had ministerial responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

**KHIEU SAMPHAN (aka comrade Hem)** Khieu Samphan was born in 1931 in Kampong Cham. After being awarded a scholarship to study in France, he finished his doctorate in economic science and returned home in 1959. Then Prince Sihanouk appointed him Secretary of State for Commerce. In 1964, he resigned from his post, but remained in the National Assembly for four more years.

In 1967, accused of being a communist agent, Khieu Samphan went into hiding in the jungle. In 1976, after the resignation of Prince Sihanouk, he was appointed President of DK's State Presidium. He joined Pol Pot in exile from 1979 to 1998, when he defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia.

**6. CHANGING THE PARTY'S ANNIVERSARY**

In March 1976, the Central Committee decided to set the date of the CPK's birth to 1960 rather than 1951. The leaders decided that anyone who joined the party before 1960 would no longer be considered as a party member. They did not want to admit the importance of Vietnamese guidance before 1960. They wanted to deny Vietnam's influence on the party and to break any links with Vietnam.

The CPK continued to lead the country secretly under the name of Angkar. In September 1977, however, just before visiting China, Pol Pot publicly admitted the existence of the Communist Party of Kampuchea and his own position as prime minister of DK.



**Khmer Rouge officials in the field.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 5

# ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

In 1976, the CPK divided Democratic Kampuchea into six geographical zones. The zones incorporated two or more old provinces or parts of old provinces. The CPK then divided the zones into 32 regions, and gave all the zones and regions numbers. Below the regions were districts, sub-districts, and cooperatives.

**East Zone** (Zone 203). So Phim was the secretary of this zone; he committed suicide in May 1978. The East Zone consisted of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces, part of Kampong Cham east of the Mekong River, one district from Kratie province (Chhlong) and some parts of Kandal province (Khsach Kandal, Lvea Em, and Muk Kampoul). The zone was divided into five regions: Regions 20, 21, 22, 23, and 24.

**Southwest Zone** (Zone 405). Chhit Choeun aka Ta Mok was its secretary. This zone held Takeo and Kampot provinces, two districts of Kampong Speu (Kong Pisey and Samrong Tong), and five districts of Kandal (Kandal Stung, Sa-ang, Koh Thom, Kean Svay, and Leuk Dek). Its regions were Regions 13, 33, 35 and 25.

**North Zone** (Zone 303). Koy Thuon alias Thuch was the zone's secretary from 1970 to early 1976. After he was arrested and executed at Tuol Sleng in 1976, Ke Pauk became the secretary until 1977, when he was assigned to the newly established Central Zone. At that time, Kang Chap became the North Zone secretary. This zone consisted of Kampong Thom province, part of Kampong Cham west of the Mekong River, and one district of Kratie (Prek Prasap). Its regions were 41, 42, and 43.

**Northwest Zone** (Zone 560). Nhim Ros was this zone's secretary. The zone comprised Pursat and Battambang provinces, and had seven regions: 1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.

**West Zone** (Zone 401). Chuo Chet was its secretary. It consisted of Koh Kong and Kampong Chhnang provinces, and parts of Kampong Speu province. Its five regions were 31, 32, 37, 15, and 11.



**Khmer Rouge and a foreign delegation.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

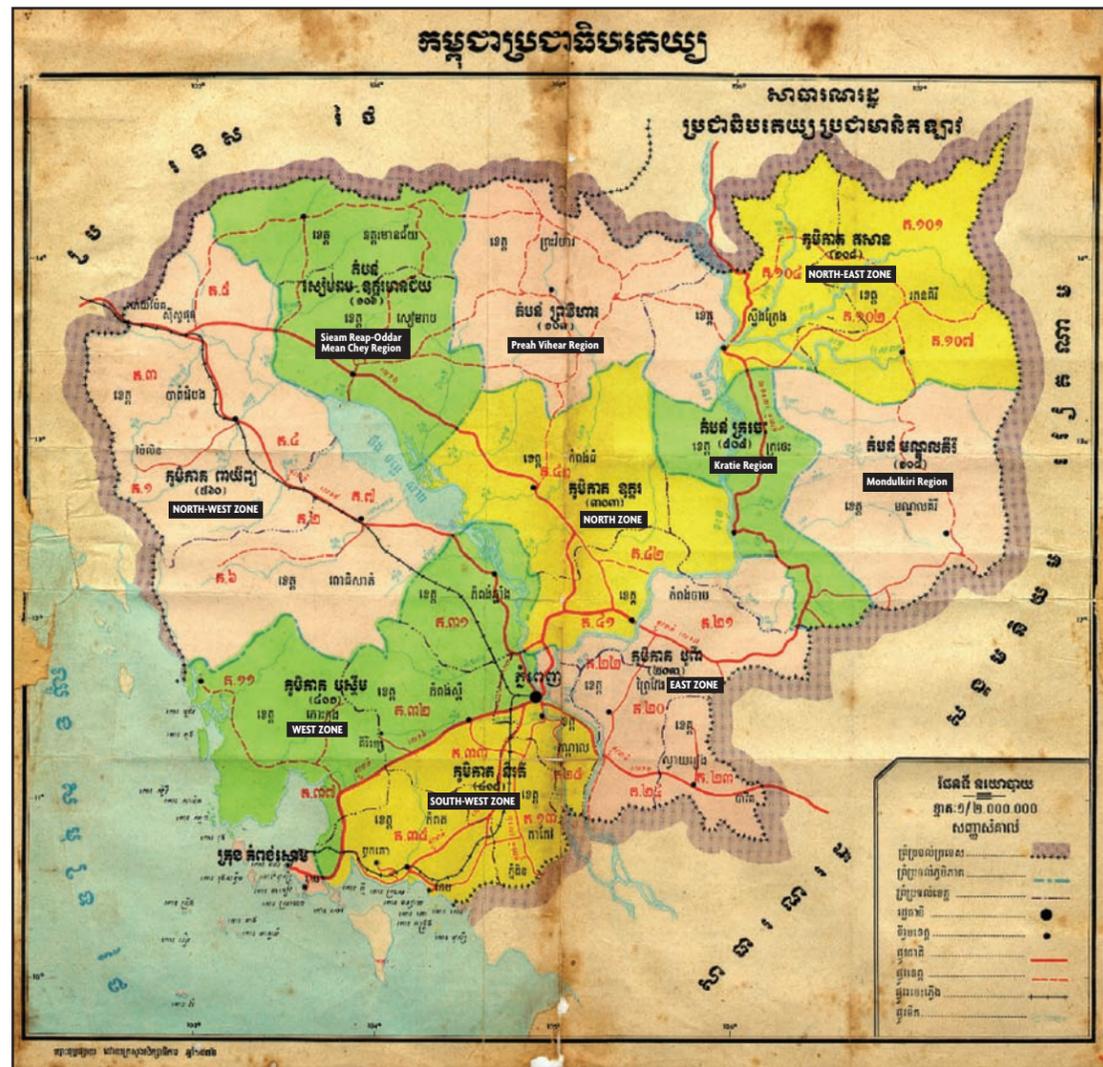


**Khmer Rouge officials in the field.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

**Northeast Zone** (Zone 108). This zone's secretary, Ney Sarann aka Ya, was purged in 1976. It comprised Rattanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri provinces, parts of Stung Treng west of the Mekong River, and part of Kratie province. Its six regions were 101, 102, 104, 105, 107, and 505.

In 1976, DK also created two autonomous regions, which reported directly to the Central Committee, not through a zone: Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey Region (Region 106) and Preah Vihear Region (Region 103). Kampong Soam (now Preah Sihanoukville) was organized separately from the zones.

The Central Zone was established in 1977. It occupied the former North Zone, while the new North Zone was moved to the Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear regions. Kratie Region (Region 505) and Mondul Kiri Region (Region 105) were taken from the Northeast Zone and made autonomous regions.



**The zones and regions of Democratic Kampuchea in 1976**  
Source: DK Ministry of Education, 1976. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



The Khmer Rouge cadre harvesting rice. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 6 THE FOUR-YEAR PLAN (1977-1980)

The Khmer Rouge emptied the cities in order to abolish urban living and to build a new Cambodia based on the expanded production of rice. In early 1976, the CPK hastily wrote the first four-year plan (1977-1980), which called for the collectivization of all private property and placed high national priority on the cultivation of rice. After national defense, collectivization was the most important policy of Democratic Kampuchea.

People in Cambodia had never been collectivized in the past. But in 1976, everyone was required to bring their private possessions (including kitchen utensils) to be used collectively. As part of the process, Cambodian families were split up and people were assigned to work groups. Husbands and wives were separated, and children were separated from their parents.

The four-year plan aimed at achieving an average national yield of three tons of rice per hectare. This was an impossible task because Cambodians had never been forced to produce that much rice on a national scale before. Moreover, the country had been devastated by war and lacked tools, farm animals and a healthy work force.

The four-year plan also included arrangements to plant vegetables, and hoped to generate income from timber, fishing, animal husbandry, tree farms, etc. The leaders of Democratic Kampuchea hoped to make Cambodia completely independent in both the economic and political spheres, and turn Cambodia from an undeveloped agricultural country to a modern agricultural country.

However, the leaders ignored the difficulties of implementing this plan and the miseries that flowed inevitably from overwork, poor living conditions, and malnutrition, lack of freedom and basic rights, and untreated diseases.



**Khmer Rouge women's unit harvesting rice.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

Throughout the period of Democratic Kampuchea, the living conditions of people were very poor. In addition, the regime robbed nearly all Cambodians of their happiness and dignity. Most people know that a country needs educated people to develop. However, the Khmer Rouge killed many intellectuals and technicians, and closed all universities, schools and other educational institutes throughout the country. They then brought poor peasants from the countryside with no technical experience to work in Phnom Penh's few factories.

The leaders of DK divided the country's rice fields into number-one rice fields and simple

rice fields. For the simple rice fields, the required yield was 3 tons per hectare, while farmers in the number-one rice fields were required to achieve 6 to 7 tons per hectare. In addition, the yields were to increase every year.

In theory, the crop was divided into four portions. Some of it was intended to feed people; everyone was entitled to receive 312 kilograms of rice a year or 0.85 kg a day. Some of the remaining crop was to be retained as seed rice and some was to be kept as a reserve. The last and biggest portion of the crop was to be sold abroad to earn foreign exchange, which could then be used to purchase farm machinery, goods and ammunition.

Unfortunately, because production almost never reached the required levels, almost no rice was saved for the people or for seed. Instead, most of the harvest was used to feed the army and factory workers, or was exported to China and several other socialist countries.

In DK, almost no one ever had enough to eat; in most cases they had only rice porridge mixed with corn, slices of banana trees, or papaya tree trunks. Most people received less than half a milk can of rice a day. Only the Khmer Rouge cadres and soldiers received cooked rice. All survivors of the regime agree that what they

remember most aside from hard labor and execution was the extreme shortage of food.

Um Saret, a 57-year-old woman living in Phnom Penh, described how painful life was without enough to eat:

In 1976, being unable to withstand hunger, my father caught tadpoles for food. He thought that they were small fish. One day, a Khmer Rouge cadre killed a poisonous snake and placed it on the fence. Though he knew that it was poisonous, he still ate that snake, which killed him. My sister and her children died of starvation. My own family was in the same condition. We had done a lot of farming, but never had enough rice to eat. Being too hungry, I picked wild arum as food. After eating, all of us became very itchy. My children cried a lot. One day, I went to fish. The unit chief said, "You behave with very low character. Be careful! Angkar will take you for execution." Because of inadequate food, one of my children became seriously sick, so I exchanged my last necklace for rice and cooked it for her. She ate a lot, but became sicker. She died as a result. The other two children and my husband also became sick because of malnutrition. However, we miserably managed to survive.



**Youth performance.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**Transporting dirt on an irrigation project.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



Base people: mother and son. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 7

# DAILY LIFE DURING DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

### 1. THE CREATION OF COOPERATIVES

During the 1970-1975 civil war, most of the people living in the areas liberated by the Khmer Rouge were organized into “mutual aid teams” of 10 to 30 families. However, starting in 1973 and especially after the 1975 victory, mutual aid teams were organized into “low-level cooperatives,” which consisted of several hundred people or an entire village. By 1977, low-level cooperatives were reorganized into “high-level cooperatives,” which consisted of about 1,000 families each or an entire sub-district.

The CPK’s leaders established cooperatives as part of their move to abolish private ownership and capitalism, and to strengthen the status of workers and peasants. To the Khmer Rouge, a cooperative meant that people were supposed to live together, work together, eat together, and share each other’s leisure activities. This resulted in severe restrictions on family life. Cambodian families had eaten together for thousands of years, so eating in cooperatives, especially when food was so scarce, was unpleasant and cruel. In addition, everyone in a cooperative had to give all of their property, which was their important means of production, to be used collectively. Such property included tools, cattle, plows, rakes, seed rice, and land.

The cooperatives were designed to be as self-sufficient as possible. The Khmer Rouge leaders described cooperatives as “great forces” for building up the country and as “strong walls” for protecting Democratic Kampuchea against its enemies.

### 2. TWO NEW CLASSES

Although the Khmer Rouge claimed they were building a nation of equals and tearing down class barriers, they in fact created two new classes in Cambodia. They named these “the base people” and “the new people.”

**The base people**, or old people, were those who had lived in rural areas controlled by the CPK prior to April 17, 1975. The Khmer Rouge classified them as full-rights people or candidates. Full-rights people were those who had no relatives who had worked for the Khmer Republic. They were members of the poor or lower-middle classes (farmers and laborers). They were allowed to vote and to run for elections, although only one election was held during DK, on March 20, 1976 (this election was not in accordance with international standards, and those voted in as members of the National Assembly were not announced publicly). Full-rights people could also become chiefs of cooperatives and other units. Candidates were people who had relatives associated with the Khmer Republic; they were tolerated as long as they worked hard.

**The new people**, or 17 April people, were those evacuated from the cities and towns in April 1975. However, many of them were from the countryside and had gone to the cities to



A Khmer Rouge dancer. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**Khmer Rouge dance troop at the ancient temple of Banteay Srey.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

escape the war. They were considered unreliable and were viewed by Angkar with hatred and suspicion. They were classified as “parasites” and had no rights as the Khmer Rouge slogans asserted: “17 April people are parasitic plants. They are the losers of the war and prisoners of war.” Another slogan, recalled by many survivors, was: “To keep you is no gain; to lose you is no loss.” New people were treated much more harshly than base people. But the degree of harshness differed from one region to another. For example, people in Svay Rieng and Prey Veng provinces in the East Zone were treated somewhat better than those evacuated to Pursat and Battambang in the Northwest Zone.

Chap Sitha, a 65 year-old woman living in Phnom Penh, described her life as one of the 17 April people:

During the evacuation in 1975, my family consisting of 14 members fled to Koh Thom district, Kandal province. There, Angkar assigned me to plant vegetables and do farming. One day, at nine o’ clock at night, Angkar requested my husband to go to study. I had been waiting for him, but he never returned. A woman in the village told one of my children: “You don’t have to wait for your father and be careful with your words. Your entire family could be taken away. Your father had a big working history.”

I knew that my husband must have been killed since he was a governor of Kandal province. Two months later, Angkar told me to move to Phnom Penh. In fact, they took us to Battambang. Angkar gave us a small decayed cottage. We were separated to live in different units. Only my six year-old child stayed with me. Life in Battambang was an unforgettable experience for me. Within ten days, four sons and one daughter of mine died one after another. Some of them died of malnutrition and disease, while others were accused of being enemies and were killed. A while later, my 70-year-old mother-in-law died of malnutrition. Life there was so fearful. Every day, I never slept well. Many of the villagers were taken away by Angkar and disappeared.

### 3. MARRIAGE

DK weddings were completely different from traditional ones. Couples were married in mass ceremonies in which there were as few as 3 to 10 couples and as many as 30 to 50, or even more than 100, at each ceremony. Most men and women were not allowed to choose their partner; instead, each couple was designated by Angkar, which claimed to be everyone’s parents. Some couples did not know the name of their future spouses or what they looked like until the ceremony. Their family members, in most cases, were not allowed to attend the wedding or



**A Khmer Rouge dance performance.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

be involved in any decision. Traditional clothes, dancing, singing, and religious ceremonies were prohibited.

Women were sometimes forced to marry soldiers who had been injured during the war and lost a hand or leg. Those who refused to accept the disabled men might be imprisoned, severely tortured, or forced to do hard labor far from their homes. Some women facing forced marriage committed suicide.

Mousa Sokha of Kampong Cham province was president of a women's sub-district association during DK. She recalled her marriage:

In 1974, at the age of fifteen, I got married to an ammunition-delivery worker, Noh Loas. We were lucky that we got married one month before a new rule was passed banning people from decorating their bodies with imperialist jewelry. Everything used for bodily decoration was considered imperialist, even fake jewelry. By that time, five to ten couples had already been forced to marry. If a couple rejected each other, they would be summoned for reeducation. Newly married couples were separated. In my wedding, I was accompanied by bridesmaids and wore jewelry, but I dressed in black clothes and tire sandals. Only three days after our marriage, my husband was summoned to go to the battlefields because Angkar needed more forces to overthrow Phnom Penh. I begged the



**A Khmer Rouge wedding.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**A Khmer Rouge wedding.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

village chief to let my husband stay, but he refused. In 1976, I gave birth to my first son, but he died of disease just a week later.

Forced marriage increased after the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. More couples were forced to marry at one time. Pheng Hang from Kampong Cham described his marriage:

In 1978, just a month before the regime collapsed, they pointed to my name on a list and forced me to get married. The next day, I sat on a chair at the ceremony, determined to do what they said. Along with 160 couples, my wife and I promised to live together and have a child within a year. The Khmer Rouge gave us new black clothes and a cotton scarf, and they had food to eat at the ceremony. After the revolution, we came home and now have five children.

On the wedding day, men and women were asked to stand in two rows. Then the village chief would ask couples to hold each other's hands and to vow to live together for the rest of their lives; that signified they were married. The brief celebration ended when some food was served.

Once married, the couple was allowed to stay together for a few days and then went back to their work groups. They would be allowed to come back home to see each other once every seven to ten days.

The Khmer Rouge saw the traditional Khmer wedding as they saw all religious practices and education at schools or universities: it was a waste of time and no help in producing rice. Mass weddings were established because they

took so little time; the time saved would be devoted to cooperative work and to what the Khmer Rouge called the “super great leap forward revolution,” a slogan derived from communist China. The leaders of DK wanted to make sure that children were born who could continue the revolution. The main purpose of weddings, for the Khmer Rouge, was not to form family units, but to produce children who could serve the revolution.

#### 4. ABUSES OF CHILDREN’S LABOR AND RIGHTS

In Democratic Kampuchea, there were no formal schools. Instead, children were sent to study under trees or people’s houses. Their teachers were often poor peasants who could only read and write a little. Although some regions of Democratic Kampuchea saw a little improvement in education in 1978 (children were given two or three hours a day of primary education), there was never any fully functioning school. The Khmer Rouge said that “There are no more diplomas, only diplomas one can visualize. If you wish to get a Baccalaureate, you have to get it at dams or canals,” and that “Study is not important. What’s important is work and revolution.”

While children were taught their ABCs, most of their education was devoted to political instruction. Young children were routinely taken from their homes and made to attend indoctrination sessions so they could serve as soldiers, bodyguards or messengers.

Children were also set to work during DK. They collected manure, cut small plants, collected human waste to make fertilizer, and carried weapons to the battlefield, where they were sometimes killed or injured. In addition, children were usually separated from their parents and never enjoyed the pleasures of family life.



Children of the Khmer Rouge high officials. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



Children learning about harvesting. (J. Kofmann/Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

Phin Ratha, 40 years old, from Phnom Penh, recalled her experiences as a ten-year-old in 1975:

We were evacuated to Kiri Vong district, Takeo province. Angkar gave each family a small house. We first lived by finding crabs and shells as food. After a political meeting with the village chief, everyone had to eat collectively and I could no longer catch crabs as food. Because of too much hunger, I usually stole vegetables we had planted around the house. I was asked to work in a children’s unit far from my home. Angkar allowed me to visit home within three or four months. My task was to work in the rice fields. I did not want to do this because I was very afraid of leeches. The unit chief always beat me, so I ran home many times, asking for help from my parents, but they could not help.

So, I hid in the forest for a while. I survived by eating wild leaves and fruit and stealing villagers’ food. Unable to bear such hard living conditions, I came back home. For fear of Angkar, my parents sent me back to the children’s unit. There, the unit chief tortured me and warned me not to run away again. I was assigned to dig up water vegetables and then to collect pig dung. One day, I was so tired that I fell down and spilled the dung, so the unit chief whipped me with a lash, which flew into my eyes. From day to day, my eyes became painful and I became blind as a result.

**The Khmer Rouge had slogans about education:**

**“Angkar makes the shadows under the trees into schools and meeting places.”**

**“You should learn while working. The more you work, the more you learn.”**

Ros Sampeou, a Phnom Penh resident, lost all of his family under the Khmer Rouge regime. He recalled:

The five members of my family were moved to Tra Loak Mountain in Preh Net Preh district, Battambang province. I and other children were assigned to dig earth and build dikes, to look after animals and to cut small plants. We had to complete our assignment; otherwise, our food ration would be cut and we would be tortured. My father died of malaria and my older sister died of a disease that made her belly swell. One day after work, we gathered and told each other about our backgrounds and families. A moment later, a man came in and told me that my mother had been killed by Angkar. Hearing this, I unconsciously cried. I was thinking that I had nothing left; I even did not know how much longer I could survive. The only other member of my family, my older brother, disappeared without a trace.

Young children were taught that, “Angkar is the parent of all children as well as male and female youths. If parents beat their children, it means they look down on Angkar, so Angkar will have no pity on them.” Cadres asked children to spy on their families. These children even dared to kill their own parents if they were told to do so by Angkar. As time passed, tens of thousands of children came to believe only what Angkar had told them and learned to obey Angkar’s commands.

In the war against Vietnam in 1977-1978, many soldiers were killed or seriously injured. The Khmer Rouge then recruited children to go to the front lines, where thousands of them were wounded or killed.

## 5. FORCED LABOR

Everyone in DK was assigned to work. Young children performed light tasks, while elderly people looked after small children or animals and made baskets. Adults (those over the age of 14) were given the most difficult tasks. They had to dig canals and reservoirs, build dikes, cut logs, clear land for cultivation, and plant and harvest rice. A few thousand men and women who were trusted by the party were sent to work in factories in Phnom Penh.



**Khmer Rouge cadres.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**Celebration after the completion of an irrigation project.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

Nearly everyone worked more than 12 hours a day, 7 days a week without rest or adequate food. They sometimes worked from sunrise until midnight if the moon was bright enough. Without moonlight, fires would be set to illuminate the rice fields. If they tried to question the assignment their cooperative chiefs gave them, they would be called enemies of the revolution and would be sent to be “reeducated.” Repeated or serious mistakes at work could lead to execution. This act was contrary to Article 12 of the Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea, which stated that:

- Every citizen of Kampuchea enjoys full rights to a constantly improving material, spiritual, and cultural life. Every citizen of Democratic Kampuchea is guaranteed a living.
- All workers are the masters of their factories.
- All peasants are the masters of the rice paddies and fields.
- All other laborers have the right to work.
- There is absolutely no unemployment in Democratic Kampuchea.

## 6. PURGES AND MASSACRES

The Khmer Rouge were always searching for enemies and believed that their enemies were everywhere. Suspects were falsely accused of serving the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), KGB (Soviet secret police), or the Vietnamese.

Fighting with Vietnam in 1977 and 1978 led to extensive purges. In late 1977, after Pol Pot returned from China, Vietnamese troops entered eastern Cambodia. They withdrew after several months, taking hundreds of Cambodian civilians with them. The Khmer Rouge then accused people and cadres in the East Zone of cooperating with the Vietnamese, which led to many people being arrested and executed, including longtime Khmer Rouge loyalists and political colleagues like So Phim.

The worst purges in the zone occurred in 1978 after some units rebelled against the DK government. From June to September, while warfare continued with Vietnam, much of the East Zone became a battlefield between the DK government and these rebellious troops, and as many as 100,000 people in the East Zone died in battle or were executed. The government sent troops from the Southwest Zone to fight the rebels. Thousands of people fled to the Vietnamese border to escape the killings that followed the arrival of these troops.

A purge also occurred in the North Zone in 1977. This one concentrated on educated people and people connected with Koy Thuon, who had served as the zone's secretary until early 1976. During the purge, Angkar arrested Minister of Information Hu Nim, Koy Thuon's mentor Tiv Ol, and many of his colleagues, including Phok Chhay and Doeun. There were several attempted coups and rebellions (especially by Cham Muslims) during DK,<sup>15</sup> but because they were unsuccessful, they only served to intensify the search for internal enemies, which in turn led to purges throughout the country.



An irrigation project. This photo was taken while a KR official delegation was visiting the site. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



Khmer Rouge Female Mobile Unit pedaling to transport water for irrigation. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

San Teimnah, a 74-year-old woman living in Kampong Cham province, recalled how the Khmer Rouge massacred the Cham minority, especially her own family, during the rebellion:

In the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime, my village had been home to thousands of Cham families. The Khmer Rouge killed almost all of them. People in my village and Koh Phal suffered more than the rest because they rebelled against the Khmer Rouge. As for my family, they killed my parents, two of my children, two grandchildren and all of my siblings. My son Musa was taken from us after the rebellion and disappeared; I heard rumors that he was killed in 1978 while he was searching for me. My daughter Rofiah and her husband and two children were killed for unknown reasons.

Afterwards, the Khmer Rouge moved my family to Sre Veal village in Stoeung Trang district. At first, they assigned me to fell tall trees with the evacuees from Phnom Penh. Many people were killed because they performed their tasks poorly or because the trees fell on top of them. Then, I was made to raise pigs. I objected, claiming that I was afraid of these animals. But, they forced me to do this, threatening that Angkar would send me off for study if I did not do it. The Khmer Rouge even forced me to eat pork, but I refused, saying that I had never eaten meat since childhood. After that, they refused to give me any food. I asked for salt, but they said the salt ration was in the pork soup. My body became swollen. Luckily, I survived the regime. I returned to my home village in 1979.



**Khmer Rouge child cadres.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 8 THE SECURITY SYSTEM

### 1. SECURITY CENTERS

Although the East Zone purges of 1978 were the most severe in DK, hundreds of thousands of people were arrested in other parts of the country and in many cases were killed. The Khmer Rouge security system, with its nearly 200 prisons, was set up virtually everywhere. The Khmer Rouge called these prisons “security offices” or “security centers” rather than “prisons.”

Security centers in DK were organized into five levels. These prisons were used for detention, interrogation, and

execution. Most of the prisoners in the lowest three levels (regional, district and sub-district) were former soldiers or civil servants of the Lon Nol government; the remainder were people accused of stealing, desertion, or speaking ill of Angkar. At the zone level, security centers held a thousand or more prisoners. These centers were generally used to hold Khmer Rouge soldiers and their families, and those accused of committing offenses in the zone. The highest level was the central security center in Phnom Penh with the code name of S-21. Almost all of its prisoners were Khmer Rouge cadres and soldiers accused of betraying the revolution.

At the lower levels, punishments were not severe, for prisoners were usually transferred from security centers to labor camps. There, they were made to build houses, plant vegetables, or cook. Many of the prisoners held at these security centers were released before 1976. But after that, almost none of the prisoners at the district and region levels were released. Very few prisoners survived S-21.

### 2. THE ENEMIES OF ANGKAR

The Khmer Rouge wanted their revolution and all the people of Cambodia to be pure. People had to be clean in terms of their mentality and background. Poor peasants were thought to be the purest revolutionaries. The Khmer Rouge distrusted everyone else. People who committed very minor infractions, such as complaining about the hard labor or stealing food, were labeled as enemies of the state and were often marked for execution. Khmer Rouge leaders divided their enemies into “internal enemies” and “external enemies.”

**Internal enemies** were the “new” or “17 April” people and people from the previous regimes whose social status was classified as capitalist or feudalist. This category also included people who were not ethnically Khmer. These internal enemies concerned the Party Center<sup>16</sup> much more than anything else. The target groups considered as internal enemies included:

**Officials of the Khmer Republic government:** In 1975, the Khmer Rouge carried out thousands of summary executions. They extended down from the Khmer Republic leaders to soldiers. Anyone who had served Lon Nol was targeted to die. Often their families and relatives were killed as well. Luckily, however, thousands of former soldiers and civil servants managed to conceal their identities and survived for a time or even until the collapse of DK.

**Minority groups:** To carry out their revolution, the Khmer Rouge favored ethnic Khmers who had no links to the former government. All minority peoples, who were not considered trustworthy and were suspected by Angkar, were persecuted.



**A Tuol Sleng messenger.**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

**Indigenous Highlanders.** Many of the CPK's leaders had lived among the hill people in the Northeast Zone before they came to power. The Khmer Rouge leaders trusted them highly because they were so faithful. Some of them became Pol Pot bodyguards. But even though the regime claimed to revere and trust them, it began relocating many people from other parts of Mondul Kiri to Koh Nhek district as early as 1972, where many people died. Those who refused to go were executed.

Phsos Prai, a Phng living in Mondul Kiri province, described the experiences of his family after they were relocated during the Khmer Rouge years.

My 15-year-old niece was shot dead because she cried, saying she did not want to live somewhere else. I was separated from my family and sent to farm in many places. At Koh Nhek, people worked day and night with little food and became exhausted. My daughter, who had just delivered a baby, had nothing to eat except cassava, so her husband collected eight cans of rice and a chicken from other villages. The sub-district chief accused him of eating privately, and all of her family members were arrested. In Lam Tik village, two people were arrested and killed because they ate a honeycomb without sharing it.

**Cham Muslims.** The Khmer Rouge forced Cham people to flee their villages and live dispersed among Khmers. They were forbidden to speak their language or to practice Islam. The Khmer Rouge killed many of their leaders (*hakims*) and anyone else suspected of resisting government policies.



**Khmer Rouge soldiers at the Independence Monument.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

Moreover, the Chams were forced to eat pork, which was forbidden by their religion. Tens of thousands Chams were killed or died of disease, starvation, and overwork under DK.<sup>17</sup>

**Vietnamese.** The Vietnamese were expelled from Cambodia en masse in 1975. Only a small number who had married Cambodians stayed behind. In 1977 and 1978, the regime began to kill these people systematically and very few of them survived. They were singled out simply because they were Vietnamese.

**Ethnic Chinese.** The members of this community, who were often entrepreneurs, also joined the forced march to the countryside to take up agricultural work. They were treated harshly when they failed to work hard, but they were not singled out to be killed.



**Communal eating in dining hall.** (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

**Intellectuals:** The Khmer Rouge leaders, some of whom were well educated, saw other educated people as potential enemies of the state and as members of the corrupt class that the DK leaders believed had made Cambodia a puppet of foreign countries. Many of them were targets for execution; those who were liable to be labeled as “educated” had to pretend to be illiterate. They could survive only by hiding their knowledge and professions. Thousands of school teachers and university-educated people were killed under DK.

Engineer Pin Yathay tells of his experiences during the Khmer Rouge period in his book *Stay Alive, My Son*. During the evacuation in 1975, eighteen members of his family were relocated many times, ending up in Pursat. The sole survivor in his family, Pin Yathay managed to escape to Thailand in early 1977. One of the reasons he was able to survive was that he hid his profession.

One day, in Veal Vong forest in Pursat province, the village chief held another boring political meeting. He made propaganda that, “Prince Sihanouk has returned to the country and is preparing a new government, so Angkar requests specialists, well-educated people, and former government military commanders, doctors, engineers and students to be registered in a special list.” About forty people raised their hands, including former soldiers who had hidden their identity for a long time. I was undecided, but managed to control myself and not raise my hand. After that we never had any information from those people. The villagers whispered from one to another, “Those former high-ranking officials and other specialists were all killed by the Khmer Rouge.”<sup>18</sup>

**Alleged traitors:** Many Khmer Rouge cadres were accused of betraying the revolution and joining the Vietnamese. Simple citizens who made small mistakes were also often accused of being traitors to the revolution. The common crimes to which these people confessed included visiting home without informing the chief of their group, breaking kitchen utensils, stealing food, talking critically about Angkar, not going to work on time, not working hard enough, complaining about living conditions, wearing jewelry, engaging in sexual relations, grieving over the loss of relatives or friends, or expressing religious sentiments. Some people who became ill because of hard work or malnutrition were accused of pretending to be sick and were labeled as lazy or malingering. They often disappeared without a trace. During DK, doing more or less than required could mean death. The Khmer Rouge slogan said: "Do whatever Angkar orders you to do! You must completely fulfill the orders made by Angkar. Comrade, do not bargain!"

**External enemies** referred to the US and its allies such as Thailand and some socialist countries, especially Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The Khmer Rouge felt that these countries attempted to invade Cambodia and make it their colony. They also accused many people – including their own soldiers and cadres – of serving the ideologies of these countries. The Khmer Rouge marked them as "hidden enemies burrowing from within." These included people from or allied with countries opposed to socialism, led by the United States, and revisionist or hegemon-

ic states like the Soviet Union, Vietnam and their allies. Most of the people considered external enemies were falsely accused of working for the US CIA, the Russian KGB, or the Vietnamese. The Khmer Rouge also considered Cambodians who could speak a foreign language to be spies for foreign countries. This accusation became a convenient excuse to execute people who local authorities did not like.



**Khmer Rouge cadres returning from field works**  
(Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

### 3. ARRESTS AND IMPRISONMENT

In late 1976 and early 1977, the search for hidden traitors became the Khmer Rouge's main activity. Villagers were made to spy on one another, encouraged by the slogan: "You must know how to trace

one another. Report everything to Angkar!" Other means of discovering enemies included surveillance, informers' reports, the frequent writing of personal biographies, and confessions.

Once enemies were discovered, their names were reported to the sub-district or district committees, and then arrests were made. Angkar rarely arrested anyone in public. Instead, if a member of a cooperative was suspected, the officials would tell them, "Angkar invites you to go for further education." Under such guises, many victims were taken off for imprisonment and often execution without a serious examination of whether or not they had actually committed a crime. The Khmer Rouge said: "It is better to arrest ten people by mistake than to let one guilty person go free."

### 4. INTERROGATION AND TORTURE

People charged with lesser offenses and imprisoned at a lower level usually suffered from malnutrition,



**Khmer Rouge cadres at a communal hall.** (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

untreated illness and rough treatment. Although many died under these conditions, some were neither tortured nor killed. But at the higher-level Khmer Rouge security centers like S-21, interrogation and torture were common.

Chou Sophea lived in Kampong Cham during DK. He was arrested in May 1977 without being given a reason. He described how he was caught and the conditions at a prison in Tbaung Khmum district:

One day, four soldiers arrived at my unit and politely asked me to help them connect electricity. When I came out, they pointed guns at me and tied me up. They put me in prison. After being in prison for 40 days, I was sent to an interrogation center that was harsher than the previous one. The prison guards used electric shocks to generate a confession from me. Sometimes they hit me hard. I was unconscious many times. No matter how bad the torture, I still rejected their accusations. Then I was transferred to a new interrogation center, where I stayed for 12 days. From that time on, they did not interrogate or torture me. I was very skinny. Three days later, they released me, saying that Angkar had been confused. I had to promise not to tell anyone about the situation in the prison. If someone asked me, my answer had to be "do not know, do not hear, and do not see."<sup>19</sup>

### 5. EXECUTION

Under DK, perhaps as many as 500,000 people were executed for crimes against the revolution and the state. Thousands of "new people" who had no farming experience or skills simply disappeared. Having been evacuated to faraway forests or fields, they were killed after they made mistakes or angered their superiors. Some victims were buried alive and died of suffocation.

Nearly everyone who was known to be well educated was put to death. No one dared to wear glasses or speak foreign languages; it was a sign that they were educated. Many urban Cambodians, in particular, had to conceal their past and their talents, and pretend to be illiterate.

Executions were carried out in a number of ways. Some who were accused of being revolutionary traitors or enemies were sent to an interrogation center. After staying there for a few months, they would be taken to the killing fields where they were forced to kneel down at the edge of mass graves. They would then be killed by a blow to the back of the head with a shovel, hoe or stick. Sometimes, people were shot to death together and buried in a grave containing up to 100 bodies. Others were suffocated with plastic bags. In the countryside, where there were many wells in the forest, prisoners were delivered by trucks to the wells and were then hit or pushed into them.

Occasionally, an entire family was summarily executed because of a mistake made by one of its members. They searched out the family members to be executed according to the Khmer Rouge adage: "To dig up the grass, one has to remove even the roots."

Mam Phai Boun of Koh Kong province recalled how his four family members were killed:

My 7-year-old sister was killed by Angkar because she stole one ear of corn to eat. She was hit with a hoe and buried near the corn farm. One afternoon, while I was walking the cows across the forest, I smelled a rotting corpse. I searched for it to see if I knew the dead. There I found the body of my father, with his neck nearly cut off from his shoulders. There were two other bodies lying dead of the same cause. Two months later, my 70-year-old grandmother died; she was accused of stealing rice porridge from children and was clubbed to death. Her body was wrapped in a sack and buried. Several days later, my mother died of overwork and malnutrition. I hugged her with a heartbreaking cry.<sup>20</sup>



Children unit. (Elizabeth Becker)



Tuol Sleng compound. (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

## CHAPTER 9 OFFICE S-21 (TUOL SLENG PRISON)

The most important prison in DK was known as S-21 (Security Office 21). The letter "S" stood for "security" and the number "21" was a code designating its location in the southern part of Phnom Penh (Sangkat Tuol Svay Prey).

S-21 was a secret facility for the detention, interrogation, torture and extermination of its prisoners. After the middle of 1976, no one was ever released. Among the perhaps 14,000 prisoners held at S-21, only about 12 survived after DK fell. While they were incarcerated, they were spared because they had skills that were useful to S-21; they were painters, watch repairers and sculptors.

### 1. THE BUILDINGS

The prison had once been the Chao Ponhea Yat High School. Built in 1962, it was situated on a 600 meter by

400 meter parcel of land. Behind the school fence were two wooden buildings with thatched roofs, one of which had been the Boeng Keng Kang Primary School. Together, these buildings formed the S-21 prison.

During DK, Tuol Sleng was surrounded by corrugated iron sheets and electrified wire. There were four main buildings. The classrooms on the ground floor were divided into small cells, measuring 0.8 x 2 meters each; they were designed for single prisoners. The 8 x 6 meter rooms on the first floor were used as mass prison cells. The second floor included even larger rooms that held up to 40 or 50 prisoners. One room served as the office of S-21's chief, Duch, and another as an office for documentation and general administration. Nearby houses were used for interrogation and torture.

## 2. THE PRISONERS

Most of the prisoners at S-21 were accused of betraying the party or revolution, or of working for traitorous cadres who had already been arrested. With the passage of time, the CPK leaders became increasingly suspicious and distrusted their own cadres and soldiers. In October 1976, for example, Pol Pot had several high-ranking CPK members arrested and imprisoned in S-21 in a move to tighten national security. The Khmer Rouge leadership saw enemies in every corner of the country and arrested hundreds of fellow communists each month. The prison population also included approximately 400 members of many other nationalities, mostly Vietnamese.



Khmer Rouge prison staff and family of S-21. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

Some of the people who worked in Tuol Sleng also became prisoners. They confessed to being lazy in preparing documents, damaging machines and other equipment, or beating prisoners to death without permission when assisting with interrogations. Most of the confessions extracted at S-21 were probably untrue because the prisoners were innocent and confessed because of severe torture.

Khiev Cheh alias Peou from Kampong Chhnang province was an S-21 guard. He recounted his story:

In 1977, two of my friends, Hong and Meoun, committed mistakes, so they were taken away and killed. After that, Angkar arrested me because I was their friend and sent me to Prey Sar. They interrogated me if I had something to do with the two, but I said "no." The interrogator named Sem Phal; he knew very well that I worked hard and faithfully. So I was released

after one and a half months and was sent to Division 502 to drive a truck that loaded weapons for Tay Ninh to fight the Vietnamese.

Life in S-21 was terrible. We dared not converse with each other. We could not trust anyone, even our close friends. Everyone had to work very hard. Besides guarding, we planted vegetables and raised pigs. We had to be very careful on duty. A small mistake, for example, falling asleep or leaning against a wall, could lead to death.

## 3. REGULATIONS

Ten regulations were posted on pieces of blackboard all around the prison compound.

### SANTEBAL (SECURITY POLICE) REGULATIONS AT S-21

1. You must answer according to my questions. Do not turn them away.
2. Do not try to hide the facts by making pretexts of this and that. You are strictly prohibited to contest me.
3. Do not be a fool for you are someone who dares to thwart the revolution.
4. You must immediately answer my questions without wasting time to reflect.
5. Do not tell me either about your immoralities or the revolution.
6. While getting lashes or electric shocks, you must not cry out at all.
7. Do nothing. Sit still and wait for my orders. If there are no orders, keep quiet. When I ask you to do something, you must do it right away without protesting.
8. Do not make pretexts about Kampuchea Krom so as to hide your true existence as a traitor.
9. If you do not follow all the above rules, you shall get many lashes or electric shocks.
10. If you disobey any point of my regulations, you shall get either ten lashes or five electric shocks.



Another regulation for prisoners was posted in buildings "B-C-D."

### CAUTION IN BUILDING "B-C-D"

1. You must absolutely not make contact with one another whether or not you know each other.
2. If you want to do anything, you must get permission from the guards.
3. You must not make sounds in your respective places.
4. When guards or other people arrive, you must sleep.
5. During inspection, put your hands behind your back. Don't try to be free.

## 4. PRISON CONDITIONS

When they arrived at S-21, prisoners were photographed and required to give detailed biographies, beginning with their childhood and ending with their date of arrest. They had to strip to their underwear and their possessions were confiscated. They were then taken to cells where they were shackled with chains fixed to walls or the concrete floor, while those kept in the large cells had their legs shackled to pieces of iron bar. The shackles were fixed to alternating bars; the prisoners slept with their heads in opposite directions. They slept on the floor without mats, mosquito nets, or blankets. They were forbidden to talk to



**Khmer Rouge prison staff eating together.** (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

each other. Vann Nath, one of the few S-21 survivors, described his life in S-21:

In S-21, I was shackled to a long metal bar with more than 30 other prisoners. They gave us food twice a day. Every prisoner got four small spoonfuls of rice porridge and some watery soup of leaves. Talking to each other was completely forbidden. If anyone wanted to sit up or to drink water, they had to ask permission from the guard. Doing something without the guard's permission would result in a serious beating. They gave us a bath every four days. They brought hoses up from downstairs and sprayed everyone from the doorway. If you were on the far side of the room, you did not get very wet. Every day, prisoners were brought out to be interrogated and some never returned, but new prisoners were brought in instead.<sup>21</sup>

At 4:30 a.m. prisoners were asked to strip for inspection. The guards would then check to see whether the shackles were loose or if prisoners had hidden any objects they could use to commit suicide. Over the years, several prisoners managed to kill themselves, so the guards were very careful in checking the shackles and cells.

Because of the filthy living conditions at S-21, most prisoners suffered from ringworm, rashes or lice. There were no medicines for treatment. S-21's medical staffs were untrained and offered treatment only to sustain prisoners' lives after they had been injured during interrogation.

When prisoners were taken from one place to another for interrogation, their faces were covered. Guards and prisoners were not allowed to converse. Moreover, within the prison, people who were in different groups were not allowed to have contact with one another.

## 5. INTERROGATION

Harsh tactics were used to extract confessions at S-21. Prisoners were beaten with hands, sticks, or tree branches. Sometimes, they were lashed with wires or given electric shocks. Other methods of torture used at S-21 included pressing a burning cigarette into prisoners' flesh, forcing them to eat human waste or drink urine, piercing them with needles, and hanging prisoners by their legs or hands for the whole day. Some prisoners were cut with knives or suffocated with plastic bags. Other methods for generating confessions included pulling out fingernails while pouring alcohol on the wounds or holding prisoners' heads under water. Some prisoners died under torture.

Female prisoners were tortured by cutting off their breasts or by forcing them to take off their clothes. Females were sometimes raped by the interrogators, even though sexual abuse was against DK policy. The perpetrators who were found out were executed.

In their confessions, the prisoners were asked to describe their personal background. If they were party members, they had to say when they joined the revolution and describe their work assignments in DK. Then the prisoners would relate their supposed treasonous activities in chronological order. The third section of the confession text described prisoners' thwarted conspiracies or supposed treasonous conversations. At the end, the confessions would list a string of traitors who were the prisoners' friends, colleagues, or acquaintances. Some lists contained over a hundred names. People whose names were in the confession list were often called in for interrogation.

Because the torture at S-21 was so harsh, prisoners often confessed to whatever they could think of, even if it was false. Um Samnang, a worker in the Train Section, confessed to a treasonous conversation he had with Ton, a train construction worker:

Ton was a senior worker. He was not satisfied with the revolution, just like his colleagues. Every day, he spread propaganda as follows:



**Khmer Rouge cadres.**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

- Because I taught them almost all of the techniques, they want to chase me out of this place.
- If you continue to act like this, one day you will be dissolved like salt in water.
- Today senior workers are like rubbish under their feet; they can step on them whenever they wish.
- They are only good at boasting and theory, but not in practice.
- I work only for rice; I do not care what is damaged.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, he is prepared to fight the revolution whenever there are soldiers fighting from outside.

Chea Hoeung, a professor and who was evacuated to Baray, Kampong Thom, confessed to the treasonous activities of Tang Lonh, an official in the Ministry of Post and later a first lieutenant:

When he was evacuated to his home village, he gathered his colleagues to resist the revolution. He gradually sabotaged us as follows:

- He instructed his cliques to set cows free to eat rice.
- He instructed his cliques to destroy plates and dishes, one by one.
- He instructed his cliques to kill one or two ducks at a time and report that they had died.
- He made his house a place for producing leaflets and scattered the leaflets at work sites.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Over a thousand people worked in and for S-21. Several hundred of them were general workers, including



Tuol Sleng prison staff eating communally. (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)

people who grew food for the prison. The rest were the internal workforce, including office personnel, who worked in one of the prison's three units.

S-21 consisted of a documentation unit, a defense unit, and an interrogation unit. The documentation unit was responsible for transcribing tape-recorded confessions, typing the handwritten notes from prisoners' confessions, preparing summaries of confessions, and maintaining files. In the photography sub-unit, workers took mug shots of prisoners when they arrived, pictures of prisoners who had died while in detention, and pictures of important prisoners after they were executed. Thousands of photographs have survived, but thousands are still missing.

The defense unit was the largest unit in S-21. The guards in this unit were mostly teenagers. Many guards found the unit's strict rules hard to obey. Guards were not allowed to talk to prisoners, to learn their names, or to beat them. They were also forbidden to observe or eavesdrop on interrogations, and they were expected to obey 30 regulations, which barred them from such

things as taking naps, sitting down or leaning against a wall while on duty. They had to walk, guard, and examine everything carefully.

Guards who made serious mistakes were arrested, interrogated, jailed and put to death. Most of the people employed at S-21 were terrified of making mistakes and feared being tortured and killed.

Within the interrogation unit, there were the hot sub-unit, cold sub-unit, and the chewing sub-unit. The hot unit (sometimes called the cruel unit) was allowed to use torture. In contrast, the cold unit (sometimes called the gentle unit) was prohibited from using torture to obtain confessions. If they could not make prisoners confess, they would transfer them to the hot unit. The chewing unit dealt with tough and important cases.

The hours of interrogation were very long. Sometimes, the process extended far into the night. Those who worked as interrogators were literate and usually in their 20s.

## 7. LEADERS

S-21 was controlled by the Ministry of Defense, chaired by Son Sen (aka comrade Khiev). Before joining the CPK he had studied in France and been a teacher.

**DUCH**  
(original name Kaing Guek Eav)  
Duch was born in 1945 in Kampong Thom. He studied at Sisowath High School and won second place in a nationwide mathematics contest. He worked as a math teacher in Kampong Thom. In 1964, he was appointed an official of the Teacher Training School after Son Sen fled the city. He joined the Communist Party of Kampuchea in 1970.

Duch defected from the Khmer Rouge in the 1980s and became a Christian. He was arrested in May 1999. He has been in prison ever since, awaiting trial. In February 2005, he was charged with war crimes and harming foreign nationals during DK. He was in poor health in 2006.

**SON SEN**  
(aka comrade Khiev)  
Son Sen was born on June 12, 1930 in Travinh, southern Vietnam. His wife was Yun Yat (aka comrade Att), who was minister of education and culture under DK. He studied in France between 1950 and 1956 and joined the French Communist Party. In 1963, he fled to the jungle, escaping from the police. He became chief of staff of the Cambodian Peoples National Liberation Armed Forces in 1971.

During DK, Son Sen was third deputy prime minister in charge of national defense and was directly responsible for S-21. Son Sen and his family were killed under orders from Pol Pot on June 10, 1997.

The leading figures of S-21 were Duch (chief of S-21), Khim Vat aka Hor (deputy chief of S-21), Peng (chief of guards), Chan (chief of the Interrogation Unit), and Pon (interrogator). Pon was the person who interrogated important people such as Keo Meas, Nay Sarann, Ho Nim, Tiv Ol, and Phok Chhay. All of them were former school teachers.

## 8. EXECUTIONS

Most prisoners at S-21 were held there for two to three months. However, several high-ranking Khmer Rouge cadres were held for several months and their confessions were sometimes several hundred pages long. Within two or three days after they were brought to S-21, all prisoners were taken for interrogation with little or no regard for the truth. They had to admit that they were revolutionary traitors or had committed the crimes that were dictated to them. After the interrogations were complete, prisoners were “smashed” or “discarded,” the euphemisms used in DK for “execution.”

For the first year of S-21’s existence, corpses were buried near the prison. However, by the end of 1976, cadres ran out of burial spaces, so the prisoners were taken by trucks at night to Choeung Ek (located 13 kilometers southwest of Phnom Penh), where they were beaten to death with hoes, axes, or sticks, or were shot. Usually, after prisoners were executed, the soldiers who had accompanied them from S-21 buried them in graves that held as few as 6 and as many as 100 bodies.

Tuol Sleng prison was made into a genocide museum and Choeung Ek into a memorial by the government of the People’s Republic of Kampuchea with assistance from Vietnam in 1979.



**Khmer Rouge cadres.** (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)



**DK leaders with a foreign delegation.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 10 FOREIGN RELATIONS

Democratic Kampuchea had diplomatic relations with China, North Korea, Vietnam, Laos, Cuba, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania, and Egypt. All of these countries had embassies in Phnom Penh. During DK, their diplomats, except the Chinese, were confined to their embassies.

DK had embassies only in China, North Korea, Vietnam (until December 1977), and Laos. Of these, China and North Korea were friendly and Laos was relatively friendly. But relations with Vietnam grew increasingly poor as a result of border clashes and ideological differences. Most of the CPK’s leaders were anti-Vietnamese and any of them who had ever lived in Vietnam or had relations with the Vietnamese were purged (except Son Sen and Ieng Sary). They were accused of having “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds.” The two countries also disagreed on who owned the under-sea petroleum deposits along the coast of DK.

The CPK wanted to take Kampuchea Krom<sup>24</sup> back from Vietnam. They also disliked Vietnam's idea of "Indochina."

Clashes between Vietnam and DK began in late 1975. Soon afterward, serious fighting erupted on Tral Island (Phu Quoc in Vietnamese). In mid-1976, Democratic Kampuchea established closer ties with China and the DK-Vietnamese conflict became part of the Sino-Soviet rivalry, with Moscow backing Vietnam and Beijing backing DK. By the end of 1976, Democratic Kampuchea had obtained massive military aid from China. In 1977, DK forces attacked Vietnamese villages that bordered Cambodia and killed hundreds of civilians. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken in December 1977.

DK expanded its diplomatic efforts in 1978, and its foreign trade reached its peak at that time. The countries known to have had trade relations with DK were China, North Korea, Thailand, Japan, Hong Kong, Madagascar, Bangladesh, and Singapore. The main exports of DK were rice, rubber, timber and exotic animal parts (skins, tusks, and shells), while its main imports included weapons, tanks, and artillery, farm machinery, chemical products and cloth.

Most of Cambodia's exports—which were far smaller than they had been before 1970—went to China, which was the only country that had a major influence on DK. From 1977 to late 1978, China provided DK with hundreds of tanks, cars and heavy weapons, tens of thousands of shells and bullets, and six jet fighters. The Chinese also offered to repair the railroad from Phnom Penh to Kampong Saom and build

a new military airport in Kampong Chhnang. In addition to trade relations, military assistance and financial support, China sent several thousand experts to work as technicians and advisors in DK. These people helped train Khmer Rouge cadres on warfare, medical services, and factory operations. DK requested Chinese troops to help fight against Vietnam, but China rejected the request and suggested a cease-fire and negotiations, which DK declined.

**IENG SARY**

(aka comrade Vann)  
Ieng Sary was born in 1930 in Vinh Binh, South Vietnam. He married Khieu Thirith. In 1950, he won a scholarship to study in France and became a member of the French Communist Party. He returned home in 1957 and joined the People's Revolutionary Party of Kampuchea. Ieng Sary taught at Kampuchaboth High School until 1963, when he fled to the jungle. He later became the military commander of the Northeast Zone.

In 1976, Ieng Sary was appointed first deputy prime minister in charge of foreign affairs. He was also a member of the Central Committee and Standing Committee. He defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia in 1996. He lives freely in Cambodia, and his son Ieng Vuth is now the first deputy governor of Pailin.



**DK leaders with a foreign delegation.**  
(Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)



**Children mobile unit.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

## CHAPTER 11 THE FALL OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA

### 1. THREE REASONS WHY DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA FELL

**A weakened populace.** DK's four-year plan specified that the country would produce a yield of three tons of rice per hectare. This figure was double the pre-revolutionary yield. When production quotas could not be met, cadres throughout the country falsified their production reports. They then sent as much rice as possible to the party center, forcing people to go hungry.

Because the entire country depended on secrecy, the plan to harvest three tons per hectare became impossible to implement. Regions were not allowed to share information or to see what was going on. Rarely did anyone from the party center come to see how people lived or to plan the work of the cadres under their



**Children unit.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

supervision. The senior leaders seemed to believe what their subordinates reported to them, while the cadres were terrified to report any bad news. CPK officials believed that the party never made mistakes and could never be wrong. All bad things were the fault of foreigners or traitors. As living conditions grew worse during the regime, hundreds of thousands died from overwork and malnutrition.

**Purges.** In mid-1976 many key members of the CPK were purged. From then on, Pol Pot and his colleagues believed that a rebellion against the leadership of the party was always being hatched. They believed that their enemies were everywhere. Many chiefs of zones, regions and military commands were arrested and executed. The situation grew worse in 1977 when Pol Pot ordered the assassination of the cadres in the East Zone and then purged almost all of the people living in the zone. After the Vietnamese invasion in late 1977, the remaining people in the East Zone were thought to have joined the Vietnamese and were labeled “Cambodian bodies with Vietnamese minds.” So, the party center sent troops to attack the East Zone, leaving tens of thousands of its residents dead. Hundreds of men fled to Vietnam, where the Vietnamese helped them form a military unit.

**Clashes with Vietnam.** This was the most definitive cause of DK’s demise. In 1975, DK began initiating its sporadic attacks on Vietnam. High-profile attacks broke out in the middle of 1977 when the Khmer Rouge

shelled Chaudoc, Hatien and other Vietnamese provinces, causing many casualties among civilians and unprepared militia. Thousands of Vietnamese fled into the interior of Vietnam. Within a few days of the attack, about 1,000 Vietnamese civilians were injured or dead.

In December 1977, Vietnam used warplanes and artillery to launch a major attack on DK, capturing the territory known as the Parrot’s Beak area in Svay Rieng province. Vietnamese forces penetrated more than 20 kilometers inside DK, reaching the city of Svay Rieng. As a result, DK broke diplomatic relations with Vietnam and ordered Vietnamese diplomats in Phnom Penh to leave the country. The Khmer Rouge agreed to negotiate the border dispute only when all Vietnamese troops had withdrawn from DK territory. Soon afterwards, Vietnam withdrew its troops, bringing with them thousands of prisoners as well as civilians. No negotiations ever took place.

Instead, Vietnam accused the Khmer Rouge of attacking all eight provinces along its border with Cambodia. Vietnam decided to encourage the opponents of the Khmer Rouge to revolt against them. They also began training Cambodians in Vietnam to take part in military operations and to form the nucleus of a new regime. The two countries were at war throughout 1978.

On April 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi broadcast in the Khmer language an appeal to the people of Cambodia to stand up and resist Democratic Kampuchea. Vietnam selected some Cambodians who had fled to Vietnam to serve in military units under Vietnamese guidance. Most of them were East Zone cadres, soldiers, and residents. By this time, part of the zone was under Vietnamese control and the rest was controlled by a rebel group opposed to the Khmer Rouge.

On December 3, 1978, Radio Hanoi announced the establishment of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea.<sup>25</sup> The Front was led by Comrade Heng Samrin, who had fled to Vietnam in late 1978.



**Two Cham muslim cadres posted in a local photo studio in the Khmer Rouge liberated zone, Kratie Province.** (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

**TA MOK**  
(original name Chhit Choeun)  
Ta Mok was born in 1926 in Takeo province. He spent several years as a Buddhist monk. He married his cousin Uk Khoem; they had four children. In 1949, Ta Mok was the chief of Issarak district in Takeo province. He became a communist in 1963. From 1968 to 1978, Ta Mok was secretary of the Southwest Zone.  
In November 1978, Ta Mok was appointed second deputy secretary of the CPK. After DK fell, he never applied for amnesty and never attempted to defect. He was captured near the Thai border by the Cambodian army in March 1999 and was imprisoned. He died of disease on July 21, 2006.

Vietnamese General Van Tien Dung launched a major assault on Democratic Kampuchea on December 25, 1978. His troops occupied Kratie province within five days and Kampong Cham in a week. Then, on January 7, 1979, Vietnamese soldiers and soldiers of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea captured the capital city of Phnom Penh and soon afterward occupied nearly the entire country. They quickly organized a conference to create the Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Council as Cambodia's provisional government under the leadership of Heng Samrin.

## 2. THE AFTERMATH

In early 1979, the Vietnamese helped to create a new regime in Phnom Penh. Called the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK), it governed Cambodia until the Vietnamese troops withdrew a decade later, in 1990. DK leaders and soldiers fled from Phnom Penh to the northwest on foot, in trucks and by train. They forced hundreds of thousands of people to go with them. During this second forced evacuation, many people died of hunger, disease or injuries.

Many people found their way back to their native villages. Prince Sihanouk and his family were evacuated by plane to China.

The Khmer Rouge established their functioning organization along the Thai border, supported militarily by countries such as China and Thailand. Until 1990 the United Nations continued to allow DK's representative to occupy Cambodia's seat in the General Assembly, in spite of objections from the PRK and its socialist allies.

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge announced the formation of a "United Front for Great National Solidarity, Patriotic and Democratic," that failed to attract many participants. At the same time, the first noncommunist resistance group, the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) was founded by Samdech Son Sann, who was Prime Minister in the Sangkum period (1955-1970).<sup>26</sup>

Soon afterwards, a royalist faction known as the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) was formed under the Presidency of Prince Sihanouk. In 1982, FUNCINPEC, KPNLF and the Khmer Rouge formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) with Prince Sihanouk as president, Khieu Samphan as vice president, and Son Sann as prime minister. The purpose of the CGDK was "to mobilize all efforts in the common struggle to liberate Kampuchea from the Vietnamese aggressors." The CGDK, in which the Khmer Rouge was the biggest portion, held Cambodia's seat at the UN.

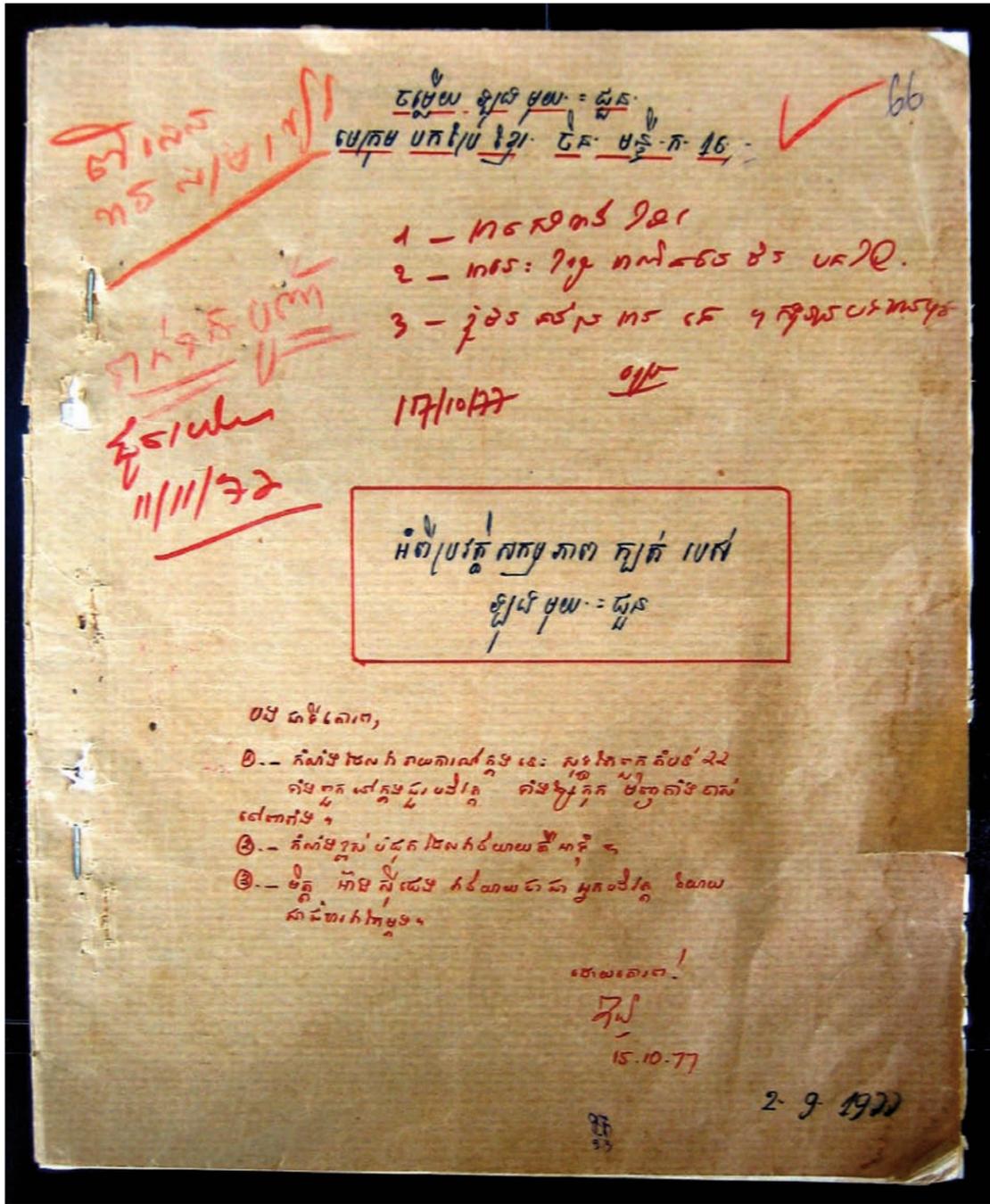
After years of negotiations, all Cambodian parties to the conflict signed a peace agreement in Paris on

October 23, 1991 and agreed to organize a national election under the supervision of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The Khmer Rouge boycotted the UN-organized election and refused to demobilize their forces. For several years, Khmer Rouge soldiers continued to fight against troops of the 1993-elected Royal Government of Cambodia, with Prince Norodom Ranariddh as first prime minister and Samdech Hun Sen as second prime minister.

In August 1996, Ieng Sary defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia, bringing some Khmer Rouge units with him. Other senior Khmer Rouge leaders, such as Ke Pauk, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, defected in 1998. After Pol Pot died in 1998, Ta Mok was the only surviving leader who refused to join the Royal Government of Cambodia; he was captured in March 1999. By then all the surviving Khmer Rouge leaders had surrendered or had been arrested, and the movement totally collapsed. People living in the Khmer Rouge-controlled areas repatriated and reunited with the Royal Government of Cambodia.



The return home of survivors after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in January 1979. (Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum Archives)



This Khmer Rouge document and other surviving documents from that era contain a wide variety of information on Democratic Kampuchea. These documents give insight into how and why so many people lost their life. In a sense, each document is symbolic of a life that the Khmer Rouge regime took away. There are over a million of these documents. (Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives)

# CONCLUSION

Democratic Kampuchea was one of the worst human tragedies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The regime claimed nearly two million lives and left tens of thousands of widows and orphans. Several hundred thousand Cambodians fled their country and became refugees. Millions of mines were laid by the Khmer Rouge and government forces, which have led to thousands of deaths and disabilities since the 1980s. A large proportion of the Cambodian people have mental problems because their family members were lost and their spirits damaged. These factors are one of the major causes of the poverty that plagues Cambodia today.

The Khmer Rouge, whose leaders held extreme views formed from the communist ideologies of China, the former Soviet Union and Vietnam, set up policies that disregarded human life and produced repression and massacres on a massive scale. CPK leaders thought their revolution was the only way to bring Cambodia to independence and equality. They claimed that their revolution did not adopt any outside ideology, even though they copied ideas from the Soviet Union and China such as the collectivization of people, the evacuation of cities, the four-year plan, and Super Great Leap Forward.

The Khmer Rouge placed no value on education. Only a few of its leaders were well-educated and none of them had any experience in governing a state. Most of its low-ranking cadres were illiterate or semi-literate. Despite these obstacles, they wanted to make huge gains in a short period of time, without considering the country's resources or the consequences of their policies. In this sense, they turned the entire country into a rice field and the entire population into peasants and prisoners of Angkor.

Basic rights and needs were ignored; private property was confiscated. Religion, money and traditions became useless. Relations with the outside world were almost cut off. The regime would not tolerate the slightest criticism of its leaders or policies. The Khmer Rouge saw educated people, former government officials, and those who opposed their policies as enemies of the state or revolutionary traitors who had to be discarded. Amnesty and national reconciliation did not exist during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. They turned the country into a huge detention center, which later became a graveyard for nearly two million people, including their own cadres and even some senior leaders.

# APPENDIX

## REGULATIONS FOR GUARDS AT S-21

### I. REGULATIONS TO CONTROL THE ENEMIES

- On duty, do not sit down or lean against the wall and do not write anything. Walk backward and forward.
- While guarding, absolutely do not ask the enemy's names in the rooms or in the houses.
- While guarding, the concerned comrades must not leave the guard posts. Those who are not on duty absolutely do not get into and open the door or windows or question prisoners.
- Whether or not one knows, do not ask prisoners in the cells.
- You are not allowed to threaten or beat the prisoners. If the prisoners are undisciplined, you must immediately report by mouth or by letter to the concerned guards.
- If the prisoners take action to destroy keys, to cut their hands, to cut their necks or to swallow screws, you must take measures to handcuff them to their back and immediately report to the responsible guards.
- When prisoners run away, you must immediately take steps to arrest them.
- While guarding, cadres in 50-soldier units have to be present at their respective guard posts as assigned by the party.
- While guarding, the cadres must not take naps or sit down; they have to constantly walk and control.
- While guarding, cadres and soldiers must absolutely check as directed. They have to check four times within twenty-four hours: 6 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m. and 11 p.m.
- After checking, guards have to wait until all prisoners have dressed properly before leaving the rooms.
- You have to make sure all prisoners put on their clothing; do not allow them to take off their clothes.
- While guarding, responsible guards have to keep the keys on their own; do not be carefree or lazy. Absolutely do not lose the keys. If you lose them, do not destroy the lock; you have to find them and report it. If prisoners run away, you have to take responsibility in front of the collective.
- While guarding, you have to wear soldier uniforms. You are not allowed to wear short trousers or take off your shirt.

### II. ABOUT KEYS AND SHACKLES

- When unlocking, definitely check the keys, shackles and iron bars before taking off the shackles and blindfolds.
- When unlocking keys, you have to keep the shackles and iron bars outside; do not keep them inside.
- When walking the prisoners out to dispose of human waste, handcuff and shackle them; do not walk far away from them.
- When walking the prisoners from interrogation rooms, thoroughly check their bodies, shackles and iron bars. Do the same during shift changes.
- Chains have to be short; half a meter is the longest. In special cases, you need to get a decision from high-ranking cadres.

### III. ABOUT SECURITY MEASURES

- Do not allow prisoners in cells to contact one another.
- In our place, do not allow prisoners to converse with one another.
- Guards who are responsible inside are not allowed to walk outside. Be careful not to allow prisoners to contact each other or have any interaction.
- In each building, you have to have the list of the prisoners' names and cell numbers.
- While guarding, take out all bullets from their magazines. When the magazines are in the guns, they must be filled with bullets.
- The guards inside the rooms are not allowed to hold guns, but sticks.
- Make clear who holds the guns and has to be responsible.
- You have to keep guns with you all the time; do not leave them outside.
- Do not keep the guns near the prisoners or carry the guns near the prisoners.
- When changing shifts and transferring duties, guards have to report on the prisoners' situation and other situations to the new guards.
- Only when shifts change are guards allowed to take waste containers to throw away and check. It is the duty of the new guards. Former guards are not allowed to leave until the new guards have fulfilled their duty.

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- Confessions and lists of people killed at S-21
- DK's Constitution and policies
- *Revolutionary Flag* and *Revolutionary Youth* (DK magazines)
- Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Committee of CPK
- DK slogans and songs
- Maps of DK
- Original photographs from DK
- Textbooks from various Cambodian regimes.

In addition, information was drawn from DC-Cam's monthly magazine *Searching for the Truth*, its chronology of DK and news clips, as well as essays submitted to a contest sponsored by the Center and the Khmer Writers' Association and interviews.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Estimates of the number of people who died during Democratic Kampuchea vary. The People's Republic of Kampuchea (1979-1989), which had conducted a national survey, claimed that 3.3 million people died. In his book *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), historian Ben Kiernan estimated the death toll at around 1.5 million based on his 1980 interviews with 500 survivors, 100 of whom had fled to France in 1979; the rest were inside Cambodia. He later claimed that according to demographers' calculations, about 1.7 million people died during DK. The US Central Intelligence Agency gave an estimate of 1.4 million ("Kampuchea: A Demographic Catastrophe," May 1980). Historian Michel Vickery stated that only about 740,000 people died during DK based on a comparison of the population before 1975 and after 1979, less the number of people who would otherwise have died from natural causes (*Cambodia from 1975 to 1982*, Bangkok: O.S. Printing House, 1988).

<sup>2</sup> Indochina was the name given to three countries that France colonized: Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. The First Indochina War was fought from 1946 to 1954 between France and the Vietnamese resistance movement (the Viet Minh) led by Ho Chi Minh. The conflict engulfed the entire country and extended into Cambodia and Laos.

<sup>3</sup> The party was founded by Ho Chi Minh while he was living in Hong Kong. First called the Vietnam Communist Party, its name was changed to the Indochinese Communist Party in February 1930.

<sup>4</sup> To strengthen the struggle against French colonialism and to gain more support from people, in 1951, Vietnam divided the ICP into

three parties that represented the three countries in Indochina. They were the Workers' Party of Vietnam, the KPRP, and the Laos People's Revolutionary Party. However, the movements in the three countries were still in the hands of Vietnam.

<sup>5</sup> Officially called the United Front for the Independence of Vietnam, the Viet Minh was founded by Ho Chi Minh in 1941 to seek independence from France.

<sup>6</sup> The Agreements were written at the 1954 Geneva Conference, which ended the conflict and restored peace in Indochina.

<sup>7</sup> No documents have yet clarified the reason for Tou Samouth's disappearance.

<sup>8</sup> Documentation Center of Cambodia, "Composition of the Royal Government of National Union of Cambodia," catalogue number D24008. Its composition was as follows: Penn Nouth (prime minister), Khieu Samphan (deputy prime minister and minister of national defense), Sarin Chhak (minister of foreign affairs), Hou Youn (minister of interior, communal reforms and cooperatives), Hu Nim (minister of information and propaganda), Chau Seng (minister in charge of special missions), Chan Youran (minister of people's education and youth), Ngo Hou (minister of public health, and religious and social affairs), Thiounn Mumm (minister of economy and finance), General Duong Sam Ol (minister in charge of military equipment and armaments), Huot Sambath (minister of public works, telecommunications and reconstruction), Chea San (minister of justice and judicial reforms), Keat Chhon (minister delegated to the presidency of the Council of Ministers), Thiounn Prasith (minister in charge of coordination of struggle efforts for national liberation), H.R.H. Norodom Phurissara (minister without portfolio), Kong Sophal (vice-minister of national defense), Poc Deuskomar (vice-minister of foreign affairs), Van Piny (vice-minister of foreign affairs), Sok Thuok (vice-minister of interior, communal reforms and cooperatives), Tiv Ol (vice-minister of information and propaganda), Ieng Thirith (vice-minister of people's education and youth), Chou Chet (vice-minister of public health and religious and social affairs), and Koy Thuon (vice-minister of economy and finance). Almost all of these members had positions in name only. Only the CPK's Standing Committee, with Pol Pot as secretary and Nuon Chea as deputy secretary, had decision-making authority.

<sup>9</sup> Khmer-Hanois were ethnic Khmers who had lived in Vietnam since the 1950s and returned to Cambodia during the war (1970-1975) to assist the Khmer Rouge in fighting the Khmer Republic government.

<sup>10</sup> Before taking power, the Khmer Rouge declared they would sentence to death only the seven highest officials of the Lon Nol government, who they regarded as "super-traitors": President Lon Nol, Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, Prime Minister Long Boret, Cheng Heng, In Tam, Sosthene Fernandez, and Son Ngoc Thanh.

<sup>11</sup> Documentation Center of Cambodia. "Office 870: Instruction on the use of the word Angkar and Party," released July 11, 1977, catalogue number D01266. "The words Angkar or Party are only used to refer to the organization, not an individual. For individuals, we use the word comrade, or comrade in charge of this or that position, or comrade representing this or

that organization, for example, comrade Teng, comrade Secretary, comrade on behalf of the organization, etc.”

<sup>12</sup> Chanda, Nayan. *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Nayan Chanda states that on January 2, 1979, Vietnamese commandos crossed the Mekong River in front of the Royal Palace, intending to kidnap Prince Sihanouk and have him lead a resistance movement against DK with Vietnamese assistance. However, the plan failed. As the Vietnamese were nearing Phnom Penh and the situation was growing tenser, Khieu Samphan moved the Prince to Sisophon near the Thai border. Two days later, he brought the Prince back to Phnom Penh, telling him that the Vietnamese forces had withdrawn. On January 5, Pol Pot summoned the Prince to a meeting and asked him to represent DK at the United Nations General Assembly in order to gain support from the UN Security Council against the Vietnamese aggression. In exchange, Pol Pot agreed to allow members of the royal family to fly out of Cambodia despite opposition from Ieng Sary, who wanted to take all members of the royal family as hostages. The Prince and his family left for China on a Chinese plane on January 6. Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Documentation Center of Cambodia. “The First Congress Meeting of the People’s Representative Assembly,” April 11-13, 1976, catalogue number D21227. The Standing Committee of the People’s Representative Assembly included: Nuon Chea (president), Nguon Kan (first vice president), Peou Suo (second vice president), and Ros Nim, Sar Sean, Mei Chham, Kheng Sok, Matt Ly, Thang Sy, and Ros Preap (members). The members of the State Presidium of Democratic Kampuchea were: Khieu Samphan (president), So Phim (first vice president), and Nhim Ros (second vice president). The members of the Council of Ministers were: Pol Pot (prime minister), Ieng Sary (first deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs), Vorn Vet (second deputy prime minister and minister of economy), Son Sen (third deputy prime minister and minister of national defense), Ho Nim (minister of propaganda and information), Thioun Thioeun (minister of health), Ieng Thirith (minister of social affairs), Touch Phoeun (minister of public works), and Yun Yat (minister of culture, education and national studies). In addition, Democratic Kampuchea established some committees such as: the Agriculture Committee led by Chey Suon, Industry Committee chaired by Cheng An, Commerce Committee under Koy Thuon, Rubber Plantation Committee with comrade Phuong as head, Transportation Committee headed by Mei Brang, and the Energy Committee. These six committees were under the supervision of the deputy prime minister in charge of economy, and each committee president had a position equal to minister. However, these institutions never functioned fully.

<sup>15</sup> Ysa, Osman. *The Cham Rebellion: Survivors Stories from the Villages*. Documentation Series No. 9. Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2006.

<sup>16</sup> The Party Center was a term the CPK used to refer to high-ranking government officials and its ministries with authority. These could, for example, be the Central Committee, the Standing Committee, or the military.

<sup>17</sup> Researcher Ysa Osman estimated that between 400,000 and 500,000 Chams died during DK. He based his figure on interviews with senior Islamic leaders who had collected statistics on the Cham population in Cambodia. They said that the country’s Cham population before 1975 was about 700,000, but after 1979 only 200,000 to 300,000 remained (*Oukoubah: Justice*

*for the Cham Muslims under the Democratic Kampuchea Regime* Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2002. Historian Ben Kiernan gave a much lower figure. He claimed that the Cham population before 1975 was about 250,000. Using the Cham population growth rate, he estimated that the population might have grown to 260,000 in 1979. He concluded that the number of Chams after 1979 was 173,000. This meant that 87,000 Chams died during the DK regime. (*The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996)

<sup>18</sup> Yathay, Pin. *Stay Alive My Son: A Real Tragedy in Khmer Rouge Regime*. (Khmer translation), SIPAR edition, Phnom Penh, 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Chou Sophea, “Why I was Imprisoned,” second-place winner in an essay competition sponsored by the Khmer Writers Association and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, April 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Mam Phaiboun, “The Remaining Life and the Shadow of the Past,” fourth-place winner in an essay competition sponsored by the Khmer Writers Association and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, April 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Vann, Nath, *A Cambodian Prison Portrait: One Year in the Khmer Rouge’s S-21*, Bangkok: White Lotus, 1998.

<sup>22</sup> Documentation Center of Cambodia, “Ton, train section worker,” catalogue number D02831.

<sup>23</sup> Documentation Center of Cambodia “Tang Lonh, a former worker in Ministry of Post, later a first lieutenant in charge of salary distribution, and now working in Chi Ok village, Baray district,” catalogue number D02845.

<sup>24</sup> Kampuchea Krom was the southern territory of the Khmer Empire, which is now Ho Chi Minh City (known in Khmer as Prey Nokor). It was called Cochinchina under the French. The French colonial government transferred this territory to Vietnam in 1949. Some parts of this region have large Khmer populations, but the majority of its people are ethnic Vietnamese.

<sup>25</sup> On December 2, 1978, a resistance movement against Democratic Kampuchea held a meeting in Snuol district, Kratie province in order to announce the establishment of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea, which later became the United Front for National Construction and National Defense of Kampuchea. Two hundred people participated in the meeting to recognize the fourteen members of the Front’s Central Committee with comrade Heng Samrin as president, comrade Chea Sim as vice president and comrade Ros Samay as general secretary.

<sup>26</sup> Samdech Bavasetha Son Sann was born in 1911 in Kampuchea Krom. He was the prime minister during the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime from May 1967 to January 1968. During the 1980s, he led a resistance movement called the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front. After the peace negotiations in Paris, he established and led the Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party to participate in the 1993 national election. He died of heart failure in Paris on December 19, 2000 at the age of 89.

