

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

**Minutes of the Meeting on the Review of the Draft of
“A History of Democratic Kampuchea”**

On 14 December 2006, at 3:15 p.m., at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, a meeting was convened to discuss the draft text of the “History of Democratic Kampuchea,” pursuant to resolution No. 77SSR. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of His Excellency Im Sothy, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

The composition of the meeting included:

1. His Excellency Sorn Samnang
2. His Excellency Ros Chantrabot
3. His Excellency Chhay Aun
4. His Excellency Eat Sok
5. Mrs. Ton Sa Im
6. Mr. Kuoy Theavy.

To mark the beginning of the meeting, His Excellency Im Sothy conveyed his gratitude to the members participating in this meeting to discuss and exchange ideas on the draft of the “History of Democratic Kampuchea.” His Excellency emphasized that, “I would like to remind you about the effort of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in developing the curriculum and writing new course books, especially history textbooks, which is a real need of students in comprehensive schools. Meanwhile, all of these efforts have received many criticisms, especially things related to the Khmer Rouge: the showing of some facts through violent pictures and things that affect the interest of individuals, etc. Writing history related to the previous regimes has met many difficulties due to the short period of time in which political changes occurred, and those facts may not yet become history for study.

“According to resolution No. 77SSR from the Office of the Council of Ministers on the establishment of the working commission, there is a clear indication of the task of the working commission. I also saw a letter from Mr. Chhang Youk, Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), to His Excellency Kol Pheng, Senior Minister and Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, dated 5 September 2006. I would like to raise some examples, which are experiences related to the complicated history of the countries in the region such as Korea

and China. I also would like to raise a challenge to the solution to develop textbooks for students; at that time we did not have the Royal Academy and education law. Please, everyone, make comments.”

His Excellency Sorn Samnang: The Royal Academy of Cambodia used to have contact and work with the Documentation Center of Cambodia. Whenever the Ministry of Education asks us to help review a text, no matter with or without payment, the Royal Academy will participate. However, if there is no request from the Ministry of Education, the Royal Academy will not participate. For the text on the history of Democratic Kampuchea, I recognize that its description goes too far beyond the period 1975 to 1979. It describes each political regime. The author should focus on three main points: causes, general events and consequences. The cause is divided into long-term causes and direct causes. This history of Democratic Kampuchea’s description is too long on the causes and gives the names of many people. I suggest the author give a brief summary of the causes and not give many names. The author should try to show the true events and avoid giving his own opinion and analysis. Moreover, the author should try to explain more about the executive activities of the regime.

Concerning DC-Cam’s request for comments on whether the text can partly or entirely be used as a textbook in high schools or used as a supplementary text for students, I suggest that if the Ministry of Education allows the text to be used in the high school curriculum, the Ministry should consider the appropriate balances between study hours, number of pages, number of parts, number of chapters, and number of history lessons in comparison to other lessons and courses. For security reasons, I request that the author reduce the number of individuals’ names mentioned.

Moreover, the author should recognize it as a new history beginning from the independence period. History before the colonial period affects those who are still alive. Therefore, it should be kept for at least 60 years before starting to discuss it. If it is raised for discussion, we should discuss only the main points such as general events and political regimes, and we should mention only important people who had strong and direct contact with those political regimes.

In addition, they should also consider its effect on other sectors: the world movement in support of peace, the declaration of the United Nations recognizing the year 2000 as a year for peace, the end of the cold war, intervention through cultural wars, the reconciliation process in Cambodia, and gratitude toward ancestors. For the text on the history of DK, if there is a request from the commission to make changes, DC-Cam has to change its content. Otherwise, the text will not be allowed to be used in the comprehensive school curriculum.

However, DC-Cam can publish the book for the public. At the university level, researchers have full freedom to write, read and analyze.

His Excellency Ros Chantrabot: I support the ideas mentioned previously. I think that this history of DK is the opinion of one group or a person, so we cannot use it generally. Moreover, this text does not tell much about the history. However, we should appreciate their effort to write and prepare this text. The text is too much for students in comprehensive schools. But it is not enough for tertiary education. I suggest that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport review and renew the existing documents to be used in schools.

His Excellency Chhay Aun: This is the product of one group or a person. The Documentation Center of Cambodia requested that it be used as supplementary material for high school. Therefore, we have to determine what a supplementary material is. And what should be done with this supplementary text? Shall we use this text or not because it is not a textbook? Supplementary material is a simple text that students might or might not use as a reference because it is their right.

Mr. Kuoy Theavy: This text is divided into three parts: the rise to power, the exercise of power, and the demise of the regime. In preface, the author states that the text is prepared in order to prevent another possibility of genocide in the future. In some parts, the author mentions the events that create terror for readers, which generates both negative and positive effects. In some parts, the author gives the account of Pol Pot as a nationalist and put a lot of philosophical opinions into the text. We are worried that if we show violence, there will be more and more violence. One part shows the rise to power of Pol Pot's party. This section shows the conflict between one group and another in order to make business through politics and to take revenge on one another.

His Excellency Eat Sok: I agree to the above-mentioned points. However, we are worried that DC-Cam will use the name of the Working Commission to publish the book without making corrections as suggested by the Commission. Whether or not it is supplementary material depends on those who use this text. For the style of writing, the author should write in accordance with pedagogical methodology and should have cooperation with experts from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

Mrs. Ton Sa Im: According to the request made of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, DC-Cam requested that the Ministry use some part of the whole text as supplementary material. Therefore, we can use this text as supplementary discussion material to write a history book for schools. There are many other problems that have to be considered such as different figures on one event. The inconsistency makes it difficult for students and researchers to learn

what is accurate. In the official curriculum, we give the account of DK in grade 9 and then in grade 12. Students learn main points in grade 9 and learn the details in grade 12. We make the tragic story into a narrative story for students in comprehensive school. Therefore, we can take some parts from this text as supplementary materials to produce a textbook and other parts can be used as history lessons. But we cannot take the entire text as a textbook for general knowledge.

His Excellency Im Sothy: This text is well written and well prepared for historians for further study. Writing a history textbook to be put into the official curriculum for general knowledge meets a lot of difficulties. Even Japan, which has many experiences in writing history books, still encounters a lot of problems in writing history related to Korea and China. Recently, the new Japanese Prime Minister has shown his intention to rewrite the history of the country. This "History of Democratic Kampuchea" can only be used as supplementary material to write a history textbook for general knowledge.

His Excellency Sorn Samnang: I agree with His Excellency Chairman's recommendation.

His Excellency Chhay Aun: We are concerned that DC-Cam will use the name of the Commission in publishing this text. Therefore, we should find the best solution which is acceptable for all. We decided that we use this text as supplementary material in writing textbooks since this text still lacks many things and gives an unclear and unofficial history of the party. I request deleting Chapter 2 and mentioning only events happening during the periods 1975 to 1979.

His Excellency Im Sothy: We should not make changes to this text because it is the research, opinion and analysis of the researcher. Therefore, we suggest that it be the base for writing history textbooks for comprehensive school. We should take some parts and put in history lessons or take it as supplementary material for other courses.

In conclusion, the Commission decided that *the text will be used as core supplementary discussion material and as a base to write a history lesson for students in general education.*

The meeting ended at 9:30 a.m. on the same day in an understandable and pleasant sentiment.

Phnom Penh, December 14, 2006
Secretary
Ton Sa Im

See and agree
Chairman
Im Sothy