



# A HISTORY OF THE ANLONG VENG COMMUNITY

The Final Stronghold of the Khmer Rouge Movement

DY KHAMBOLY  
CHRISTOPHER DEARING

Documentation Series No. 20 in collaboration with  
the Ministry of Tourism, Kingdom of Cambodia



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CAMBODIA: GENOCIDE EDUCATION IS GENOCIDE PREVENTION



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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

**Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC**



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## Foreword

Books are like people in the sense that we often associate them with certain settings. For example, religious books gravitate to places of worship, thick academic books find their way in schools and libraries, and short fictional pieces will often accompany the office worker or traveler as a means of escape from the daily routine or commute. Books can inform, cultivate, and inspire. They serve as the seeds of our imagination—a lesson Cambodians have forgotten amidst the endless stream of modern technology. I think it is good for authors to take the circumstances of setting into account, particularly if they are going to truly match their work to the target audience.

I see this book being read outside near a historic site or in a classroom not far from the Anlong Veng region and its people. This setting makes sense particularly because the authors clearly intended to focus on the human element of the Khmer Rouge movement.

Focusing on people rather than groups, circumstances, or events, has its benefits as well as its disadvantages. The benefit of this focus is it reveals the complexity of the human soul amidst war, atrocity, and social upheaval. The disadvantage of this approach is we are exposed to the uncomfortable reality that perpetrators have faces like our own, and we must make a choice.

All crimes are committed by human beings, and it can be difficult for the victims of crimes (as well as their offspring and family) to recognize this fact because it is beyond their imagination. There is an inherent need to disassociate the perpetrators of crimes, their accomplices, as well as their family members from the rest of society. This response only seems just given the horrible costs that society must repay as it moves forward. However, in the long term, this approach is not the answer. In order for Cambodia to move forward, we must face the difficult fact that the Khmer Rouge were human beings too.

If history is truly to be an effective guide to the future, then we must also recognize the unceasing need to study all aspects of our past, including the ones that are troubling and difficult to explain. Justice cannot be served in a state of ignorance, and healing and reconciliation only become genuine if we are willing to see each other as human beings.

This book will help in these endeavors, but it is only one small piece of a much wider struggle to find justice in Cambodia. We need the beginning to search for an end, if any. It has been over fifteen years since peace descended on Anlong Veng, but we would be mindful to note that peace and justice must go hand-in-hand for a society to move forward. The future of Cambodia will depend on how well we recognize and appreciate this fact as individuals, communities, and a Nation.

*- HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. THONG Khon, Minister of Tourism*



## **Acknowledgements**

The research, writing and publication of this book would not have been possible without the inspiration, assistance, and suggestions from a number of individuals and organizations. First, we wish to present our special thanks to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for providing generous financial support toward the research and publication of this book. Our effort to capture the oral history of the community required extensive interviews, archival research, and travel to the region (as well as to Thailand), and we are grateful to the SDC for their support.

We are also deeply indebted to Youk Chhang, Founder of the Sleuk Rith Institute (SRI) and Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). He forged the initiative for this book's research, and he provided invaluable direction and advice in all phases of the project. In particular, he helped us in identifying some of the primary sources referenced in this book, and he offered valuable ideas to improve its content and organization. Without exaggeration, he was a cornerstone to this project from beginning to end. In addition, we are indebted to the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism—especially His Excellency, Minister Thong Khon and the Inter-Ministry on the Anlong Veng Development Committee.

Tourism depends not only on knowing one's audience, but also the people, resources, and environment that shape the tourism experience. To this end, the Ministry recognized historical research as a critical step toward making the region accessible and appreciated as part of Cambodia's history. This book is only one piece of this overarching effort to cultivate and preserve an appreciation for the region's unique history, and we want to thank the Ministry for its input and support in this field.

The production of the book would also not have been possible without the sincerity and generosity of the Anlong Veng residents and the nearby district of Trapeang Prasat. Over six hundred residents from the Anlong Veng and Trapeang Prasat districts and other former KR strongholds willingly and tirelessly provided their time and assistance to the DC-Cam research team, who conducted oral interviews, returning multiple times for further clarification. Some of those interviewed spent more than five hours narrating their stories. They started from the time they joined the Khmer Rouge (KR) revolution in the early 1970s to the time of their struggles on top of Dangrek Mountain and eventually to the 1998 final integration until their life today. Their stories are invaluable to the success of this book's research. We are particularly thankful to the leadership in Anlong Veng and Trapeang Prasat, especially the district council and commune council members who

provided both the interviews and administrative support facilitating the communication between the research team and the people. We would like to highlight the kindness of Mr. Yim Phanna, Anlong Veng's governor, who not only endorsed the research, but also participated in the interviews several times, providing additional direction and guidance for the book's research.

The text would also not have been possible without the editing and input of Professor David Chandler, Emeritus Professor at Monash University in Australia and a leading historian in Cambodian history.

Our research encouraged us to conduct interviews of people in Thailand, and to this end, we are grateful for the generosity of the people of Srae-prai village, who were extremely generous in their time. Their stories, some of which are included in this book, helped us better understand the cross-border relationships between Thai and Cambodian villages that span generations and continue even today.

None of this book would have been possible without the work of Dr. Kosal Path and Dany Long. Kosal is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College at the City University of New York (CUNY). He conducted many of the early interviews in the region and generously contributed some of the photos included in this book. Dany, who is a team leader within DC-Cam, was a prominent leader in this book project. His knowledge of Anlong Veng and its people helped shape the interview process and he was a constant resource for information and insights into the region.

Finally, we would also like to acknowledge the work of interpreters Ounruen Oun-on ("Tai") and Stephanie Mey, as well as DC-Cam's researchers (Peou Dara Vanthan, Kok-Thay Eng, Vannak Sok, Pechet Men, Sovann Mam, Sotheany Hin, Kimsroy Sokvisal, and Leakhena Ry. Tai provided Thai-to-English translation, and she was crucial to securing interviews of people in Thailand. Stephanie was exceptionally helpful in translating some of the more difficult French correspondence in the early twentieth century. We are especially grateful to DC-Cam's researchers who traveled to Anlong Veng and Trapeang Prasat districts numerous times to conduct interviews and collect artifacts and other necessary documents and materials which provided additional evidence to the book. Their audio interviews and transcripts helped foster the writing process of the book. The book would not have been critical enough without the insightful review and comment from Dany Long, Kok-Thay Eng and Sok-Kheang Ly.

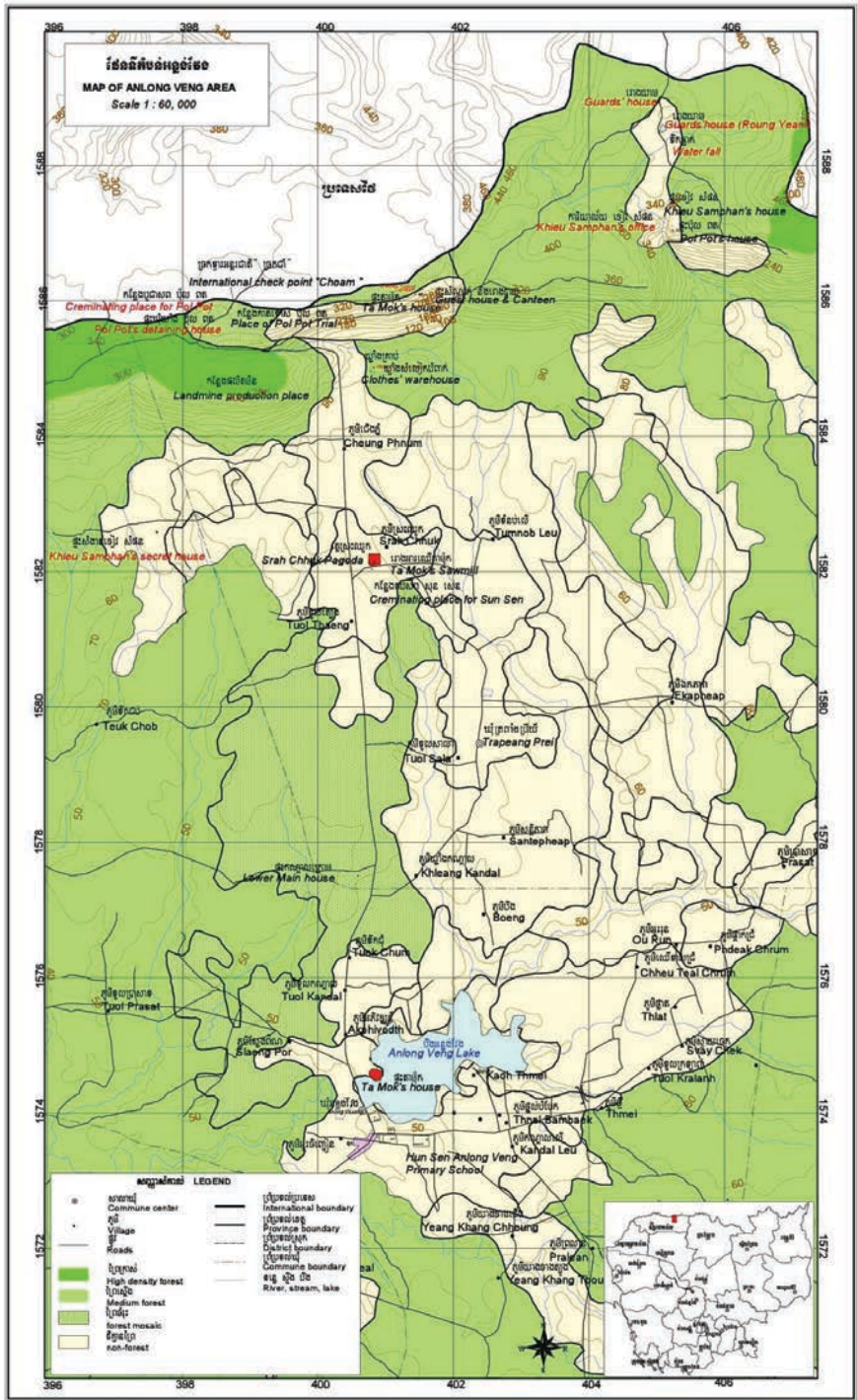
## Abbreviations

ARC	American Refugee Committee
CAMA	Christian and Missionary Alliance
CGDK	Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea
CNUP	Cambodian National Unity Party
COERR	Catholic Office for Emergency and Refugee Relief
COR	Christian Outreach
CPK	Communist Party of Kampuchea
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DK	Democratic Kampuchea
ECCC	Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independent Neutre Pacifique Et Cooperatif
FUNK	National United Front of Kampuchea
GRUNK	Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea
HI	Handicap International
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Service
JSRC	Japan Sotho Relief Committee
KPNLF	Khmer People's National Liberation Front
KR	Khmer Rouge
KRT	Khmer Rouge Tribunal
KUFNS	Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NADK	National Army of Democratic Kampuchea
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NUF	National United Front

## **Abbreviations** (continued)

PAVN	People's Army of Viet Nam
PDK	Party of Democratic Kampuchea
PGNUNSC	Provisional Government of National Union and National Salvation of Cambodia
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RCAF	Royal Cambodian Armed Forces
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RI	Refugee International
SAWS	Seventh-day Adventist World Services
SIPAR	Soutien a l'Initiative Privee pour l'Aide a la Reconstruction
SNC	Supreme National Council
SOC	State of Cambodia
UFNSK	United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea
UN	United Nations
UNBRO	United Nations Border Relief Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YWAM	Youth with a Mission





The delineation of international boundaries should not be considered authoritative. Map prepared by Geography Department 20.08.02.

Map of Anlong Veng region, with permission from the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism.



## Introduction

History invites moral judgements, and in studying the people of Anlong Veng, it is easy to slip into an accusatory mindset. Anlong Veng was the final stronghold of the notorious Khmer Rouge regime—a regime which was responsible for perpetrating genocide, mass atrocity, and uncalculable harm on the fabric of Cambodian society. It is believed that over two million people died during the regime, and to this day the country still struggles with the byproducts of this history. Many of Anlong Veng's residents were former Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres, and without a doubt many either participated or assisted in violent acts.

The reverse can also be said, which is that in studying the people of Anlong Veng, it might be easy to slip into an empathetic mindset in which the horrors of the regime and movement fade in relation to the stories and personal struggles of its individual members. Thousands of cadres and their families—including high-ranking communist leaders—were arrested and murdered throughout the country. The regime arrested, tortured, and killed members who joined the movement from its earliest days, and there was often little recourse or escape if one was suspected of disloyalty. Without a doubt, terror became a universal blanket that enslaved the society as a whole.

Even after the regime fell, the Cambodian population—both within and outside of Khmer Rouge-controlled territory—suffered incredibly. The over-ten-year war between Vietnamese forces and the Khmer Rouge produced thousands of casualties on all sides. For several years the people were largely dependent on humanitarian assistance, and famine and disease were a constant threat.

But while the people of Anlong Veng can acknowledge the horrible consequences of the movement they joined and in many respects sustained, their attitude toward the regime is not necessarily consistent with the gravity of evil they know occurred. While nearly everyone recognized that horrible crimes occurred during the DK regime and even after, there was still a sentimental affection for the past, and even a few believed that communism may have worked if the leaders were better. Likewise, while many people acknowledged the cruel nature of certain leaders, in particular Ta Mok, in the same breath, there was a sense of respect that could not be forgotten.

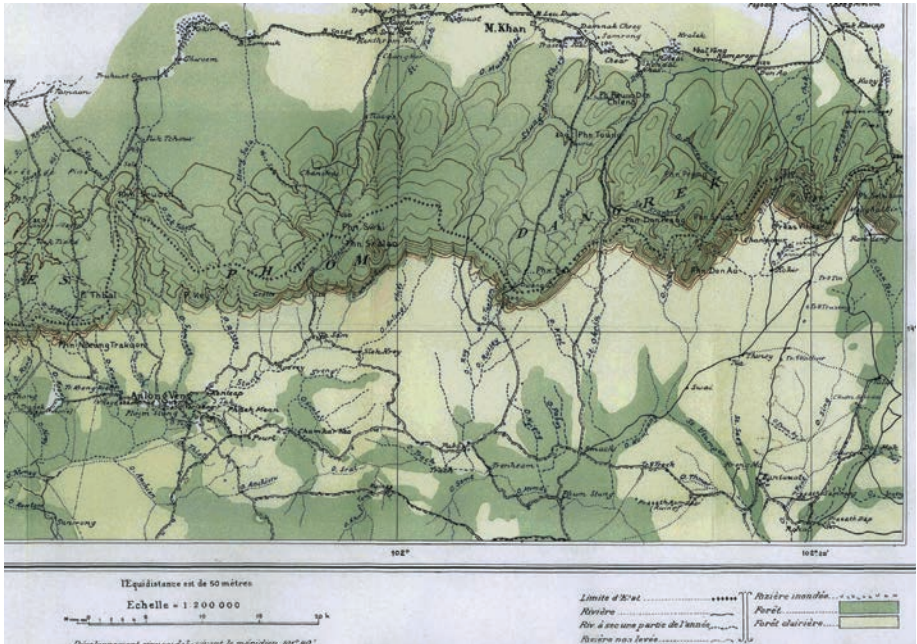
The purpose of this book is to neither condemn nor venerate the people of Anlong Veng. Instead, we hope to provide a view into an under-studied community and a voice to an otherwise under-heard people. It is a universal rule that peace is built and sustained on an

open-minded discussion of the past. Hopefully this book will contribute to this overarching goal, which is being taken up by DC-Cam in their work to establish a Peace Center in Anlong Veng.

The book begins by providing a snapshot of how the community existed before the Khmer Rouge. Chapter 1 discusses the history of the region and the country during the first half of the twentieth century. Chapter 2 proceeds to outline the rise of the communist movement in French Indochina and the early arrival of the Khmer Rouge to Anlong Veng. Chapter 3 discusses life in the region under the Khmer Rouge: first as collectivized communities, and then later, after re-location, as cooperatives. Chapter 4 provides a variety of narratives and insights to the Khmer Rouge defeat by Vietnamese forces. The chapter discusses the dispersion of the Cambodian population and the experiences of soldiers, civilians, and families. Chapter 5 describes the occupation of Anlong Veng by Vietnamese forces, and Chapter 6 outlines the re-organization of the regime. While the regime was removed from power and utterly defeated on the battlefield, through foreign support, it managed to re-organize into a relatively dangerous guerilla force. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss life as a guerilla force. Chapter 7 focuses on the KR's military tactics and strategies, while Chapter 8 looks at the struggles of the common people who grew up in the military bases and refugee camps. Chapter 9 provides an overview of the international political forces that helped the Khmer Rouge sustain their guerrilla struggle. The chapter outlines the administration of the movement at the senior leader level, and it introduces the next chapter on Ta Mok. Chapter 10 focuses on the public persona of Ta Mok, as illustrated in the numerous construction projects and his relations with the people. Chapters 11-13 discuss the final days of the KR's leadership, which cover the internal struggle between Ta Mok and Pol Pot, and the arrest and trial of Pol Pot. Chapter 14 details the events that eventually led up to the movement's final battles and ultimate defeat. Finally Chapters 15 and 16 are dedicated to summarizing the community's history, first from an outsider's perspective and then in the words of the residents themselves.

## Anlong Veng Early History

Anlong Veng was established long before it came to prominence as the final stronghold of Cambodia's communist movement. As early as 1907, the community was recognized by French cartographers when they were establishing the border of Cambodia with its northern neighbors. It is believed that, like other communities established along the Thai-side of the border, Anlong Veng was settled by Khmer people who migrated south from upper Siam or from what is now Sisaket province in Thailand.<sup>1</sup>



Map of Cambodia-Thai border. Completed by the French section of the Border Commission of Indochina and Siam, prepared by Captains Kerler (Colonial Infantry) & Oum (French Foreign Legion), Published by H. Barrere, Geographer editor, (Paris) reproduced with permission from the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism.

### Administration

In terms of administration, Anlong Veng village has a history of shuffling back and forth between Cambodian and Thai control. Between 1867 and 1907, Anlong Veng was situated within the former Thai province known as Siam Nakhon, and before this, it was



located within Cambodia. In 1863 Cambodia came under French protection as a colonial protectorate, and as a result of French pressure, Siam returned the former territories of Battambang and Siem Reap to Cambodia in 1907.

In 1941, the region was again ceded to the Thai, following a brief conflict between Thailand and France. Between 1941 and 1946, Anlong Veng fell within the Thai province of Plaek Phibunsongkhram, which was the name of Thailand's prime minister at the time. Thailand held what had been the Khmer provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang until 1946 when a border pact between France and Thailand secured their return to Cambodia. Under the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime (Prince Sihanouk), the Cambodian province of Oddar Meanchey was created out of the province of Siem Reap; however, after 1970, it became an "administrative no-man's land, alternating between a province and district under successive regimes."<sup>2</sup> In 1999, the province was reborn and Anlong Veng—once a village, but now a district—is still inside that province today.

### **Anlong Veng and Surrounding Region: Pre-1908**

Situated nearly 125 km from the closest Cambodian town, Siem Reap, and approximately 12 km from the base of the Dangrek mountains, Anlong Veng has historically been on the periphery of the Cambodian state. During King Norodom's reign [r. 1860-1904] and for most of the French colonial period [1863-1953], Cambodian administration was, at best, negligible in the countryside and almost non-existent in the more remote areas of the kingdom.

Lacking roads, communication systems, and infrastructure, Anlong Veng was outside of Siamese and Cambodian government influence, and the situation hardly changed with the arrival of the French.<sup>3</sup>

At the height of Angkorian civilization, the Khmer Empire stretched nearly as far north as China, encompassing nearly all of modern-day Thailand.<sup>4</sup> But for reasons that are still debated today, the Khmer Empire experienced a rapid decline in the 14th century and, in turn, Cambodia's neighbors gradually increased in power. By the 18th century, as a result of war, social turmoil, and economic decline, Cambodia was in a weakened state that was ripe for pillage, plunder, and the loss of territory to its powerful neighbors Annam and Siam (modern day Viet Nam and Thailand). With the steady loss of sovereignty to Cambodia's neighbors, the Cambodian King Ang Duong [r. 1841-1860] sought out French protection, which eventually culminated in the Treaty of 1863 between his son, King Norodom and France.

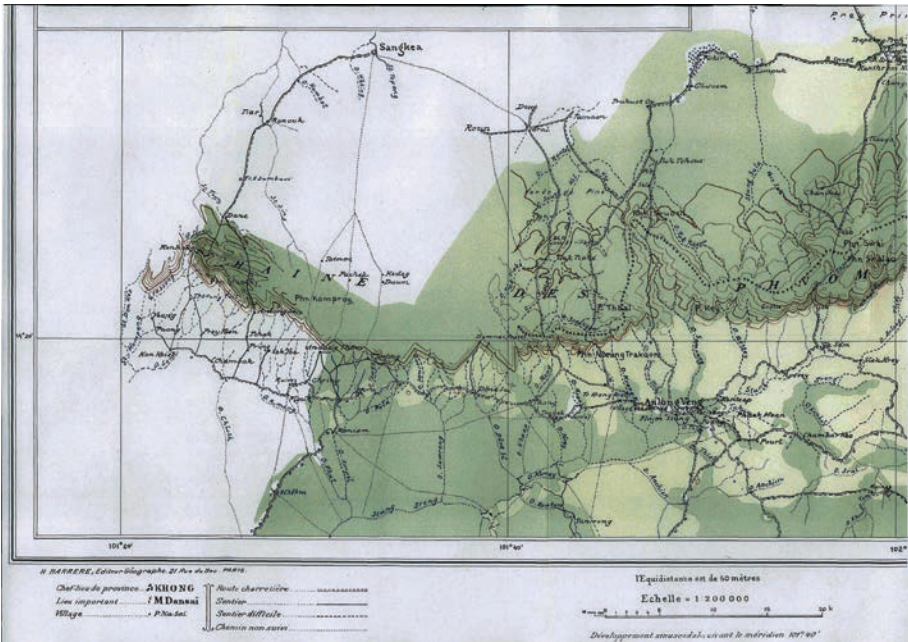
The 1863 treaty established the French protectorate in Cambodia, in which the French exercised a wide range of commercial, territorial, and religious rights. King Norodom, however, for all practical purposes, continued to manage Cambodia's internal political and administrative affairs;<sup>5</sup> although, over time, and especially after 1884, these too would come to be largely overseen by French authorities.

In terms of Cambodia's social institutions and economic development very little had changed between 1863 and the end of the 19th century. In contrast to the lifestyles of the royal family and the wealthy elite, most people had few possessions besides their clothing, eating utensils, and tools for work.<sup>6</sup> "They lived as their ancestors had done for thousands of years, in palm-thatched huts, often mounted on piles for ventilation and refuge from floods, snakes, and insects."<sup>7</sup> Buddhism was a cornerstone of village life, guiding relations amongst neighbors as well as community organization and worldview. Social and economic exchange was limited by the friction of terrain, and in the more remote areas like Anlong Veng, villages were isolated islands amidst a sea of teeming jungle.<sup>8</sup> We can imagine that the French officials who explored Cambodia's border with Siam in 1905 would have found similar conditions. As one historian has stated, "Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down [...] but the village communities remain the same."<sup>9</sup>

Anlong Veng would hardly have been different, whether it existed under Cambodian or Siamese<sup>10</sup> administration.<sup>11</sup> The Siamese were relatively content to allow the old Khmer ways to continue in the provinces they annexed,<sup>12</sup> and for the remote area of Anlong Veng, as well as the sparsely-settled region just north of the Dangrek Mountain range (in Siam), Khmer people and culture continued to dominate just as they had done for centuries. One Thai villager who lived in Anlong Veng in the 1950s described how Khmer was the dominant language on both Thai and Cambodian sides of the border for well into the latter half of the 20th century. "Almost 100 percent of the people spoke Khmer here. However, today, [referring to Thailand's Sisakhet province] almost 100 percent speak Thai now."<sup>13</sup>

## The Story of a Bandit

*In November 1907 the Cambodian authorities arrested a bandit, identified as A. Khoun, who had taken part in plundering the region. He managed to escape after a few days of detention, but not before he divulged some information about the bandits, which confirmed the French authorities' suspicion on the complicity of the Siamese civil servants in the bandit operations. "A. Khoun" was a Cambodian who lived in Phum Thnong, in the province of Changkal. In early October 1908, his village was visited by a large force of bandits (about 60 individuals) who carried rifles and sabers. The leader of the group tasked thirty of his men to gather up the inhabitants of the village and take them to Khum Kaul in Sangkeak (Siam).<sup>1</sup> A. Khoun was one of these conscripted villagers. The bandits collected all of the villagers tax cards and destroyed them, saying that they would not allow them to be part of the French. They tried to take the cows and other livestock but realized that it would slow them down. The bandits forced A. Khoun to be a guide for them in their raids of other villages in Cambodia. They ordered him to guide them to Phum Don Loc where they plundered the village. The bandits plundered Phum Tong and Khet Chongkal as well. In both villages, they assigned a number of men to escort the villagers to Siam. The remaining group went onward to plunder Anlong Veng; however, because of heavy rains, they could not reach the area. Given the fact that many of the bandits could not swim, they decided to return back to Siam.*



Map of Cambodia-Thai border (Western orientation). Reproduced with permission from the Cambodian Ministry of Tourism.

## Banditry

While it is impossible to know what may have drawn the original settlers to the Anlong Veng area, we can speculate that the community's location at the margins of state governance may have been a factor. Under the heavy hand of local wealthy elite (mandarins), common people were often subjected to conscription, forced labor, and taxes. Lacking any means of defense, subjects saw freedom in the hills, jungles, and border areas that lay just beyond authoritarian reach.<sup>14</sup> But people did not necessarily always seek out remote areas in the interest of flight. Banditry was endemic in Cambodia for centuries, and it "flourished best where sympathetic terrain allowed the brigands to melt away into swamps, jungles, mountains, or retreat over national boundaries."<sup>15</sup>

Pok Toeuk, a villager in Anlong Veng, recalled what elders had told her about Anlong Veng in the 20th century. "Anlong Veng was called the theft village because the residents stole cattle from Siem Reap to sell in Thailand. They had no jobs or businesses at that time."<sup>16</sup> While it is highly unlikely that Anlong Veng was actually, in fact, a "theft village," we can nevertheless infer that the region's terrain encouraged brigands and fugitives as much as settlers.<sup>17</sup>

By 1892, the French had assumed control of nearly all taxes, and the French soon played a hand in nearly every facet of Cambodia's administration.<sup>18</sup> The death of King Norodom and the coronation of his brother, King Sisowath, in 1904 also ushered in a new era of



more centralized administration and greater taxes, both of which may have contributed to greater social unrest.<sup>19</sup> As the French discovered, with the increase in state administration, taxes, and other obligations, people were inclined to move deeper into the jungles and border areas.<sup>20</sup> When even these areas came under greater control as well, some people became more mobile, shifting their residence to Siam or Laos during periods of tax collection and returning when the state authorities had departed.<sup>21</sup>

The border areas became an escape route for tax avoidance as well as a conflict zone. In 1907 France negotiated the return of Battambang and Siem Reap provinces to Cambodia. However, while Siam was compelled to return Cambodia's northern and western territories, it nevertheless was unwilling to give up the region without a fight.

Hardly a coincidence, in the same year that Cambodia reclaimed its northern and western provinces from Siam, Cambodia suffered from a harsh series of attacks from a large group of bandits in the Battambang and Anlong Veng regions.

In 1907, there were a significant number of reports of bandits moving through Cambodia's northern and western regions. Villagers informed the French officials that approximately 60-90 bandits from Siam came to several villages in Anlong Veng and Battambang provinces and forced the inhabitants to come with them into Siam under the threat of death. Many villagers were afraid and fled to the Siamese villages of Sangkea, Pasan or further upland into modern day Thailand.<sup>22</sup> After the bandits visited, the French authorities came to the region to investigate, only to find that a handful of families remained in certain villages.<sup>23</sup>

Recognizing the threat posed by such a sizeable force, the French authorities sent approximately fifteen militia men to the border in Anlong Veng to observe the area.<sup>24</sup>

Life in Anlong Veng in those days was isolated and hard. There was little communication to the outside world, so any police posted to the area would have been completely dependent on the resources within the area. The French deliberated on the harsh circumstances of the posting and decided to rotate militiamen every three months.<sup>25</sup>

The French authorities could never prove the complicity of the Siamese government in the banditry enterprise, but they assumed that the bandits had received some encouragement from the Siamese authorities. The proof of this alliance was the bandits' ongoing strategy of emptying villages, which is counter-productive to the enterprise of banditry.<sup>26</sup> They suspected that the Siamese officials were telling the bandits to plunder the Cambodian villages as they saw fit, provided they brought the inhabitants to Thailand, in which case the bandits would not be punished. The French suspected that some of the purported bandits were actually unwilling Cambodians who were conscripted into the banditry force.<sup>27</sup>

### Life in Anlong Veng: 1908–1970

Like other colonial powers, French colonialism was often driven by the urge to exploit new resources and increase commerce for the benefit of the homeland. However, alongside economic and geostrategic interests, colonial powers sometimes sought to spread culture and, to a limited extent, improve the lives and communities of the colonized territories. The French interest in cultural and socio-economic development, which they referred to as their *mission civilisatrice*, was an important facet of the French colonial enterprise in Cambodia.

The French excavated, studied, and restored many of the Angkorian ruins and relics that are enjoyed by tourists today. The French also built roads and railroads, and laid telegraph wire. Tax collection and government administration were reformed and centralized, and a large-scale public works program was created.

But while France certainly devoted extensive time and resources to projects that could improve the country's overall administration and socio-economic development, improvements to education, health, and the overall livelihood of people in the countryside were wanting. Like other rural communities of Cambodia in the early 20th century (and especially remote areas), Anlong Veng lacked infrastructure, medical facilities, trained medical personnel, and medicine. Disease was a constant danger, and epidemics were common.

In truth, no matter what century they were born in, the harshness of life and the vagaries of human existence were a constant part of life in the rural communities and border areas in particular.

Approximately 12 kilometers from Anlong Veng, and straddling the present-day border between Cambodia and Thailand, there once was a small village called Sa-Ngam (referred by the French as "Sra Ngam"). According to Thai elders, the village was located approximately where the Chaom Sa-Ngam border post sits today, and like Anlong Veng, the village was recognized by French cartographers as they mapped out the border between Siam and Cambodia in 1907–09.

Sa-Ngam village was named after a type of large tree that grew in the area, and it was described by Thai elders as a village where Siamese and Khmer settlers lived together.<sup>28</sup> The village was probably like most other villages in the area—in the sense that most people spoke Khmer.

Sa-Ngam probably would have continued to exist as a local hub for commerce today, but for an epidemic that broke out around 1948. While the details of the epidemic are cloudy, the general belief among Thai elders is the village of Sa-Ngam was wiped out by cholera.<sup>29</sup>

In the 1940s outbreak, village after village succumbed to the disease's horrible effects. While it is impossible to confirm today, it is believed that the disease began in the Siamese

village of Roern Cher (about 10 km from Sa-Ngam). From Roern Cher, the disease spread to people in Sa-Ngam, where it took the most deadly toll, infecting nearly everyone in the village. If anyone from the village survived the disease (and accounts differ on whether anyone survived), they left, and the village was abandoned.

In Thailand today, only one or two Thai villagers were actually alive when the epidemic broke out, but the story of the village and the horrible disease that swept through it and many other communities on the Thai-side of the border continue to be remembered.

It is not known whether Anlong Veng or the neighboring Cambodian villages suffered from a similar outbreak. However, given the relative proximity to Sa-Ngam and the intensity of the epidemic in the villages within a day's walking distance, it is very possible that the cholera epidemic that ravaged Siam's side of the border in the late 1940s had also touched the villages around Anlong Veng. This assumption is all the more likely given the relative ease by which people moved back and forth between Siam and Cambodia and the relatively similar socio-economic conditions of all communities in the border area.<sup>30</sup>

Up until the 1990s, public health, transportation, and education were very limited (and almost non-existent) in Anlong Veng.

Mey Chheng recalled that only one school existed in Anlong Veng in the 1950s. Rumchek village, an old village with about fifty families, had no school. Likewise, there was no school in Ta Tev or Khnol villages in the Anlong Veng district. As Thin Ben relates, "Children simply just did not go to school. They grew up to be illiterate."<sup>31</sup> Chhit Thy would agree, "I did not attend school as I was busy with family earnings."<sup>32</sup>

Chhan Bai, a resident in Anlong Veng, describes life in Khnol village (pre-1975):

*There were only 6 families living in the area at the time. They did not go to school. They dug up manioc and potatoes for sustenance and they never wore shirts or clean clothes like you see today. We did not have money. We simply wore dirty clothes. We also had no money for food seasoning. We simply bought salt. We bought this in Khnar Village located in Thailand. There was no market or roads in Cambodia at that time. It would take 10 days to walk across the mountains to get into Cambodian civilization. To buy salt, we simply walked into Thailand where we stayed the night and returned the following day.<sup>33</sup>*

The age for attending school was also calculated differently than today. Because birth-dates (and consequently ages) were not always well-known, let alone recorded, people employed innovative ways to determine when children were mature to attend school.

*When I attended school in the early 1960s (Takeo province), the age for starting school was much different than the age today. When I was a child, we had to reach our hand over our head to touch our ear on the opposite side. If our hand could not reach our ear, we would not be allowed to go to school. Very often, children were almost ten years old before they were allowed to go to school.<sup>34</sup>*

Anlong Veng's economy was entirely based upon what could be grown or gathered from the land, and, lacking currency, the residents relied upon bartering as the means for procuring goods. "We did not have cash or coins; instead, we would barter mats and rattan to the Thai in exchange for salt."<sup>35</sup> Local residents also grew rice and, in some cases, mango trees as well as other types of plants, depending on the terrain and circumstance.<sup>36</sup>

Transportation was extremely limited by the lack of roads, and no one had cars or motor-bikes. In fact, almost no one had bicycles either.<sup>37</sup>

*Everyone walked. It took us one day to walk from Anlong Veng to Rumchek. We reached Rumchek at about noon. Some people would bring carts, but because our family had no cart, we simply walked and had to sleep along the way if we were walking some place far like Sre Nauy.<sup>38</sup>*

Lacking transportation and adequate roads, it was not surprising that most residents did not leave their village. Chhit Thy describes life during the reign of King Norodom Sihanouk (r. 1941–1955), "People did not have much contact with one another. They worked, lived, and did business in their respective villages."<sup>39</sup> Chhan Bai relates, "I did not leave my village for most of part of my youth."<sup>40</sup>

Given the lack of exchange and the relative poverty in the area, clothing supplies were also limited.

*People in Rumchek village were very poor and usually only wore a cloth to wrap around their body. Many men didn't even have shirts, and some men didn't even have trousers. There wasn't any place to buy clothes, and the Thai only came once every ten months to trade.<sup>41</sup>*

Village ceremonies and traditions were also much different than they are today. According to Chhan Bai, "There was no music or drums during weddings. They simply killed a pig and three or four elders would preside over the ceremony to pay respect to one's ancestors."<sup>42</sup>

Up until the 1980s, wild animals were plentiful in the region. "Elephants would come right up to the wall of the Ta Dev Village."<sup>43</sup> There were also wild ox, buffalo, and tigers. The

French Resident (equivalent to a governor) of Stung Treng province regularly listed the market prices for various skins, elephant, rhinoceros and tiger bones, ivory, and pangolin (spiny anteater) scales.<sup>44</sup>

The wildlife was seen as much as a threat as it was a resource. As Mey Chheng relates, "We used guns to protect our village from elephants, which would come and eat our rice."<sup>45</sup> Thin Ben recalls that tigers were a constant concern because oftentimes they would come into the village at night and kill the dogs. Thin Ben adds, "In the old times, we ate deer, rabbit, musk, tortoise, big lizards, and so on. All of these are gone today."<sup>46</sup>



## ***The Rise of the Communist Movement and Early Arrival of the Khmer Rouge***

### **Introduction**

Straddling the border with Thailand, Anlong Veng has always been one of Cambodia's most remote districts. For most of Anlong Veng's history, residents were left largely unattended by the central government and its inhabitants had little access to the outside world. These circumstances created favorable conditions for the Khmer Rouge (KR) to both coerce and convince the residents' loyalty and sympathy.

The term "Khmer Rouge" was the name Prince 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. While the KR did not technically take control of Cambodia until April 17, 1975, much of Cambodia's countryside fell under KR administration much earlier. Partly a consequence of its remoteness, Anlong Veng was one of the first communities to come under KR control.

The KR effectively occupied Anlong Veng area in 1970 after a brief encounter and military presence of Lon Nol's troops. Under KR control, Anlong Veng's residents saw their traditional way of life change tremendously. KR's revolutionary ideologies required the population to abandon the community's culture and practices, and eventually even their homes.

After the KR victory in 1975, the people in Anlong Veng continued to live in their respective homes under KR control; however, they were organized into units that farmed, cleared forest, or performed other labor.<sup>1</sup> The KR occupied the district and organized the district according to their revolutionary administrative structure.<sup>2</sup>

Sometime in 1977, the residents were forced to move *en mass* out of Anlong Veng and live in cooperatives that were set up in other parts of the region. Upon the collapse of the KR in early 1979, Anlong Veng's residents returned to their communities after which they once again faced the difficulty of being caught between military forces that vied for their loyalty. Remnants of the defeated KR forces sought refuge in the Dangrek Mountains, while the joint Vietnamese-PRK forces occupied the Anlong Veng area. The residents who had no prior affiliation with the KR military units were forced to decide whether to stay in their home villages under Vietnamese-PRK control or to accompany the KR forces into the Dangrek Mountains and into Thailand.

## **The rise of the communist movement**

While Anlong Veng in some ways was the final chapter in the Cambodian communist movement's history, the movement did not begin here. In order to understand the final history of the Cambodian communist movement and how it relates to Anlong Veng, we must shift our focus to the early history of the communist movement in Southeast Asia (or what was, in the 1940s, French Indochina).

The early history of communism in Cambodia is closely linked to the wider struggle against French colonial authorities, which did not coalesce into a significant force until the 1940s. In 1939, France was defeated by Nazi German forces who installed a puppet regime to oversee part of France as well as her colonial interests. Germany ordered Vichy French authorities to direct French colonial administrators in Indochina to cooperate with Germany's ally, Japan.

For most of World War II, Japan's attention was focused on the Pacific theatre, and it chose to simply maintain a limited presence in Indochina. In Cambodia specifically, Japan established a military post in Phnom Penh and French colonial authorities were allowed, with some limitations, to continue their administration as they had since 1863.

With France's defeat by Germany in 1939, however, Cambodia's neighbor, Thailand saw an opportunity for reclaiming the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap (as well as territory in Laos). Sensing French weakness, Thailand attacked northwestern Cambodia in 1940.

The Franco-Thai War (1940–41) was largely a skirmish war, but it nevertheless ended on bad terms for both France and her colonies. Under Japanese brokered peace terms, France/Cambodia handed over the Cambodian provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap to Thailand.<sup>3</sup> For the rest of Cambodia, Japan contented herself with allowing French colonial administration to continue up until March 9, 1945, at which point, for a brief period, the Japanese exercised direct control of Cambodia until Japan's surrender in World War II. In the wake of Japanese and Nazi Germany's defeat in World War II, France re-asserted her colonial interests over Indochina, but a page had already been turned in French colonial administration.

France's defeat in World War II as well as France's inability to defend her colonial interests in Indochina exposed its weakness. The aura of French invincibility had dissipated, and while Southeast Asia was no stranger to rebellions, insurrections, and guerilla movements in the past, the confluence of revolutionary ideology, nationalism, and foreign support inspired a new generation of freedom fighters that were unlike others.

The Khmer Issarak was an anti-French, Khmer nationalist movement that emerged with the support of Thailand in 1945. The movement can trace its origins to Bangkok where, with Thai support, Phra Piset Phanit (Poc Khun) formed the Khmer Issarak party. Thai-



land resented the impending return of Battambang and Siem Reap provinces to Cambodia, and with an eye toward stoking insurrection, the Thai supported the rise of the Khmer Issarak movement (which comprised a spectrum of different groups that independently arose in a number of locations throughout the country).<sup>4</sup> While the movement emerged as primarily a movement to overthrow the French colonial authorities, it became the inspiration for a generation of future Cambodian leaders who would challenge the independent Cambodian state.

While the Issarak groups in western Cambodia tended to look to Thailand for support, the Issarak groups in the East worked with the communist Việt Minh.

The Việt Minh were a Vietnamese communist coalition of groups who opposed the re-occupation of Viet Nam by France. By 1949, the Việt Minh were receiving support from Chinese communists, which allowed them to elevate their struggle with France from a guerilla conflict into a conventional war. By 1950, French Indochina was in the throes of rebellion.

The First Indochina War was an anti-colonial insurrection. Nationalism had emerged as a potent force in the wake of World War II, and anti-colonial fighting surged throughout Southeast Asia. The brunt of the fighting in the First Indochina War occurred in Viet Nam; however, the Khmer nationalists were engaged in their own parallel struggle for independence.

While the Việt Minh battled the French in Viet Nam, the Khmer Issarak waged a smaller, but nevertheless significant, guerrilla war in Cambodia. One part bandit, the other part freedom-fighter, the Issarak groups were a constant thorn to French and Royal Cambodian armed forces in the countryside. While the Issarak groups tended to share a common political goal of Cambodian independence, they never coalesced into a single, cohesive movement on the same level as the Việt Minh. Many groups embraced banditry and only had a semi-political orientation. Some groups looked to Thailand for support, while other groups, under the banner of communism, looked to the Việt Minh.<sup>5</sup>

In April 1950, 200 left-wing members of the Khmer Issarak movement assembled in Kampot province and formed the communist-led Unified Issarak Front. The movement represented an alliance between urban, educated elite as well as peasants and Buddhist nationalists. Led by Son Ngoc Minh (A-char Mien, a Buddhist lay preacher), the group cooperated with Viet Nam in fighting the French, and it served as the starting point for many of the future members of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)—the party that would ultimately seize control and establish Democratic Kampuchea in 1975.<sup>6</sup>

For example, Ta Mok, Chea Sim, and Heng Sarin served as revolutionaries in the Issarak movement;<sup>7</sup> however some of the more senior leaders of the CPK, such as Saloth Sar (Pol Pot), Son Sen, Khieu Samphan, and Ieng Sary, became communists while studying abroad.

In 1951, the Vietnamese communists guided the formation of the Khmer People's Revolutionary Party (KPRP), which would serve as the precursor organization to the Communist Party of Kampuchea. The members of the KPRP committee were Son Ngoc Minh (top position), Sieu Heng (military affairs), Tou Samouth (ideological training), and Chan Samay (economic affairs). Like the Unified Issarak Front, the KPRP looked to the Vietnamese communists for direction.<sup>8</sup>

By the time of the Geneva Peace Conference in 1954 (which would formally end the First Indochina War), the French colonial administration was dismantled in Viet Nam, and Viet Nam was divided into two zones, Communist North Viet Nam and pro-Western South Viet Nam. As part of the Geneva Peace Conference, Viêt Minh forces withdrew from Cambodia.

Some Vietnamese military personnel and advisors remained in Cambodia; however, 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 Viet Nam, where they joined Son Ngoc Minh and others who had gone there earlier.

The years that followed the Geneva Peace Conference (1955–59) mark the low point of the Cambodian communist movement. Prior to the Geneva Peace Conference, King Sihanouk convinced the French Government that the only way to prevent a communist revolution was for France to grant independence. Still embroiled in the First Indochina War, France relented, and Cambodia became independent in 1953. While Cambodia may have occupied a significant place in French colonial interests, France's primary concern was its administration in Viet Nam.

With Cambodia's independence from France, many Issarak groups gave up resistance, and with the Geneva Peace Conference, the Vietnamese communists, for the most part, withdrew from Cambodia. The confluence of these circumstances sapped the strength of the communist movement in Cambodia, and hounded by Prince Sihanouk's army, many communist leaders fled to the forest.

The communists who continued to remain in Cambodia after 1954 struggled to survive. Under Prince Sihanouk's Army Chief of Staff Lon Nol, the government arrested many communist leaders and pushed the groups into the jungle.

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 members 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 it is believed he became second deputy secretary in 1961.<sup>9</sup>

After Tou Samouth disappeared in 1962, the party held an emergency congress in February 1963. It elected Pol Pot as secretary, and Nuon Chea remained deputy secretary. Soon after being named party secretary, Pol Pot took refuge at a Vietnamese military base in the northeast, near Memot, called "Office 100." In 1965 he walked up the Ho Chi Minh Trail to Hanoi for talks with the North Vietnamese. He would also visit China and North Korea.

In 1966, after returning home, Pol Pot changed the party's name to the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The Central Committee at this time consisted of Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Vorn Vet, and Son Sen. During the late 1960s, the CPK 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.

Outside of the Cambodian government's reach, the Cambodian communist forces consolidated their power and re-organized in anticipation of more favorable circumstances that would allow them to seize power. Favorable circumstances finally appeared in 1970—with the removal of Prince Sihanouk and the establishment of the Lon Nol regime.

The removal of Prince Sihanouk and the establishment of the Lon Nol regime can be drawn from a long line of steadily increasing pressures, both internal and external, on the Sihanouk administration, which resulted in no small part from Prince Sihanouk's struggle to maintain Cambodia's neutrality during the Viet Nam War.

The Viet Nam War is the term used to describe the conflict between the United States and South Viet Nam on one side, and the Vietnamese communists as supported by North Viet Nam on the other. While American support to South Viet Nam was initially limited to economic support and military advisory assistance, the assistance incrementally grew to confront the communist threat. By 1965, the United States was pouring money into the state of South Viet Nam, and U.S. military support quickly blossomed from simply logistics and military advice to an enormous influx of American military forces and personnel. As the conflict between the United States and communist North Viet Nam intensified, American aerial bombardment increased and expanded in scope. Predictably, Vietnamese communist forces utilized Cambodian territory to avoid American bombardment.

Prince Sihanouk did not have many options to prevent the use of Cambodian territory by Vietnamese communists. The Royal Cambodian military was no match for the Vietnamese communists, and he was already confronted with containing his own communist opponents in the Cambodian countryside.

Instead, Prince Sihanouk looked to the conservatives in his administration (police and military) to attack his communist opponents while he continued to maintain friendly relations with the Vietnamese communists and push through his own socialist reform program. The gamble paid off to a degree while he received American aid, but in Novem-

ber 1963, having cut off American assistance, he was unable to maintain his costly social welfare programs. To confront the shortfall, he nationalized Cambodia's import-exports, which had the short-term effect of supporting his social programs; however, in the long term, it encouraged black market trading that resulted in diminishing tax revenues.

Ultimately, the Cambodian right-wing (police, military, and wealthy elite) became anxious with the increasing instability of the Cambodian economy and the emerging strength of the Cambodian communists. The Cambodian communist forces were becoming more assertive in their military operations, and lacking military assistance from the United States, the threat of a communist seizure of power increased.

By 1969, Prince Sihanouk could not even take credit for keeping Cambodia out of the Viet Nam War. Frustrated by Prince Sihanouk's inaction (and to some extent, support for) Vietnamese communist activities in Cambodian territory, the United States began heavy, strategic bombing over Cambodia in 1969.<sup>10</sup> Prince Sihanouk's ineffectiveness in managing the economy and defending the Cambodian government from its enemies, foreign and domestic, encouraged his critics to take action.

In 1970, while Prince Sihanouk was out of the country, the right-wing moved to remove him from power.

### **Lon Nol Regime: 1970–1975**

In March 1970, the National Assembly voted to remove Prince Sihanouk as head of state and install a new regime. The new regime, led by Marshal Lon Nol, attempted to confront the communist threat, both Cambodian and Vietnamese. While Lon Nol had significant support from the United States, in the countryside, the people rejected the regime.

Despite being removed from power, Prince Sihanouk still commanded the reverence of the people in the countryside. He thought that by seeking assistance from the Khmer Rouge, he could regain power. He aligned himself with his former communist enemies, the Khmer Rouge, and formed a National United Front of Kampuchea (FUNK) and a government in exile called the Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK). In the end, however, the Khmer Rouge merely used him as a means to achieve their goals, and many of his supporters were ultimately targeted by the regime in their campaign to root out enemies and people with suspect loyalty.”

Meanwhile Vietnamese communist forces moved deep into Cambodia and worked with the Khmer Rouge to recruit and train soldiers for the insurgent army, which grew from an estimated 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. However, the Vietnamese-KR collaborative effort was only temporary. As the KR forces grew in strength and assertiveness, they began to increasingly demand that Vietnamese forces leave Cambodia.<sup>11</sup> By the

end of 1973, the Vietnamese had largely withdrawn from Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge assumed all responsibilities for the war against the Lon Nol regime.

From January to August 1973, the United States, dropped about half a million tons of bombs on Cambodia, which may have killed as many as 300,000 people.<sup>12</sup> The bombing postponed the Khmer Rouge victory; however it incited resentment in the countryside, which facilitated the Khmer Rouge recruitment efforts.

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 U.S. assistance, it was able to continue fighting the Khmer Rouge for two more years.

### **The Early Arrival of the Khmer Rouge to Anlong Veng**

Shortly after the 1970 coup to depose Prince Norodom Sihanouk from power, Lon Nol's troops occupied Anlong Veng for a brief period. It was during this period that Lon Nol's troops frequently came in contact with and fought with South Vietnamese Communist forces (Viet Cong), which entered Cambodia to help the KR. The struggle to overthrow Lon Nol's government was described (by the KR at that time) as the war against "the American imperialists" and the American-backed Khmer Republic.

The exact circumstances and time period in which KR forces settled in the area of Anlong Veng is not entirely certain. It is reported that KR forces settled in the area of Anlong Veng before 1970 and a few months after Lon Nol's troops withdrew from the area, the KR forces established a base near Prey Sa-ak. Prey Sa-ak was known as Kang Keng—a place where they conducted propaganda and recruited many of Anlong Veng's residents to join the revolutionary struggle. The KR had been successful in this endeavor as the recruited residents were grouped into different work units to clear farmland for crops and rice cultivation—critical tasks for the KR strategic goals. Shortly after Kang Keng was established, the Viet Cong and the KR forces defeated Lon Nol's troops and occupied the entire Anlong Veng region. The people in Kang Keng returned to their respective villages, happy to rebuild the life that they left behind. However, small-scale fighting between Lon Nol's troops and KR forces appeared to continue throughout the 1970–75 period, giving them no respite for what was soon to come.<sup>13</sup>

The KR occupation of Anlong Veng occurred during a period of chaos, conflict, and social upheaval in the countryside.<sup>14</sup> Community life changed as the war consumed the countryside, producing fertile grounds for large-scale recruitment into the KR ranks.<sup>15</sup> Those who volunteered to join the revolution wore black clothes and lived in the KR offices. Language amongst community members in Anlong Veng changed and community relationships withered. As a mark of distinction and proof of their devotion, new KR recruits used different words to describe their social relations—addressing each other as "comrade." Before long, traditional Khmer words for family relations such as "uncle, aunt, brother and sister" faded. Political rhetoric seeped into everyday speech.

**Kaet Preah** recalled his experiences as a youth in the mobile unit, working on the rice field. Preah relates:

*We started working on the rice field at five in the morning and were allowed to rest at eleven for lunch. We had to start our work again at one in the afternoon and stopped at five in the evening for the second meal. Then the KR asked us to go to work at six in the evening until ten at night. The KR used kerosene lamps to light the rice fields for the mobile unit. The plan was to achieve three tons of rice per hectare. During the harvesting season, we collected rice crops and stored it in three to four storehouses. But I didn't know where they took the rice to.<sup>1</sup>*

Anlong Veng's experience with Khmer Rouge ideology and administration only foreshadowed a part of the KR's larger vision for transforming the country. When Phnom Penh fell to Khmer Rouge forces in 1975, hundreds of thousands of people were forcibly transferred to the countryside. The policy of moving people out of the city to the countryside was not limited to Phnom Penh. Throughout Cambodia, people were moved from the few urban centers that remained to the countryside, where they were forced to work in any number of forced public labor projects or camps.

In addition to forced transfer, the KR ideology took a toll on national culture and economy. The KR ideology was founded on a radical interpretation of Maoist and Marxist-Leninism theory.<sup>16</sup> The KR leaders wanted to transform

Cambodia into a rural, classless society in which there were no rich people, poor people, or 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.<sup>17</sup>

## ***Anlong Veng Under the Khmer Rouge***

### **Khmer Rouge Leaders in Anlong Veng**

Anlong Veng had a tumultuous administration under the Khmer Rouge—a consequence of the purges, arrests, and political winds that blew through the region under the DK regime. During the Cambodian civil war, (1970-1975), Anlong Veng district was under the administration of the KR Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey Region, which was then known as Region 35.<sup>1</sup> At the sub-provincial level during the DK period, Anlong Veng was divided into four communes: Anlong Veng, Lumtorng, Trapeang Tav and Pha-av. These communes were further divided into cooperatives, where the vast majority of Anlong Veng citizens would spend their time during the DK regime.

It is believed that arrests, purges, and executions were as frequent in Anlong Veng as in most other parts of Cambodia, and while leaders were the most common target for purges and executions, the leaders of Anlong Veng were also known to have perpetrated the like on their own people. The KR headquarters was located in Rumchek village, Lumtorng commune. Comrade Rong, a cadre from Kampong Cham, was the KR secretary of Anlong Veng district from 1970 to 1977. He was arrested in 1977<sup>2</sup> and sent to a prison in Samrangs district, Oddar Meanchey province.<sup>3</sup> He was replaced by Tuy, who held the position as chief of the district for only three months before disappearing. Vorn, a cadre from the Southwest Zone, was the third in line for leadership. Vorn and his deputy Tao were rumored to have arrested and executed many of the cooperative chiefs.<sup>4</sup>

In terms of border defense, a military battalion was stationed at Anlong Veng district with the responsibility to guard and protect the border with Thailand. The battalion was led by Comrade Kai as a Chief, Then was his deputy; and Chum was the third committee member. The soldiers of the battalion underwent training for three months before assuming their posts along the border, where conflicts with Thailand occasionally occurred. The soldiers were asked to guard the border, dig holes for spiked booby-traps, and defend against the possible attack from Khmer Sar (“White Khmer” or remnants of Lon Nol’s forces).<sup>5</sup>

The military life was difficult but it was relatively better than the conditions faced by most of the people. To those stationed at the border, the food seemed insufficient. They often had to dig potatoes and manioc tubers for extra food, even though at times, the top leaders would supply rice, which was generally distributed every two weeks. Generally,

units had to survive on their own, and soldiers were encouraged to live off the land by hunting animals and foraging. Because Anlong Veng was still surrounded by rain forests, wild animals (such as rare tigers) were plentiful and the soldiers became proficient in their hunting skills.

### **Daily Life Under DK**

From 1970 to 1975, the people were allowed to live and eat together in their respective houses. However, as the KR assumed greater control of the region, daily life slowly moved from a life of family, farming, and community to a life dominated by collective living on a cooperative. After 1975, the KR leaders asked everyone to give up their kitchen utensils for collective use. Life became harsher as the people began eating collectively, and family time was overcome by field labor. Within the framework of cooperative living, the workday was long, dull, and oppressive. People worked from dawn to dark, and even late into mid-night. Everything, including a farmer's daily routine, was subject to 'Angkar's' whim.

Life was drudgery and there was no time for family or personal routines. The people were forced to work in the rice fields from six until eleven in the morning. After this morning session was complete, they were allowed to take a short rest. At one in the afternoon they returned to the fields until five in the evening. By the time five o'clock came, nearly everyone was completely exhausted and eager for the ringing of the gong that signaled the end of their day. Despite these long days, the KR sometimes required the people to work in the rice fields late into the evening. These night-time work sessions often lasted until ten o'clock.

In an attempt to streamline work, the KR divided the people into different units according to their gender and age. These units included: mobile, children, women, and transportation units. The people in each unit strived to work despite sickness or fatigue. Those who refused or failed to fulfill their assignment almost always disappeared.

### **Cooperative life**

Like other parts of the country, many of the villages in the area of Anlong Veng were transformed into cooperatives during the DK period. While we may assume that life was probably not drastically different between cooperatives in this region; it would be dangerous to assume that there were not some differences based on the specific leaders' prerogatives and the administration of work by cadres. Our study did not go so far as mapping each cooperative's circumstances; however, in the interest of providing a general window into cooperative life, we summarize the circumstances of one village in particular—Ta Dev.

Ta Dev is a village in Trapeang Tav commune, which was formerly an old village of the Roneam commune in Prasat Rovieng district. It consisted of about twenty-five families during Prince Sihanouk regime. There was no social infrastructure back then and government officials rarely visited this isolated village.



It is reported that people from many villages such as Trapeang Tav, Kok Khdan and Phkom Romeas were gathered into Ta Dev cooperative. While comrade Mol was the chief of the cooperative, there were other KR cadres who managed the cooperative's affairs, such as Sakk, Choem, and Ek—all of whom were described as cruel leaders who made the people eat watery porridge. The leaders' families, on the other hand, enjoyed rice. Sin H-ong recalled her life in Ta Dev cooperative:

*We were asked to work separately. My father worked at the rice mill machine. I was asked to tend the cattle. My mother worked on the rice fields. My younger brother cut grass to make fertilizer, and my older brother worked at the cooperative rice mill with my father. We worked from morning until the evening and could rest only at lunch time. We were allowed to eat only a small bowl of porridge per time and two times per day. We had to find extra water grass and ate it with salt.<sup>6</sup>*

Like other villages in the area, Ta Dev assumed a cooperative lifestyle; however, for the most part, families remained in their respective villages (or at least in the general vicinity of their home villages) until 1977. In 1977, however, the villages (or rather cooperatives) in the area were emptied, and most people were transferred to Kralanh district, Siem Reap province (discussed infra).

### **Children**

Based on interviews of people in the area, it is believed that the children of Anlong Veng endured prolonged separation from their parents and elders, and boys and girls were placed in separate groups. Mot Sao, a former school teacher, was the chief of the children's unit. The children were assigned to cut plants and chop them up for fertilizer. Oftentimes, they had to do heavy labor, involving digging soil and building embankments. Many children could barely even raise the heavy hoes necessary to till the soil.

Like most Cambodians under the DK regime, life took the form of a surreal drama as children were employed like cattle to till the fields, dig, and perform work like their parents. Youthful play became a distant memory, and childhood innocence gave way to a macabre tragedy of sickness and death. It is believed that there were between 300 and 400 children in the unit. They ate and lived collectively; and, while they performed hard labor, they also attended classes on ideology and basic literacy. They were allowed to eat two meals per day—eleven in the morning and at five in the evening—and each child only received one bowl of porridge per sitting.<sup>7</sup>

### **Arrests & Executions**

Arrests and executions were common, and daily life involved a constant vigilance of one's habits and speech. Simple gestures, words, or habits could suggest the lack of enthusiasm for the regime, and mere suspicion was often the only requirement for one's arrest.

Kai was the chief of both the military battalion and the security center (prison) in Anlong Veng, which early on became a nerve center for targeting suspicious people. The KR sought out anyone who had connections with either Prince Sihanouk or the Lon Nol regimes. Once identified, these people were placed in Rumchek village for observation and execution. In addition, the KR executed anyone who was caught trying to escape to Thailand.

One witness recalled seeing Kai arrest five people who were trying to cross the border. He recalls:

*I saw the soldiers arrest five people who were running to Thailand. Ta Kai arrived with four or five body guards. He hit the five captives. Each person received at least thirty lashes. Ta Kai asked where they were from and where they wanted to go. They said they were from Kampong Thom and Siem Reap and they wanted to go to Thailand. Ta Kai hit them until their backs bled. Then the five people were taken away. I doubt they survived.<sup>8</sup>*

Many people from other provinces were evacuated to live in Anlong Veng, but because they were not trusted by the KR cadres and they had no relatives or friends to look to for support, they were often executed out of suspicion.<sup>9</sup> The security center and prison were set up in what is now the Hun Sen Lower Secondary School. The prison was made from wood with a thatched roof. It was about five-meters wide and seven-meters long. Prisoners were forced to sleep together in a row with their legs bound with wooden shackles. This arrangement for the prisoners was similar to those at S-21—in Phnom Penh. Prisoners were often kept in the prison for about one week before they were taken for execution. It is also believed that there were several execution sites—one which was near Anlong Veng's pagoda today.<sup>10</sup> The executions usually took place under cover of darkness.

### **The 1977 Forced Evacuation to Kralanh**

In late 1977, Vorn, the new chief of Anlong Veng district, ordered that all people in Anlong Veng be moved to cooperatives. Most people were transferred to Kampong Thkov commune, Kralanh district, Siem Reap province; although some residents were transferred to Varin, Srey Snam, Samraong and Chong Kal districts. For the most part, Anlong Veng, from 1977 to early 1979, became a KR military base.

Yim Lahoeu, a soldier protecting the border in Anlong Veng between 1975 and 1979 recalled his shock when he visited his family and the empty house after the evacuation. Lahoeu relates:

*When I arrived home, I saw my grandmother's cooking pot hung unattended. The village was so quiet. Everyone was evacuated to Kralanh. With this sight of the village, I felt a sudden feeling of hopelessness. I*

*had made every effort to serve the country, but for what? I lost everything. I lost all confidence. I could not do anything but resign myself to the situation and continue living.*<sup>11</sup>

The people made the journey to Kralanh by a variety of methods. Some people traveled by ox-cart, while most travelled on foot. Some were fortunate enough to be transported by KR trucks.

In Kralanh, the people from Anlong Veng were forced to live in various cooperatives and were grouped into separate units with people from other areas. Only small children could stay with their mothers at night. During the day, the children had to attend study sessions and cut grass in order to make fertilizer for the fields. The children also collected rice stalks or chased the birds away from the rice fields. The people were put to work in both the rainy as well as the dry seasons. The people also worked on dam and canal construction. At the Spean Sraeng dam, one can find one killing site—"La Pikheat Phnom Trong Bat"—for the Kralanh district.<sup>12</sup>

Life was difficult. There was not much food, and people lived in suspicion of one another. Even the most basic human routines could trigger suspicion. For example, one survivor recalled seeing people put on trucks and delivered to the execution site for simply taking too long to relieve themselves in the bathroom or field. The killing site in Kralanh is believed to be near a furnace in Phnom Trung Bat (Trung Bat Mountain). At this site, it has been reported that hundreds and possibly thousands may have been executed.<sup>13</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Before 1970, Anlong Veng was one of the most remote regions in Cambodia—a community that was on the periphery of state influence, economy and administration. The central government rarely visited the region, and the residents had lived in the same way as they had for generations, farming, trading and living off of the land. Upon the arrival of the KR in early 1970, Anlong Veng's culture began to change. Villagers were forced to accept the KR's new revolutionary ideology, which attempted to discard or destroy traditional practices, beliefs and behaviors. The residents confronted significant challenges and they suffered greatly. Cooperative living, forced labor, food shortages and the restriction on one's personal freedom caused significant difficulties for individual and community. Summary executions, forced relocations, and the persistent threat of conflict created and perpetuated an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. Sometime in 1977, the KR relocated the entire population to a work site in Kralanh district, leaving Anlong Veng as a military-controlled area of the KR. Though the relocation may have been planned as a means for building up the labor pool in Kralanh, it is also likely that the move was a measure for preventing anyone from fleeing to Thailand. Based on interviews, it is believed that there were attempts to cross to Thailand through Anlong Veng, and these people were caught. It is not known if anyone actually escaped.



## ***The Khmer Rouge Defeat & Escape***

### **Conflict with Viet Nam**

Almost since the beginning of the Democratic Kampuchea regime, Khmer Rouge forces clashed with their Vietnamese communist neighbors.<sup>1</sup> Eventually border skirmishes escalated into frequent clashes between the two communist states, and by the end of 1977, it was generally recognized that Democratic Kampuchea was engaged in a full-scale war with Viet Nam.

The escalation of violence did not begin overnight. Rather, sporadic conflict between the two states can be seen in the early 1970s, and major fighting between the two states can be traced back to the middle of 1977, when KR forces shelled and raided a number of Vietnamese provinces. KR forces raided the Vietnamese provinces of Kien Giang and An Giang on separate occasions in the spring of 1977, and they shelled Chau Doc, (Mort Chrouk, Khmer: ចាត់ជ្រូក) a Vietnamese provincial capital, in May.<sup>2</sup> In addition, in September, under the general command of Son Sen, KR forces massacred an estimated three hundred civilians in Tay Ninh province, Viet Nam.<sup>3</sup>

Faced with the increasing aggression along its borders, the Vietnamese determined to retaliate. Fighting between the Vietnamese and KR forces increased significantly in October 1977, with Vietnamese forces penetrating in various parts of Cambodian territory. By January 1978<sup>4</sup>, however, the Vietnamese withdrew their forces.<sup>5</sup>

In response to the Vietnamese incursion, driven by paranoia and the fear of internal betrayal, Pol Pot's regime waged war on the Eastern Zone, bordering Viet Nam—"where the Vietnamese penetration had been the deepest."<sup>6</sup> Many of these Eastern Zone officials fled to Viet Nam, where they received support for eventually helping Viet Nam overthrow the DK regime. In December 1978, the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS) was officially established—foreshadowing the oppositional government that would replace the KR regime once removed from power. In June, Viet Nam began bombing Cambodia and in October 1978, it began preparations for a large-scale offensive.<sup>7</sup> Finally in late December 1978, the Vietnamese Army launched a large-scale attack on Democratic Kampuchea.



People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) Liberation Map in 1979, DC-Cam Archives

### The Khmer Rouge Defeat

The DK period ended as it began, in war and social upheaval. The regime was defeated by the advancing Vietnamese forces and the forces of the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation (KUFNS).

The Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia through a ferocious attack that depended on overwhelming numbers, speed, heavy artillery and multiple points of attack. Nine battalions of the KUFNS and twelve divisions of the People's Army of Viet Nam (PAVN) forces began a massive and coordinated attack on DK on December 25, 1978. The KUFNS approached from three major points of attack. Three battalions approached from Svay Rieng on the national road 1, three others came from Kampong Cham, and the other three attacked from Snuol district of Kratie province.

PAVN employed twelve military divisions (approximately 120,000 troops) who were supported by naval forces, tanks, artillery, and air strikes. The Vietnamese and KUFNS forces were able to capture the capital city of Phnom Penh in only three weeks on January 7, 1979, and within ten days, almost the entire country was under their control. Viet Nam



Khmer Rouge crossing into Thailand in 1979 after being chased by Vietnamese forces, Photo by Jack Dunford, DC-Cam Archives

assisted in the establishment of a new regime, the People's Republic of Kampuchea, which was officially proclaimed on January 12, 1979, with comrade Heng Samrin as President and comrade Pen Sovann as Prime Minister and National Defense Minister.<sup>8</sup>

### **Escape to Dangrek Mountain**

With the advance of the PAVN and KUFNS forces into Cambodia, the KR soldiers, cadres and frightened people began to disperse and escape to the forest and Thai border. For the most part, units lost contact with their chains of command and abandoned organized military operations in favor of finding personal refuge. During the escape, the KR also evacuated tens of thousands of people with them, attempting to resume another revolutionary struggle. The people in the KR Northeast, North and Central Zones were evacuated to the northern border and regrouped on top of Dangrek Mountain Range (in the provinces of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey). Those people who lived in the East, West, Southwest and Northwest Zones were encouraged to walk and/or were transported to the western and northwestern border in various border areas in the provinces of Koh Kong, Pursat and Battambang provinces. The people in Phnom Penh were shuffled onto trains that then transported them to Pursat and Battambang. Upon arrival to these areas, the people had to disembark and continue the long journey to the Thai border on foot.



On the long and dangerous journey to the Thai border, fleeing soldiers and civilians had minimal food supplies and often resorted to foraging for tree leaves, wild plants, and animals they found along the way. Some people were able to obtain food and supplies from the villagers, but oftentimes, they were forced to go several days without food or water. In some cases, they reported that they had to drink their own urine because they could not reach local water sources, which were guarded by Vietnamese forces. Some soldiers and civilians also reported finding water that was poisoned, which led to deaths after drinking. The truth of these reports is unknown and it is very likely that such deaths may have been attributed to simply water that was inadvertently contaminated with chemicals or dangerous pathogens.<sup>9</sup>

The people who traveled to the Thai border faced remarkable difficulties. They lacked food supplies and shelter, and they were forced to avoid human habitations out of fear of being arrested or captured.

People from the Northeast—namely those from the provinces of Ratanak Kiri, Stung Treng, Mondul Kiri and Kratie—had to cross the Mekong River to Preah Vihear province in order to reach the Thai border.<sup>10</sup> Many of these people were members of Division 801 and Division 920—the KR central divisions under the command of So Saroeun (Ta 05) and Miech San (Ta 06) respectively. Though many people crossed the Mekong River in Kratie and Stung Treng, some had to cross the river in Laotian territory because of the attacks from Vietnamese forces on Cambodian land. While some people crossed the river by boat, others crossed the river with only a few trunks of bamboo. People had to walk during the day and sleep at night, and some died along the way of hunger. There was little regard for each other's welfare—all that mattered was individual survival. As one survivor recounted, survival was a very selfish affair.<sup>11</sup>

Saing Thanh, a former messenger of KR Division 280 with its base in the East Zone, recalled his escape to Mountain 1001.

*I led seven soldiers to Mom Bei in 1980. On the way, I met many other groups of KR soldiers and people walking to Mom Bei. However, each group had to be independent, ensuring that they arrived at Mom Bei and met Angkar. I exchanged gold for rice and salt with the villagers. We divided salt into small packages and kept it in our respective bags. I saw a lot of people die along the way. There were many swollen corpses on the ground. Some women simply laid in their hammocks to die. They would call out to me: "Comrade! Please help! Take me with you!" I asked myself, "How could we help them if we could not even help ourselves?" Moreover, the Vietnamese soldiers were constantly chasing us, and the soldiers killed the dying people. Arriving at Chhaeb district, we cut down banana trees and ate the fruit like elephants. It took one and half*



*months to arrive at Mom Bei. Upon our arrival to Mom Bei, we found plentiful rice, and everyone was starving. As a result, many people ate too much. Many people died from over-eating the uncooked rice, so we were asked to eat sticky rice instead.*<sup>12</sup>

The KR soldiers and their family members spent many days (and for many people it took several months) walking to the Thai border. Chouen, a soldier of Division 920, walked with 1,500 other soldiers for two months and ten days to arrive in Battambang province where their division commander Miech San received them and subsequently led them to Dangrek Mountain.<sup>13</sup> Yim Phanna, a soldier in Division 801, also escaped to the Thai border with other soldiers and cadres. He recalled his long and difficult journey:

*We started our journey around March [1979]. The weather was so hot. The areas with water were occupied by the Vietnamese forces, and fighting usually occurred in these areas. There were a lot of deaths and injuries. My legs and hands became swollen, and I could not walk. I got lost with my group running away from Vietnamese soldiers. Eventually I had to drink my own urine to survive. Sometimes, when we were cooking rice, the Vietnamese forces attacked us. We would disperse in different directions and simply leave our rice. Over time, our group became smaller. Dy Thin was the group leader at that time. When we arrived at Chhaeb district, I was forced to go into the village for medical treatment because my legs and hands became too swollen. I also developed a fever. If I continued to stay with the group, the journey would have been slow because of my illness, so the members of my group decided to confiscate my gun and force me to surrender to the enemy. I did not want to go, but I had no choice. Arriving in the village, I was arrested by Vietnamese soldiers, and I was sent to a prison where I saw a number of my friends.*<sup>14</sup>

Kim Nan, a former KR soldier in Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey Region (Region 106), was in the heavy artillery unit of the region. In 1979, when the Vietnamese forces entered Cambodia, Nan and his unit were sent to Thala Borivat district to assist the battlefield there. Nan described how he escaped the harrowing journey to the Thai border.

*Arriving at Thala Borivat, I could not recognize who were Khmer and who were Vietnamese. In the morning, a lot of Vietnamese soldiers sprouted up like mushrooms from the earth. The fighting took place for several days. We were defeated by the Vietnamese forces and retreated into the forest which was full of wild animals such as elephants and tigers. I thought that I would certainly die. At night, I dared not sleep on the ground but in the branches of a tree. In the morning, I lost my*

*direction. I heard the sound of gunfire and decided to walk in that direction. Coming upon a field, I saw a group of shirtless people but could not recognize who they were. I called out to them, but as they were Vietnamese soldiers they could not understand me. Instead, they beckoned me to come closer to them. I approached them, but upon recognizing their Vietnamese helmets, I ran. I became lost in the forest again for another two days with no food. Walking on the road, I heard the sound of a truck. I realized it was a KR truck so I approached them and asked for a ride, which they agreed. The Vietnamese forces kept chasing us until we reached Choam Khsan district, Preah Vihear province.<sup>15</sup>*

There were several reasons why people chose to flee to the Cambodian-Thai border. The people were immersed in a stream of KR propaganda describing the Vietnamese as monsters. They were told that Vietnamese soldiers would cut people's throats or boil them in hot water. The people were also told that the Vietnamese were fond of disemboweling their victims and stuffing their bellies with grass. For many people, being captured by the Vietnamese became a fate worse than death and they were willing to take any measure to flee. Some people also believed that Cambodia was lost to Viet Nam and their only choice was to start a new life in another country. Still other people chose to flee Cambodia because they knew that the United Nations (UN) was feeding refugees at Phnom Chhat and other refugee camps in Thailand. Finally, some were also servants of the DK regime.

Leng Pheng, a former soldier of Division 801, recalled his escape from Ratanak Kiri province to Tonle La-Pov.

*When Viet Nam entered Cambodia in 1979, I ran and lived in the forest in Ratanak Kiri province. Thereafter, in 1981, I ran to Dangrek Mountain because we faced severe economic hardship. We walked through Laotian land from Ratanak Kiri to Stung Treng because the Vietnamese forces were stationed along the border inside Cambodian land. Arriving in Stung Treng, we made bamboo rafts to cross the Mekong River to Preah Vihear. When I was swimming across the river, I developed a cramp and could not walk, so I stayed on the bank of the river. The rest of my unit crossed the river and went to Mom Bei ahead of me. It took me nine days to reach Tonle La-Pov/Mom Bei, whereas my unit was able to make the journey in three days.<sup>16</sup>*

Em Sarin, presumably the last secretary of the Kratie region under the DK regime, oversaw the escape of the KR cadres, soldiers and civilians from Kratie to the Thai border. Under Sarin's direction, KR soldiers and civilians crossed the Mekong River in Prek Prosap district. From there they proceeded in the direction of Kampong Thom and onward to Preah Vihear. Many other people proceeded to Stung Treng by truck, at which point

they disembarked and crossed the Mekong River to Thala Borivat. From Thala Borivat, the people continued onward to Preah Vihear. For this longer trip, Sarin prepared forty-seven trucks full of gasoline, food supplies and other necessities. Due to the massive exodus of people in the Northeast provinces, Sarin was not able to ferry all trucks and people to the other side of the river. With assistance from Kheng, a chief in Stung Treng province, Sarin managed to transfer seventeen trucks carrying only the most essential supplies such as gasoline, rice, and clothes. The remaining trucks were set on fire to avoid being used by the Vietnamese forces. For those people who could not be transported by truck, they swam across the river or dispersed into the forest.<sup>17</sup> The situation was intense and chaotic as the Vietnamese forces drew closer to the region and people fled in all different directions.

Separated from his wife, Sarin decided not to go to the Thai border immediately; rather, he decided to travel back into the interior of Cambodia to find his wife. After meeting her in Kampong Cham, Sarin encountered a group of KR soldiers in the forest who he stayed with until 1983. In 1983, he joined the KR community on top of Dangrek Mountain. Sarin described life in the forest.

*I traveled to Phnom Chy by ox-cart. My group consisted of fifteen people including two women. We hid inside the forest, cleared land and farmed for a living. There were several KR units working in the front. Some units lacked salt and food. Fortunately, my group found jars of salt and sugar buried under the ground in what was once a KR work site. We boiled and dried the salt and then hid it for longer use. We had plenty of salt, axes and knives allowing us to do good farming. We grew a lot of rice and vegetables including corn, water melon, water grass, cucumber, pumpkin and wax melon. After several years at this location, we decided to ascend Dangrek Mountain in 1983.<sup>18</sup>*

To facilitate the escape of military units and civilians to Thailand and KR-controlled areas, the KR positioned a number of small military units on each escaping road. These units were responsible for guarding the roads, guiding the direction of the escapees, and in some cases leading the people to the military camps on Dangrek Mountain. Without these military units, the escaping soldiers and people would face difficulties in escaping the Vietnamese forces who were occupying or patrolling nearly every district and commune.

The people who made the journey out of Cambodia were extremely exhausted and suffered from severe malnutrition. Many people had been walking for more than a month without food. The KR leaders allowed the exhausted people to rest for about one or two months, giving them a number of supplies such as medicine, clothes, food, and many other materials necessary for living. Later, in an effort to reorganize the fighting forces, the people were grouped according to their former regions and units.<sup>19</sup>



## ***Anlong Veng under Vietnamese Control***

### **Arrival of Vietnamese Forces**

In early 1979 Vietnamese forces and the forces of the United Front for National Salvation of Kampuchea (UFNSK) defeated the KR and the Democratic Kampuchea regime was removed from power. The Vietnamese forces and UFNSK quickly established a provisional government—People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK)—and many of Anlong Veng's residents who had been forcibly transferred to cooperatives returned home. As people returned home, they could still hear the sounds of war between the Vietnamese/PRK forces and the KR.

When they first arrived in Anlong Veng, the people gathered in an area which is now the Anlong Veng market. They saw a lot of rice and materials such as bicycles, motors, and sewing machines, which were left over from the KR cadres and soldiers who fled the area. They collected the materials and food supplies and returned to their respective homes.

One week later, the Vietnamese forces arrived and took control of the region. The Vietnamese called upon the people to attend a meeting. As they were talking, KR soldiers fought their way into the area and dispersed the meeting. The fighting continued for an entire day before the Vietnamese forces were able to push the KR back into the forest. On the morning of the next day, the Vietnamese and PRK forces convened another meeting with the people in Anlong Veng. The PRK announced to the people that they had come to liberate the people—not to kill them—and asked everyone to prepare for a second round of evacuations. The Vietnamese had decided that the residents had to be relocated to another village because Anlong Veng was too remote for the Vietnamese to defend. And, given the frequency of KR attacks, it was safer for the residents to be somewhere other than Anlong Veng.<sup>1</sup> It is believed, based on interviews of individuals in the area, that there were about 100 families at that time, or in total between 400 and 500 people. The PRK and Vietnamese soldiers took about 30 trucks to deliver people to live in Kantuot commune, Choam Khsan district. The evacuation was conducted around March 1979. There were also some people who were afraid of the KR and believed that Viet Nam came to liberate them, and these people decided to go to Sre Noy, Varin district, where they started a new life by farming.<sup>2</sup>

At Choam Khsan, the people were welcomed by the PRK commune chief. Anlong Veng residents were put in one place and a new commune was created specifically for the Anlong Veng residents. Fortunately, because many of the village homes were abandoned, no new houses had to be built.<sup>3</sup>

While Choam Khsan was a more secure area than Anlong Veng, there were still frequent incursions by the KR. Consequently Choam Khsan had to be abandoned as well, and people were relocated to Preah Vihear's provincial town in Rovieng district. Some of the residents continued to live in Rovieng while others who missed their home villages returned to live in Anlong Veng after the 1998 integration.

Some KR soldiers and their family members who were born in Anlong Veng refused to obey the Vietnamese-PRK evacuation plan and continued to live in Anlong Veng. As a result, they faced many difficulties and risks. The Vietnamese forces did not trust these people, as their loyalties appeared to lie with the KR. Although unconfirmed, according to KR-affiliated people in the area, it is alleged that some people were arrested and even executed.<sup>4</sup> The Vietnamese soldiers accused these people of being "Pol Pot's soldiers with bloody hands."<sup>5</sup> Yim La Hoen said that he and another seventy people who returned to Anlong Veng to search for their relatives were arrested by the Vietnamese soldiers in Lum-tong village. The people were tortured and interrogated. Lahoen recalled:

*I ran back home and was arrested by the Vietnamese soldiers in Lum-tong. They examined me on everything. They looked at my clothes, face and eyes. Then they called five of us out of the group and asked us what we did during Sihanouk's regime. I said I did not do anything; I just studied a little bit. "What did you do during Lon Nol's regime?" I said I looked after the cattle. "What did you do after 1970?" I said I did not do anything. I was young. I was asked to learn dancing for the KR. When they asked me about my work during the Pol Pot's regime, I told them frankly that I was Pol Pot's soldier. "Which border did you defend?" I said I was based at the Thai border. "Did you ever fight on the Vietnamese border?" I said that, "Oh, I never knew that border. I don't even know what Viet Nam looks like." After asking me these questions, the Vietnamese soldiers said that they would "smash us later." After the interrogation, the Vietnamese forces allowed us to go to our respective villages. I went to Ta Dev village, where I met my parents and the other villagers who had just returned back from Kralanh district.<sup>6</sup>*

The people who were perceived to be "Pol Pot's soldiers" who fought Vietnamese were not so fortunate. Thin Bin describes what he witnessed one day in Anlong Veng:

*The Vietnamese forces arrested six people and walked them to a place near O'Chik. They asked the people to stand in a straight line facing them. Moments later, they shot them. The entire line of people just collapsed to the ground. The Vietnamese soldiers observed the bodies briefly and believed that they were all dead. The Vietnamese then went into the forest to find wood to burn the bodies. At that point, those who were still alive immediately got up and ran for their life. My younger brother was one of those people who were shot dead. We were about to go to Samraong village that day, but after I saw this incident and the death of my brother, I returned to my home village. Shortly thereafter, the KR came down from the mountain and evacuated us to their camp on the mountain. They assigned us to the task of producing spikes.<sup>7</sup>*

In late 1979, the KR soldiers evacuated some of the remaining families in Anlong Veng to Dangrek Mountain. The road to the mountain did not exist at that time, so people had to walk through dense forest and, in some cases, climb up rocky cliffs by pulling on wild vines or trees.<sup>8</sup> Those who managed to reach the top assisted the people at the bottom by hoisting them up using wild vines. Since the journey was arduous, the people had to discard many of their belongings. They only kept the most essential items like cooking pots, rice, and other food.

Outside of these groups, there were still other villagers who decided to avoid both the Vietnamese and the KR forces by hiding in the forests. These people divided into small groups and lived in the forests around Anlong Veng. Families tended to congregate in groups for safety and companionship.<sup>9</sup> They often were forced to run from place to place to escape the fighting between Vietnamese and KR forces.<sup>10</sup> These groups of people typically lived off the land by foraging for wild plants and hunting wild animals. Also, for at least the early 1980s, the population that remained in Anlong Veng became for the most part nomadic. Sin Huong described her nomadic life in Anlong Veng after returning back from Kralanh.

*We generally stayed at home for only one or two nights before moving to another location. We had to run and sleep at various places in the forest when the Vietnamese and the KR forces fought each other. We found over-ripe wild potatoes that were very tough to eat, but they were our only food supply. We sometimes ate these potatoes with either fish or wild animals, such as lizard or tortoise to supplement our diet.<sup>11</sup>*

### **Vietnamese Occupation of Anlong Veng**

The PRK and Vietnamese forces established several garrisons in Anlong Veng as their strategic military bases. The main Vietnamese military headquarters was known as Cong Binh. The Vietnamese army set up one special military unit near the area known today as

the Choam Sa-Ngam border pass to protect against KR infiltration into Anlong Veng. For the most part, Anlong Veng from 1979 to 1989 was abandoned by civilians—becoming essentially a militarized zone—as there were not many places for ordinary people to settle. Anlong Veng’s natural terrain afforded the Vietnamese/PRK army a strong defensive position, which the KR forces spent a decade trying to acquire without success.

To protect against KR infiltration and incursion, the Vietnamese/ PRK forces constructed a number of bunkers in Anlong Veng. Under the K-5 plan,<sup>12</sup> a series of measures were taken to fortify the area and reduce KR infiltration. These measures included clearing the forest, planting landmines, setting up spikes, and building bamboo fences with barbed wire.

On the KR-side, from 1979 to 1989, the KR forces and the people under their control either lived in the KR military bases along the Cambodian-Thai border or in various refugee camps inside Thailand. The two main KR military bases that were affiliated with the Anlong Veng region were known as Mountain 1001 and Mountain 1003. These bases were situated along the Dangrek Mountain range on the northern and northwestern border between Cambodia and Thailand. The two bases were ideal for defensive maneuvers and reconstituting a fighting force. They were situated a few kilometers from the Thai border, surrounded by dense forests and mostly inaccessible mountainous areas.



## **The Khmer Rouge Re-Organization**

### **Mountain 1001: The Early Khmer Rouge Re-Organization**

Mountain 1001 was the name given to a military camp within the tri-border region between Cambodia's Preah Vihear province, Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani province and Laos' Ch'impasak province, well-known as Mum Bei or Tonel La-Pov. It became one of the early safe zones where the KR leaders met with their soldiers and tens of thousands of other escaping people.<sup>1</sup> Mountain 1001 was established immediately following the KR defeat, and it became one of the KR military and civilian bases for the regroup and reorganization of armed forces and administration for the struggle to regain power.

Mountain 1001 was strategically chosen because it was located in the northern part of the country—which was relatively far from the Vietnamese border and close to Thailand. In essence, Thailand became the only channel for the KR to acquire food and other necessary supplies and ammunition. In addition, Thailand served as a strategic hub for communications with and connections to the outside world. Geographically, Mountain 1001 was located in an ideal location by which the KR could quickly concentrate its forces. The region was naturally protected by dense forest and mountain ranges, which the Vietnamese and PRK forces could not surmount until almost six years later in late 1984.

While there were a variety of different sources for foreign assistance, China was the main supporter for the KR. Without military, financial, logistical and political support from China, the KR would hardly have been able to wage war against the Vietnamese-backed PRK throughout the 1980s. Thailand as well was a critical supporter to the KR. The Thai government provided sanctuary for the KR forces, and they facilitated the vast supply of aid, including arms and ammunition, which poured in from China.<sup>2</sup>

Son Sen, DK's Third Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense, was the *de facto* leader of Mountain 1001. The other prominent KR leaders—Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan—retreated to their headquarters inside Thailand or resided in other border areas in the provinces of Koh Kong, Pursat and Battambang. These leaders managed a variety of projects ranging from economics, foreign affairs, political training, policy and propaganda. Inside the country, Son Sen was assisted by senior military commanders including Ta Mok, Ke Pauk, Meas Muth, Sou Meth, So Hong, Ny Kan, So Saroeun and Miech San—all of whom would become key KR military front leaders in the struggle

against the PRK and the Vietnamese.<sup>3</sup> Generally the middle-tier leaders focused their efforts on local and regional management projects, such as organizing villages and setting up schools and medical-care facilities,<sup>4</sup> which became all the more possible after Vietnamese military operations began to focus on consolidating their hold on Cambodian territory. The KR leaders used the several months of relative peace to reorganize their remaining armed forces and arrange the supervision of the remaining occupied land of Cambodia.

As part of the KR plan to acquire more territory and coerce greater defections to their side, the KR in Mountain 1001 prepared to return a large number of soldiers back to the interior. Soldiers in these divisions worked in the provinces of Ratanak Kiri, Mondulhiri, Stung Treng, Kratie, Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, and part of Kandal.

Generally, they conducted what was then called guerilla war or “people’s war.” The soldiers’ family members and other civilians at the bases had to deliver supplies, weapons and ammunition to the soldiers on the frontlines. These dangerous tasks often required large convoys of about two hundred soldiers. Supply convoys traveled on foot through forests, covering about five to ten kilometers per day. Each individual carried heavy ammunition and other supplies, which slowed their travel and made the journey exhausting. Each trip typically took one month to complete. They generally traveled during the day and slept on plastic mats or hammocks during the night.

Thiep Then, a former soldier in Division 920, described his experiences in delivering ammunition from Mountain 1001 to the forces based in Kratie province.

*I led a group of seventy soldiers delivering the ammunition to the battlefield in Kratie province. We walked down the Dangrek Mountain to Sra-Em and crossed to Kampong Thom. At one in the afternoon, we stopped on the way in order to cook rice for lunch. After lunch, we walked for about one kilometer, and then the Vietnamese forces exploded a string of claymore mines. One soldier in front of me fell down. When I looked back, two other soldiers also fell down. I shot several explosive rounds from my grenade launcher, which may have killed some of the Vietnamese soldiers. We collected ten Vietnamese military helmets from that ambush. I also was injured and taken back for medical treatment.<sup>5</sup>*

Mountain 1001 was overrun and captured by the PRK and Vietnamese forces in late December 1984. All civilians in the region were evacuated to Thailand where they lived close to Son Sen’s office. Later, all military divisions and the people were transported to live in another occupied area called Mountain 1003 under Ta Mok’s control. From that day onward, Son Sen began to gradually lose military influence—even though he continued to oversee military divisions and people from Mountain 1001. Over time, newer and junior leaders began to assume

greater power in the KR circle of power—sowing the seeds of tension and internal rivalry.

### **Mountain 1003: Ta Mok's Strategic Military Base**

The KR made every effort to re-occupy the 830-kilometer Cambodian-Thai border stretching from Preah Vihear province in the North to Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Pailin, Pursat and Koh Kong in the West.<sup>6</sup> Ta Mok was one of the most active KR military commanders in this endeavor because he oversaw the northern border of Preah Vihear and Oddar Meanchey provinces.

Accounts are not entirely clear on when each base was created; however it is generally believed that Mountain 1003 was established shortly after Mountain 1001. After successfully assisting Son Sen in establishing his base in Mountain 1001, Ta Mok occupied another major area (Mountain 1003) in late 1979.

Since 1979 and until 1984, Mountain 1003 had become one of the most critical strongholds of the KR movement. Given the concentration of KR forces in the area, it could be considered as the primary military base for the entire KR movement. In comparison, the base in Malai under Ieng Sary tended to focus primarily on economic enterprises, and Office K-18 in Thailand's Trat province, which fell under the supervision of Pol Pot and a handful of intellectuals, tended to focus on political priorities and functions.<sup>7</sup>

Geographically, Mountain 1003 extended from Preah Vihear Temple to Anlong Veng district of Oddar Meanchey province. Trapeang Prasat district is located near the Chup Ron border pass, which straddles the Cambodia Thai border. The KR used this pass to deliver weapons and food supplies from Thailand or from their bases on Dangrek Mountain to the forces inside Cambodia.<sup>8</sup>

The inhabitants in Mountain 1003 were selected from various KR strongholds including Samlot, Malai, Mountain 1001, and various refugee camps. The people ended up in Mountain 1003 either by chance, coercion or propaganda. Most people were former KR cadres and people in the DK Southwest Zone, Ta Mok's former controlled areas in 1975–1979;<sup>9</sup> although some women had no choice but to follow their husbands who served as soldiers

**Kaet Preah** a former KR cadre working in the DK Foreign Affairs Ministry, provides a snapshot of her experience in the O'Trao refugee camp (a KR-controlled camp which was then located in Thailand's Sisakhet Province).

*On top of Dangrek Mountain, there was no water. Luckily, we met the red Thai army, who gave us water and food when we were running to the refugee camps. We continued our journey to O'Trao refugee camp where we were given all kinds of things for living, and rice was distributed weekly. There were tens of thousands of people in O'Trao camp. I was married in the camp. There were songs and senior people who attended the wedding ceremony. We were also able to use the Thai pagoda.<sup>1</sup>*

in Mountain 1003. Most people were former KR cadres and people in the DK Southwest Zone, Ta Mok's former controlled areas in 1975–79.<sup>9</sup> The incoming people had to travel by way of Thailand in order to avoid accidental confrontation with the Vietnamese-PRK soldiers who were stationed in the Cambodian side of the border. The population in Mountain 1003 increased substantially and the people claimed that this was due largely to the favorable conditions of the region and the good leadership of Ta Mok, who provided all kinds of support and supplies necessary for daily life. With a strong constituency of loyal fighters and community members, Ta Mok became a powerful and unchallenged military commander in Mountain 1003.

In the field of foreign policy, China and Thailand had come to serve as critical proponents for the KR's continued struggle. The Cold War dynamics and theories that had compelled the United States to prop up the South Vietnamese regime during the Viet Nam War continued to play a part in the West's approach to Cambodia. With China as a critical source for supplies and Thailand as a critical source for space, the KR forces were capable of re-organizing a movement that could challenge the PRK and Vietnamese forces.

### **Organizing the Villages and Camps**

For administrative efficiency, the area in Mountain 1003 was organized into villages, and the people's lifestyle was identical to the cooperative living arrangements during the DK regime. One of the prominent differences, however, between life during the DK period and life after was the provision of adequate food and other supplies.<sup>10</sup> While the DK regime was defined by starvation, the post-DK, KR administration used the provision of food and supplies (provided by foreign donors) as a means of securing the people's loyalty.

Everyone was assigned to live in their respective military units. People were expected to share tasks, eating and pleasure activities. The villages, which were about one half to one kilometer apart, were named according to the code number of each military division or in some cases after the individual village chiefs.<sup>11</sup> Each village consisted of about thirty to forty families, and the people generally lived in small cottages made from wood, bamboo and thatch.<sup>12</sup> Given the ever-present threat of attack, the use of these materials and the style of housing were primarily functional. The communities had to be mobile and ready to flee with minimal notice.

In terms of administration, the commune and district structures that exist today in Cambodia did not exist in Anlong Veng at that time. For the most part, Ta Mok presided above both administrative and military affairs.<sup>13</sup>

The KR soldiers and their families also lived and moved between camps inside Thailand, such as O'Trao, Stung Chan, Chup Malou, Dang Tung, Khai Don and Norn Sung. While some people in Anlong Veng claimed these camps were effectively under the control of

the KR in Mountain 1003, the exact disposition of each camp was not possible to confirm and, in retrospect, may have changed with the relative ebb and flow of civilians/soldiers during conflict.<sup>14</sup>

O'Trao camp was reported to be one of the most important support bases of the KR in Mountain 1003. It was under the direct control of Ta Mok, who set up one of his headquarters in the camp. United Nations Border Relief Organization (UNBRO) and several other international organizations provided humanitarian assistance by way of food, water, health care, and other life necessities, including primary education.<sup>15</sup> However, the assistance was limited to women and children because soldiers were perceived as the warrior groups. The total number of refugees in O'Trao was estimated at over 15,000 by 1991. The camp was officially closed on October 19, 1992.

Some people in O'Trao sneaked into Thailand to work and earn income. They would do any work they were offered including picking watermelons, digging potatoes and harvesting rice. The work was facilitated by Thai businessmen who took advantage of Cambodian refugees who were in search of an opportunity for a better life. A number of Thai trucks would idle outside the camp in the morning and deliver the refugees back in the evening.<sup>16</sup> Aside from selling labor, some sold thatch to Thai people. They could earn about five baht (about 5–10 U.S. cents) for a bunch of thatch.<sup>17</sup>

In late 1984, tens of thousands of Vietnamese-PRK forces assaulted the main exit of Mountain 1003 in Preah Bralay commune. With a force of over 30,000, Vietnamese-PRK soldiers were able to destroy all KR refugee camps, supply bases, and defensive networks inside Cambodia.<sup>18</sup> By this time, Vietnamese and the PRK's forces occupied all KR strongholds and those of FUNCINPEC and KPNLF. Both the refugees and the resistance forces had to move into Thai-based camps.

The PRK described the 1984–85 offensive as a tactic of “setting up a mosquito net to kill the mosquitoes”; however, the KR described their defeat as “the piercing of the ant nest.” Rather than defeat, the KR, like ants, would now infiltrate more deeply into the interior of the country.<sup>19</sup> While the exact effects of this offensive are difficult to determine, it is believed that some KR soldiers did infiltrate deeper into the interior of Cambodia than before for the purpose of conducting sabotage and sowing propaganda. On the other hand, many KR soldiers were called back to the region as a result of the offensive for the purpose of bolstering the KR forces on the border. With the lack of food supplies during this period, KR soldiers looted communities in the interior for daily survival.

The KR leaders evacuated the people from the villages in Mountain 1003 to O'Trao camp and Stung Chan. From that point forward, in light of the Vietnamese threat, the KR began to recruit ordinary people in the camps to serve in the military. Life became harsher, and the KR leaders and cadres became more oppressive and coercive.



## ***Guerrilla War and People's War***

### **Military Front on Mountain 1003**

In December 1979, the KR remnants declared the formation of the National Army of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK). Its forces increased gradually from 1979 to 1985 after which the size of the army began to gradually diminish. By August 1980, the total number of KR forces increased from around 20,000 to 40,000. On one occasion, Son Sen claimed the KR had 60,000 forces, which were divided into 5,000-strong guerilla units that conducted guerilla war throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> After the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, the number of forces was reduced to around 20,000 personnel—due largely to the repatriation of people from the refugee camps to their homeland as well as small-scale defections.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1990s, the KR forces were estimated to be about 10,000, and by 1998 only a few thousand members remained.

Although the KR forces were divided into smaller units, they were still organized into what they called divisions, regiments, battalions, companies and platoons—the military structure that existed since the revolutionary period (1970–75). It is believed that each division consisted of two to three thousand members, although this number diminished significantly over time. Eventually, the number of people assigned to some units consisted of no more than a few hundred members.<sup>3</sup>

A few former KR Divisions from the DK period (1975–79) continued their existence while many new Divisions were created by mobilizing the dispersed soldiers. The KR also recruited more forces either from the refugee camps or from inside the PRK's controlled areas.<sup>4</sup> The new recruits were a mixture of volunteers and conscripts (some of whom were abducted in the interior of the country and transported to military units along the Cambodia-Thai border).

As part of Mountain 1003's military organization, Ta Mok established several military fronts along the border in what is now Anlong Veng and Trapeang Prasat districts (bordering Thailand's Sisaket province). These military fronts included Front 808, 800, 40, 1002 and 50—all of which were under the organizational structure of Mountain 1003. These military fronts were located on top of Dangrek Mountain in strategic border passes where the KR could send in their forces to capture various places inside Cambodian land for military operations.<sup>5</sup> Essentially, these military fronts were created in an attempt to push the Vietnamese forces out of Anlong Veng. However, the KR were not successful in this endeavor until late 1989, when all Vietnamese forces withdrew from Cambodia. On the

Cambodian side of the border, pursuant to the national defense plan known as “K-5,” the Vietnamese-PRK forces also established a number of strategic military garrisons preventing the infiltration of the KR.

Front 808 was in an area called Thkeam Romeas village and what is now Chaom Sa-Ngam border pass. One KR warehouse was built in this Front to assist the battlefield. Soeun, former DK commander of Division 775 based in the DK North Zone, was the chief of Front 808, which was one of the main border passes between Cambodia and Thailand.<sup>6</sup> It was the closest of all the Fronts to the Vietnamese military bases. To the East was Front 800, located near Tumnupeu dam in Trapeang Prey commune (Anlong Veng district). Front 800’s name was taken from Division 800 with Dy Thin as a commander. Further east was Front 40, which was located in an area known as O’Thom and Chroak (currently in O’Svay commune, Trapeang Prasat district). The next military base was Front 1002, which was located in an area known as Chup Ron border pass (now in Preah Pralay commune, Trapeang Prasat district). Division 612 was established and assigned to protect and operate in Front 1002. Hoeun was the chief of the division, and Chhean was the deputy chief.<sup>7</sup> Soldiers in Front 1002 operated along the border from Chup Ron to Preah Vihear temple. The



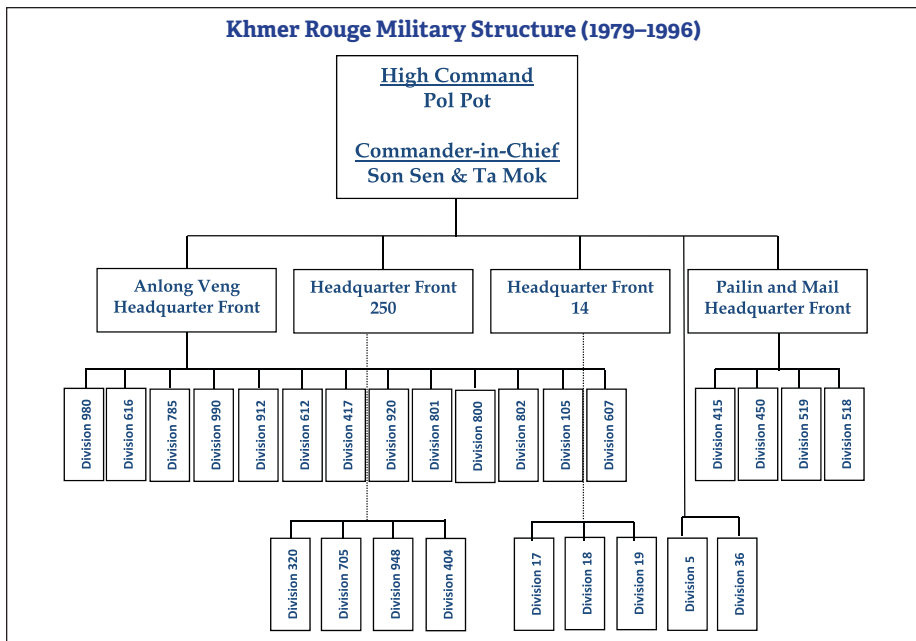
Khmer Rouge strongholds and military operations between 1979 and 1989. Credit to Ly Kok-Chhay, DC-Cam Archives. The map reflects the prominent strongholds and headquarters of the movement, which were conceptually organized in terms of economic, military or political affairs. From Mountains 1001, 1002, and 1003, guerilla forces, spies, and saboteurs were dispatched throughout Cambodia.



soldiers also operated in various parts of Preah Vihear province, especially on national road 12 from Sra-Em to Choam Khsan district. Front 50 was situated to the east of Chup Ron.

Between 1979 and 1985, Fronts 1002 and 50 appeared to be the two most important military fronts in the war against Viet Nam-PRK. Their bases were inside Cambodian land. In the interest of military strategy, in 1980, Ta Mok personally oversaw the construction of a main road from his base in Thai soil across Chup Ron border pass to Preah Pralay commune. This road served as the main pass to transfer forces to the interior and to deliver supplies and ammunition to the soldiers at the front. During the construction of the road, Ta Mok lost his right leg because of a mine explosion in an area called chilly farm (Chamkar Ma-tes). Pil Saratt described the road construction and how Ta Mok became disabled.

*He stood and ordered the bulldozer operation on his own. He was told not to stand too close to the bulldozer because one anti-tank mine could not be located. As he was directing the construction, the bulldozer ran over an anti-tank mine. The chain on the bulldozer broke and hit Ta Mok—breaking his right leg severely. The pieces of mine fragment also*



The chart is adapted from the military organization chart produced by the Khmer Rouge and reported to UNTAC in 1991. However, the Khmer Rouge falsified the names of the divisions and the names of the military commanders. The authors reproduced the chart by extracting the information from the interviews with over 300 former Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres. In addition, two divisions (Division 801 and Division 920) are former military divisions from the 1975-1979 period. Some divisions were created after 1979 and some others were created after the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement.

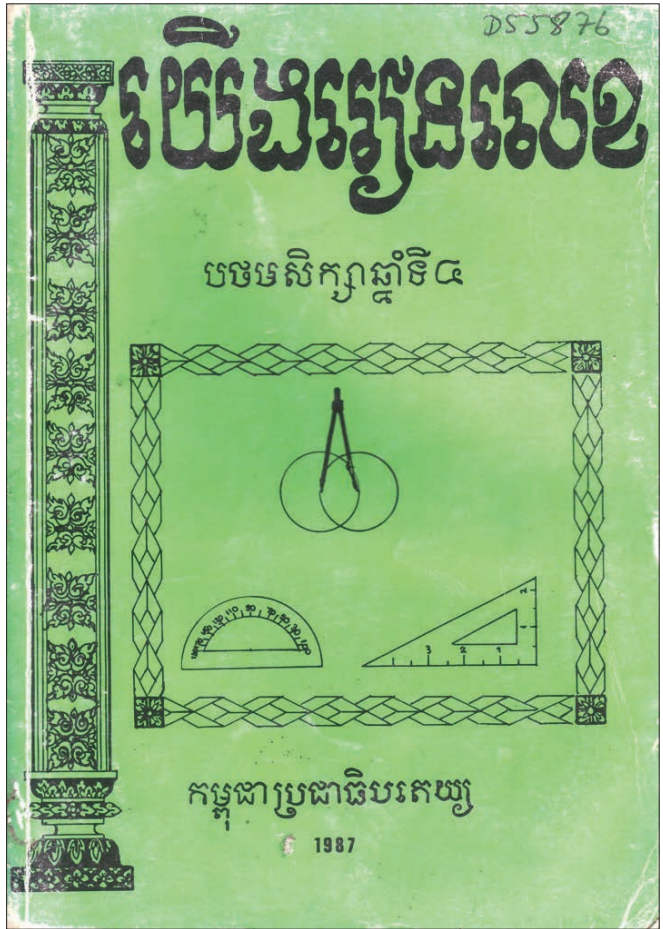
hit his chest. The soldiers put him on a bed and carried him to Thailand. Doctor Thiounn Thioeunn and several other Thai doctors provided treatment along the way. The soldiers carried him on foot across the border to Chup Ma-lou camp and then put him in a car to Thailand. It took the soldiers the whole night to reach Chup Ma-lou. The carriers took turns carrying his bed. They did not sleep nor rest. Before losing consciousness, Ta Mok told the soldiers and the surrounding people that "I may not be able to survive. Please take care of the people and continue the struggle." Everyone cried upon hearing these words.<sup>8</sup>

### **Working in the Interior: Guerilla War and People's War**

Soldiers in Mountain 1003 were sent to work in the interior on annual assignments. They were dispatched to work around Tonle Sap Lake in the provinces of Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, and Battambang as well as along the border in Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear provinces. Each soldier could visit their families on Dangrek Mountain for only one or two weeks at a time, after which they would be dispatched back to their assigned locations. Occasionally the front soldiers could get in touch with their wives and families in the rear through telegrams and letters.<sup>9</sup> Before going onto their missions, the soldiers also attended training sessions with their leaders. Ek Sophal, former DK Secretary of Region 37 and military commander of the Western Zone recalls his work in the interior:

*When the Vietnamese forces fought into Cambodia, my deputy Pa Chem and I led 1,000 soldiers from Koh Kong to Kampong Chhnang. Our forces operated around Tonle Sap Lake with extremely little food. In 1982, Ta Mok called me back to Anlong Veng where I got married to my second wife. After the marriage, Ta Mok asked me to return back to work in various places in Preah Vihear and Kampong Thom with Ke Pauk's and Srey Soben's forces. I also worked in Pouk, Kralanh and Varin. I could return back to visit my wife every six months to a year. In 1986, I was assigned to work in Kampong Chhnang. I led one hundred forces to swim across Tonle Sap Lake because we did not have enough boats. My forces worked in Boribo district where frequent fighting with the Vietnamese and government forces occurred. We sometimes stayed in the villages, but most of the time we stayed in the forest to avoid fighting. All of my soldiers left their wives in Anlong Veng. In 1996, I took the train from Kampong Chhnang to Pursat and lived there until the integration.<sup>10</sup>*

Usually the KR soldiers were sent to work in areas around their home villages. There were many advantages of keeping soldiers close to their home villages. Soldiers who were close to their home villages knew the local geography and could work effectively with the people. Moreover, they could receive food and accommodation from the villagers in the



A KR mathematics textbook for grade 4, DC-Cam Archives

event that they ran out of food supplies. In addition, the KR were also assigned to their home villages because they were often able to gain the cooperation of villagers in terms of obtaining information on the local PRK authorities. Their network of spies allowed them to prepare for sabotage missions and other guerrilla operations against the government, Vietnamese military bases, as well as administrative offices.

The guerilla war and people's war were the main military techniques of the NADK in the battle against what they called "the invading Vietnamese enemy". They were strategies that were well-recognized and practiced by the common people since 1968 when the KR first started to take up an armed struggle against the Cambodian government. The tactic of guerilla war can be described as mobile and flexible to an opponent's strategy and organization. Each guerilla group consisted of a small number of men (between ten to twelve men).

*The small guerilla groups conduct the fighting using any number of weapons from spikes, mines, snap shots, and exploding mine strings in order to deteriorate the enemy's forces by regularly killing one or two enemies per day. [...] The guerilla groups destroyed the enemy's small and big roads by cutting down trees, constructing wooden barricades to block the roads, and by planting mines and spikes along the roadside.<sup>11</sup>*

The attacks were conducted in the quietest manner without allowing “the enemy” to be aware of the advance. The hit-and-run guerilla raids also required constant movement to adapt to the ever-changing battlefield.<sup>12</sup>

With these guerilla tactics, the KR soldiers attacked commune and district offices as well as other state buildings. Communications, roads, and railways throughout the country were targets. These attacks created great security challenges for the PRK government and caused heavy casualties to both PRK and Vietnamese soldiers as well as the ordinary people. For example, in June 1980, the KR launched a rocket attack on a crowded train at Sdoc Ach Romeas in Kampong Chhnang province, which killed a number of people.<sup>13</sup> The KR guerrilla forces attacked a town in Prey Veng and an orphanage in Svay Rieng in January and February 1985 respectively. In late March, they burned down the market in Kampong Speu and attacked Battambang provincial town.

The KR leadership believed that the daily nationwide attacks and killings of Vietnamese soldiers would weaken the Vietnamese and would eventually force Viet Nam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia. At one point Pol Pot even boasted that if the Vietnamese forces were ever withdrawn from Cambodia, he would blow the PRK regime over like a piece of paper and seize power once again.<sup>14</sup>

As part of the people's war, each soldier was assigned to recruit support by working closely with the people. Rather than focusing on military targets, the people's war was focused on the civilian population, which could offer up valuable information and serve as an unlimited resource for supplying operations in the interior. Liberating the country from “the Vietnamese invasion and its puppets” was the key message of the people's war. In addition, the people's war meant that male, female, young and old could participate in the war.

The people were encouraged to work together in the war effort. People could produce spikes and plant traps to protect their villages. They can provide information to the guerillas fighters and help guerilla fighters as spies in targeting state officials and administration. The people were encouraged to participate in the destruction of state roads and refusing to sell to the enemy. The people were also encouraged to prevent their mobilization or recruitment on behalf of the state.<sup>15</sup>

Prum Yim, a former KR soldier from Division 801, talked about the lesson he learned from his leaders on how to conduct the people war:

*First we need to build up individuals and then entire families. We first built up the husband who can then, in turn, build up his wife. When the husband and wife have a common patriotic view, they both can build up their children who in turn build up their friends. The process of building up forces was like termites on wood. Bit by bit, the termites would destroy the wood from the inside. The outside of the wood may still look good, but it was this internal process that had to be secret; otherwise, the forces would have to run into the forest to escape arrest and persecution.<sup>16</sup>*

Working in the interior, the KR soldiers developed both fear and friendship with people. On the one hand, the KR soldiers looted people's property and burned down people's homes in order to weaken the local authority and the Vietnamese forces. On the other hand, the KR soldiers developed close relations with the villagers who provided food and other necessary materials for their daily living. Pan Pat, a former KR soldier of Division 519 said, "It was not difficult to connect to the villagers. We developed relationships with the villagers whose children were PRK's soldiers, and a while later we became friends. We did not fight. Fighting was like destroying our rice cooking pot. We could come in and out of the village easily."<sup>17</sup> Some people even worked as messengers for the KR. Likewise, Meas En, a villager in Anlong Veng district, recalled that:

*I joined the KR in 1985 because I had a problem in the family. The KR had good relations with the villagers [Roung village, La-veng Russei commune, Chikreng district, Siem Reap]. The villagers helped organize my trip to Dangrek Mountain. The KR had their own spies in the village. If the Vietnamese soldiers came out to observe the village at 1:00pm, the villagers would give the information to the KR who would leave the area by 12:00pm to avoid confrontation with the Vietnamese. If the KR soldiers could not get out of the village in time, they would have to fight with the Vietnamese soldiers. I walked and slept with the KR soldiers for half a month before arriving at the base on Dangrek Mountain. We had to walk across areas littered with land mines. I had to climb up the mountain cliff using wild vines for support. I became a soldier in the KR Division 785 and later Division 980.<sup>18</sup>*

Ultimately however, the tactics of the people's war proved ineffective as the people were not convinced by the KR's unrealistic strategies. Moreover, the people were fed up and traumatized by their suffering during the DK period (1975–79). Many people would not risk cooperating with the KR under any circumstances. Many people, if they did decide to run into the forest to escape difficulties with the authorities, preferred to join the

FUNCINPEC movement led by the former King Norodom Sihanouk or Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) led by Samdech Son San. Usually, the KR soldiers would also resort to threats. For example, one person described how the KR would say, "Your economic base is in the forest. If you report about us to the enemy, you will lose your economic base and face death."<sup>19</sup> Under these circumstances, many people chose to sit on the fence—neither committing nor opposing the KR forces. For economic survival, the people cooperated with both sides of the conflict.

## ***Life on the Mountain***

### **People's Life on Mountain 1003**

Residents of Mountain 1003 described life as harsh and nomadic in which the shadow of war colored all aspects of one's daily living. The sound of artillery or explosions in the distance signaled impending assault, which meant families had to gather up the possessions in urgency and prepare to retreat. Many parents were also very anxious on a daily basis. Simple activities like allowing one's children to play would involve calculated risks on whether an attack was possible that day. Wives anxiously bid farewell to husbands who went to the frontlines, knowing fully well that each exchange could be their last. Life assumed a surreal walk between daily living and war.

Fighting between the KR in Mountain 1003 and the Vietnamese forces was frequent. This condition forced the people on the mountain to flee from place to place to escape the bullets and shells. People described this mobile life as miserable because they had to continuously build new living quarters after each retreat. Moreover, they had to carry many of their belongings with them whenever fighting erupted. The people witnessed injured and dead soldiers being delivered across the villages almost daily. Sometimes the soldiers stepped on their own landmines. The Vietnamese forces also shelled the villages in the mountain, which cost a number of casualties each time.<sup>1</sup> Sam Pin, a resident in Mountain 1003, described his mobile life:

*Whenever the Vietnamese learned about our location, they attacked us. Those who died were left behind, and those who were still alive kept moving forward to find a new location. We constantly kept pans and plates in our backpack, and we were alert all the time. We did not allow our children to go anywhere far from us for fear of missing each other when fighting took place. It became our habit that after finishing eating, we would pack our utensils into our backpacks. The assaults usually happened daily.<sup>2</sup>*

On the other hand, the people lived under the full support and patronage of Ta Mok, who distributed food supplies and other materials to them on a regular basis. They were not required to work on the rice fields or dam and canal constructions that they once did during the DK period (1975–79). Each person received one pair of clothes per year and two

milk-cans of rice per day. The people withdrew food, kitchen utensils and other necessities from Ta Mok's warehouses on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. The food supplies included fish sauce, salt, sugar, noodles, canned fish, fish paste, frying oil, milk, shampoo, seasoning, cloth, scarves, and sarong. Ta Mok transported all of these materials and food supplies from Thailand every month. It was made possible due to the support from China, the U.S. and its Western allies, ASEAN member states, and the international humanitarian organizations.<sup>3</sup>

### **Women's Transportation Units**

When men were recruited to serve as fighting forces and were sent to the frontlines and the interior, women served a crucial role as rear support. Ta Mok established several women transportation units, which worked directly under his supervision. Each unit was made up of twenty to thirty women, all of whom were single. The married women were allowed to leave their units and go with their husbands to their respective division bases.

The women units contributed considerably to the KR's military effort. They were dispatched to various places along the border to manage the transportation and distribution of food supplies, mines, and ammunition to the front soldiers. Moreover, they assisted with producing and delivering sharpened spikes, which were used as defensive obstacles to frustrate enemy attacks and incursions. The women units were also tasked to deliver the injured soldiers back to the bases on the mountain.

Lach Thay, one of the women in the transportation unit recalled her experiences with delivering weapons to the soldiers on the front line.

*Our forces lived in Choam Sla on Thai soil. Whenever our work was needed, we traveled to the border, in groups of between 50 to over 100 people for the purpose of delivering weapons to the frontline soldiers. My unit chiefs were Phuon and Phat. During the delivery operation, we would encounter Vietnamese soldiers patrolling along the border. When this occurred, we would quickly run to escape their observation. We were only able to walk normally after we had put some distance between us and the Vietnamese patrols. It was very difficult work. On one occasion, the Vietnamese soldiers exploded a string of claymore mines killing twelve women. We ran in different directions after this occurred, and it took us about two weeks to find each other again. Some people died of injury or starvation as they could not find food during this time. It was a miserable life.<sup>4</sup>*

### **Disabled Unit**

Even though everyone faced the risk of coming upon a hidden mine or explosive, the soldiers and the people in the transportation units were the most vulnerable. Up to 1986,



there were at least several hundred disabled people in Mountain 1003, and as a result, Ta Mok established a disabled unit that allowed him to support all of their needs. Ta Mok said that “even the disabled people can help by producing children.” In this regard, Ta Mok arranged marriages for the disabled. Lon Seng, who was former chief of Regiment 91 of Division 980 and who lost one leg to a landmine, was the chief of the disabled unit. The disabled people were subsequently co-located in one village when the KR moved down to Anlong Veng in early 1990.

**Producing Spikes**

One of the main tasks of the people—most of whom were families of the soldiers—was to produce bamboo spikes. The people were divided into groups that took turns cutting down the bamboo in the forest to produce spikes for the soldiers who would then set them up in major infiltration routes used by Vietnamese soldiers. Spikes were also set up around the villages in order to prevent infiltration by Vietnamese or PRK government spies.<sup>5</sup>



KR spike producing unit in the 1980s

Each person was supposed to produce between 200 and 500 spikes per day. Sometimes, people worked into the night in order to meet their quota. After completing their task, a group of people were then responsible for delivering the spikes to the soldiers on the front-line.<sup>6</sup> Some women were able to carry the spikes by balancing them on their head, while others had to use ox-carts to deliver them. The significance of this work was not lost on the population or the soldiers on the front-line. In honor of their contribution, a statue was built of a woman carrying spikes on her head. The statue was installed on the road to the Choam Sa-Ngam border pass.

The people were also taught to produce poisonous resin spikes (*Chom Rong*). The poisonous substance was composed of a certain type of tree resin mixed with snake venom and other poisonous substances that could be found. The resin and poisonous substances were boiled together until it became glue which was applied on the tips of the spikes. The recipe to produce these poisonous resin spikes came from the minority highlanders from the Northeastern Zone. Because the substance was incredibly potent, the people who worked in producing the resin often faced health problems. For example, the people who boiled this poisonous substance often suffered a painful swelling of their face.<sup>7</sup> The KR described poisonous resin spikes as “their sacred weapons.” They compared one piece of poisonous resin spike to be better than ten B-40s because “one piece of poisonous resin spike can physically kill one enemy while destroying the spirit of many.”<sup>8</sup>

Pil Saratt, a former KR cadre in Mountain 1003, recalled her experiences working directly under Ta Mok in producing spikes and laying mines.

*I was in a women's unit. Sister Sup was the unit chief. My group—well-known as grandmother Tong unit—was assigned to Chup Ron. There were about thirty people in my unit. All of us were single. After I got married in 1986, I left the unit and followed my husband to Division 785. The wives of the soldiers sharpened the spikes, and carried and transported them to the frontlines by carts. The length of the spike was from elbow to hand. I also applied poison on the tips of the spikes. The poison was supplied by the military. I really enjoyed life as a female militant. I really enjoyed the activity of carrying the mines. I was not afraid of mines. We laid the mines at places where the Yuon [Vietnamese] spies were commonly seen.<sup>9</sup>*

Spikes were the second most important fighting tools for the KR besides their weapons. The soldiers set spikes in two different ways. They either planted spikes mingled with grass or dug up pits and planted spikes in the pits. The spikes looked almost like actual grass and they were hardly recognized when one was running in the heat of battle. Falling upon these traps, the spikes would often break apart into small pieces that would get lodged in the human body. These pieces were extremely difficult to remove and most sol-



top of Dangrek Mountain to Prey Sa-ak. Oftentimes they encountered Vietnamese forces, which prompted them to hide and seek alternative routes to the frontlines. When this situation occurred, the supply groups would often spend at least two weeks in trying to reach their destination. Generally most supply groups walked both day and night.<sup>12</sup>

The main delivery effort occurred in 1987–89, when the KR struggled to re-capture lost territories. The Vietnamese forces responded by pushing them back in several instances, to the point that KR forces were forced to seek refuge inside Thailand. The delivery units faced many dangers on the way to the frontlines. They risked possible attack from Vietnamese-PRK forces, and they often had to tread carefully, given the vast number of landmines. Very often supply groups suffered casualties by stepping on their own landmines. The delivery personnel who died along the way would be buried where they died, while those who were injured were taken back to the hospital on the mountain. Generally, one person a month was chosen or he/she volunteered to deliver ammunition and food supplies to the frontlines.

Ao Savat stepped on a mine and lost one leg when he carried weapons to the soldiers on the frontlines in 1987. Savat recalled his experience then:

*The road on the mountain to deliver weapons to the front was narrow. It was about only a half-meter in width, and it was the only way to the front. When I reached the battlefield and handed over the weapons to the soldiers, I returned back. Walking back, I saw old women carrying big and heavy ammunition on their back. I stepped aside to give some way to them. Unfortunately, my one step off to the side was exactly on top of a mine. As the mine exploded, not only did I lose one leg but also my nephews were injured by the small pieces of glass that shot out from the mine. I recall advising the women not to enter the forest due to the risk of landmines. But I did not expect that the mines were planted on the edge of such a narrow road, and, to add to the injury, the mines were planted by our own forces. As I fell down I glanced around and noticed that there were several other mines around me. Fortunately, I fell onto the walking path; otherwise, my whole body would have been destroyed by the mines. I was taken to the hospital on Dangrek Mountain.<sup>13</sup>*

## **Education**

There was only a primary school on Mountain 1003, and it was set up only for children. The poorly managed education system allowed students to learn only basic writing and reading skills and basic mathematics and geometry. Even though Ta Mok ordered children to go to school,<sup>14</sup> the school system at that time only went up to grade four. Education was only made possible by a handful of dedicated cadres who served as teachers. Khiev





A KR language study textbook for grade 2, DC-Cam Archives

Nov (Ta Mok's nephew), Yuk Ham, Leav, Oeun, Vun, Phang Kim Chhan and Nhoeun were some of these teachers. Although they possessed limited qualifications and knowledge of pedagogy, these teachers formed a committee to produce textbooks with hand-written texts derived from knowledge the teachers gained during their schooling. Due to the severe lack of teaching references, they translated some lessons from Thai textbooks. The education also received support from the international assistance programs, especially the United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO), which published and donated textbooks and other teaching materials for the schools.

School was initially conducted two times per day, but as there were not enough classrooms, the students only studied one time per day. The morning session ran from 7 to 11am, and the afternoon session was organized between 1 and 4:00pm. Children attended

schools six days per week from Monday to Saturday. The number of students could be as low as five to six students depending on the grade level. Ta Mok also provided clothes and logistical support to the school.

The educational goals and objectives were strongly linked to the larger political and military struggle. In addition to educating children about basic language skills and mathematics, education also centered upon political propaganda. The curriculum promoted hatred, anger, and revenge toward what they called “the invaded Vietnamese enemy.” The children were educated to understand that it was the Vietnamese who waged war against Cambodia, and the fundamental problems related to the life and death of the Cambodian nation were rooted in the Vietnamese attempt to swallow up Cambodia. During this period, the children were taught to see other children in terms of their political orientation: Yeang Cheung (‘Vietnamese children’ referring to the children in the PRK-controlled areas), Kaun Ra (‘Children of the Funcinpec movement’) and Kaun Cheat (‘Children of the Khmer nation’ referring to the children under the KR control).

Language textbooks published by the Democratic Kampuchea regime-in-exile for grade 2 (1987) contained a number of lessons dedicated to political and ideological propaganda. The KR prepared children from a young age to develop a “struggling consciousness” and an extreme nationalist spirit. One lesson entitled “The People in My Village” reads:

*Since the Vietnamese enemy invaded and occupied our Cambodian land, the people in my village have fled to live in the forest and mountainous areas. The living was so poverty-stricken and miserable. However, the people in my village did not surrender to the Vietnamese enemy. In our daily living, my village people united and helped each other. Every day, my village went out to dig up manioc, wild potatoes, young bamboo shoots, and tree leaves to make food... Later, we had a better living condition. My village had relatively good health. Our brothers and sisters actively and bravely participated with the national soldiers to fight the invading Vietnamese enemy. Some people delivered ammunition and food supplies to the soldiers. Other people assisted in producing spikes and building hospitals, ammunition warehouses, and schools. This excellent tradition allowed my people to live in happiness and with pride and value, even though we were in a period of constant struggle to fight the invading, expansionist, country-swallowing and genocidal Vietnamese enemy.<sup>15</sup>*

Another lesson entitled “My Brother” reads:

*In 1980, my brother was fifteen years old. At that time, he lived with my parents at Kravanh district. My brother is a hard-working, gentle*

*and polite man. At dawn, my brother got up early, lighted the kerosene lamp and reviewed the lessons he learned... At night before he slept, he read lessons or did homework. Sometimes, he taught me language. My brother liked reading and narrating the heroic tales of the Cambodian people and Democratic Kampuchea soldiers who fought the invading Vietnamese enemy. In 1983, my brother served the Democratic Kampuchea armed forces. In 1986, he was assigned to work with the people in Trapeang Thom commune, Tramkak district, Takeo province in order to fight the invading Vietnamese enemy and liberate the villages and all of Cambodia. I love and respect my brother very much.<sup>16</sup>*

### **Medical Treatment**

The medical treatment in Mountain 1003 was very basic and could only provide treatment to normal injuries and diseases. As a result, the people and soldiers were severely vulnerable to a number of dangers and diseases. The people did not have access to proper medical care. Medical staff members were selected among the men and women in the Mountain. Some of them attended training in Mountain 1003, while others were sent to attend medical training in Thailand with instruction from Thai and Chinese doctors assisted by Khmer translators.<sup>17</sup> The training was conducted on-the-job. The medical students were trained on basic medical skills such as cleaning wounds and malaria treatment.<sup>18</sup> Some female medical students were trained as mid-wives.

Upon finishing the training, male medical staff members were sent to accompany the military divisions who were fighting with the Vietnamese soldiers on the front lines. The medical places received five to six injured soldiers from the frontlines per day.<sup>19</sup> In order to facilitate the medical treatment and to accommodate the increasing number of injured soldiers, the KR in Mountain 1003 established several hospitals, including Hospital 1003, Hospital 72, and Hospital 13. Khoeun and Khal were chiefs of Hospital 13. Khorn, and later Lorn, was chief of Hospital 72. The hospitals also moved from place to place, depending on the situation on the front lines.

### **Marriage**

The KR policy was to encourage marriage as a means of binding soldiers to Mountain 1003 by way of a family, thereby discouraging their defection to the government. Marriage was not forced, but the people did not have many opportunities to choose their partners or to

**Nup Sophea**, one of the former medical students in Mountain 1003, recalled her study sessions in Thailand:

*The studies did not take the year into account. For example, there are 30 days per month, and we studied [the medical theory] for ten days, provided actual treatment for ten days, and then studied language for ten days. Likewise, a group consisted of 30 people. We rotated in cooking duties. We used the medical techniques to provide treatment to both people and soldiers.<sup>1</sup>*

find better alternatives. Everything, including marriage, was largely based on the leaders' discretion. The soldiers requested women in the camps for marriage; however, some women were not really satisfied with their partners. The women often believed that it was better to seek out husbands who could provide a warmer family life rather than living alone.<sup>20</sup> Some women in particular resented the order to marry disabled men; however, they were afraid to refuse.<sup>21</sup> After marriage, the couples typically built their own small three-by-three meter-wide bamboo cottage with thatched roof.

Initially, the marriage was conducted in a mass ceremony like the DK period; even though the number of couples in each ceremony was much smaller. Over time, however, traditional Khmer weddings were also allowed.

Chan Noeun was in the transportation unit and she was married in 1980. There were four couples during her marriage. The soldiers and cadres in her unit participated in the ceremony.<sup>22</sup> Hab Hen, another woman who got married in Mountain 1003, said, "We did not know what love meant at that time. We didn't even feel attracted to men."<sup>23</sup> Hab Hen recalls her marriage day:

*Ta Nhim was a senior man who arranged the marriage for us. The ceremony took place at around three in the afternoon. There were eleven couples at my wedding day. There were no chairs or tables. Both men and women sat on wooden stumps they could find nearby. In the wedding ceremony, the chief asked us to become husband and wife and advised us to work hard and not run away. We clapped our hands in response, and afterwards there was a small party to mark the ceremony. We were offered boiled noodles, canned fish, milk, and tins of Chinese cakes. This marked our wedding ceremony during that time.<sup>24</sup>*

Around the latter half of the 1980s and after, marriages in Mountain 1003 were conducted in a more pleasant manner. Although there were no special wedding gowns, monks, or traditional Khmer music, the achar<sup>25</sup> was allowed to conduct the ceremony and some traditional practices such as Bangvil Porpil<sup>26</sup> were allowed. Dancing with Sin Sisamoth's<sup>27</sup> songs was held for the wedding party, and three to five different kinds of food were served with dessert.<sup>28</sup> Relatives and other people known to the bride and groom also attended the wedding. The wedding gifts typically ranged from ten to one hundred Thai baht. Although Ta Mok did not attend the weddings, he generally gave gifts of rice and kitchen utensils to the married couples.<sup>29</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Mountain 1001 and 1003 on top of Dangrek Mountain were important Khmer Rouge strongholds and served as strategic military headquarters for the KR military operations



nationwide. These military bases allowed the defeated KR remnants to reorganize their military structure and strategies. They were the main strategic places for the KR survival and re-struggle. They were also the locations of battles between the KR guerrilla forces and Vietnamese-PRK forces. Moreover, they served as critical relief areas for Cambodian refugees.

Life on Dangrek Mountain was physically and mentally difficult. Soldiers were sent to the frontlines while civilians helped the soldiers through the delivery of food supplies, ammunition, and spikes.

Because of the constant threat of conflict, it was difficult to enjoy a normal life; rather, families were forced to live with constant awareness of the war and national struggle. In this militarily-charged situation, the children did not have much chance to receive a proper education. Likewise, the people did not receive proper medical treatment. The leaders tried to support the people in order to free the soldiers from worrying about their family members in the rear; however, the constant fear and chaotic lifestyle wore on the soldiers and families alike. The story of people stepping on land mines and the soldiers injured in the battlefields almost became everyday news that people expected. No one knew for sure what their future would be.

Life was also difficult because of the ongoing need to send community members and units to work in the interior of the country. These detachments were sent to almost every province in Cambodia for the purpose of generating propaganda and executing sabotage missions in remote areas. They had to be away from their wives and children for long periods of time. Since they lived far from the bases, they had to survive on their own. This situation forced some soldiers to engage in looting and killing activities, particularly in the more remote villages of Cambodia. They generally returned to their units within one or two years after being replaced by new groups.



## ***Anlong Veng: The Last Khmer Rouge Stronghold***

### **Introduction**

After ten years on Dangrek Mountain, the KR remnants under Ta Mok's leadership on Mountain 1003 were finally able to capture Anlong Veng in late 1989. In early 1990, Ta Mok decided to move the entire population from his camps in Thailand and military bases on Dangrek Mountain to Anlong Veng. The people began to construct houses and farm, and the leaders focused on building up the community's administrative organization and infrastructure. Within the first few years of the occupation, Ta Mok launched various construction projects in the town including damming the reservoir in Anlong Veng Lake and constructing roads, bridges, storage houses, ammunition warehouses, a school, a hospital and several command headquarters. As a result of the community development, Ta Mok became increasingly popular among the Anlong Veng residents.

However, while the KR community appeared to have better living conditions, the overall KR movement faced a significant reduction in foreign aid, which ultimately impacted Anlong Veng's ability to sustain its community and defense strategies. Bound by the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, the KR were obligated to participate in the 1993 election; allow the UN peace-keeping forces to oversee their controlled areas; and disarm. However, the KR never fulfilled these obligations, and over time, they found themselves increasingly ostracized and isolated.

The KR leaders believed they had reasons to boycott the election set up under the Paris Accord. In essence, driven by the supreme goal of self-preservation, they had an unrealistic expectation that war could secure a form of political parity with the newly elected Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

China, Thailand and the United States officially cut off support. Viet Nam had withdrawn from Cambodian territory, and Cambodia had accomplished the first democratic elections in decades. Outside of Cambodia, the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union had ended, and the old geopolitical rivalries between the United States and the Soviet Union, China and Viet Nam, and the United States and Viet Nam had dissipated. In sum, the geopolitical environment, which had sustained the KR movement for so many years, was finally changing. Yet the KR senior leaders were not ready to give up war.

Despite the change in the international environment, Anlong Veng was still able to sustain itself. Thai government officials and businessmen benefited substantially from the cross-border trading (particularly in timber) with Anlong Veng; and for this reason, the Thai secretly accommodated and did business with the KR. In return, the KR were able to maintain a flow of cash and resources to defend Anlong Veng up until the very end.

The people in Anlong Veng appeared to prefer national reconciliation over the continuation of war. Decades of war and living in the jungle had taken its toll on the people, and even though there may have been a common desire to end the fighting, the common people did not have much influence in the overall KR strategy. Husbands were sent to conduct guerilla war in the interior, while wives and other family members supported the battlefield through supply and ammunition delivery.

But even though the senior leadership stubbornly waged war, the diminishing prospects of the KR movement became apparent to all. Ultimately, internal rivalries and the steady loss of territory, resources, and support sapped the KR leadership. Triggered by defections of the KR remnants in Pailin and Malai as well as many other strongholds, friction within the KR leaderships in Anlong Veng became more intensified. In addition, Anlong Veng became totally isolated and it obtained the unhelpful status as the last KR stronghold.

The conflict reached its peak when Pol Pot ordered the execution of Son Sen, which was followed by five days of fighting between forces loyal to Pol Pot and Ta Mok's sympathizers. The conflict ended when Ta Mok defeated, arrested and prosecuted Pol Pot, who eventually died while fleeing Cambodian Army forces.

Ta Mok's supreme command of the KR movement only lasted about one year as his military commanders rebelled against him and defected to the RGC. Anlong Veng was finally integrated into the government by late 1998, and the integration was celebrated on all sides.

### **The End of the Cold War**

The rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge movement is inextricably linked to world affairs. Thus, in the interest of putting the movement's final days in context, it is useful to summarize the regional and global dynamics and how they came to play in the final chapter of the movement.

In the wake of World War II, regional and global rivalries between the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and Viet Nam had important implications for Cambodia. Locked in a global competition for power with the Soviet Union, the United States committed economic and military resources to fighting the Second Indochina War (or Viet Nam War). While the effort was driven by the strategic goal of containing communism, it ultimately resulted in the opposite outcome in that the war merely forestalled Viet Nam's re-unification, and it facilitated the KR ascent to power in 1975.

In the wake of the Second Indochina War, communism covered all of French Indochina. Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia were governed by communist regimes, which took advantage of (and were impacted by) the global struggle between the United States, the Soviet Union and China. While the Soviet Union and China shared a common bond in their communist orientation, ideological, territorial, and economic disagreements ultimately led to a long-term severance of relations (or split) between the two states.

The Sino-Soviet split played a huge part in the geopolitical dynamics in Southeast Asia. The Khmer Rouge, who feared Vietnamese dominance, aligned with China; and Viet Nam, always suspicious of Chinese intervention, aligned with the Soviet Union. When Vietnamese-UFNSK forces overran Khmer Rouge forces in 1979, China, in response, attacked and occupied a portion of Viet Nam for a short time.

The struggle between the Soviet-backed Vietnamese-UFNSK army and the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge came to be called the Third Indochina War (or Cambodian-Vietnamese War:<sup>1</sup>

Removed from power, the KR continued to look to China for support. Viet Nam and the newly-established Cambodian government, the PRK, on the otherhand looked to the Soviet Union. Because the United States and the West saw the Vietnamese-UFNSK intervention in Cambodia as an unwarranted invasion of a sovereign state, they supported, to a limited extent, the KR's struggle to re-take Cambodia.

The United States also saw an opportunity to undermine its former enemy, Viet Nam, as well as its patron, the Soviet Union. In the wake of the Second Indochina War (or Viet Nam War), the United States largely withdrew from Southeast Asia. However, while American influence receded from the region, the United States continued to seek out ways to confront Soviet influence and expansion in Southeast Asia. Having normalized relations with China, the United States collaborated with China in secretly supporting the Khmer Rouge and any forces that opposed Viet Nam and the newly established Cambodian government. Thus, from 1979 and through most of the 1980s, the KR were supported in varying degrees by the West, China, and Thailand.

In the late 1980s, however, regional and global circumstances precipitated a drastic reduction in the resources and diplomatic support for the KR movement.

Since 1980, the UN General Assembly had voted on several occasions for the complete withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia;<sup>2</sup> however, the continuing threat of a KR resurgence persuaded the ongoing presence of the Vietnamese army. With Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, the KR were unable to confront the Vietnamese-UFNSK forces in open battle. On the other hand, utilizing the jungle, mountain, and border regions, the KR and other oppositional forces frustrated all attempts at stamping out resistance and putting an end to the costly guerrilla war.

The presence of Vietnamese troops in Cambodia took an enormous toll on both Viet Nam and Cambodia. The United States, China, and the West supported economic sanctions on Viet Nam and the Cambodian government, and over time, the sanctions had a crippling effect. While Viet Nam and Cambodia received support from the Soviet Union, and to some extent other Soviet bloc countries, this support began to wane. In the latter half of the 1980s, the Soviet Union made significant efforts at reducing its economic support to communist countries and movements around the world. Consequently, Viet Nam was forced to reduce its support to the Cambodian government. On November 29, 1987, Viet Nam withdrew an estimated 20,000 troops.<sup>3</sup> Then again, on May 26, 1988, Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach announced the withdrawal of another estimated 50,000 troops by December 1988.<sup>4</sup> By September 1989, Viet Nam completed its withdrawal of an estimated 200,000 troops.<sup>5</sup>

The Vietnamese withdrawal can be seen as a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it lifted one of the paramount obstacles to achieving a political settlement of the Cambodian problem; on the other hand, for the time being at least, it provided the Khmer Rouge with an opportunity to go on the offensive.

### **The 1989 Khmer Rouge Occupation and Settlement of Anlong Veng**

As Viet Nam began its troop withdrawal, the KR remnants on Mountain 1003 as well as the remnants in other border strongholds began a massive campaign to re-occupy areas inside Cambodia. They reportedly mobilized some 6,000 refugees to assist them in the delivery of weapons and food supplies to the soldiers at the front battlefields.<sup>6</sup> With a well-stocked supply of ammunition, the KR forces in Mountain 1003, under the command of Ta Mok, began a final offensive in late 1989 to capture Anlong Veng. The offensive took place on the Pchum Ben Days (a sacred Buddhist holiday).

The KR forces successfully took Anlong Veng on December 25, 1989—two months after their occupation of gem-rich Pailin, which fell under the KR control on October 24, 1989. Much later, the KR captured additional areas such as Poipet and Malai in Banteay Meanchey; Sampov Loun, Phnom Prek, Kamrieng, Pailin and Samlot in Battambang; Veal Veng in Pursat, Koh Sla and Phnom Vor in Kampot; Oral and Phnom Srouch in Kampong Speu; and several other smaller areas along the border. One of these smaller areas included the land surrounding the Preah Vihear temple.

At the same time of the KR offensive, forces aligned with the United National Front for an Independent, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia (FUNCINPEC) and the Khmer Peoples National Liberation Front (KPNLF) conducted major offensives and captured several border territories in Oddar Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey provinces. By and large, despite the loss of many areas of the country, the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) government still controlled the majority of Cambodian territory. Likewise, the dominant percentage of Cambodia's population continued to reside in PRK-controlled territory.

In the area of Anlong Veng, the KR in Mountain 1003 employed twelve military divisions to seize the area. Duch Sarit, who was a soldier in the Division 612, recalled the KR victory over the PRK forces in Anlong Veng:<sup>7</sup>

*In 1985, Vietnamese forces occupied all KR strongholds on top of Dangrek Mountain. The KR transferred the entire population, including soldiers, from bases in the interior of Thailand to near the front lines. The soldiers were needed to push the Vietnamese forces out of the border areas. The fighting took place over a four-year period from 1985 to 1989. In late 1988, we were able to push the Vietnamese forces down from Dangrek Mountain. After seizing Dangrek Mountain, we conducted operations along the French road [road from Anlong Veng to Preah Vihear province]. We fought constantly between 1988 and 1989. Finally, [in 1989] we were able to capture Anlong Veng, and we moved the people to settle in the area.<sup>8</sup>*

Once Anlong Veng was seized, the area became a pseudo-capital for the KR movement, which allowed the KR to organize its military, political, and economic strategies.

### **Early Settlement**

Within a few days of the victory, Ta Mok held a meeting with the people in Chup Malou camp, proclaiming the KR's return to Cambodian land. Ta Mok declared, "We will no longer live on Thai soil."<sup>9</sup> To facilitate the mass mobilization and transportation of the people and materials, Ta Mok led the construction of another main road across Choam Sa-Ngam border pass.<sup>10</sup> Ta Mok used several high-quality bulldozers he bought from Thailand to pave the road which stretched from Chup Malou camp to Anlong Veng downtown. It took about two months to complete this project. Shortly thereafter, in February 1990, the people were transported from the mountain to Anlong Veng. In Anlong Veng, they began setting up permanent settlements—ending over ten years of nomadic living.

Ta Mok called Anlong Veng a country. He moved his warehouses into the area, and he instructed KR soldiers to plant mines and spikes along the strategic roads into the area for the purpose of bolstering the region's defenses from possible attacks from the State of Cambodia (SOC's) forces.<sup>11</sup>

The people who traveled down the mountain in the early 1990s, described seeing several clay houses, small huts, and several wooden halls that were the former Vietnamese garrisons. The region was full of land mines, and life was extremely hard as both soldiers and civilians had to cope with the difficulties of rebuilding their lives from scratch. But despite the difficulties of a frontier life, there was a universal joy and sense of hope in setting up a new home on Cambodian soil.



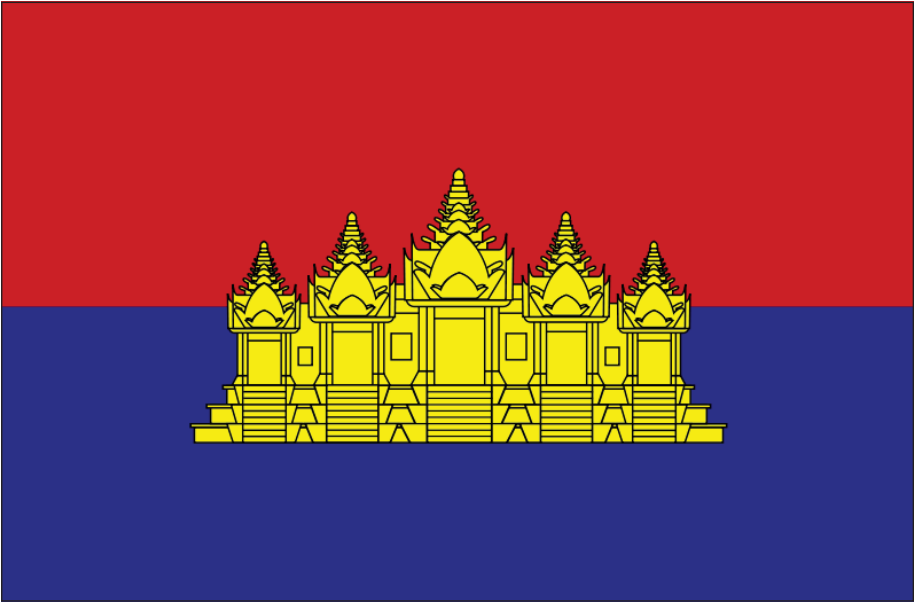




Photo of Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia, DC-Cam Archives



Photo of ceremony marking Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia. Pictured on far right: H.E. Prime Minister Hun Sen, DC-Cam Archives



Flag of the State of Cambodia<sup>14</sup>

*killing them, and leaving small children behind. During this time period, we didn't dare farm the land. The rice fields existed much later.*

As the land was de-mined, people began cutting down trees in order to build shelters. Within five to six months after the occupation of Anlong Veng, the dense forests were nearly leveled. Even small trees were taken away. The villages were temporarily named according to their respective military divisions and leaders—the same way they organized the villages in Mountain 1003. Division 980 was based in an area close to the current Anlong Veng district hall with big mango trees. Because this area was affiliated with members of the Division of 980, the community in this area was named “Village 980.”<sup>13</sup>

In late 1990 and early 1991, Ta Mok and the top KR leaders in Anlong Veng organized the villages. Village names were based on their respective proximity to natural resources. For example, Tomnup Leu village's name reflected the name of a dam that Ta Mok constructed nearby. Tuol Tbeng village was named for the vast number of Tbeng trees in the area. Srah Chhouk village was named after the local pond with lotus plants. Trapeang Brei village reflected the large number of Brei trees in the nearby pond; although the village was later moved further from the pond and closer to the main road. Toek Chum village (literally means “surrounded by water”). This village assumed its name from the fact that the village resembled an island surrounded by water. The name of Khleang Kandal (central warehouse) village was taken after Ta Mok's nearby warehouse, which was used to store



On Sopheap holding her daughter's hand with other small children in Anlong Veng. DC-Cam Archives



Two Khmer Rouge soldiers. DC-Cam Archives



A wedding in Anlong Veng. DC-Cam Archives

food and supplies to feed the people. Boeng (pond) village received its name from the fact that there was a lake in front of the village. Tuol Sala village was named after an old dilapidated school built on the hill in that village. O’Kra Nhuong village reflected the vast number of rosewood trees, even though the trees were cut down shortly after the village was setup. O’Svay village was named because there was a mango tree near the stream, and Yeang Cheung (North) and Yeang Thbong (South) villages were named for the many Yeang trees nearby. Pralean village was named after the old airport that existed nearby since Prince Sihanouk’s regime.<sup>15</sup>

Other villages were named after significant construction projects. For example, there was a tractor village, a truck village and a delivery village. The worker village was another village named after the large population of workers who lived nearby and built the local bridge.

Ta Mok also established a village specifically for people disabled during the war who could not live on their own. The village was called the Cheung Phnom village. Food and materials were delivered to them on a regular basis. The people in Anlong Veng usually called it “the disabled village” as most villagers were disabled people. Ta Mok arranged the marriages for all disabled soldiers. The first village chief was also a disabled person. Generally, there were only about 30 to 40 disabled families because many disabled people wanted to live close to their relatives in other villages.<sup>16</sup>

### **Waning of International Support**

While the KR were able to take advantage of Viet Nam’s withdrawal from Cambodia, the geopolitical environment, which had sustained the KR movement for so many years, was changing. The Cold War was drawing to a close, and the United States, the Soviet Union, China, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) took significant steps toward finding a diplomatic resolution to the ongoing Kampuchean conflict. By 1991, all parties, including the Khmer Rouge, agreed to the Paris Peace Agreement, and by 1993, China, Thailand and the West had officially cut off support to the Khmer Rouge.

Over time as the flow of international supplies dwindled, Ta Mok began to shift the responsibility for daily living from his administration to the individual families. People cleared farm land and began raising animals, which could supplement the provisions they received from Ta Mok’s administration.<sup>17</sup> Ta Mok also gave wood to the soldiers to encourage the building of houses, and he asked both people and soldiers to help each other in constructing the villages and shelters in the form of mutual-aid teams or solidarity groups. These groups were entirely distinct from the communist cooperatives set up during the DK regime (1975–79) in that private ownership was recognized, and each family lived and ate in separate houses.



## **Establishing Administrative Structure**

In 1995, the KR began to organize Anlong Veng into a district with eleven communes and fifty villages. According to the KR administrative records for Anlong Veng, there were 3,257 families, which accounted for 16,087 people.<sup>18</sup> The entire population was considered a military community, which was divided into two groups: front and rear forces. To enforce the security in Anlong Veng, several security units were established. These units included approximately 108 village militiamen; 59 commune militiamen; 15 guard posts consisting of 87 regular guard members; 2,214 bunkers, 1,261 spike-producing forces; 807 bamboo-cutting forces and 133 ox-carts.

Alongside Anlong Veng, Trapeang Prasat district was also established with six communes: Bak Anlung, Pha-av, Trapeang Prasat, O'Svay, Tomnup Dach and Preah Bralay. Interestingly, while Anlong Veng was clearly within Ta Mok's controlled area, Trapeang Prasat appeared to be a Pol Pot-administered area.

While Anlong Veng's staple crop was rice, the population also grew an assortment of other dry season products: corn, light rice, winged yam, yams for making noodles, pumpkin, wax melon, gourd, cabbage, cucumber, eggplant, chilly, tomato, papaya, banana, sugarcane, coconut, mango, jackfruit, orange, custard, and guava. The people also raised a variety of animals, such as cows, buffalo, chickens, ducks and pigs.

The local craft industry was also extensive. There were both old and new craft and textile workshops, which produced a spectrum of tools, cloths, and materials for the local economy and the KR military organization. The industry produced an assortment of items such as knives, axes, hoes, sickles, plows, rakes, ox-carts, hand-operated mortars and pestles, foot-powered mortars and pestles, small grinding mills, flat baskets, round baskets, handbags, gravel, mats, scarves, and skirts.<sup>19</sup>

## **The Khmer Rouge Administrative Leaders in Anlong Veng**

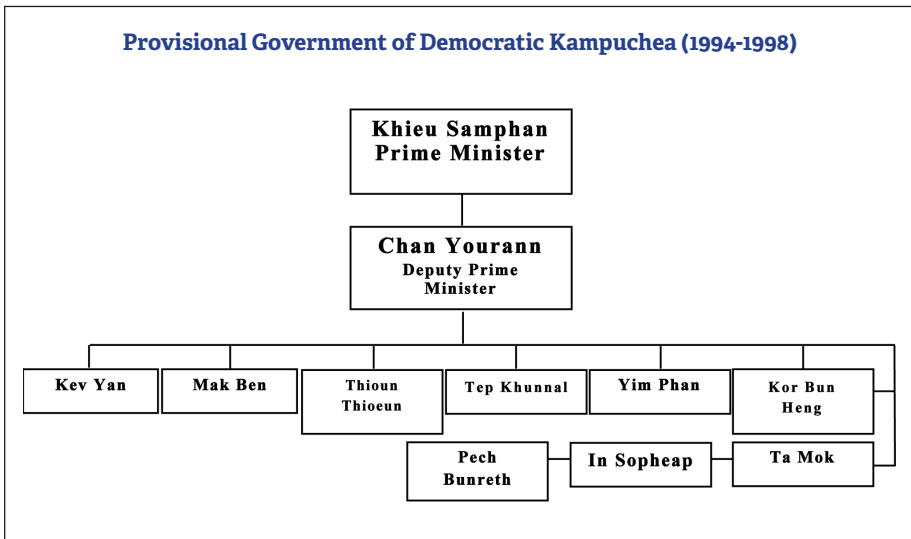
When the KR headquarters in Phnom Chhat was overrun by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, and Chan Youran fled to Anlong Veng in October 1993. Ta Mok built houses for them in Kbal Ansoang, which was located about twenty-five kilometers from Anlong Veng's downtown and just one kilometer from Thai soil.<sup>20</sup>

The houses at Kbal Ansoang became Pol Pot's command headquarters, and they were considered to be the inner sanctum of the regime. No one was allowed to enter this area except Pol Pot's closest advisors, the radio broadcast team, and his bodyguards. The military commanders often had meetings at Pol Pot's house in Kbal Ansoang.<sup>21</sup> Pol Pot also set up a radio broadcast station near his house. Unsurprisingly, while many ordinary people who lived in Anlong Veng's downtown were familiar with Ta Mok, very few had ever seen

Pol Pot's face.<sup>22</sup> Instead, Pol Pot was said to have closer relations with the soldiers and people living in Trapeang Prasat where Pol Pot planted rice and often visited the people.

Nuon Chea and Son Sen moved to Anlong Veng in October 1996 after the KR remnants in Malai, Pailin and Front 250 (Sampov Luon, Phnom Prek and Kamrieng) defected to the RGC.<sup>23</sup> Ta Mok provided houses for them in an area called Peuy Ta Ruon, near Choam Sa-Ngam border pass. Ta Mok built a big house in O'Chik, near Anlong Veng's downtown, which was his military command headquarters. Ieng Sary was the only senior KR leader who lived outside of Anlong Veng's administrative area. He was based in Malai with the support from two strong military divisions—Sok Pheap's Division 450, based in Malai and Y Chhean's Division 415, based in Pailin. The rest of the KR strongholds—either at the border or in the interior—were smaller in number and they received their directions from Anlong Veng.

In July 1994, the Royal Government of Cambodia officially outlawed the Khmer Rouge. In response to “the KR Outlaw” law, the KR proclaimed the establishment of the Provisional Government of National Union and National Salvation of Cambodia (PGNUNSC) with its headquarters in Anlong Veng. Members of this provisional government included Khieu Samphan (Prime Minister), Chan Yourann (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs), Kev Yan (Minister of National Defense), Mak Ben (Minister of Finance and Economic), Thioun Thioeun (Special Adviser), Tep Khunnal (Minister of Territorial Integrity), Yim Phan (Minister of Interior), Kor Bun Heng (Minister of Public Work) and Ta Mok (Commander-in-Chief).



Provisional Government of Democratic Kampuchea (1994–1998), Credit to Ly Kok-Chhay, DC-Cam Archives

Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Son Sen and Ke Pauk were not mentioned in the list of the provisional government's leaders. However, Pol Pot was still a powerful leader and an influential figure of this new government. Nuon Chea played a role as an educational instructor, but he did not have any military influence. Periodically, Nuon Chea gave political education sessions to the soldiers and cadres. He also educated the people on general life topics such as sanitation and how to raise animals.<sup>24</sup> He advised the people to be mindful of malaria. With regards to political ideology, Nuon Chea advised the people to never waiver in their commitment to the nationalist cause. "Do not desert your country, and do not submit yourself to Vietnamese trickery."<sup>25</sup>

Son Sen also arrived to Anlong Veng around the same time period. He was stripped of his administrative and military responsibilities; although, like Nuon Chea, he played an occasional role in the education of the people and cadres. Son Sen taught the people, "You have to be active in rice cultivation. You should plant as many banana trees, potatoes, and lemongrass as possible, so you don't have to buy them in the market."<sup>26</sup>

In reality, because Ta Mok commanded most of the strongest military divisions in the area, and he was the principal administrator of the community, he was considered to be the supreme leader in Anlong Veng. His life was usually mobile—moving between houses on Dangrek Mountain and the big house in O' Chik.





## ***The Legacy of Ta Mok***

### **Ta Mok: Anlong Veng Warlord**

Born in 1926 in Takeo province, Ta Mok (also known as Ung Choeun or Chhit Choeun) lived many lives before he came to Anlong Veng. In his early life, he was a Buddhist monk and then an Issarak chief in Takeo province. Much later, in 1963, he became a member of the Communist Party of Kampuchea's (CPK's) Central Committee, and from 1968 to 1978, he served as a Secretary or Deputy Secretary of the DK Southwest Zone. In late 1978, he assumed control of the DK Northwest Zone and, with the revolutionary name Nguon Kang, he became the first Vice President of DK People's Revolutionary Assembly and Second CPK's Deputy Secretary.

From almost all accounts from the pre-DK and DK periods, Ta Mok was described as a cruel and heartless leader.<sup>1</sup> Under his command, military forces purged the Eastern Zone of Democratic Kampuchea, massacring civilians and KR cadres alike,<sup>2</sup> which earned him the title, Ta Mok, "the butcher."

However, Ta Mok assumed a completely different face in Anlong Veng. Residents described Ta Mok as a simple, generous and nondiscriminatory leader whose greatest fault was a foul mouth. He was able to provide support to over 16,000 people—both civilians and soldiers who were living under his control in Anlong Veng. For many Anlong Veng residents, Ta Mok was a traditional leader who led the country like a father who took care of his family.

Generally, people withdrew their allotted ratio of supplies on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. One person from five years old and up received one 'gasoline container' of rice per month (one container is approximately twenty kilograms and seven containers are equal to one sack of rice.)<sup>3</sup> Children from five years old and down to the newborn baby received half of this gasoline container of rice.

Ta Mok's support touched every aspect of the peoples' lives, and people would approach him for the simplest needs—even sugar or salt to make a meal. Ta Mok spent most of his time with the people, and he devoted significant time to overseeing the many construction projects that benefited the local community. This attitude and his local construction projects earned him a reputation as a committed patron of the people and a revered leader

of Anlong Veng. In this regard, Ta Mok continued the KR custom of managing all aspects of the peoples' lives.

The noticeable difference between Ta Mok during the DK regime (1975–79) and Ta Mok after the DK regime (1979–after) was his image as a ruthless leader or murderer. Generally speaking, people who knew Ta Mok in Anlong Veng doubted how Ta Mok could be perceived as a cruel leader or a “butcher.”

Based on interviews of people who knew Ta Mok, he appeared to eschew extravagance. Chhoun Chhun, Ta Mok's driver, said that Ta Mok ate food like the poor peasants. He did not like the richer foods like other senior leaders, and he did not like using modern equipment. He usually scolded people like parents who scold their children, but he never held grudges. After scolding a person, he would talk to them, and he was eager to help the people regardless of status or background. The people only knew other KR top leaders such as Khieu Samphan, Pol Pot and Nuon Chea through photos.<sup>4</sup>

Kim Nan, a former soldier in Division 785, characterized Ta Mok as a man who is hard to describe.

*It is complicated to describe Ta Mok's personality. He did not differentiate himself from the ordinary people. When he met anyone, he scolded them nastily but he would give them whatever he had. One day, I and my colleagues went to withdraw rice and food from the warehouse. We took weapons with us. As we were withdrawing our food ration, Ta Mok's jeep arrived. He asked us, "How are you young men? Where are you going?" I replied, "We came to withdraw rice and food grandfather." He asked, "How is the battle at the frontline? If the enemy penetrates, I will kill all of you. You are all like shit." Then he hit me with his walking stick. He walked into the warehouse. He scolded the people who guarded the warehouse. He asked the guards to give more rations of food to us, saying that we did not eat enough with the ordinary ration.<sup>5</sup>*

Ta Mok was famous for his skills in military strategy and his ability to work under the harshest conditions of jungle life. People in Anlong Veng described him as a fearless leader. He walked from place to place to observe the people's living conditions. Em Oeun, one of Anlong Veng's residents, commented over the personality of Ta Mok:

*Ta Mok is a good person because he did not have possessions. He never allowed his children or relatives to take the community's property. He lives as simple as the people. Ta Mok is direct in his speech and honest, and he loves the people so much. He distributed equal portions of rice to the people regardless of status or occupation. Without Ta*

*Mok, all people may have died and wouldn't have had anything to eat. The other leaders did not even allow people to know of their movement or location.<sup>6</sup>*

The people who were not close to Ta Mok had similar impressions. Kim Ly entered the Rithysen refugee camp under KPNLF's control. Later, when the camp was overrun by Vietnamese forces, she ran to FUNCINPEC's refugee camp near O'Smach. She came to live in Anlong Veng in 1993. Ly recalled her experiences living under Ta Mok.

*I did not take sides. I said what I saw. Whenever we lacked rice, money or medicine, he [Ta Mok] helped me. I don't know how to get angry with someone like Ta Mok because he never did any harm to me. He even gave me about two thousand baht to buy pigs and chickens.<sup>7</sup>*

Ta Mok married his second wife Nen in the early 1990s when his first wife Nget Khoem died of illness.<sup>8</sup> His second wife was a widow. She had two children with her first husband who was Ta Mok's military commander. Her former husband died during fighting in Anlong Veng. Nen moved to live in Pailin and married her third husband after Ta Mok's death in 2006.<sup>9</sup>

### **Ta Mok's Construction Projects**

Ta Mok took the initiative to build roads, dams, a school, a hospital, a bridge and many other buildings in Anlong Veng. A multitude of these projects were tied to the KR's interpretation of the Paris Peace Agreement. As part of the Agreement, the Khmer factions were encouraged to invest in infrastructure and human resources in anticipation of government integration. As a result, Ta Mok hired Thai builders who had construction skills to build the school, hospital, and O'Chik bridge. Curiously, Ta Mok only spent money on the Thai contractors but not on the Khmer workers. Ta Mok appealed to the Anlong Veng people to help in the construction projects, and anyone who had children that attended school or needed to cross the bridge were obligated to contribute to the construction effort.<sup>10</sup>

These achievements gave Ta Mok a strong personal foothold in Anlong Veng because they attached his persona to the construction projects that benefited the people. In addition to the roads inside Anlong Veng, Ta Mok also built roads for military purposes. These roads included the road from Choam Sangam border pass to Anlong Veng downtown, road 67 to Siem Reap province, Road 68 to Samroang city (Oddar Meanchey province), and the restoration of the old "French road" to Preah Vihear temple.<sup>11</sup> Before Ta Mok's work, all of these roads were dirt roads, which were hardly accessible by truck.

### **Central Warehouses (Khleang Kandal)**

Because Chinese aid was halted after the Paris Peace Agreement in 1991, Ta Mok began to

buy food supplies from Thailand. The KR had to buy tens of thousands of sacks of rice per month to feed both the people and the soldiers. Ta Mok built six huge warehouses to store these supplies. The construction was completed in May, 1992. It was located in Kleang Kandal village, Trapeang Brei commune, which is about four kilometers from Anlong Veng downtown. The warehouses were built with a brick floor and a corrugated iron roof. The warehouses were the main supply point for the Anlong Veng community and frontlines. People usually called it the “Ta Phin warehouse” because Ta Phin was the name of the person who was in charge of the warehouses. The other cadres who worked at the warehouses were Hoeung, Ly, Net and Reth. The warehouses were also used to keep the surplus guns and weapons provided from China.

### School

The school construction was completed in April 1993. It was a three-floor building with twelve classrooms that could accommodate between 300 to 400 students. In addition, each commune established between one to four smaller schools that were usually small wooden halls with thatch roof. The teachers appeared to work primarily for the betterment of the community because they reportedly did not receive a regular salary. The school became Anlong Veng High School after the 1998 integration.



Anlong Veng High School: One of the main buildings was built by Ta Mok, 2012.  
Photo by Christopher Dearing.

Ta Mok's school provided primary education for the students up to grade 5. The hand-written textbooks provided education on Khmer grammar, folktales, poetry, agriculture, geography, natural resources, nutrition, sanitation, and raw materials. However, the textbooks were dominated by propaganda, which encouraged the students to harbor anger against "the Vietnamese crimes" and the Royal Government of Cambodia. The textbooks educated children about the heroism of the KR soldiers who conducted sabotage missions, and they included lessons on the methods of guerilla warfare, people's warfare, spike producing, and how to be a good cadre. The textbook for grade 4, produced in 1995, contained a lesson on the five elements of a "good cadre":

*A good cadre is the cadre who stays constantly with the masses—both the masses in the party line and the masses in the population—like fish to water.... A good cadre is a person who fully understands and implements the line; he holds firmly to the base and battle field; constantly comprehends the enemy's and our situation; and leads the fighting to the enemy.... A good cadre is serious and absolute toward the enemy; he does not have relations with or do business with the enemy in any way. A good cadre leads the people to solve the economic problems. A good cadre lives*



Anlong Veng Hospital: "Ta Mok Hospital": The site provides a peaceful view of the Anlong Veng Lake ("Ta Mok Lake") and Ta Mok's House. It is about 1 kilometer from the Anlong Veng High School. The Hospital is reported to have been built in 1994 by Ta Mok as a gift to the community, and its principal use is reported to have been used to serve the Khmer Rouge soldiers stationed in the area. According to one of the hospital administrators, the previous hospital was a wooden structure, not too far from the Ta Mok Hospital, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

*through the party's economic line.... A good cadre is gentle and honest toward the people, and he does not use his power to threaten anyone....*<sup>12</sup>

The children were asked to learn by heart two key words aimed at holding anger and hatred toward the Cambodian government. These words were "A-Yang" (puppet) and "Youn" (Viet Nam).

### **Hospital**

The construction was completed in October 1993. It was a concrete building with three floors. A KR cadre Lorn (who used to study in China) and a Thai constructor (Leav) were responsible for the hospital construction. While the hospital provided treatment to the people and soldiers for minor illnesses and injuries, the serious diseases and injuries were sent to Thailand. Ta Mok's hospital eventually became the main district hospital of Anlong Veng after the 1998 integration.

### **O'Chik Bridge**

O'Chik Bridge was initially built from timber and bamboo for the temporary use of moving people down from the camps and mountain. During each rainy season, O'Chik increased exponentially in its size, which made the people's daily journeys very difficult. The people often spent many hours trying to cross the O'Chik stream to Anlong Veng's downtown, and each journey was perilous. Several people even drowned trying to cross O'Chik during the rainy season. Consequently, Ta Mok decided to build the bridge after finishing the construction of O'Chik dam. The bridge construction started in 1994 and was completed in January 1996.<sup>13</sup>

The bridge did not have any foundations, and Ta Mok did not allow Thai constructors to build pilings. He claimed that he used two whole hills (the former hills at his lakeside house) to serve as the foundation for the bridge. According to local stories, Ta Mok's rationale was, "My roots are stronger than yours." The people participated in the construction by delivering soil, rock and cement for the construction workers. Preah Yang, a former soldier, recalled Ta Mok saying that:

*The bridge was for the benefit of all people, and even if one was in a hurry, one had to stop and help. Anyone who walked across the bridge had to share their labor. No one dared to resist because Ta Mok sat at the head of the bridge almost every day. Ta Mok would stop anyone who passed by the bridge to help in the construction.*<sup>14</sup>

### **Lakeside House**

Ta Mok's lakeside house was built on a former hill that had been demolished in order to extract rock for building the bridge and O'Chik dam. There were four different houses in the





Ta Mok Bridge, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

compound. The first house, which was built in 1993, was constructed with a wooden wall and a cement roof. The second house, which was the biggest house, took two years and was completed in 1996. It was a three-story house, in which the first floor was constructed as a secret room and only Ta Mok could enter. The second floor was used as a meeting place, and the third floor was Ta Mok's bedroom. The third house was used as living place for his family members and anyone who came to his residence in need of assistance. The fourth house, which was built in 1993, was for Ta Mok's staff and cooks.

For the second biggest house, Ta Mok ordered the workers to use the whole trunk of a tree as pillars. Ta Mok did not allow the workers to take out even the tree bark. Initially, the roof was made from wood. But the wood expanded and contracted over time with exposure to the elements and changes in the temperature. After three months, the rain eventually penetrated through the wooden roof, and Ta Mok ordered the construction of a tile roof. The interior of the house was decorated with the paintings of Preah Vihear and Angkor Wat temples. There was a big painting of a Cambodian map on the wall, and ancient statues were placed all around the house compound.

Over thirty workers labored on this house construction. Hem Mean, Dul, and Moeun were among the workers. Sok was involved in the logging unit of the saw mill that supplied the



Ta Mok house on Dangrek Mountain, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

wood for the house construction. Eng was the painter of the temples and the map.<sup>15</sup> Tann, an ethnic highlander, was the sculptor.<sup>16</sup> Ta Mok drew the design and worked directly with the workers. If the workers could not follow his instructions, he would call out to them to speak one-on-one, at which point he would hit them repeatedly with his walking stick. Mean's head took several blows during the construction period. Mean recalls Ta Mok's words after one particular beating. "After hitting me with his stick he said, 'Let's go and bring the cow head to your wife.'<sup>17</sup> Ta Mok allowed the workers to eat one cow per day.<sup>18</sup>

The lakeside house was Ta Mok's head office for both military and administrative affairs in Anlong Veng from 1993 until the total collapse of the KR movement in 1998. Ta Mok often held meetings with his commanders in this house. It was also one of the accommodations for his family.

### **Saw Mill**

Ta Mok constructed a saw mill in 1991 in order to provide wood to the soldiers and to trade with Thailand. The saw mill was located in the present-day Srah Chhouk pagoda, where Ta Mok's stupa was built. The small factory could not provide enough wood to the tens of thousands of people who were building houses after coming down from the camps and mountain, so many people had to cut down the trees on their own.<sup>19</sup>





(Top left) 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Ta Mok Lakeside House, 2012

(Top right) Pavilion overlooking field outside Ta Mok's Lakeside House

(Bottom left) Ta Mok's human cages, 2012

(Bottom right) Fighting position built into Ta Mok's Lakeside House, 2012, Photos by Christopher Dearing

Cadres working in the saw mill included Hem Mean, Ren, Tie, Sok, and Moeun. Ham was the chief of the factory, and Ren was the deputy chief. There were 24 machines at the factory, and the timbers were cut down from Prey Sa-ak (Sa-ak forest). Sok was the chief of the logging unit while Moeun was one of the unit members. The factory operated until the fighting in early 1998 after which the machines and other materials from the factory were sold by the soldiers.<sup>20</sup>

### **O'Chik Dam**

O'Chik dam was formerly a big lake from which the name Anlong Veng originated. Ta Mok began constructing this dam in order to provide a big water reservoir and fish supply for people's daily consumption. The construction of the dam terrace was accomplished over three stages in 1991, 1992 and 1994. In one way or another, nearly every single person who resided in Anlong Veng was involved in the dam construction. The people in the villages were divided into groups of twelve, and the groups took turns to provide labor for the dam construction. In addition, Ta Mok would often indiscriminately call on people he met on his daily tours of the area to assist in the construction.



Wooded area outside Ta Mok's house by the lake with mobile radio unit truck, 2012.  
Photo by Christopher Dearing.

In addition, Ta Mok also built a new dam called "Tomnup Thmei" located about twenty kilometers from Anlong Veng. Ta Mok planned to build a long canal which surrounded the entire Anlong Veng district like a pseudo-mote. The small sub-canals would reach all villages and provide abundant water for the people to do farming and rice cultivation.<sup>21</sup>

### **External Conflict: Fighting with the Government Forces**

The SOC and later the RGC made several attempts to capture Anlong Veng with only mediocre success. In early 1993, the SOC forces fought into and captured Anlong Veng in order to prevent further KR incursions into Cambodia's interior.

The SOC forces' gains, however, were temporary. Faced with losing Anlong Veng, Ta Mok ordered the people to burn down their houses. Because Ta Mok could not transport the large stockpiles of timber to Thailand in time, he also ordered the timber to be burned. The burning of these timbers created vast swaths of fields that smoldered with white ash. Nan, a former resident, says that "tens of thousands of timbers in one square kilometer in Srah Chhouk village were burned down. The place was full of white ash. The burned timber was still, surprisingly, good wood."<sup>22</sup> Ta Mok led the people up Dangrek Mountain and over the border into Thailand. The government forces occupied positions at the foot of the mountain near Choam Sa-Ngam border pass, and they occupied Anlong Veng for about a month and a half.





Site B Refugee Camp (Thailand) in 1997, Photo by Jack Dunford, DC-Cam Archives



Small market in Site B Refugee Camp, Photo by Jack Dunford, DC-Cam Archives

Chiv Chann, a former messenger of Vorn Vet, DK Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics, said that life was miserable during the 1993–94 conflict.

*I carried my child behind my back and ran up the Dangrek Mountain.  
My newly built house was burned to the ground—leaving only a shell.  
We escaped to Thailand. Having no means of transportation, my wife  
and I herded our cows and carried our children and some materials up  
the mountain.*<sup>23</sup>

After a brief occupation by government forces, the KR fought back and reoccupied Anlong Veng. Amidst their reoccupation, they came upon many corpses that were left rotting in the open. As the people came upon the bodies, they collected them for a mass cremation.<sup>24</sup> After clearing the land of corpses and solidifying their hold on the area, the people once again rebuilt their houses.

On February 5, 1994, the RCAF, the government coalition of forces between the Cambodian People's Party (CPP)<sup>25</sup> and FUNCINPEC, conducted another major assault and briefly occupied Anlong Veng. They forced the KR and their people to flee to Thailand once again.<sup>26</sup> This time, however, the KR forces were able to re-take their community within two weeks.<sup>27</sup> The RCAF soldiers experienced bitter conditions due to the region's isolation, dense forest and landmines. RCAF forces suffered from KR attacks, landmines and inadequate food supplies. The constant ebb and flow of government and KR forces occurred several times over an eight-year period, which made the experience of occupation, flight, and re-occupation almost an ordinary cycle of life for the Anlong Veng people.<sup>28</sup>

Lacking sufficient ammunition to protect their strongholds, the KR, at this point, began to produce home-made weapons and mines from left-over bottles and cans. Even simple orange juice bottles became deadly weapons.<sup>29</sup> The KR also relied heavily on bamboo-made spikes. They even made mines from bamboos. These techniques allowed the KR remnants in Anlong Veng to fight with the RCAF until late 1998.

### **Internal Purges: Swollen and Rotten Flesh**

During the DK regime, it was common to see trusted cadres as much as ordinary people arrested and put in prison. The regime set impossible economic goals, and when the goals were not reached, someone had to be held responsible. In this environment, middle- and lower-tier KR cadres turned on each other and the common people in order to satisfy the regime's persistent need to search for internal enemies, spies, and saboteurs. While the regime, as represented by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), was officially dissolved in 1979, the communist practice of purging the ranks continued up until the final days of the KR movement in Anlong Veng.

The people and soldiers who were taken for detention or execution were marked as “swollen and rotten flesh,” which referred to those who had an oppositional tendency toward the leadership and/or who planned to defect. The terms also referred to those people who were considered to be Vietnamese or foreign spies. Political propaganda perpetuated the idea that spies were in the ranks, and they wanted to sabotage the KR movement in Anlong Veng.

Swollen and rotten flesh was a term used to identify a wide variety of different enemies. The soldiers and people who defected from other political groups that were formed in 1979, such as the Khmer People’s National Liberation Front (KPNLF) or the Cambodian Royalist Party, FUNCINPEC, were identified as swollen and rotten flesh. In addition, people who committed moral mistakes or acts against the leaders, or who engaged in prohibited business or trade, were also regarded as swollen and rotten flesh.

Tuol Krous village was well-known as the place for segregating swollen and rotten flesh from the rest of the body politic. It was a remote jungle village, about ten kilometers from Anlong Veng. The village was set up as a concentration and execution camp for the people who were identified as “swollen and rotten flesh” or, in other words, the people who committed offenses that deserved punishment. Sat was the chief and Lun Seng was the deputy chief of Tuol Krous village. Sat received orders from Ta Mok to arrest anyone who was marked as swollen and rotten flesh. There was an underground prison in Tuol Krous, and Men was the chief of this prison.

Tuol Krous was also known as the “village where Chinese people cry” or in literal terms, “the Chinese-crying village.” The Chinese population who lived in Cambodia for generations were often associated with entrepreneurship and private business, which ordinary Cambodians shied away from. Because private business was prohibited during the DK period and then as well under KR rule in Anlong Veng, anyone who was caught engaging in such business was often marked as a Chinese businessman, and consequently punished. In Anlong Veng, people who engaged in any of these entrepreneurial or “Chinese-like” businesses were arrested and sent to Tuol Krous. It was also said that people in this village were heard crying loudly; consequently, the sound and the stereotype of “Chinese-businessmen” came to be part of the name of the village.

Moep Mom recalled her story as being marked as rotten and swollen flesh:

*My husband was sent to the front. I stayed behind and worked on rice cultivation and producing spikes. We were not allowed to do business. However, I made Khmer noodle for sale. My husband and brother knew Thai language. Their commander allowed them to go into Thailand to buy clothes for their wives when they were about to return home. After receiving the clothes and other materials, I walked across the forest to*

*sell them in other villages. I was caught and marked as rotten and swollen flesh. If not for a quick defection, I would have been taken for execution.*<sup>30</sup>

As in previous years, purges and arrests tended to come in waves. During the DK period, as the border conflict between Viet Nam and Democratic Kampuchea began to intensify, the number of arrests increased dramatically. Similarly, as the number of defections began to increase and frictions between the KR leaders began to become more intense, a massive campaign of arrest and execution ensued.

Ta Mok called the soldiers who ran from Division 519 to Anlong Veng as “second Para,” which referred to FUNCINPEC’s soldiers and their ‘paramilitary’ uniforms. Most soldiers in this division defected to the government in 1996 with Ieng Sary.<sup>31</sup> Some commanders and about one hundred soldiers in Division 980 were also named swollen and rotten flesh. These people included Yim Phanna, Yim San, Nuon Chreoun, Ly Sun and Peuy Saroeun. However, Ta Mok did not send these people to Tuol Krous as they still commanded significant respect and loyalty from their military divisions. Instead, Ta Mok sent them to the most vulnerable battlefield in Preah Vihear province where they confronted the government forces on a regular basis.<sup>32</sup>

## ***The Beginning of the End***

### **Internal Conflict within the Khmer Rouge Leadership**

There are several reasons for the friction and eventual conflict that emerged in the final days of the KR movement. The decision on whether to participate in the 1993 election created tension among the KR leadership. Pol Pot clung to the belief that Vietnamese forces and spies had permeated the ranks of the SOC administration. In addition, he continued to believe that the KR could conquer Cambodia again. Pol Pot's views could not have been further from the truth.

Almost as soon as Viet Nam had completed its final withdrawal in 1989, the strategic battleground over Cambodia's future shifted from the military to the political stage. Of course, the relative military strength of the parties provided opportunities for shaping the political landscape. Simply put, one's political power was predicated to some extent on one's control of the Cambodian population as well as their relative military organization. However, while military strength certainly had its advantages in terms of organizing support in the U.N.-sponsored elections, the strategic victory would not come on the military battlefield, but in the hearts and minds of the Cambodian people.

The other key parties in the struggle, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), FUNCINPEC, and the KPNLF, recognized this reality and jockeyed for political leverage both pre- and post-election. The KR leadership, on the other hand, refused to see the alliance of the CPP-FUNCINPEC-KPNLF as anything more than an international conspiracy.

For Pol Pot, participation in the election was akin to putting one's head inside the tiger's mouth, and the KR leadership decided to boycott the election. In April 13, 1993, just six weeks before the election, the KR closed down their office in Phnom Penh and withdrew all their cadres back to their controlled territories. They closed down all the exits to their controlled areas, and refused to disarm.

The KR leadership also prohibited the people and soldiers from voting. In Anlong Veng, the KR leaders instructed the people, "If we participate [in the elections], we die fast; by not participating, we die late."<sup>1</sup> In this regard, the KR decided to continue the struggle against the newly elected Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).<sup>2</sup>

The success of the U.N. elections in 1993 followed by the establishment of the democratically-elected Cambodian government discredited the KR movement. On one hand, there was little chance that the KR would have achieved any greater gains politically than they had militarily. On the other hand, there was almost no possibility for the KR to seize power.

On July 7, 1994, the Cambodian National Assembly passed the “Khmer Rouge Outlaw” law, which went into effect on July 15.<sup>3</sup> The law focused on the KR leaders and armed forces, but not the ‘common’ people under their control. Under the law, the KR organization was deemed illegal and leaders could be prosecuted and imprisoned from ten years to life imprisonment.<sup>4</sup> Pol Pot believed that there was no more hope for any future peace settlement and reconciliation. The KR leadership decided that their only option was the continuation of war.

At this stage, while the KR continued to be feared, they were not in a strong position. The KR’s two former political allies, FUNCINPEC and KPNLF<sup>5</sup> were bound by the Paris Peace Agreement and were no longer hand-in-hand with the KR.

The discontinuation of international assistance after 1993 had also encouraged a decentralization of KR forces. As mentioned previously, the KR lost nearly all of their international support after 1993. With the exception of unofficial business transactions with the Thai, the KR were largely left to their own resources.<sup>6</sup> As KR forces assumed greater responsibility for their own local survival, economic and consequently political disparity within the movement set in. Left to fend for itself, the movement splintered into locally-controlled fiefdoms, which precipitated factionalism. To add to the fray, the Cambodian government also took advantage of this factionalism by encouraging defection. As defections increased, the KR leaders became increasingly isolated and suspicious of each other. Eventually the movement’s leaders began to turn on each other.

Among all the KR factions, Ta Mok was the most successful in re-organizing the Anlong Veng economy into one that could survive without international assistance. Ta Mok did not want to depend on other KR leaders for his survival. Kim Nan recalls Ta Mok saying, “I will not ask money from anyone. There was plenty of money in the West. Pol Pot has a lot of money. But I will not ask him for help.”<sup>7</sup>

However, this was not the aspiration of the Anlong Veng people. Many of the people who resided in Anlong Veng had devoted their entire lives to the communist struggle. Some people had joined the unit in the early 1970s, so they had served the communist party for over twenty years. After over twenty years of war, however, even the most die-hard KR cadres questioned the utility of continuing the war.

The ultimate factor of the KR internal conflict was the large-scale defection of the KR remnants in Malai and Pailin. In October 1996, Ieng Sary led the defection of about 3,000



KR soldiers in Pailin and Malai to the RGC.<sup>8</sup> The formal defection ceremonies were held in Pailin and Malai on November 6 and November 7, 1996, respectively. The ceremonies were presided over by Co-Defense Ministers Tea Banh and Tea Chamrath from the Royal Government and Ieng Sary, Y Chhean, and Sok Pheap from the KR side. Subsequently, other small-scale defections followed suit. These defections included the KR remnants in Samlot<sup>9</sup>; Division 519 in Banteay Meanchey province under the commands of So Hong and Dul Saroeun<sup>10</sup>; and KR forces in Veal Veng district of Pursat province.<sup>11</sup> Keo San, military commander in Phnom Srouch district and Keo Pong, military commander in Oral Mountain, defected to the government since early 1996.<sup>12</sup> On December 18, 1996, Ny Kan, Son Chhum and Meas Muth led the defection of the KR forces in Kamrieng, Phnom Prek, and Sampov Loun districts.

These defections were a critical factor in demonstrating the futility of the KR movement. The defections represented a psychological blow as much as a military defeat, and in the end they precipitated the internal divisions within the KR leadership, which would collapse the KR movement.



## ***The Dispute between Pol Pot and Ta Mok***

### **Introduction**

The dispute between Pol Pot and Ta Mok can be traced to the Pailin and Malai defections. Pol Pot believed that there was still hope that Ieng Sary, Y Chhean, and Sok Pheap might return to the movement. In early October 1996, Pol Pot ordered Ta Mok and Nuon Chea to solve the problem of defections in Pailin and Malai.

Under Pol Pot's orders, they made the trip to Pailin without any military units. Only a few body guards accompanied Ta Mok and Nuon Chea. Pol Pot knew that Ieng Sary's commanders were in full control of the forces in Pailin, so if conflict broke out, Ta Mok and Nuon Chea would have a difficult time returning. According to some sources, Pol Pot was hoping if conflict did ensue, he would be rid of his junior rival Ta Mok.<sup>1</sup>

Ta Mok and Nuon Chea were not successful in their assignment, which angered Pol Pot. Even worse, not only did they fail to convince the KR remnants in Pailin and Malai to return to the KR-fold, the two leaders were chased from the area. They escaped to Samlot, where they met Son Sen. The three leaders made the trip to Anlong Veng together by way of Thailand. Ta Mok's closest body guard Mao carried Ta Mok on his back as Ta Mok lost one leg and could not walk on his own. To facilitate the loyalty of their bodyguards, Son Sen gave a sack of money to the soldiers who helped guide them until they reached Thailand safely. The Co-Prime Ministers Prince Norodom Rannariddh and Hun Sen requested the Thai authorities arrest Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Son Sen. It is believed, however, Thailand balked at this request and the leaders were able to return to Anlong Veng without incident.

Arriving at the Thai border, Mao (Ta Mok's guard) made a phone call to Anlong Veng, asking for a car to transport the three leaders back into the stronghold. Rather than receiving help, Mao received instructions from Pol Pot to buy several containers of gasoline and burn the car with the people inside. Mao had known Ta Mok since his childhood and had served him as a faithful aid for most of his adult life. Consequently, he refused to carry out the order. Instead, Mao rented a car from Thailand and they returned to Anlong Veng with all three leaders.<sup>2</sup>

When Ta Mok arrived at his house in Peuy Ta Ruon, Pol Pot came to meet him. The two had a very loud and long meeting. Pol Pot arrested Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Son Sen and

detained them for about five to six months from October 1996 to February 1997. Ta Mok recalled, "I was jailed for six months together with Son Sen and Nuon Chea. It was like a dark cell. We were not allowed to walk. I thought that he might be afraid of leaking the information. I didn't realize that they wanted to kill us."<sup>3</sup>

### **Committee 19: New Generation of Democratic Kampuchea Leadership**

While Pol Pot quietly detained the senior leaders during this period, he did not kill them, which would have likely sparked a conflict. Instead, he chose to deprive them (and in particular Ta Mok) of their support by proposing a change in leadership over the affairs of Anlong Veng.<sup>4</sup> Pol Pot suggested that all senior and older-age KR leaders, including Ta Mok and himself, retire and allow the new generation of leaders to carry out the struggle. All senior leaders would stay with the movement as advisers. In February 1997, Pol Pot held a congress with about 400 participants, most of whom were military commanders. The purpose of the congress was to discuss the transfer of power from the old to the new generation. The transfer of power would be determined by votes. There were ten candidates including So Saroeun, Miech San, Khem Nguon, Nhan, Hoeun and Khorn. Miech San, a commander close to Pol Pot, received the majority of the votes. However, San chose not to challenge Saroeun, who was his former chief who entered the revolution ahead of him. The senior leaders discussed and decided that Saroeun was the new leader of the KR movement. However, Ta Mok reportedly wanted his close commander Khem Nguon (or comrade 42) to take over command.

After the congressional vote, Pol Pot established a ten-member committee called "Committee 19" led by his close commander So Saroeun, who became commander-in-chief of all KR forces in Anlong Veng. Saroeun's military base was in Preah Pralay commune, Trapeang Prasat district. Saroeun and Khem Nguon did not get along. Saroeun wanted to consolidate power by eliminating the strong commanders close to Ta Mok. Most of Ta Mok's prominent commanders (Khem Nguon, Long Tem and Yim Phanna) would be sacked of their military commands and assigned to administrative posts.

Ta Mok strongly objected to this initiative. For Ta Mok, the entire affair reflected Pol Pot's strategy to consolidate power in Anlong Veng.<sup>4</sup> While Pol Pot's forces were sent far to work inside the country, most of Ta Mok's forces were close to Anlong Veng. This circumstance allowed Ta Mok to successfully block the functioning of Committee 19 and continue to hold power in Anlong Veng. After the February congress, Ta Mok re-engaged negotiations with the government through FUNCINPEC. In his negotiations, he agreed in principle that Pol Pot should have no voice in any political compromise with the Cambodian government.

### **Execution of Son Sen**

On June 9, 1997, Son Sen, who was Pol Pot's long-time revolutionary, was brutally killed.<sup>5</sup> In addition, ten other family members, including his wife Yun Yat (DK Minister of Culture,

Education and National Studies), two daughters, a five-year-old grandson, a driver, and a messenger were also killed en mass. Son Sen's execution marked one of the final events in the KR movement's last days in Anlong Veng.

At the night of Son Sen's execution, Pol Pot asked for a meeting with Son Sen, who turned down the request. Yun Yat told the messengers that it was too late at night and asked for extending the meeting to the morning of the next day.<sup>6</sup> Pol Pot ordered his commander So Saroeun to execute Son Sen and his wife who were staying at a house built by Ta Mok near Peuy Ta Ruon. Saroeun led a group of about twenty to thirty soldiers and approached Son Sen's house at around eleven at night. The soldiers called Son Sen out and shot him and his wife to death.<sup>7</sup> Saroeun exceeded Pol Pot's original instructions in that he ordered his soldiers to not only kill Son Sen and his wife, but also the entire family.<sup>8</sup> It is believed that two of Son Sen's daughters were also raped before they were killed. Le Rin, a former soldier in the Division 912 witnessed the two women's bodies lying naked on the rock wearing only their underwear.<sup>9</sup> Worse than this, the soldiers drove the car over top of the bodies, which crushed their heads and broke their legs and hands into pieces.

Son Sen's body and the bodies of his ten family members were taken for a mass cremation in what is now Srah Chhouk pagoda. Hundreds of people who lived nearby came to witness the cremation. After the cremation, the ashes and remaining bones were collected and buried nearby. The cremation site is close to Ta Mok's tomb, and while it is unmarked, it can be identified as simply a few small mounds in the ground.<sup>10</sup>



Son Sen burial site: The site is located on the front side of a house, just meters from the dirt road. It is marked by a small tree and it clearly appears to be a burial site by the mound that is seen from the road, however there are no other identifying markers, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

Upon receiving information about Son Sen's death, Ta Mok came to the conclusion that Pol Pot also wanted to target him for a collective purge. Ta Mok was furious with Pol Pot and So Saroeun and called for a meeting with his military commanders at his lakeside house, informing them that Pol Pot and So Saroeun wanted to kill him and become the regional King in Anlong Veng. Ta Mok asked his commanders to prepare for a war with Pol Pot.

### **Fighting between Pol Pot and Ta Mok**

The execution of Son Sen triggered a five-day conflict in Anlong Veng. Between June 10 and 14, 1997, forces loyal to Ta Mok clashed with forces loyal to Pol Pot.

On the night of June 9, Ta Mok ordered the gathering of his forces. Ta Mok's forces fought to obtain the dead bodies of Son Sen and his family members, which were later photographed for propaganda purposes. On the morning of June 10 at around 7 a.m., Ta Mok and his loyalists publicized the killing of Son Sen to rally the soldiers and people. Ta Mok announced to the people that Son Sen and his entire family were killed. With photographic evidence of Son Sen's death, Ta Mok appealed to the people to help him in his struggle against Pol Pot.

Ta Mok ordered Divisions 980 and 912 to arrest Pol Pot and his co-conspirators.<sup>11</sup> Long Tem, Sann Kong, Yim Phanna, Yim Pem and Mon were responsible for leading Ta Mok's forces against forces loyal to Pol Pot—So Saroeun's Division 801 and Miech San's Division 920. Ta Mok also asked for assistance from Nhek Bun Chhay (a FUNCINPEC military commander), whose helicopters delivered weapons from O'Smach military base. The intent was to use Nhek Bun Chhay's helicopters to supply Ta Mok's forces in Anlong Veng. Fifteen soldiers were ordered to protect the central warehouse. The warehouse was the principal supply depot for Anlong Veng. Their job was to defend this warehouse at all costs from Pol Pot's forces.

In response to Ta Mok's propaganda, Pol Pot began denouncing Ta Mok over the radio. He accused Ta Mok's forces of treason. Khieu Samphan also entered the fray. On June 11, he read an announcement over Pol Pot's radio station accusing the late Son Sen of betraying the movement and being a spy of "the Vietnamese puppet government" in Phnom Penh.

During the conflict, people were not allowed to walk freely at night, and the roads were closed at around 5 or 6 p.m. People could see soldiers moving about Anlong Veng during the evening, which frightened many people. The fighting was a significant blow to the people's outlook. In one sense, tensions always existed between the different factions; however, the open conflict confirmed the movement's lack of unity and it undermined the people's faith in their leaders. Yuk Ham, a worker at Ta Mok's sawing factory, expressed his feeling when he learned about the killing of Son Sen:

*When I saw the leaders openly fight, I felt like I had lost all confidence in them. I didn't know how I could work and continue living with them. I felt like the only way to find happiness and security would be if we integrated into the government. Fighting, shooting, and killing each other created constant tension. I believed that there was no future in this kind of life. We lived in different units and groups, all of which had a leader. But the leaders did not get along each other, so we could not live peacefully. Every year, we struggled through constant problems and war. We fought the government and then we were ordered to burn down our houses. All we wanted, however, was to return to our home villages. We were so tired of the war. It is because of this, I believed that happiness was only attainable through integration into the government.<sup>12</sup>*

After the fifth day of fighting, Pol Pot asked So Saroeun, Miech San and other loyal military commanders to put down their guns and negotiate with Ta Mok. Pol Pot wanted to convince Ta Mok to stop fighting because in his mind, the longer the struggle continued, the greater chance “the enemy would gain.” In addition, there were practical reasons for ending the conflict. While Pol Pot commanded the loyalty of his commanders, he had little economic support to sustain himself. In sum, because Ta Mok controlled the economy in the area, Pol Pot had little chance of achieving military victory.

Ta Mok arrested So Saroeun and his wife, Miech San and his son Miech Saravuth, and several other military commanders including Yorn, Nguon, Sen and Khemara, who were loyal to Pol Pot. They were detained in two iron tiger cages which were less than one-and-half-meter in height.<sup>13</sup> The rest of Saroeun's and San's family members were put under house arrest.<sup>14</sup> About two months later, So Saroeun, his wife and Miech San were sentenced to death. They were buried alive in one mass grave.<sup>15</sup>





## ***The Arrest & Trial of Pol Pot***

### **The Arrest of Pol Pot**

Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Thioun Thioeun, Chan Yourann, Tep Khunnal and several other advisers and followers escaped Ta Mok's forces to O Svay commune in Tra-piang Prasat district and hid in a cave. A handful of soldiers who ran with and protected Pol Pot were formerly Ta Mok's soldiers. Losing hope, the soldiers left Pol Pot one after another. Ta Mok's forces were able to search for them. One of Ta Mok's soldiers who entered the cave to arrest Pol Pot witnessed Khieu Samphan cooking rice for Pol Pot. As the soldiers approached them, Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan pointed the pistols to the soldiers but did not shoot.<sup>1</sup> Khieu Samphan was about to shoot himself but he was stopped by his in-law who was also Ta Mok's military commander.

Approaching the cave, the soldiers politely said to Pol Pot, "We would like you to return with us. Ta Mok wants to meet with you." Pol Pot was eventually arrested on June 19, 1997. The soldiers carried Pol Pot on a hammock.<sup>2</sup> The rest walked back. Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea cried as they walked. They were afraid of being executed by Ta Mok. The soldiers put all of the senior leaders in a central warehouse. Later, Pol Pot and his military commanders were moved to a detention center near the present-day Choam Sangam border pass. Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea, Chan Youran, Thiounn Thioeunn and several other leaders were freed. With no place to go or to escape, these leaders continued to live with Ta Mok until the 1998 integration.

### **The People's Tribunal: Pol Pot's Prosecution**

On July 25, Pol Pot was brought before the "People's Tribunal."<sup>3</sup> Four high-ranking military commanders and civilian leaders loyal to Ta Mok were selected as members of the jury. They were Khiev Nov (representing the masses and the people); Khem Nguon (representing the armed forces); and Mak Ben and Tep Khunnal (representing the intellectuals).<sup>4</sup> Between four and five hundred people in Anlong Veng were asked to witness the prosecution of their long-time revered leader. Participants were not allowed to take any weapons along. Most of the participants were women, children and about one hundred soldiers who wore Chinese-made green uniforms. It was the first time that many of the participants saw Pol Pot's face since they joined the KR revolution for almost three decades.



Khmer Rouge People's Tribunal location, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

The prosecution started by clapping their hands and shouting, “Long Live Democracy which is flying up! Long Live the Great National Solidarity! Down with Pol Pot and his clique! The traitors!” Most participants just did what they were told to do. They had little or almost no understanding of Pol Pot’s history, the recent internal conflict, or the purposes of the prosecution.

The pseudo-trial was held in a simple wooden shelter that had a corrugated iron roof and no walls. Fourteen kilometers from Anlong Veng’s downtown, the shelter was built by Ta Mok as a rest stop area before crossing over the border into Thailand. Pol Pot sat in a wooden chair placed in the middle of the shelter. Next to Pol Pot were his three division commanders, all of whom were handcuffed. They were Miech San, So Saroeun and an unknown man.

Khiev Nov was the head of the four-member trial committee. Nov opened the hearing with remarks:

*The more Pol Pot asked of people, the more he killed his people. This continuous execution distracted the movement from peace and national reconciliation. National solidarity suffered, and in the end, Cambodia was nearly destroyed.<sup>5</sup>*

Even before Khiev Nov could finish his speech, a man from the crowd stood up and shouted, "Pol Pot and his cadres failed us! Traitors!" At which point, the participants raised their clenched fists in support.

The second speaker was Khem Nguon, who stated, "The Pol Pot regime ended on June 16th." Ngon referred to the day that Pol Pot's forces were defeated by Ta Mok. Ngon also talked about the killing of Son Sen. Another man shouted from the crowd, "Down with Pol Pot, whose hands are full of blood!" The shouting was followed by a chorus of people who shouted, "Down! Down! Down!"—while pointing to the ground. Then Ngon began to ask several rhetorical questions which were intended to generate anger amongst the people.

*Why was a five-year-old child killed? What crimes did this child commit? Women were found naked and raped, and they drove a car on top of the bodies to crush their heads and break their legs and hands into fragments. These acts are much crueler than the Vietnamese crimes. Sareoun was the one who committed these crimes. What was our struggle really for? We have struggled for over twenty years to preserve our motherland, and to not allow Cambodia to become Kampuchea Krom. Even a senior leader like Son Sen and his family were killed. What does this say for the people?<sup>6</sup>*

Mak Ben, the French-educated intellectual, was the third speaker. He was in his Chinese-made green military uniform. Ben commented that from June 14-15, there was no longer a Pol Pot regime. Ben announced that the new political line would be "Khmer would not kill Khmer, and the Khmer people must unite to struggle against the genocidal Vietnamese. This is the new political line that we are implementing in now and will carry on into the future in order to achieve our ultimate goal which is true peace."

Tep Khunnal—another French-educated engineer, DK diplomat to the UN and Pol Pot's adviser—was the fourth speaker. Khunnal commented that "[Pol Pot's] decision to appoint people to positions of leadership in Anlong Veng who do not have popular support from the masses is against the will and interests of the people, masses and armed forces. This decision triggered internal conflict."<sup>7</sup>

Khiev Nov also allowed two disabled soldiers to express their opinions at the trial. Both men had lost their right legs. The two men appealed to the United Nations and the international community to find justice for the peasants. One man commented:

*For twenty-seven years I saw traitorous acts; however, I had no idea that the Pol Pot regime was such a murderous regime. The June 9 event [Son Sen's execution], however, made me realize that it really was a murderous regime. Even a small innocent child was killed. From now on, I*

*will no longer be a supporter of the Pol Pot regime. I am a supporter of the real movement under the leadership of the National Solidarity Party, which aims to destroy the communist Vietnamese and the genocidal regime. We want the UN to know that the Anlong Veng people are the true force that raises the democratic flag.*<sup>8</sup>

Finally, Khiev Nov announced the verdict. Pol Pot was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of “killing Son Sen, attempted murder of Ta Mok, and the destruction of the national reconciliation effort.” The charge of destroying the national reconciliation effort referred to Pol Pot’s effects upon the potential peace deal between Ta Mok and FUNCINPEC. Pol Pot was put under house arrest with his wife and a young daughter. Mao and Nuon Nov, Ta Mok’s Chief of Economy who took care of all finance issues in Anlong Veng, were made responsible for taking care of all matters related to Pol Pot. In particular, they were responsible for Pol Pot’s food and medicine.<sup>9</sup>

The trial did not afford any rights to the accused, and there was no semblance of due process. Instead, the ceremony was more akin to a public shaming ceremony. Pol Pot and his cadres were condemned for their actions against the Cambodian people and the speeches focused on making Pol Pot and his cadres solely responsible for all of the heinous acts committed during the DK period. Even though they had followed Pol Pot and his KR communist movement for almost three decades, the speakers described themselves more along the lines of ‘democrats’ rather than communists. Being asked to identify their status, Ta Mok said, “We are patriots... Pol Pot was the only person responsible and in charge of everything... I have no idea why we let Pol Pot do whatever he wanted. I personally have no idea about what Pol Pot was thinking. In my eyes, he is a dictator.”<sup>10</sup>

The prosecution of Pol Pot was the final nail in the KR movement’s coffin. While the movement had been steadily growing smaller as a result of defections throughout the 1990s, the internal struggles and the subsequent show trial that followed in the summer of 1997 hollowed out whatever remained of the movement’s esprit d’corps.

Chapter 14:

## ***The 1998 Integration into the Royal Government of Cambodia***



An art performance in Anlong Veng in 1998, DC-Cam Archives

### **Initial Prospects of Integration in Anlong Veng**

The KR's plan to integrate into the newly elected Royal Government of Cambodia was cultivated long before the 1998 final integration. The idea of integration could be traced back to the time of the Paris Peace Agreement when all conflict parties agreed to unite and work toward building a peaceful Cambodia. The people in the former KR strongholds no longer wanted to fight with their Cambodian opponents, and the aspiration for a peace deal reached its peak with the 1993 national election.

Yim Phanna said that he thought about defection since 1992. At that time, a group of KR officers, Yim Phanna included, were sent as DK representatives to work in the framework of the SNC in Phnom Penh. When the KR boycotted the election, they were recalled back to Anlong Veng. Some were accused of being courted by “the Vietnamese puppets” in

Phnom Penh and betraying the movement. Phanna described the difficulties he endured, "When I returned [to Anlong Veng], I was accused of conspiring with "the Vietnamese puppets in Phnom Penh," and put in a tiger cage."

From that point forward, Phanna believed that "the 1993 election was the only way for all Cambodian factions to be united in peace and security."<sup>1</sup> However, his optimism in the elections was blunted by the KR top leaders' decision to boycott the election and continue the struggle.

The situation and governing system in Anlong Veng became more tense in those days in comparison to the neighboring Pailin and other KR-controlled territories. Division commanders in Anlong Veng did not have the same degree of autonomy as unit commanders in Pailin. Yim Phanna commented, "We did not have the same economic independence like the ones in Pailin."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the KR regulation did not allow soldiers to send their wives and children to the interior of the country. Sending family members inside the country was the equivalent to betrayal."

In October 1993, Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan and many other leaders came from Phnom Chatt to settle in Anlong Veng. Because the senior leaders assumed greater control of military and economic affairs (that were not in the hands of Ta Mok), their presence appeared to dampen the possibility of defection. Phanna relates that as senior leaders moved into Anlong Veng, the opportunity for Anlong Veng's units to defect diminished. At the same time, however, the prospects for defection increased for Pailin and Malai.<sup>3</sup>



DK-KPNLF-FUNCINPEC personnel at a private party in 1993, DC-Cam Archives



A KR Soldier with his niece in a KR-controlled camp, DC-Cam Archives



In 1996, the units in Pailin and Malai re-integrated into the Royal Government of Cambodia, causing great alarm for the KR leaders in Anlong Veng. The leaders educated the people that they should not follow the example of the people in Pailin and Malai. They had to continue the struggle no matter the cost.

The people however were exhausted of the protracted war, and even though no one dared to express their sentiments in public, the KR leadership began to lose popular support.<sup>4</sup> Most military commanders and civilians thought about defection but the risks appeared too great. An individual soldier could escape, but their wives and children would be executed as punishment.<sup>5</sup> No one dared to raise the issue out of fear of being reported. Mistrust among the commanders was a great hindrance to moving forward with any defection plans.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the KR soldiers had not received any confident assurance from the government for their personal security after defection.

### **Ta Mok's First Attempt to Negotiate the Peace Deal**

Ta Mok began the first round of negotiations with FUNCINPEC in February 1997. Ta Mok made contact with the late Hem Bun Heng, then FUNCINPEC Second Deputy Governor of Siem Reap province.<sup>7</sup> The secret negotiation was conducted without Pol Pot's knowledge.

The meeting took place in Romeat village about thirty-five kilometers from Anlong Veng on February 14, 1997. Hem Bun Heng headed the team of fifteen people. Ta Mok's negotiators included Nup Socheat, Long Tem, and Khem Nguon. Long Tem and Hem Bun Heng had close relations. Bun Heng was former FUNCINPEC's military commander during the anti-Vietnamese struggle in the 1980s. He worked closely with the KR as part of the CGDK framework.<sup>8</sup> Son Sen was sympathetic with the negotiation.

The negotiations were not designed to be specifically focused on re-integration. Bun Heng was also assigned to hand a copy of the document of the FUNCINPEC-initiated National United Front (NUF)<sup>9</sup> to convince the KR in Anlong Veng to take part in the Front.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately, the meeting ended in disaster.<sup>11</sup> As the meeting was taking place, soldiers under Division 801 (a Pol Pot-aligned division under the command of So Saroeun) fired their guns to interrupt the talks. Hem Bun Heng was injured in the leg and he was arrested and transported to Anlong Veng. Bun Heng suffered serious injuries which eventually led to his death. The other ten negotiators including General Phuong Bun Phoen and General Hang Sochan from the Ministry of Defense were killed on the spot. The helicopter was set on fire, and the four pilots who were waiting near the helicopter were arrested and detained in Anlong Veng.

### **Second Attempt at Negotiations**

Soon after the failure of the first attempt, FUNCINPEC and Ta Mok began the second at-

tempt at negotiations. Nhek Bun Chhay and Khan Savoeun (the top FUNCINPEC military commanders), Tun Chay (FUNCINPEC Siem Reap Governor), and Long Sarin (FUNCINPEC's Second Secretary of Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok) were the government's chief negotiators. The KR side was represented by Ta Mok, Khieu Samphan, Tep Khunnal and Long Tem, who continued to serve as the main channel and point of contact for the two sides. The negotiations took place over several weeks. FUNCINPEC demanded the exclusion of Pol Pot, which did not present a problem to the KR negotiators. Ta Mok, in return, demanded that Anlong Veng be given the status of an autonomous region, which reflected the similar treatment given to the Pailin and Malai regions. With these conditions, the KR in Anlong Veng would agree to dissolve their Provincial Government and respect the Cambodian constitution.

For obvious reasons, Pol Pot strongly opposed the re-integration plan and tried to block the negotiation. Besides his obvious interest in self-preservation, Pol Pot seemed to believe that any attempt for peaceful negotiation with the government would not yield any fruitful solution. In Pol Pot's view, the only way forward was to continue the struggle until the KR could take back the country.

The negotiations broke down amidst the five-day conflict between Ta Mok and Pol Pot's forces. A meeting was scheduled on June 10 but did not occur as a result of the internal KR conflict. Ta Mok asked for assistance from Nhek Bun Chhay to help defeat Pol Pot and recover what he called the plan for peace and national reconciliation. Nhek Bun Chhay agreed and from his military base in O Smach, he transported ammunition to Ta Mok's forces by helicopter.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, after Pol Pot and his close commanders were arrested, Ta Mok was able to accelerate the negotiations. The deal with FUNCINPEC was to be finalized by July 4, 1997.

Ta Mok's forces agreed to integrate themselves into the government's army and respect the Cambodian constitution and the government's administrative structure. In return, Ta Mok asked for an amnesty from the King—the same request granted to Ieng Sary in 1996. Ta Mok also asked to preserve his administrative and military structure in Anlong Veng—all of which Prince Rannariddh agreed.<sup>13</sup>

The negotiations between FUNCINPEC and Ta Mok's faction appeared to have been the spark that ignited the fighting between forces loyal to First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Rannariddh and those loyal to Second Prime Minister Hun Sen.<sup>14</sup> Between July 5 and 6, fighting erupted in Phnom Penh. Eventually Prince Norodom Rannariddh was ousted from power. Many FUNCINPEC high-ranking government officials and members of Parliament fled abroad. A number of FUNCINPEC's officials and military officers were also believed to have been summarily murdered. The defeated FUNCINPEC forces escaped and regrouped near the Thai border. General Nhek Bun Chhay ran to Anlong Veng, asking Ta Mok for help.



The July 1997 event convinced Ta Mok that the KR remnants could not work with the 'Hun Sen' government and the continuation of armed struggle was the only option. Some of Ta Mok's military commanders were disappointed and began the third and final round of negotiations for a peace deal.

While the negotiations with FUNCINPEC may have ended with the July 1997 event, Ta Mok still began one final attempt to gain international support by inviting a group of American journalists for a three-hour interview with him, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Chan Youran at his lakeside house.

As the warlord of Anlong Veng, Ta Mok arranged all the matters related to the interview. Nhek Bun Chhay was also present at the interview.<sup>15</sup> Asking how his movement had continued to survive without international aid, Ta Mok replied,

*We have to continue our struggle and work hard; otherwise, we will die. Indeed, what else we can do? We have no way out.*<sup>16</sup>

Nuon Chea, who sat next to Ta Mok added,

*Cambodia has its own model—the model of a people's movement. That is why we still survive today, even though we receive no foreign aid. We can continue because we have the support from our people—from peasants and Cambodian people alike.*

Nuon Chea also recited the political sessions he lectured to his cadres during the KR period.

At the end of the interview, Ta Mok appealed to the United States for help.

*Before you leave, I would like to ask the American government to bring peace to Cambodia and help the formation of a national government which includes every party. There is no other way.*<sup>17</sup>

Ta Mok's last appeal was made just two months before Anlong Veng fell under the control of the defecting KR forces and the government forces. Ta Mok led his forces and civilians up Dangrek Mountain and across the border into Thailand for one final time.

### **The Final Peace and Reconciliation Deal**

A group of commanders of the Division 980 led by Yim Phanna, Yim San, Yim Pem, Nuon Chroeuon and Ly Son secretly began the last round of negotiations. Instead of negotiating with FUNCINPEC, the commanders negotiated with Hun Sen without Ta Mok's knowledge. Part of the deference to Prime Minister Hun Sen's forces was based on the commanders' former experiences in working with P.M. Hun Sen's forces. During the pe-

riod leading up to the general elections of 1993, Phanna and his forces had worked with government officials from the PRK/SOC regime. They developed good relations with the government, and these relations facilitated the commanders' re-initiation of negotiations for the final re-integration of KR forces in Anlong Veng.

Phanna also commanded significant influence on the KR side. He certainly had almost total support from the forces he commanded in Division 980, and upon defection, he claimed that he could gather at least 60 percent of the total forces and people in Anlong Veng.<sup>18</sup> He was joined by Yim Pem, Ke Pauk of Division 417 and several other military commanders, all of whom met in Yim Pem's house to discuss the final details for making the proposal to P.M. Hun Sen's government.

Yim Phanna led the entourage of negotiators for the meeting in Phnom Penh. At the meeting, P.M. Hun Sen, remarked,

*I was also a former KR cadre myself, but I joined the government ahead of you. I was not the one who created war. You, Yim Phanna, were also not the one who had the ability to create war. They [the senior leaders] created war and dropped it on us. We are the ones suffering because of them. So please, let us stop fighting each other and work together for national reconciliation and national unity.<sup>19</sup>*

The KR military commanders in the meeting were moved by Hun Sen's vision, and they requested three conditions for their defection: (1) The right to live as normal citizens; (2) The right to possess private property and to manage their local government affairs; and (3) The right to hold government positions in their former strongholds. P.M. Hun Sen agreed to all requests.

After negotiations with P.M. Hun Sen, Yim Phanna and his colleagues planned to break from Ta Mok on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1998. Phanna sent a team to organize the plans with Siem Reap's Deputy Governor Nov Sam on March 13. To secure the government's confidence in the deal, Phanna also sent his wife and children to live in Siem Reap under the government's control ahead of his departure. However, the secret defection plan was leaked to Ta Mok, who prepared forces to fight the defectors.

The fighting between the defectors and forces loyal to Ta Mok took place on March 24, three days prior to implementation of the defection plan. The government provided ammunition to support the defecting soldiers but they did not send forces to Anlong Veng. The government forces were allowed to stay at Prey Sa-ak only. Forces of the Division 980 fought into Anlong Veng in order to give people an opportunity to join the defection; however many people ran to O'Bai Tap. Phanna's division received support from Ke Pauk's Division 417 and Division 801, whose Chief So Saroeun was executed by Ta Mok several

months earlier. Ta Mok's trusted military unit was Division 912, which was led by a committee of three members including Heng, Sann Kong and Tuy Bunreth.

At the sound of gunfire, the majority of people in the area fled. As one former resident mentioned, the people became like "poisonous fish." Given the secrecy of the negotiations, most people were unaware of the defection plan. It was only later, through village gossip which started with the defecting soldiers' families, that the people began to learn about the plan.

Most people did not know where to go or who to side with.<sup>20</sup> The people ran in two different directions depending on where they lived. The people either ran up the mountain to Phu Noi refugee camp in Thailand with Ta Mok or retreated to O'Bai Tap in Sre Noy commune (about fifty kilometers South of Anlong Veng) with the defectors' forces led by military commanders of Division 980. Dom Chhuly, who was another commander of Division 980 and who was working in Stung district, Kampong Thom, led his soldiers to join the defectors in O'Bai Tap.

About 8,000 civilians and soldiers escaped to O'Bai Tap, where they lived until July 1998. After July 1998, some people returned, only to find much of their property confiscated or occupied by former soldiers.

### **Phu Noi**

During the March 1998 infighting between the defecting units and Ta Mok's forces, Ta Mok led his forces and civilians to escape to Phu Noi refugee camp in Thailand's Sisaket province until December 1998. They lived under the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which provided accommodation and food supplies.<sup>21</sup>

Ta Mok took all the KR senior leaders with him. Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Chan Youran, Tep Khunnal, Mak Ben, Pech Bunreth, In Sopheap and Kor Bun Heng, all accompanied Ta Mok into Thailand. He also took a radio transmitter and a radio team with him, which allowed him to denounce the defectors as "traitors." He vowed to put them all to death.

While Ta Mok vowed to struggle against the government until the end, most of his trusted cadres did not see any hope. His cadres implored him to take a rest and allow them to negotiate with the government. Ta Mok agreed, and transferred his political responsibilities to Khieu Samphan and his military responsibilities to his close commander Khem Nguon.

The infighting between Ta Mok's forces and those of the defectors went on for several months. It is believed that Ta Mok had only about 2,000 soldiers on hand, even though Khem Nguon claimed that he still commanded over 5,000 soldiers and over 15,000 civil-

ians. On April 2, Ta Mok's forces were able to recapture Anlong Veng. However, they were chased out of the town soon after by a joint offensive between the recently defected KR units and the RCAF. In mid-April, the KR defecting forces and RCAF captured Srah Chhouk commune, another key military base for Ta Mok. Ta Mok's forces retreated to Mountain 200, which is about 20 kilometers north of Anlong Veng's downtown.

It was at this time that Pol Pot passed away. While the circumstances of Pol Pot's death were murky, it appears that he died of a cardiac arrest during the KR forces' retreat from Anlong Veng. With the steady advance of the RCAF, his caretakers could not obtain oxygen or medicine for Pol Pot. It is believed that he died in his bed on April 15, 1998, with his young wife and daughter by his side, and he was cremated on a bed of car tires two days later.



The site is easily accessible by car on a dirt road that is about a half-kilometer from the Khmer Rouge People's Court. It is marked with a Ministry of Tourism sign, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

Some of Ta Mok's soldiers who refused to defect to the government through the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) finally defected to Nhek Bun Chhay's forces at O Smach border pass.

Ta Mok's forces were weakened further when they lost the battle field in Mountain 200 on May 4. As a result his forces moved to Kbal Ansaong, one of Pol Pot's houses and headquarters.

As the situation intensified, civilians under Ta Mok had crossed over into Sisaket province in Thailand. Most civilians had left Ta Mok's forces for Thailand since May 1. The villagers used trucks, ox-carts, bicycles, excavators and cars as means of transportation. The people took with them all kitchen utensils, clothes and food supplies—as much as they could carry.

### **The End of the KR Movement**

A series of secret negotiations between the government and the remaining KR forces took place reportedly at Preah Vihear temple and in Bangkok. Ta Mok's chief negotiators included Khem Nguon, Nuon Nov and Tep Khunnal. Yim Phanna and Yim Pem along with several other RCAF commanders including Defense Minister Tea Banh and General Meas Sophea represented the government side.<sup>22</sup> The negotiations failed several times as Ta Mok's forces demanded for the autonomy over Anlong Veng in return for their defection. The demand was rejected by the government's negotiators.

Between May and November 1998, the remaining KR forces became more and more weakened and lost spirit. Many soldiers defected to the government either through the CPP or FUNCINPEC. Some soldiers who did not want to defect to the government ran to Pailin and Malai. Senior leaders such as Chan Youran, Thiounn Thioeunn, In Sopheap, Kor Bun Heng and Mak Ben defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia in June. They later settled in Pailin.

On December 4, 1998, both sides reached an agreement marking the final chapter of the KR defection and the ultimate dissolution of the KR remnants who had struggled against the government for nearly twenty-eight years. Ta Mok agreed to surrender and allowed all forces and people to come down. Khem Nguon also agreed to join the government.<sup>23</sup> Ta Mok no longer had any means to feed his followers, and he recognized the people's aspiration for peace and the futility of continuing the war. In return, the government guaranteed the security and well-being of his civilians in Phu Noi camp.

In addition, all former KR soldiers and civilians would be recognized as legal citizens of Cambodia, with the right to retain their current property as well as hold administrative positions in the area. Many former KR military commanders and civilian leaders were appointed to leadership positions within the administrative, police and military functions in the area. Those who have little knowledge or poor health and cannot hold any important positions were appointed to advisory positions in various government ministries, such as the Ministry of National Defense and Ministry of Interior. Yim Pem was appointed a two-





Formal integration ceremony in Anlong Veng in February 1999, Photos by Khun Ly, DC-Cam Archives

star general and commander of Division 8. Yim San became the first governor of Anlong Veng district, and Yim Phanna was appointed Deputy Commander of Military Zone 4.

Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea defected to the Royal Government of Cambodia on December 24, 1998, and they were well received by Prime Minister Hun Sen at his house in Ta Khao. Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea were allowed to live freely in Pailin until their arrest on November 19 and September 19, 2007, respectively.

On February 9, 1999, a formal integration ceremony was convened in Anlong Veng. The ceremony was presided over by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defense Tea Banh. Close to two thousand former KR soldiers changed their Chinese-style uniforms to those of the RCAF during the ceremony. The ceremony marked the last KR defection.

At the conclusion of the war, Anlong Veng residents were extremely happy. People were able to build new houses, reunite with family members, and set up new businesses.<sup>24</sup> Many Anlong Veng residents were grateful to the government for giving former KR soldiers and civilians the right to possess property and live as they pleased. Keo Peak gave his impression of Anlong Veng after returning from O'Bai Tap:



Meas Muth, late former Chief of the Democratic Kampuchea Navy Division 164 leading the funeral procession for Ta Mok's coffin. DC-Cam Archives.



Ta Mok's funeral procession in Anlong Veng in 2006. DC-Cam Archives.





Ta Mok Stupa (Burial site): The Stupa sits on the pagoda grounds overlooking a scenic, but small man-made pond. According to the head monk another stupa, off to the side of Ta Mok's is Ta Mok's chief architect, who was also presumed to be a close family friend, 2012, Photo by Christopher Dearing.

*There is a huge difference between Ta Mok's regime and the present regime. I never had the chance to attend school, and my children could not attend school much either. Ta Mok's regime was full of war. We ran and crawled in the dirt. There was no proper medical care. Now, we don't have to run, and our children can attend school regularly. Now our children can attend school up to grade 11. We live together with our relatives. There is a lot of economic development. The people can do business and work as they please. We can go anywhere—Phnom Penh or Kampong Cham—as long as we have money. We have complete freedom of movement. We have farms and rice fields which give us enough food to eat. I feel satisfied with the present regime and our life in the future.<sup>25</sup>*

### **The Final Days of Ta Mok**

Initially Ta Mok was put under house arrest near Peuy Ta Ruon. He was fed by the government for several months in Anlong Veng. Ta Mok was asked to confess the crimes he committed; however, Ta Mok often said, "How can I confess? There are a lot of things to say. I cannot finish in three years. Please announce to everyone I have been arrested."<sup>26</sup> Ta Mok was the last KR leader who refused to surrender to the government.<sup>27</sup> Ta Mok was

finally arrested in Anlong Veng on March 6, 1999, and he was sent to a military prison in Phnom Penh. He stayed in Phnom Penh for another seven years until he died, at the age of 80, of complications related to high blood pressure and tuberculosis on July 21, 2006. Ta Mok's body was transported back to Anlong Veng, and a big funeral ceremony was held with the participation of many of his former loyalists. Even Thai businessmen attended.<sup>28</sup> A big stupa of Ta Mok was built in Srah Chhouk pagoda.

## **Conclusion**

For political and practical reasons, the DK regime has often been portrayed as a regime that began in 1975 and abruptly ended in 1979, and in one sense this is correct. Democratic Kampuchea's ability to mount an effective defense against the Vietnamese forces completely collapsed in early 1979. Phnom Penh fell to Vietnamese and PRK forces and, with the exception of some pockets sprinkled in the remote countryside and provinces in the west, Cambodia's territory was controlled by Vietnamese and PRK forces. However, the regime that oversaw genocide, mass atrocities and the destruction of nearly all social institutions in Cambodia did not disappear in 1979; rather, the regime quickly reorganized into a partly mobile guerilla force that continued to wage war.

Under the banner of retrieving Cambodian national sovereignty from what the KR remnants called "the invading Vietnamese enemy" and the "Vietnamese puppets," the KR reorganized its armed forces and waged another prolonged guerrilla war against the newly established PRK regime and its Vietnamese patrons. Amidst this re-organization and new war, the Cambodian people living under both sides of the conflict continued to suffer.

Dangrek Mountain, the natural border between Cambodia and Thailand, became one of the strategic bases for the KR's escape, regroupment and ultimately re-struggle. As part of the plan to recapture Cambodia, the KR re-established military, economic and political bases just a few kilometers from the border, both inside Cambodian land and on Thai soil.

Mountain 1001 and Mountain 1003, respectively under the supervision of Son Sen and Ta Mok, became the strategic military bases for the entire KR movement. Twelve military divisions were based on Mountain 1001 and 1003. On these mountains, tens of thousands of soldiers were sent to conduct guerilla war and people's war in the interior. While the rest of the divisions stationed in the Northwest and West parts of the border were economically independent of each other, military direction appeared to primarily come from Mountains 1001 and 1003.

On top of Dangrek Mountain, the KR remnants and people under them experienced another decade of displacement and separation from loved ones. The people appeared to receive plenty of food supplies and other living necessities from their leaders. And clearly the mass executions that dominated the DK period were no longer the norm in the post-DK period. However, people were not free to talk, travel, or live as they individually pleased.

Under the strict control and propaganda of the KR leaders, the KR soldiers and their families—whether through volunteerism or coercion—fully committed to the KR military struggle, serving as aids to the battlefield. Ammunition delivery across mine fields, making and planting spikes and delivering food supplies to the front's soldiers were considered to be patriotic duties. The people in Anlong Veng lived in Dangrek Mountain for over ten years performing these tasks, which were essential to the defense of their community.

It would take another ten years after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea before the people of Anlong Veng would be able to finally move down the mountain to settle into a real community life in the KR-occupied Anlong Veng region. In early 1990, Anlong Veng became an actual community again; however, the resettlement of Anlong Veng was only temporary. After resettlement, it would be another eight years of struggle and warfare before the final defection and reconciliation could take place in late 1998.

The discontinuation of international assistance after 1993 encouraged a decentralization of KR forces. As defections increased, the KR leaders became increasingly isolated and suspicious of each other. Eventually the movement's leaders began to turn on each other.

Among all the KR factions, Ta Mok was the most successful in re-organizing the Anlong Veng economy into one that could survive without international assistance. Ta Mok was able to develop a strong personal foothold in Anlong Veng because his persona was attached to the numerous construction projects that benefited the people. But while Ta Mok was astute in establishing his relationship and rapport with the people; he was less adept in navigating the complicated inter-party dynamics of the Cambodian political system. The defection of his military commanders in 1997 left him with only a residual force, and ultimately he surrendered to Cambodian government forces in 1998.

## *Anlong Veng in Retrospect*



Anlong Veng Lake, Photo by Em Sovanna, April 2002, DC-Cam Archives

Anlong Veng is like many sleepy Cambodian villages in the countryside where life still resonates with an ethos of collectivism and a deference to independent living. Residents value the space that comes with living on the outskirts of Cambodian soil and the frontier-like air that comes with tilling one's land and living by one's toil. There is an air of pride in the community's ability to take care of their own—echoing a stateless past and the patron-client system of old.

Like most of Cambodia's countryside during the French colonial period, Anlong Veng was largely outside the periphery of state administration. Most villages in the region, at that time, did not have a school and the economy was dominated by a barter system.<sup>1</sup> The circumstances of day-to-day survival, in the light of Buddhist teachings, affirmed the localized patron-client system, which thrived in a stateless space where custom superseded law and culture passed orally. In this context, an ethos of communalism and independence flourished as families struggled with minimal support or protection from the state—looking to each other during times of need.<sup>2</sup>



Khmer Rouge family in a camp. DC-Cam Archives.

But independence fell victim to the age of conflict as war and forced evacuations battered the region: first, under the Lon Nol regime and then later, under Democratic Kampuchea (DK). As war gradually enveloped the region, the community's time-honored administrative structures dissipated, and Lon Nol soldiers dispersed the residents to the forests or other regions where they were recruited into the Leftist [early KR] movement.<sup>3</sup> When the Leftist forces arrived to Anlong Veng, many villagers also joined the movement, and well before 1975 the district was reorganized under a communist administrative structure. Eventually, the entire population of the region was forced to evacuate to distant cooperatives.<sup>4</sup>

In these cooperatives, residents were exposed to the rigors of starvation, long hours in the field, and criticism sessions in which all aspects of one's existence were critiqued for weakness and disloyalty. During the DK period, the culture of communalism assumed a new monstrous form in which the 'common interest' consumed all aspects of human existence, swallowing the private sphere in a senseless inquisition and a program of destruction to root out secret enemies. The spirit of independence that emerges in a life of farming one's land in relatively stateless regions was all but extinguished by the all-consuming program to collectivize everything for Angkar. Property, time, relationships, and even one's concept of self were swallowed up by the Khmer Rouge regime's insatiable need to own everything, including one's soul. But this platform was not sustained in the post-DK period, and under the re-organization of the KR movement, the ethos of independence and communalism assumed a new vibrant form.



Under Ta Mok's leadership, farming was privatized and soldiers' families were encouraged to grow their own foods and own their own land. While the economy was still largely state-controlled within Anlong Veng, the allotment of privately-owned land created a new space for independent living to take hold. In addition, because the regime was for the most part surrounded by the new Cambodian government's forces, with support from the Vietnamese, the ethos of independence took on a new value that was integral to the regime's public identity. Now, the concept of independence was integrated within the KR regime's overarching propaganda against the new Cambodian government.<sup>5</sup> In this light, the KR regime was not only a vehicle for instituting communist ideology but it also presented itself as the vanguard for securing Cambodia's independence from Viet Nam. Anlong Veng's residents were encouraged to see their work in support of the KR regime as not only defenders of their 'independent' community but also Cambodia's sovereignty.



An old couple in Anlong Veng, DC-Cam Archives

During the 1980s and 1990s, the community persisted under the duress of repeated attacks and attempts to weaken the community's separation from the Cambodian state. With each attack, the community looked inward, building ever greater ties amongst a people who shared a common bond as comrades-in-arms as well as citizens in a beleaguered state.<sup>6</sup> Forged in the totalitarian ethos of the DK period, the shared misery of nomadic life in the post-DK period, and a common bond of comradeship amidst an atmosphere of constant war, Anlong Veng became a state within KR's pseudo-state.

This community ethos, undoubtedly, contributed to Ta Mok's ability to keep the region independent when other regions gradually fell to the Cambodian state's 'Win/Win' policy. Yim Phanna, now governor of Anlong Veng district, relates, "The system in Anlong Veng was very different from the economic/social systems in Pailin and Smlaut. Here...people depended on us for food, supplies, and land."<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Y Chhean's controlled area had a free market, which contributed to self-interest over community. In effect, the community ethos, which flowed from the controlled economy and social organization of the KR leadership, produced the ironic situation where the leaders' ability to sustain independence from the Cambodian state flowed from a culture of dependence from within—a fact that did not go unnoticed by residents. Oeun relates, "Honestly, I did not like Ta Mok's regime. But you ask, 'How could I live with Ta Mok for so many years?' The answer is: Because I had no choice."<sup>8</sup> Thuon notes as well, "Ta Mok was in charge of Anlong Veng's government, transportation, and food supply. He was in charge of everything."<sup>9</sup>

This culture of dependence between leaders and governed not only shored up Ta Mok's control over his people but it had lasting effects on his legacy. Indeed, Ta Mok's legacy as a fatherly patron of the community continues today even in the face of stories of Ta Mok's horrific past. Rather than disavow their patron today, the vast majority of the Anlong Veng community are quick to disassociate Ta Mok 'The Butcher' from Ta Mok 'The Patron.' Nen affirms, "Ta Mok is a kind person. He helped people. He paved the road, and he liked helping people build their houses."<sup>10</sup> Channa adds, "Ta Mok provided food to the people. Each family was provided with rice for ten days or a half-month for instance. We also received some grocery stuff, clothes, and shampoo."<sup>11</sup>

The community's devotion to their leader and his legacy pits nostalgic thoughts of a disciplined society and communal living against memories of a difficult life of subsistence living under the KR regime. Indeed, Ta Mok's legacy not only resides as a living memory of a time now past, but also an ongoing moral dilemma on how to describe the KR movement, particularly for many who have given their entire lives to its success. Ly describes how there was no lack of food during Ta Mok's rule and life was good. "There was plenty of rice, food, desserts."<sup>12</sup> Rem relates, "While [Ta Mok] killed many people, he was simple and like other peasants. He built a school, dam, and supported the people."<sup>13</sup>





A KR soldier in Anlong Veng, DC-Cam Archives

But not all residents were indifferent to the duplicity of Ta Mok's legacy. Toeuk affirms, "Ta Mok did not look on human beings as equal to his dogs, which in truth ate better food than the people."<sup>14</sup> Sokh adds: "Ta Mok had two personas. He was gentle, but could become mean. He was mean, but he gave us food to eat...If we asked him for anything, he would give it to us. Other people did not give us anything to eat."<sup>15</sup> Comparing life between now and during Ta Mok's regime, Thuon states, "People were not starved; he helped people. People did not have inadequate food, ...however if we talk about development, today is better than that time."<sup>16</sup>

In essence, Anlong Veng's people came to justify their loyalty to Ta Mok in terms of his support to the community and his ability to relate to them as peasants. Channa states, "In the past, Ta Mok was our support...But it was not the way to lead a sustainable life."<sup>17</sup> But others found this circumstance acceptable. For Chuong, Ta Mok was a "real peasant." He was a good leader because he did not allow people to become too rich. He allowed people



A KR family in their cottage in the camp in 1984, DC-Cam Archives

and soldiers to have just enough to eat.<sup>18</sup> For Koeum, “Ta Mok is a committed and patriotic leader who fought for our country’s independence. Because he helped me as if I was his child, I devoted myself to his leadership.”<sup>19</sup>

Ta Mok’s ability to rally Anlong Veng under the image of a peasant movement appealed to the sympathies of a people who were tied to an agricultural way of life, and whose world-view was informed (as well as eroded) by years of war and communist indoctrination.

Not surprisingly, the vast majority of Anlong Veng’s residents, particularly the older residents, are overwhelmingly part of the group known as ‘base people.’

‘Base people’ are people who trace their origins and social standing to Cambodia’s peasant class. They generally lived in rural areas controlled by the CPK prior to 1975, and during the DK period, they were recognized as the vanguard for the KR regime’s ideology and

vision for the future. Their status, as 'full-rights' people, afforded them relatively more protection from the regime's rabid campaign to identify internal enemies, and as such, their life was notably more secure, if not perhaps better, than the alternative group that was known as the 'new people.'

The new people (or "17 April people") were generally individuals from the cities or towns or anyone associated with the Khmer Republic. They were not an identifiable class as much as they were simply people who carried the misfortune of having some specific quality or association that justified suspicion. A person's educational background, relations to the former regime, or simply one's location in a city or town amidst the DK regime's forced evacuations would be all that was needed to mark one as a '17 April person.'

While new people were treated more harshly than base people, the degree of harshness was very relative and differed from region to region. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that many of Anlong Veng's residents were 'base people'—for this would provide one reason for the community's growth during the post-KR period.

Because base people were afforded greater security from annihilation and because they were even accorded leadership roles during the DK period, it is not surprising that many of them would flee to the KR regime's final stronghold not only as a shelter against the perceived threat of torture and death by Vietnamese hands, but also as a last refuge from a life that was utterly alienated from one's heritage. As Nen relates, "I left my home in 1973 and I did not return until 1999. I couldn't even remember where my home was when I returned to my village. I got lost in my own village."<sup>20</sup> Koeum, who left to serve in the KR military in the 1970s, provides a similar experience. After joining the revolution, he left behind six siblings, two brothers and four sisters, but now only one brother still lives. All of his siblings died many years ago, and the day he joined the KR was the last day he saw his parents or siblings alive. All of his family's property is gone too. All that he has left is in Anlong Veng.<sup>21</sup>

Oftentimes, most people who did return to their home villages, returned home in tears. Many residents of Anlong Veng, in the hope of reconnecting with their past life, family and friends, realized that lost time could not be made up, and very often their family homes, long abandoned during the forced evacuations, were now occupied by others. Saray left his family home in Kampong Speu in 1973. He was in Division 801 during the three-year regime and he was sent to Rattanakiri. He never contacted his parents, siblings, or family and he did not return to his home until 1999. When he came back, the elderly people did not recognize him and he could not recognize his family land. He remembered tending cattle at the age of thirteen on his family's land, but now this land was lost. The state had given the land to another family and new houses were already built. Because he wanted peace, he did not fight the family on his claim.<sup>22</sup> Vy relates, "Most people who left Anlong Veng for their homeland after the reintegration came back in tears. They realized



Every morning at approximately 7 a.m., the gates of Chaom Sa-Ngam border post are opened and Cambodians sprint to the local Thai market to buy up the best produce and goods, 2014, Photo by Christopher Dearing. The border post, which is only open from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m., sees significant foot traffic in the early morning from Cambodian families and merchants eager to obtain fresh, relatively cheap produce across the border in Thailand. The market, which has existed for many years, provides an interesting snapshot of the cross-border exchanges that have existed in the region for generations.

that their family homes were either claimed by new people, and they no longer had a place in their community.”<sup>23</sup>

But shared loss often draws people closer, and with nowhere to call home, many former KR cadres, base people, and their families returned to Anlong Veng with the realization that their childhood homes, villages, and their entire past were now lost to the sands of time. Anlong Veng had now become not only their refuge in the face of losing one's former life, but also a place where lives could begin anew. Yan could not live in Takeo because





Bunker outside Thai primary school for protection against Cambodian artillery, 2014, Photo by Christopher Dearing. Thailand and Cambodia continue to dispute Cambodia's rights over the Preah Vihear Temple area. At times, the dispute has erupted into border skirmishes and artillery barrages upon the other side. During the conflict, the Thai government was encouraged to provide small shelters for schools in the local area. According to one elementary school teacher at this school, children and teachers frequently participated in bomb drills during these periods.

she knew no one and could not bear living in her home village. In Anlong Veng, however, she knows all levels of officials and land is cheap. She could ask for assistance from many people including Nuon Nov, Yim Phanna, Pem, and Khieu Vuth. She states, "It is easy to live close to the market."<sup>24</sup>

Anlong Veng's undeveloped forests, teeming with resources and opportunities for development, presented a new frontier by which lives could begin anew. Land was plentiful, even if disputes were common, and there was a deep respect for community, in the sense that everyone was coming from a similar past marked by a life with the KR movement.

Of course, not all lives were easily reborn, and for every story of rebirth there are equally sad stories of regret and lives forever lost. Saray, a former KR soldier, relates:

*I regret that when everything was over, I had nothing. They [the Cambodian government] gave me three million riel for my retirement, and I used the money to pay off people who I owe. The remaining money was used to treat my medical condition. The social affairs section said they would give me land, but where is the land? I have nothing. I am no better than a monk who leaves his monkhood.<sup>25</sup>*

For many residents, regret runs even deeper than economics. Looking back over many years serving the KR regime, many residents see a life wasted and dreams shattered. Koem lost one of his legs and he suffers constant pain in his shoulder from the rigors of his life as a soldier. He asks, "What have I gained for all of my devotion to my country? This is a question that I have for the leaders of the KR regime."<sup>26</sup>

Indeed, while many former KR cadre and base people were able to begin their life anew, many found that, having given their lives to the KR regime, they had nothing left to start over with. Life, in the post-KR period, was full of remorse over nothing to show but broken limbs and shattered dreams for decades of service to a lost cause. Lot states:

*Looking back to what happened at that time, I thought that I was following Angkar. Then I think of reconciliation and realize that what happened was wrong. I realized, first, that we destroyed the nation. Second, I realized I had destroyed myself. At that time, we thought that we did the right thing. However, after the integration, I thought about this again. I am remorseful. Some people did bad things. But the hopeful aspect is they could change themselves. [They could be new people.] However, for a disabled person like me, there is nothing left.*<sup>27</sup>

Nothing was left but the intense desire to move forward in establishing a new life. At the conclusion of the war, Rong was so happy. He started building a new house, reforming a new family and doing business in Anlong Veng.<sup>28</sup> Savet relates, "There is no discrimination based on background, past, or when we came to Anlong Veng."<sup>29</sup> But often in reestablishing a new life, residents were asked to make incredible sacrifices even in the context of having already devoted their entire lives to the KR movement. The government forces fought into Anlong Veng two times: one in 1993 and the other one in 1994. For the first run, the KR did not burn down their houses. But as the government forces fought into the area for the second time, the leaders ordered the people and soldiers to burn down all their houses to prevent their use by government forces.<sup>30</sup> For many residents, these sacrifices were exceptionally difficult. Koeum relates,

*The soldiers burned my house and they destroyed all means of my earning a living. This devastated my family's living condition. I was disappointed of the way I was treated after all those years of my devotion fighting to protect the country. I should not have suffered from any hardship in return.*<sup>31</sup>

Eventually, hardships took their toll on the will of the people and the KR movement would be undone from within. With the defection of Ta Mok's senior commanders, Anlong Veng made the gradual transition to reintegration within the Cambodian state. The people were eager for peace and, in some ways, so were the KR leaders.<sup>32</sup> And while reintegration

ushered in a new age of economic and social freedom, echoes of the community's past and culture under the DK and post-DK regimes continue to resonate in subtle ways, influencing the community's understanding of its identity and vision for the future.

In many ways, nostalgia runs deep, despite the counter-narratives of suffering and loss. Ly relates, "The KR law was good. People loved each other like siblings. People could not walk freely. They had to behave properly. Now is different. Young people are involved in gang activities." She adds, "The KR practices are better than the present day because people helped each other."<sup>33</sup> Lot concurs in the sense that economic and social freedom has exposed Anlong Veng to problems that were not present in the KR period. "People are spoiled with civilized society. They have lost their roots, which is in growing crops."<sup>34</sup> According to Rem:

*How business is conducted today is much different than under Ta Mok's regime. During Ta Mok's leadership, we lived as a community. We helped each other, even when we were sick. Arguments were rarely seen among us. Today, when people do business, they think of profit first.*<sup>35</sup>

This deep respect for community and the concomitant spirit of independence from outsiders appears to resonate today in a variety of areas, from land titles and farming to family life and community taboos.

One taboo, the act of begging, exudes the high value accorded independence and the ability of a community to take care of its own. There is a popular belief that Anlong Veng has little to no beggars because residents of Anlong Veng, no matter what the difficulties, do not beg.<sup>36</sup> According to Saing Vy, "[e]ven the blind people in Anlong Veng survive by farming. For instance, Ta Sat is blind but he uses his hands to feel things and he is still able to work on his farm."<sup>37</sup> Looking back, Yim Phanna, governor of Anlong Veng, states that the KR leaders looked after the people in Anlong Veng and this explains the absence of beggars. Residents were given land to farm, unlike other para-military areas after the war, which gave their members little or nothing, forcing them to become beggars.<sup>38</sup> The belief that beggars are non-existent (and observations would appear to confirm such) seems to also spring from the culture of resilience that permeates the identity of community members, particularly the ones who lived during the DK period.

Similarly, the strong attachment to a life of farming not only as a means for survival, but as a means of following tradition also reveals the subtle deference to a life of independence and communalism. The KR proverb, "Feet on the ground and the economics have its root," echoes in many conversations on the importance of growing crops. The proverb means that economics has its roots on the ground just as one's feet. As one resident states, "There is nothing besides growing crops and doing farm work."<sup>39</sup> A life of farming, which was promoted by Ta Mok, continues today as a reminder of the community's ability to live off the land, and depending on each other in times of need.



But as the community passes from one generation to another and newcomers come to dominate the region, these qualities will presumably fade, as they have been doing since re-integration.<sup>40</sup> But even in the face of an aging community and social/economic change, community values can still linger in other subtle ways.

There does not appear to be any significant levels of animosity to outsiders,<sup>41</sup> particularly toward Cambodians who have only just recently settled in the area; however, one can perceive the growing tones of mistrust between members of the community and the outside world, particularly in the area of land. Recently there have been a number of reports of foreign companies, primarily rubber plantations, taking land away from residents in Anlong Veng.<sup>42</sup> Discussions of rubber companies grabbing land have been compounded by reports of outsiders also measuring land with global positioning equipment.<sup>43</sup>

On a similar note, the recent occupation of lands surrounding the Preah Vihear Temple area in Cambodia and the corresponding skirmishes that have broken out along the Cambodian-Thai border have bolstered the lingering suspicion of pseudo-invasions by Thai.<sup>44</sup> During part of 2011, the Hun Sen Primary School based in Anlong Veng was forced to close due to the border issues with Thailand, and there is a lingering concern that border issues will continue. The increasing demand of new land development, as a result of a growing population, also does not bode well for the community. As the community expands with newcomers and outsiders seeking to take advantage of the local resources, the issue of land rights becomes a pressing concern.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, increasing interest in the region's history, particularly its historical sites, poses an interesting opportunity for greater tourism and development to the region. The Ministry of Tourism's interest in addressing infrastructure for the purpose of encouraging greater tourism suggests that the community stands to benefit from its dark past and in particular its association to the last vestiges of KR power.

But tourism and development are but one aspect to the region's future. Anlong Veng's future will primarily be shaped by its people, and the people of Anlong Veng offer a diversity of experiences that provide a window into the legacy of the KR regime, the horrors of war, and the incredible beauty and courage of humanity in extreme adversity.

Im Chaem with Anlong Veng residents at the Documentation Center of Cambodia's (DC-Cam's) History of Democratic Kampuchea Textbook Distribution at Anlong Veng High School in 2012, Photo by Heng Sinith, DC-Cam Archives.



People and students of Anlong Veng attending DC-Cam's DK History Textbook Distribution at Anlong Veng High School in 2012, Photo by Heng Sinith, DC-Cam Archives.



SRI Founder, Youk Chhang talking to Im Chaem at a DK History Textbook distribution ceremony at Anlong Veng High School in 2012, Photo by Heng Sinith DC-Cam Archives.





## **Anlong Veng Stories**

### **Introduction**

Writing the history of the people of Anlong Veng—like all histories—requires a distillation process in which experience translates to memory, memory to oral recollection, and recollection to recordable media. In effect, memories pass through a multitude of filters. Perspectives and beliefs, and ideology and culture influence every stage of the historical process, framing and shaping the past like an artist to his subject matter. The work is, for better or worse, a labor of extraction, where seemingly prominent themes are brought forth as the rubric for defining a community's past. The process can often parallel the act of rendition, in which the historian reproduces the emotions and atmosphere of a particular experience, bringing the past to life in a drama that, if done faithfully, builds a bridge between the consciousness of a people and his audience.

While no history can create this perfect bridge any more than a portrait can capture the complete essence of its subject, we can venture to explore snapshots of human life, through the words of Anlong Veng's residents, and hopefully, in so doing, come away with not so much a perfect understanding of the actual experience but a greater awareness of the humanity that has come to define Anlong Veng's people and culture.

### **A Consequential Act**

During the KR regime, I once saw a woman get arrested in the Children's Unit, and I remained in my place. She would say things in a threatening way and her personality was like half man/half woman. We did not trust her. One night she said something that she wanted to eat...eat all of something. I don't know what she wanted to eat, but after I heard her say that, I reported it to a commander. Then the soldiers arrived to guard the woman. The next morning, I was asked to bring her out and then she was taken away and never returned. The Khmer Rouge cadres always wanted us to be aware of disloyal people. They just told me to continue to be observant and search for traitors or others who were not well-balanced.<sup>1</sup>

### **An Act of Kindness**

I was in a KR military unit guarding the border with Viet Nam. The military units suffered from arrests and executions in a similar way to the civilian population. I remember my unit chief was arrested one day. They had me guard him. The battalion chief pointed his

finger at me and said, "Come and guard my chicken." He was referring to my unit chief. When I went to the house, I saw my unit chief, Pheak, tied up. I felt so sorry for him. We used to live together and were close friends. I loosened the knots binding his hands and I gave him a cigarette. I asked him not to run away as I would be dead as well. We talked a little bit. He said that he didn't want me to die with him, but he was prepared to die. Later, I cooked some meat for him and gave him some more cigarettes. At 6 p.m. the executioner came and escorted him away, about 200 meters from the village. They shot him with three bullets in the back. About an hour later, I walked to the site where he was killed and saw his body. They didn't even untie him. I cut the string from his wrists. I felt so sorry for him.<sup>3</sup>

### **One Was Fleeing While the Other Was Searching**

My husband was a guard at Chamkar Daung, and he was in charge of taking care of the children there. In 1979, we were initially separated in the chaos of escaping the Vietnamese invasion. Later, we met each other and fled to Kanduot, Trapeang Chornng. Upon our arrival there, the Khmer Rouge sent all the women to Thmei Village. Ta Mok sent my husband elsewhere. They didn't allow me to accompany him. Since that day we separated, I never heard from him again.

When I met my relatives, they told me that he had returned to search for me. But how could we find each other, since one of us was fleeing while the other was searching?

So we were separated from each other forever.

I believe he died of starvation some time ago. You see, he was disabled (with only one leg) and could not carry any food. I heard from people who knew him that he only had fruit to eat. There was no rice at all in the jungle. The children had to carry and cook the rice which we ate together. Later when he was separated from the children, no one would carry anything or cook for him. So, he probably did not have anything to eat.

I heard from others who met him that people offered to have him stay with them, but he refused because he wanted to find me.

During this time, I was also pregnant with his child. It was our first child together. I was suffering from lack of food, but I still had energy. Even though I had nothing to eat, I could still continue walking to the Thai border, up and down the mountains, despite my pregnancy. But reaching Trang in July 1979, I delivered the baby at six months pregnancy. Within two hours of giving birth, the baby died. He cried like a frog and was not properly formed. His feet and hands were very short, and he was just too young. If the baby was at least seven months, he might have survived.

### **Caught Between Two Worlds.**

Toeuk was in the district mobile unit until Viet Nam entered Cambodia in 1979. He returned back to his village and met all family members. Luckily, he could have his own house back....There were a lot of Vietnamese forces in the commune. He worked as the commune militiaman until 1983. When he was harvesting rice, the KR forces arrested him. Ta Mon from the Division 980 arrested him, accusing him of being Cambodian body with Vietnamese head. He was taken to 1003 to deliver weapons for the KR soldiers stationing in Koulen Mountain in Sotnikum district. He stayed with the KR for half month before he was released to go back home. Returning back home, the Vietnamese forces accused him of being the KR spy and arrested him. He escaped the arrest and joined the KR ever since. The Vietnamese were so cruel. Some were arrested by the Vietnamese and were put in prison in Toek Vil. He joined Ta Then unit. Actually, the KR victimized him by making the Vietnamese suspect him as a spy. As he had no choice, he had to join the KR armed forces. At that time the Vietnamese killed a lot of people who were accused of being the KR spies.<sup>148</sup>

### **A Border Only On Paper**

As a Thai citizen, 14-year old Min Myam did not want to join the Royal Cambodian Army. But on that fateful day in 1963, he really had no choice.

Born in No Lo Han, a small village in Thailand, Min spent his days like one would expect of a young boy in rural Thailand. He helped his parents with farming and other chores, and sometimes accompanied them on shopping trips across the Cambodian border.

Like most people in the area, his parents, who only spoke Khmer, were farmers. They had most likely migrated from upper Thailand before he was born, but he had never asked them where they came from or how they met. This was information that simply wasn't very important to know back then. Early in his childhood, at the behest of the Thai government, he and his family had to move from No Lo Han to Non Cho Reah village, a community that was closer to the border with Cambodia.

The government officials required his family to move under the aegis of protecting the forest. His family had a choice: move closer to the provincial capital, Sisakhet, or move further south. The land in upper Sisakhet province was drier, and less fertile, so his family decided to move south. It was from Non Cho Reah village that he and his family could then walk across the Cambodian border to Anlong Veng to buy local materials.

It was on one of these ordinary shopping trips across the border, Min Myam's life changed drastically. The Cambodian military officials announced to everyone in Anlong Veng that each family had to give up one adult male to volunteer for the Cambodian army. Min told his parents he was afraid of war, but his mother tried to comfort him. She said it would only be for a short while and the soldier's salary would help his family.

He knew he had little choice. Lacking identification papers, he had no proof of his Thai citizenship. And even if he did, common sense told him to keep his mouth shut. While Cambodian and Thai communities overlapped for generations—through intermarriage and cross-border exchange—citizenship was a sensitive subject. As Min relates, “If I told them I was a Thai, they would have killed me.”

Caught at the wrong place at the wrong time, Min was conscripted into the Cambodian army, where he became a typical foot soldier. The camp was small, and there were only about 100 soldiers assigned to the unit. The unit’s purpose, at that time in the early 1960s, was to bring security to the region, which was historically a transit point for bandits, communists, and other armed groups.<sup>4</sup>

### **‘Secret Spies’**

I lived in my village, going to school until 1972. In 1972, I quit school as I was old enough to be a soldier for the KR, but I worked in cooperative mobile unit until 1977, at which point I became a soldier. I withdrew from military service in 1979 and lived in my village as a reserve force. I got married in 1984 and had children. But in 1987, people in my village alleged that I was a spy for Pol Pot, and as a result I felt afraid. I was all alone and tried to prove my innocence, but people did not believe me. I think that if I had stayed in the village, I would have been killed. So I decided to leave my wife, children, everyone, to go to Thailand and join Ta Mok in 1987. I had four children at that time, and I had no choice but to leave. I did not reunite with my family until the defection to the new government.<sup>5</sup>

### **Familiar Strangers**

I did not see my relatives in Rattanakiri since I was twelve years old. I am, I believe, fifty-five years old now. I did not recognize them when I saw them in 2010, but they held a welcoming ceremony to congratulate my arrival with a roast pig. They also gave me money as a blessing for my return. Because I could not remember who they were, we had to talk about our childhood memories to help me remember who they were to me. I apologized to my older relatives for not recognizing them, but they understood that I was away from the village since I was young. My mother also helped me recognize my uncles, aunts, and grandparents. I spent a few days at each of their houses. When I met them, I burst into uncontrollable tears. I felt both nostalgia but also pity on myself. I suffered so many years without my parents’ comfort.<sup>6</sup>

### **Regret**

Looking back to what happened at that time, I thought that I was following Angkar. Then I think of reconciliation and realize that what happened is wrong. The first one is that it destroyed the nation and the second one is that it destroyed myself. And for this reason, I became disable. And then I did the farming. This is just my thought. When we led, we



thought that we did the right thing. However, after the integration, I thought about this again. I am remorseful. Some people did bad things, but they could change themselves. [They could be new people.] However for a disabled person like me, there is nothing left. What I did before...defend my country and nation.. but now I realize, I am the victim.<sup>7</sup>

### **A Hundred Mountains Up and a Hundred Mountains Down**

There is a saying amongst elders that to reach Thailand, one must “climb up a hundred mountains and down a hundred mountains.” The journey from A-rek to Thailand certainly validated this saying, as we had to climb up and down, up and down. The journey took about a month, and it was so difficult. When we began our trek to Thailand there were initially ten women, but by the time we reached our destination, only three remained. When we started out, the group included old and young women. Along the way, some women became sick and wanted to rest, but those of us who could still walk continued forward. At first, we ate together. Later, we used only one pot and ate whatever was available. It was a miserable time. Family members abandoned each other. We had nothing to eat. If a husband was sick and his wife could still walk, the wife abandoned the husband and continued walking. If his wife was sick and was still sleeping on a mat, the husband continued walking. People kept shouting, “The Vietnamese are coming!” So we continued walking, because we could hear gunfire behind us. A husband or wife might be left behind by the side of a tree. Even small children were abandoned under trees by their mothers. An infant only or two days old was deserted, crying loudly from a hammock.<sup>8</sup>

### **Struggle**

Ang was born in Kab village, Boeng Chak commune, Bor Nhok district, Ratanak Kiri province. He is Tompoun ethnic.... In 1977, he was asked to work in the Region hospital. Pem was the region chief, who was called to Phnom Penh and disappeared ever since. In the hospital, he sprayed anti-mosquito substance in the villages. Rice was cooked mixed with potatoes, sometimes mixed with banana trees. It was not enough. He lived in the hospital for one year; then Vietnamese forces came in. Many patients died every day. He buried dead bodies every day. He knew about the arrest of the people but never saw the killings on the spot.... When Viet Nam entered Cambodia, he ran to Se San River with other medical staff and soldiers. They crossed the River to Laotian land. They ate potatoes as they did not have rice. There were crowds of elephants. People set fires to prevent the elephants from coming in. He lived in the forest for about one year. As life in the forest was so hard, one woman killed her two children by suffocating them. They crossed the river in Laotian land.<sup>9</sup>

### **No Funeral Ceremonies**

I reached the Thai camp in 1979, and shortly after reaching the camp, my hair fell out. I believed I lost all my hair because I was still sick and suffering from the tolls of the journey. Within the camp, the French camp personnel did not allow us to eat much of

anything. At first, they only gave us mackerel with lard and rice. But because we were starving everything tasted delicious. We could often get extra food at the hospital as well. Not surprisingly, everyone had severe diarrhea. It was so bad that men and women were no longer modest about defecating in front of each other. It is true that by eating, we could get rid of the toxins in our body. After about a month, we no longer had diarrhea, and we began gaining weight. Looking back now, hundreds of people died daily in Srah Keo Camp. Many of the international workers cried because so many people were dying. The one machine they used to dig holes for the bodies could not keep up with the number of bodies that had to be buried each day. There were no funeral ceremonies either. When people died, the holes were dug, and the carts would simply transport the bodies to be thrown into the pits.<sup>10</sup>

## Epilogue

Reconciliation is as much an individual journey as it is a collective phenomenon. In fact, if we acknowledge that reconciliation can only become tangible in the hearts and minds of individuals, we realize that it is the individual spirit, not the collective will, which holds the key to a post-conflict society's ability to overcome its past. When I think of this, I am reminded by the relationship between the Tonlé Sap and Mekong Rivers.

The two rivers are distinct for most of their journey; however, they converge around the Royal Palace of Cambodia in the capital city of Phnom Penh. When the rivers merge, the Tonlé Sap does not lose its distinction. Swollen by the rapid flood of rainwater from the Mekong River, the Tonlé Sap becomes a hydrological wonder—defying gravity and reversing its course to flow upland and into the Tonlé Sap River, which is one of the richest freshwater fisheries in the world.

Reconciliation, like the merging of two rivers, does not destroy individuality; rather, like the Tonlé Sap, the convergence becomes a factor that empowers individuals in unforeseeable ways.

Whether we view our situation as individuals or as a collective body, reconciliation is essential to living full, quality lives. We cannot escape from our history; however, we do not have to be enslaved by it either.

History overlaps. We often forget that we are no more removed from the history of the Khmer Rouge as the generation before was removed from the colonialism, war, and social upheaval that preceded them. Yet reconciliation offers us a way out. Reconciliation offers a way by which we can contribute to the collective success of our nation without sacrificing our individual endeavors. Like the Tonlé Sap and Mekong Rivers, we do not lose our individuality when we merge; rather, as we accept each other, we empower each other's personal way of life and contribution to Cambodia as a whole.

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Founder, Sleuk Rith Institute



# Notes

## Chapter 1 Anlong Veng Early History

1. Chhan Bai, an Anlong Veng resident stated that “the people who came to the area were all Khmer from the upper land in Thailand.” Vannak Sok interview with Chhan Bai, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 1, 2012 [hereinafter “Interview with Chhan Bai”] This coincides with Thai villager accounts and published sources. Based on interviews of Thai village elders, most, if not all, settlers of the Thai-side of the border were people who came from upper Sisakhet province, Thailand. It is very likely that while Anlong Veng preceded these settlements, it was part of the general southern migration of Khmer people from upper Thailand. As John Tully relates, there are still hundreds of thousands of ethnic Khmers north of the Dangrek mountains in modern-day Thailand. John Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, (Lanham, MD., 2002).
2. Sara Stephens, “Oddar Meanchey: A province is reborn,” Phnom Penh Post, June 25, 1999; Erin Moriarty, “From coup to casinos: The forgotten frontier of Oddar Meanchey,” Phnom Penh Post, July 6, 2001.
3. *See generally*, David Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 125 (Boulder, CO., 2008) discussing Cambodian village governance in the 19th century.
4. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 40. “An undated inscription gives the borders of Jayavarman II’s kingdom as being “China, Champa, the ocean, and the land of cardamoms and mangoes”—a land perhaps located in the west.”
5. Penny Edwards, *Cambodge: The Cultivation of a Nation, 1860–1945*, 42 (Silkworm Books, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2007), “In the first two decades of the protectorate, the king retained complete power over the treasury, as well as the farming of opium, fisheries, pig farms, gambling, and other concessions, and he was the undisputed owner of all land in the kingdom.”
6. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 39.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *See generally*, Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 125–26. “Rice-growing villages and those in the prei could be days apart from each other and from the nearest representative of authority. In their isolation the villagers faced inward, toward the lives and traditions they shared with one another.”
9. John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, 313 (Ann Arbor Paperbacks, University of Michigan, 1965) *citing* Sir Charles Metcalf, a British colonial administrator in India.
10. Siamese is the older term for the modern day Thai people.

11. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 183, noting how the Thai made little effort to colonize (or depopulate) the region, choosing to govern it at most levels with ethnic Khmer.
12. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 11.
13. Christopher Dearing interview with Min Pro Nyam, [on file], January 16, 2014.
14. James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, 7 (New Haven, CT, 2009). “For long periods people moved in and out of states, and “stateness” was, itself, often cyclical and reversible.” Ian G. Baird, *Living on the Margins: Minorities and Borderlines in Cambodia and Southeast Asia*, “Spaces of Resistance: The Ethnic Brao People and the International Border between Laos and Cambodia,” 19, 29 (March 14–15, 2008) discussing how a number of Brao Kavet villages in Siem Pang crossed over the boundary from Cambodia to Laos in 1906, 1909, and 1912 as a result of higher taxes in Cambodia as compared to Laos.
15. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 168.
16. Dany Long interview with Pok Toeuk, male, former member of Mobile Unit, Koh Ker Village, April 22, 2012 [hereinafter “Interview with Pok Toeuk”]
17. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, 8. “Once we entertain the possibility that the ‘barbarians’ are not just ‘there’ as a residue but may well have chosen their location, their subsistence practices, and their social structure to maintain their autonomy, the standard civilizational story of social evolution collapses utterly.”
18. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 178. “The 1890s, in fact, saw increasing French consolidation throughout Indochina, culminating in the governor-generalship of Paul Doumer (1897–1902).”
19. *c.f.*, Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 181. “The change over the long term, which is easy to see from our perspective, was not immediately perceptible in the *sruk*, where French officials found old habits of patronage, dependence, violence, fatalism, and corruption largely unchanged from year to year. Offices were still for sale, tax rolls were falsified, and rice harvests were underestimated. Credulous people were still ready to follow sorcerers and mountebanks. As late as 1923 in Stung Treng, an ex-monk gathered a following by claiming to possess a “golden frog with a human voice.” Banditry was widespread, and there were frequent famines and epidemics of malaria and cholera. The contrast between the capital and the *sruk*, therefore, sharpened in the early twentieth century, without apparently producing audible resentment in the *sruk*, even though peasants in the long run paid with their labor and their rice for all the improvements in Phnom Penh and for the high salaries enjoyed by French officials, fueling the resentment of anti-French guerrillas in the early 1950s and Communist cadres later on.”
20. Letter from Consul of France in Oubon to French administrator in Stung Treng, November 10, 1908, National Archives of Cambodia.
21. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 67 citing AOM Indochine AF 13 Dossier A30 (22) Cambodge 1874–1875. Letter from Governor Krantz to the Minister of Colonies, Paris, 3 June 1874.
22. Letter from Balat du Variseng, Head of Post to Governor of Melou Prey, October 1, 1908. National Archives of Cambodia. File No. 36482/Box No.3727

23. Letter from Balat du Variseng, Head of Post to Governor of Melou Prey, October 1, 1908. National Archives of Cambodia. File No. 36482/Box No.3727
24. Letter from Monsieur Salabelle, Administrator, Resident de France in Stung Treng to French Superior Resident in Phnom Penh, October 15, 1908, National Archives of Cambodia. File No. 36482/Box No.3727
25. Letter from Balat du Variseng, Head of Post to Governor of Melou Prey, October 1, 1908. National Archives of Cambodia. File No. 36482/Box No.3727 The Balat of Variseng noted, "Variseng is not a very attractive region. I suggest we establish a rotation between the militiamen. We should ask them to stay for three months at a time. The first men were volunteers."
26. Letter from Balat du Variseng, Head of Post to Governor of Melou Prey, October 1, 1908. National Archives of Cambodia. File No. 36482/Box No.3727 As one French official commented, "Indeed by getting rid of the Cambodian villagers, the thieves are going against their own interests because a village that is empty cannot be plundered anymore. So why would they give up a possible source of income. That would be lack of self-interest or silliness that is beyond understanding."
27. Letter from Administrator of Melou Prey to Administrator of Stung Treng, "Deposition of A. Khoun" November 11, 1908.
28. Christopher Dearing interview with Kamse Sam, Sisakheth Province, Thailand, February 17, 2014.
29. Cholera is a diarrheal disease that causes severe dehydration as a result of the massive loss of bodily fluids. The bacterium thrives in warm water and it is transmitted by drinking contaminated food and water. After ingesting contaminated food or water, the victim may not immediately become ill, yet they will begin to shed cholera bacteria in their stool for 7 to 14 days. The typical symptoms of cholera include diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and dehydration, and depending on how many body fluids have been lost, dehydration can be mild to severe.
30. See Interview with Chhan Bai, "In the old times there was no water. They [villagers in Anlong Veng] dug their own well for water and relied upon a ditch."
31. Chhan Bai lived in Khnol Village, Chhouk Trav as well as Prey Roneam and Ta Dev villages. Men Pechet interview with Thin Ben, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 30, 2012 [hereinafter "Interview with Thin Ben"]; Interview with Chhan Bai.
32. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Chhit Thy, female, a former member of mobile unit, Pralean Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 29, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Chhit Thy."]
33. Interview with Chhan Bai.
34. Dany Long interview with Uk Sokh, Sleng Poa Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 8, 2012.
35. Interview with Chhan Bai.
36. Dany Long interview with Aom Koeum, Kandal Kroam Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Aom Koeum"] According to one local resident, "The people who lived here before the Khmer Rouge [before 1975]



grew mango trees.” It is believed that the giant mango trees grown by local residents today can be traced to these earlier generations.

37. See Interview with Chhit Thy.
38. Vannak Sok interview with Mey Chheng, Rumchek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 21, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Mey Chheng”]
39. Interview with Chhit Thy.
40. Interview with Chhan Bai.
41. Interview with Mey Chheng.
42. Interview with Chhan Bai.
43. Interview with Thin Ben.
44. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 31 citing ANC RSC E03, File 14992 Box 1246, Residence de Stung Treng, Rappo politiques et économiques trimestriels, 1914–1919.
45. Interview with Mey Chheng.
46. Interview with Thin Ben.

## **Chapter 2: The Rise of the Communist Movement & Early Arrival of the Khmer Rouge**

1. Interview with Chhit Thy.
2. Ibid.
3. Portions of Laotian territory was also ceded to Thailand.
4. Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*, 460–61.
5. See generally Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over*, 69-70 (1998); Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863–1953*.
6. Khamboly Dy, *Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea*, 6 (Phnom Penh, 2007).
7. Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–75*, 86, 258 (New Haven, CT., 2004), mentioning names of Khmer Issarak who would eventually hold positions in the CPK. Heng Samrin would eventually become one of the leaders of the oppositional government to the Khmer Rouge regime.
8. Khamboly Dy, *Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea*, 6 (Phnom Penh, 2007).
9. Khamboly Dy, *Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea*, 8 (Phnom Penh, 2007); c.f., Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Communism in Cambodia, 1930–75*, 193, discussing the secretive nature of Pol Pot’s rise to power.
10. See Taylor Owens & Ben Kiernan, “Bombs Over Cambodia” *The Walrus*, (Yale University Press: 2006). The bombing of Cambodia began in 1965 and by the end of 1970 already close to half a million tons of ordinance had been dropped on the country.
11. Ibid at 341–44, 357–68, discussing the KR forces’ expulsion of Vietnamese forces (and civilians) from Cambodia.

12. Khamboly Dy, *Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea*, 11 (Phnom Penh, 2007); Taylor Owen & Ben Kiernan, "Bombs Over Cambodia," *The Walrus*, (Yale University Press: 2006). The number of death could have been over 150,000 people.
13. Dany Long interview with Yim Lahoeu, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Yim Lahoeu"]
14. Throughout the country food production fell rapidly as bombing and military operations forced peasants off their land and concentrated them into the cities. *See generally* Eva Mysliwicz, *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea*, "The Khmer Rouge Years," (Oxford, 1988).
15. The KR cadres in Anlong Veng established an art performance unit which was part of their strategy to win over the people's trust and mobilize greater numbers for the movement. Some of the more popular revolutionary songs at that time were "Oh! Uncle Militiamen" and "Oh! Brave Messengers."
16. *See generally* David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism*, 489–95 (NY., 2009).
17. *See generally* Eva Mysliwicz, *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea*, "The Khmer Rouge Years," (Oxford, 1988); Elizabeth Becker, *Bophana*, 24 (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Daily Press, 2010). "There was only one right—the right to work. Everything else was outlawed. Civilization and society disappeared. Schools and libraries were closed. Books were banned. Markets were abolished along with restaurants, cafes or any private business. Pagodas were shuttered; religious was trumped by revolutionary politics. Cambodian's acclaimed dance and music were erased; the artists hid their identities. The craftsmen and women who once wove the silk and pounded the silver were sent to the fields. "

### **Chapter 3: Anlong Veng under the Khmer Rouge**

1. After the 17 April 1975 victory, Region 35 was renamed Region 106, and sometime after 1977, the Region was again renamed as Region 46.
2. Interview with Chhit Thy.
3. Interview with Yim Lahoeu; Long Dany's interview with Yun Savoeun, male, a former children Unit in Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 23, 2012 [hereinafter "Interview with Yun Savoeun"]; and Dany Long interview with Moul Men, male, a villager in Lumtorn Chass Village, Lumtorn Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 25, 2012.
4. *See* interviews on file with DC-Cam.
5. The National Army for the Liberation of the Khmer Populace and the National Front for the Liberation of the Khmer Populace compiled by Stephen R. Heder, Box 38, DC-Cam's archives). White Khmers were the remnants of Lon Nol's forces who, with the assistance from Thailand, continued to fight the Khmer Rouge along the Cambodian-Thai border.
6. Long Dany interview with Sin Huong, male, a villager, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 1, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Sin Huong"]
7. Interview with Pok Toeuk.
8. Interview on file with DC-Cam.

9. See interviews on file with DC-Cam.
10. See interviews on file with DC-Cam.
11. Interview with Yim Lahoeu.
12. “La Pikheat Phnom Trong Bat” literally means “Killing furnace at Trong Bat Mountain.” See Unpublished “Killing Fields Report” in 1998 by Pheng Pong-Rasy (DC-Cam’s Archives).
13. Report on KR mass grave sites prepared by Pheng Pong-Rasy. for the detail, please visit DC-Cam’s website at [http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/List\\_of\\_Burial\\_Site\\_Most\\_Updated.pdf](http://www.dccam.org/Projects/Maps/List_of_Burial_Site_Most_Updated.pdf) (accessed on November 13, 2013).

#### **Chapter 4: The Khmer Rouge Defeat & Escape**

1. See Nayan CHANDA, *Brother Enemy: The War after the War*, 32–34, 88, (2009); See also Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) Case 001, KAING Guek Eav alias Duch, “Judgement”, para. 62, Case File: 001/18-07-2007/ECCC/TC, July 26, 2010.
2. Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*, 357–58 (New Haven, CT., 2008); Khamboly Dy, *Teaching the History of Democratic Kampuchea*, 59–60 (Phnom Penh, 2007).
3. Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*, 373.
4. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 272.
5. Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*, 375.
6. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia*, 272.
7. Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) Case 001, KAING Guek Eav alias Duch, “Judgement”, para. 79, Case File: 001/18-07-2007/ECCC/TC, July 26, 2010. See also Merle L. Pribbenow II, in his work “A Tale of Five Generals: Viet Nam’s Invasion of Cambodia,” *The Journal of Military History*, 70:2, April 2006.
8. Pribbenow II, in “A Tale of Five Generals: Viet Nam’s Invasion of Cambodia,” 70:2.
9. Vannak Sok interview with Nhay Teun, male, a former medical staff of region 105, Tumnop Thmei Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 3, 2012.
10. Some KR soldiers and people crossed the river at Preah Romkel Village located in the far end of Thala Borivath District, Stung Treng Province, to Chaeb District, Preah Vihear Province.
11. Dany Long interview with Choeun, male, a former soldier in Division 920, Anlong Veng District, April 18, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Choeun”]
12. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Saing Thanh, male, a former soldier in Division 280, Lumtorng Thmei Village, Lumtorng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 26, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Saing Thanh”]
13. Interview with Choeun.

14. Dany Long interview with Yim Phanna, male, a former messenger of Division 801, Anlong Veng District Hall, February 2012. The second interview was conducted in March 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Yim Phanna"]
15. Dany Long interview with Nan, male, a former soldier, Anlong Veng District, March 27, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Nan"]
16. Dy Khamboly interview with Leng Pheng, male, a former soldier in Division 801, Thnol Bambek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012.
17. Dy Khamboly interview with Em Sarin, Chief of Trapiang Prasat District Council, Trapiang Prasat, Oddar Meanchey, November 23, 2013.
18. Ibid.
19. Dany Long interview with Sang, female, a former Messenger of Region 43, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Sang"]

### **Chapter 5: Anlong Veng under Vietnamese Control**

1. Interview with Yun Savoeun.
2. Mam Sovann interview with Mam Roeum, male, a former mobile Unit, Anlong Veng District, May 21, 2012.
3. Interview with Yun Savoeun.
4. Dany Long interview with Sam Sean, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Sam Sean"]
5. Ibid.
6. Interview with Lahoeu.
7. Men Pechet interview with Thin Bin, male, a former mobile Unit, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Thin Bin"]
8. Vannak Sok interview with Yang, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier in Region 106, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Preah Yang"]
9. Interview with Lahoeu.
10. Dany Long interview with Tauch Mony, male, a villager, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 8, 2012; Interview with Sin Huong.
11. Interview with Sin Huong.
12. The K-5 Plan was a national security plan that was designed to strengthen Cambodia's defenses against KR incursions and attacks. The Plan was implemented between 1984 and 1988, and it had several phases. The first phase was to clear away the foliage and forest from the tens of thousands of kilometers of land along the Thai border. In addition, the Plan called for the construction of trenches, bamboo fences and barbed wire along the border. Millions of anti-personnel mines were also planted. The intent was to seal off the border with Thailand and choke off the infiltration routes by resistance forces, which included KR forces. Under the K-5 Plan, hundreds of thousands of people from around the country were required to 'volunteer' for the common defense of the country. Many people died

of starvation, exhaustion, mines and disease. A significant number of people contracted malaria because of the poor living conditions and the proximity to the forest. According to Margaret Slocomb, the letter “K” is the first letter of Khmer alphabet, which meant “defense” while the number “5” referred to the fifth defense strategy of the Vietnamese.

### **Chapter 6: The Khmer Rouge Re-Organization**

1. Geographically, Mum Bei or Tonle La-Peou was located along the border between Choam Khsan district of Preah Vihear province and Thala Borivath district of Stung Treng province.
2. See Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, *Getting away with Genocide? Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*, 52–66 (London: Pluto Press, 2004).
3. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Oeun, male, a former messenger of a Region, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Oeun”]
4. Dany Long interview with Sar Von, male, a former reserved truck driver of Division 920, Tuol Sala Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 24, 2012. The wives of the military commanders were responsible for taking care of the women and children in their respective units. The children of the KR leaders and soldiers were gathered and put in one place under the care of Yeay Vin, Miech San’s wife and a sister of Oam An. Other members of the childcare unit, working under Yeay Vin, included Ny, Run and Thoeun.
5. Dany Long interview with Thiep Then, male, a former soldier in Division 920, Tuol Prasat Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 04, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Thiep Then”]
6. Seven Thai provinces border with Cambodia. From Cambodia’s North to West, these Thai provinces include: Ubon Ratchathani, Sisaket, Surin, Buriram, Sa Kaew, Chanthaburi and Trat.
7. When the KR ran to the Thai border, Office K-18 was called Office 87, which was later changed to Office 131 with its location in an area called O’Sour Sdei. The office was moved into Thai soil and renamed to Office K-18 in late 1984 when Vietnamese forces conducted the operation to clean up the KR from the Cambodian border. Pol Pot recruited a number of educated people to work in this office. The office was divided into six different units including Unit 21 (military, fighting and intelligence); Unit 31 (population statistics); Unit 41 (social affairs and healthcare); Unit 51 (economics, commerce and agriculture); Unit 61 (education and publication) and Unit 71 (foreign relations). Dany Long and Dy Khamboly interview with Chin Kimthon, Member of Trapiang Prasat District Council, Trapiang Prasat, Oddar Meanchey Province, November 22, 2013.
8. Dany Long interview with Sam Phin, male, a former chief of logistics in Division 164, Anlong Veng District, August/February 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Sam Phin”]
9. Dany Long interview with Chuong, male, a former chief of Region 106 office, Anlong Veng District, April 18, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Chuong”]
10. Dany Long and Christopher Dearing interview with Chem, female, a former Preah Netr Preah District Chief, Anlong Veng District, April 6, 2012. [hereinafter Interview with Chem] Im Chem, Rochem Ton (*alias* Phi Phuon or Chiem) and Choem were among the administrative leaders in Mountain 1003. The three individuals supervised the people and families of the soldiers. Im Chem and Rann were responsible for the women in Mountain

1003 during the entire period of the 1980s and until the KR moved down from Dangrek Mountain to Anlong Veng in 1990. Chem conducted a census of the population in Mountain 1003 for the purpose of distributing rice, food, and other supplies.

11. Dy Khamboly interview with Pil Saratt, female, a former medical staff, Yeang Khang Cheung Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 19, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Pil Saratt"] These villages included: village 980, 50, 785, 60, 616, 80, 912, 92, 12, and 18. The villages that were named after the village chiefs included Yeay Chem, Yeay Rann, Ta Thiep, and Andeng Moth villages.
12. Mam Sovann interview with Khut, female, a former Rice Mill worker, Anlong Veng District, April 23, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Khut"]; Interview with Thoeun.
13. Dy Khamboly interview with Pheak, female, a former agriculture worker, Anlong Veng District, May 18, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Pheak"] and Dany Long interview with Phat, male, a former soldier in Division 117, Anlong Veng District, May 20, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Phat"]
14. Among the over fifty camps, about twenty camps were believed to have been under KR control. Five KR refugee camps (Bung Beng/Klong Wah, Khao Din, Nong Pru, O'Sralau and Tap Prik) were incorporated into Site 8 camp in 1985. The well-known KR refugee camps from 1985 included: Anlong Veng inside Cambodia, Borai in Trat province, Camp 85 inside Cambodia, Chong Bok, Huay Cherng in Sisaket province, Nam Yuen in Ubon Ratchathani province bordering with Preah Vihear, O'Trao in Sisaket province, Phnom Malai inside Cambodia, Sakeo, Site 8 in Sakeo province, Site 8 North, Site 8 West, and Site K in Trat province bordering with Pursat. The KR-controlled camps existed until the early 1990s were Site 8, Site K and O'Trao.
15. Between 1979 and 1991, the period of Cambodian civil war, over fifty refugee camps were established inside Thailand along the Cambodian-Thai border in the West, Northwest and North parts of Cambodia in order to accommodate hundreds of thousands of Cambodian refugees and displaced people. The organizations that provided support to the refugee camps included the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the United Nations Border Relief Organization (UNBRO). There were many NGOs and governmental organizations providing assistance to the camps. The list of organizations included the following: These NGOs included American Refugee Committee (ARC), Christian and Missionary Alliance (CAMA), Catholic Office for Emergency and Refugee Relief (COERR), Christian Outreach (COR), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Dom Bosco, Handicap International (HI), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Japan Sotho Relief Committee (JSRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), CONCERN, Refugee International (RI), Seventh-day Adventist World Services (SAWS), SIPAR, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and Youth With A Mission (YWAM). These organizations provided a variety of assistances ranging from education, medical services, site maintenance, and water sanitation. Only Khao-I-Dang refugee camp was responsible for overseeing the resettlement of refugees to the third countries. Some camps were destroyed by the advancing Vietnamese forces during the 1982-1984 offensives. Some camps were closed down since 1985 and were incorporated into the newly established camps while other continued their existence to the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement. A few camps continued to provide support to the remaining refugees until 1999. Phu Noi refugee camp was closed down in early 1999 when the last KR soldiers and civilians under Ta Mok integrated into the government.

16. Mam Sovann interview with Nhep Mao, female, a former mobile Unit, Yeang Khang Cheung Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 19, 2012. [hereinafter Interview with Nhep Mao]
17. Mam Sovann interview with Ngim Khan, female, a former mobile Unit, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012. [hereinafter Interview with Ngim Khan]
18. Slocomb, Margaret (June, 2001). "The K5 Gamble: National Defense and Nation Building under the People's Republic of Kampuchea," 32:2, p. 196. Dy Khamboly interview with Chhin Vorn in Svay Chek Village, Thlat Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 25, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Chhin Vorn"] Chhin Vorn said that Vietnamese forces occupied Mountain 1001 on 27 December 1984 three days after she gave birth of her oldest daughter who was born on 24 December 1984. She ran into Thailand with other people and soldiers though she was physically weak.
19. DC-Cam interview with Ngeat Nguon, May 10, 2012, DC-Cam Report for Inauguration of Genocide Education Memorial.

### **Chapter 7: Guerilla War & People's War**

1. Stephen Heder, "Kampuchea October 1979-August 1980, the Democratic Kampuchea Resistance, the Kampuchea Countryside, and the Sreikar," unpublished research paper, November 1980. (DC-Cam's archives). Between 1979 and 1989, the estimated number of the KR soldiers varied from 20,000 to 60,000. Margaret Slocomb in her work "The K5 Gamble: National Defense and Nation Building under the People's Republic of Kampuchea," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, June 2001, 32:2, page 195, claims that the KR forces after 1979 was between 30,000 and 35,000 soldiers. Michael Leifer, in his work "Kampuchea in 1979: From Dry Season to Dry Season," *Asian Survey*, 20:1, page 35, gave an estimate of 40,000 KR forces in 1979. His estimate dropped to over 30,000 in 1980 in his work "Kampuchea in 1980: The Politics of Attrition," *Asian Survey*, 21:1, page 94. Timothy Carney, in his work "Kampuchea in 1981: Fragile Stalemate," *Asian Survey*, 22:1, page 80, gave an estimated number of 30,000-40,000 KR soldiers in 1981. Elizabeth Becker, in her work "Kampuchea in 1983: Further from Peace," *Asian Survey*, 24:1, page 41, gave a higher estimate of 50,000 KR soldiers by 1983. Michael Eiland, in his work "Cambodia in 1985: From Stalemate to Ambiguity," *Asian Survey*, 26:1, page 121, gave an estimate of 40,000 KR soldiers in 1985. Nayan Chanda, in his work "Cambodia in 1987: Sihanouk on the Center Stage," *Asian Survey*, 28:1, page 106, gives an estimated number of KR forces of 28,000 soldiers in 1987.
2. According to UNTAC official website <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untac.htm>, between 1992 and 1993, about 365,000 refugees and displaced Cambodians were repatriated back from the nine refugee camps in Thailand to Cambodia. These camps included Sok San, Site K, Bo Rai, Site 8, Khao-I-Dang, Ban Thad, Site 2, Site B and O'Trao. It was one of the major successes of UNTAC's mission in Cambodia. *See also* Benny Widjono, *Dancing in Shadows: Sihanouk, the Khmer Rouge, and the United Nations in Cambodia*, 112 (Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., Plymouth, UK, 2008) For the details of Cambodian refugees and displaced population during the 1980s and early 1990s, please see Judith Banister and Paige Johnson, "After the Nightmare: The Population of Cambodia," in Ben Kiernan (ed.) (1993). "Genocide and Democracy in Cambodia: The Khmer Rouge, the United Nations and the International Community," (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies), p. 110-116.



3. Ibid. Stephen Heder
4. The number of military divisions in 1975-1979 was about 22 Divisions; however, only about 16 divisions were operational during the time of the Vietnamese fighting into Cambodia in late December 1978. The KR 1975-1979 operational Divisions included: Division 703, Division 801, Division 290, Division 170, Division 108, Division 310, Division 920, Division 164, Division 502, Division 450, Division 520, Division 280, Division 335, Division 603, Division 207, Division 117 and Division 173. This figure did not include the Divisions of the seven Zones.
5. Dy Khamboly interview with Savat, male, a former soldier in division 801, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Savat"]
6. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Tho Lun, male, a former messenger of regional chief and Soldier in the North Zone, O-Korky Kandal Village, Lumtornng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 27, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Tho Lun"] Soeun was subsequently shot in his office in Mountain 808 in May 1980. His own soldiers shot him allegedly because they were angry with him for executing a number of his subordinates in 1978.
7. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Sarit, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, Anlong Veng District, May 20, 2012.
8. Interview with Pil Saratt.
9. Dany Long interview with Khy Thea *alias* Lai, male, a former medical staff, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Khy Thea"]
10. Dany Long interviewed with Ek Sophal in Chrey Khang Cheung Village, Anlong Reap Commune, Veal Veng District, Pursat Province, May 23, 2011. [hereinafter "Interview with Ek Sophal"]
11. Democratic Kampuchea Textbook for grade 4, 28 (1995) [on file DC-Cam archives]
12. Dy Khamboly interview with Mei Makk in Pailin Provincial Hall, February 22, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Mei Makk"] Mei Makk is currently Deputy Governor of Pailin province and former personal adviser to Pol Pot.
13. Michael Leifer (January 1981). "Kampuchea in 1980: The Politics of Attrition," *Asian Survey*, 21:1, p. 94.
14. Interview with Mei Makk.
15. Democratic Kampuchea Textbook for grade 4, 28 (1995) [on file DC-Cam archives]
16. Dy Khamboly interview with Prum Yim, member of the council of Trapiang Prasat district, Oddar Meanchey province, November 24, 2013.
17. Vannak Sok interview with Pan Pat in Svay Village, Trapaing Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, 2 April 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Pan Pat"]
18. Vannak Sok interview with Meas En in Yeang Thbong Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, 20 May 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Meas Em"]
19. Dany Long and Dy Khamboly interview with Chum Cheat, former chief of Trapiang Prasat District, Trapiang Prasat, Oddar Meanchey, November 25, 2013.

## **Chapter 8: Life on the Mountain**

1. Dany Long interview with Chann Bai, female, villager, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 1, 2012.
2. Interview with Sam Phin.
3. See generally Eva Mysliwiec, *Punishing the Poor: The International Isolation of Kampuchea, "The Khmer Rouge Years"*; Michael Vickery, *Cambodia: A Political Survey*, 34–35 (Phnom Penh, 2007).
4. Dany Long interview with Lach Thay, female, a former children Unit, Thnol Tortoeng Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 21, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Lach Thay"]
5. Dany Long interview with In Phin, male, a former member of Chey Sen district and Thmiech commune chief, Trapean Prasat District, June 24, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with In Phin"]
6. Vannak Sok interview with Bai, female, a villager, Anlong Veng District, April 1, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Bai"]
7. Interview with In Phin.
8. Democratic Kampuchea Textbook for grade 4, pg. 38 (1995) [on file DC-Cam archives]
9. Interview with Pil Saratt.
10. Ibid.
11. Prey Sa-ak was a thick forest located in the border of Anlong Veng and Sre Noy commune, Varin district, Siem Reap province. It was one of the major battlefields between the KR and the Vietnamese forces.
12. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Lorn, male, a former mobile Unit, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Lorn"]
13. Interview with Savat.
14. Vannak Sok interview with Yuk Ham, male, a former soldier in Division 801, Sreh Chhouk Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, February 24, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Yuk Ham"]
15. "Language Study" textbook for grade 2, pg. 21–22 (1987)
16. Ibid., 17.
17. Vannak Sok interview with Nan, female, a former medical staff, Anlong Veng District, March 28, 2012. [hereinafter Interview with Nan]
18. Interview with Nan.
19. Interview with Nan.
20. Interview with Pheak.
21. Vannak Sok interview with Kuon Kim, female, a former children Unit, Aphewat village, Anlong Veng commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.

22. Vannak Sok interview with Noeun, female, a former mobile Unit in Region 106, Anlong Veng District, April 8, 2012.
23. Dany Long interview with Hen, female, a former weaver, Anlong Veng District, March 29, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Hen"]
24. Interview with Hen.
25. A Buddhist clergy who leads a ritual such as Buddhist ceremony or wedding. According to the Khmer dictionary written by Supreme patriarch Chuon Nat, Achar refers to the respected person who has good conduct and who provides benefits and education to students.
26. Bongvil Popil is a Khmer wedding ceremony that is based in Khmer legend. The groom circles the bride with a lit candle wrapped in banyan leaf, and the smoke is believed to bring harmony, joyfulness and good fortune to newlyweds.
27. Sin Samuth was a popular singer in the 1960s. His songs remain popular among the Cambodian people today. He has been considered as the golden voice of Cambodia. Sin Samuth was killed during the KR regime.
28. Interview with Nop Sophea.
29. Dany Long interview with Nop Socheat, male, former Battalion Chief, Aphetwat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.

### **Chapter 9: Anlong Veng: The Last Khmer Rouge Stronghold**

1. While the start and end dates of the conflict are debatable, one can attach significance to 1977 as the start date for open hostilities between Viet Nam and Democratic Kampuchea, and October 1991 as the month and year in which the Paris Peace Agreements were signed between all parties.
2. Lau Teik Soon (June 1982). "ASEAN and the Cambodian Problem," *Asian Survey*, 22:6, p. 549. The UN General Assembly on October 23, 1980 voted for a resolution which called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Cambodia. Ninety-seven UN members voted in support of the resolution; 23 voted against it; and 22 abstained.
3. Nayan Chanda (January 1988). "Cambodia in 1987: Sihanouk on Center Stage," *Asian Survey*, 28:1, p. 107.
4. Khatharya Um (January 1989). "Cambodia in 1988: The Curved Road to Settlement," *Asian Survey*, 29:1, p. 77.
5. Merle L. Pribbenow II, "A Tale of Five Generals: Viet Nam's Invasion of Cambodia," *The Journal of Military History*, 70:2, April 2006, estimated that about 30,000 Vietnamese soldiers, including a General Kim Tuan, were killed in their operation from 1977 to 1989. Le Kha Phieu, the then Deputy Vietnamese commander in Cambodia, gave a higher estimate of 55,000 soldiers killed.
6. Khatharya Um (January 1989). "Cambodia in 1988: The Curved Road to Settlement," *Asian Survey*, 29:1, p. 79.
7. Dany Long interview with Heng Viech, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier of Division 920, Aphetwat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012.

8. Dany Long interview with Duch Sarith, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, Yeang Khang Tbaung Village, Anlong Veng commune, Anlong Veng District, May 20, 2012.
9. Interview with Chan Sang.
10. Regaud, Nicolas (1992). "Le Cambodge dans la Tourmente: Le Troisieme Conflit Indochinois, 1978-1991," L'Harmattan, France. Translated into Khmer by Tep Meng khean.
11. On April 29, 1989, the PRK's National Assembly amended the constitution and changed the name of Cambodia to State of Cambodia (SOC), which continued to hold the state apparatus until September 1993 when the new Constitution was proclaimed and Cambodia became the Kingdom of Cambodia.
12. Dany Long interview with Prakk Pek, male, a former soldier in Svay Leu Distirct, Kandal Leu Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 18, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Prak Pek"]
13. Vannak Sok interview with Koy Thuon, male, a former soldier in Division 801, Trapeang Prasat District, May 23, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Koy Thuon"]
14. Flag of the Khmer Republic, Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/> (last accessed 29 December 2014).
15. Dany Long interview with Ven, male, a former soldier in Preah Vihear Temple, Anlong Veng District, May 22, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Ven"]; Interview with Savat.
16. Interview with In Phin.
17. Interview with Khut.
18. KR document on the administrative structure of Anlong Veng, December 28, 1996. (DC-Cam's Archives D24084)
19. The table is extracted from DC-Cam's archive D24084, which was created by the KR on December 28, 1996. The document which contains 18 pages (two pages are duplicated) details a number of statistics in Anlong Veng district. The statistics of the population includes the number of houses, families, men, women, male youth, female youth, widows, widowers, grandfathers, grandmothers, disabled people, male children, and female children.
20. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Chhoun Chhun, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Chhoun Chhun"] Chhoun Chhun was a friend of Mao. They both lived close to Ta Mok and were Ta Mok's messengers, bodyguards and drivers. Mao narrated the experiences he had had with Ta Mok to Chhun.
21. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Heng Viech, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Heng Viech"]
22. Dany Long interview with Heng Viech, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier of Division 920, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012; Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Chhoun Chhun, male, former driver for Ta Mok, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.
23. Dany Long interview with Chhoun Chhun, male, former driver for Ta Mok, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.

24. Dany Long interview with Kim Nan, male, former soldier, Or Angre Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Trapeang Tav District, March 27, 2012.
25. Dany Long interview with Kim Ly, female, former villager in region 4, Tuol Prasat Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Trapeang Tav District, April 4, 2012.
26. Dany Long interview with Kim Ly, female, former villager in region 4, Tuol Prasat Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Trapeang Tav District, April 4, 2012.

### **Chapter 10: The Legacy of Ta Mok**

1. See generally Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*; Elizabeth Becker, *When the War Was Over, 177–78*, 299–300.
2. Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*, 298–300.
3. Mam Sovann interview with Diep Ly, male, a former mobile Unit, Sleng Poar Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 6, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Diep Ly”]
4. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Tuon Chhin *alias* Chuon Rong, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier in Kampong Chhnang, Kandal Krom Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012. [hereinafter Interivew with Tuon Chhin] and Interview with Aom Koeum.
5. Dany Long interview with Kim Nan, male, former soldier, Or Angre Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Trapeang Tav District, March 27, 2012.
6. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Em Oeun, male, messenger of a Region, Kandal Krom Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012 [hereinafter “Interview with Em Oeun”]
7. Vannak Sok interview with Kim Ly, female, a former villager in region 4, Tuol Prasat Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 4, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Kim Ly”]
8. Long Dany interview with Priek Heanh, female, a Ta Mok’s daughter, Toek Chum Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 23, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Priek Heanh”]
9. Interview with Kuon Kim.
10. Interview with In Phin.
11. Men Pechet’s interview with Bin, male, a former mobile Unit, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012. [hereinafter “Interview with Bin”]
12. Democratic Kampuchea Textbook for grade 4, pg. 25 (1995) [on file DC-Cam archives]
13. Dany Long interview with Mao Chhoeun, male, former soldier in Division 920, Koh Thmei Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 18, 2012 [hereinafter “Interview with Mao Chhoeun”]; Dany Long interview with Sam Phin, male, former Chief of Logistics in Division 164, Cheung Phnom Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, August 2011; February 2012.

14. Men Pechet interview with Lan Nhoep, male, former soldier in Division 801, Trapeang Tav Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 29, 2012 [hereinafter "Interview with Lan Nhoep"]; Dany Long interview with Preah Yang, male, former Soldier in Region 106, Ta Dev Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 30, 2012.
15. Interview with In Phin.
16. Mam Sovann interview with Phang Kim Chhan, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier, Kandal Krom Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012.
17. Long Dany interview with Hem Mean, male, a former messenger of Thma Kol district's chief, Trapeang Tav Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 29, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Hem Mean"]
18. Interview with Hem Mean.
19. Interview with Yuk Ham.
20. Interview with Lan Nhoep.
21. Interview with Chem.
22. Interview with Kin Nan.
23. Long Dany interview with Chiv Chann, male, a former Vorn Vet's messenger, Sleng Poar Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 6, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Chiv Chann"]
24. Interview with Chum Chuong.
25. The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party was renamed the Cambodian People's Party in its extraordinary congress on October 18, 1991. CPP renounced Leninism and took up multi-party democracy.
26. Khatharya Um (January 1995). "Cambodia in 1994: The Year of Transition," *Asian Survey*, 35:1, A Survey of Asia in 1994: Part I, p. 81.
27. Dany Long interview with Nhep Ha (Pol Pot's nephew), Tuol Svay Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 3, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Nhep Ha"] Nhep Ha is the son of Saloth Nhep, Pol Pot's youngest brother. Saloth Nhep died in his home village in Kampong Thom in February 2010 at the age of 84. Nhep Ha became a soldier of the State of Cambodia in 1989. He joined the KR in Malai in around 1991. He is currently the Chief of Trapeang Tav commune.
28. Interview with Chiv Chann.
29. Interview with Yim Phanna.
30. Dany Long interview with Moep Mom, male, a former children unit, Tuol Svay Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 2, 2012.
31. Dany Long interview with Um Pheap, male, a former Soldier in Central Zone, Tuol Svay Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 2, 2012.
32. Dany Long interview with Khorn Morn, male, a former children Unit, Thnol Tortoeng Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 20, 2012.

## **Chapter 11: The Beginning of the End**

1. Interview with Chea Chhan.
2. Interview with Mao Chhoeun.
3. The “Khmer Rouge Outlaw” law which consists of ten articles was passed by the Cambodian National Assembly during the second plenary meeting of the first legislation on 7 July 1994 and was signed by Acting President of the National Assembly Loy Sim Chheang. The law came into effect on July 15, 1994, after the promulgation by the Acting Head of State Chea Sim. The law determined only the KR leaders and their soldiers as illegal, but not the people and the soldiers’ family members. The law gives the KR faction six months to surrender to the Royal Government within which time they will not be prosecuted. However, the law does not accept the surrender of the DK leaders.
4. For a comprehensive analysis of the loopholes and the legitimacy of this law, please see a brief internal report prepared for the Documentation Center of Cambodia by Jan van der Grinten entitled “The Law on the Outlawing the Group of Democratic Kampuchea,” August 30, 2000.
5. KPNLF was officially proclaimed on 9 October 1979. According to the organizational structure of the KPNLF’s leadership produced in June 1983, the Executive Committee of the front included: Son Sann (Chairman and Commander-in-Chief); Sak Sutsakhan (First Vice Chairman); Dien Dael (Second Vice Chairman and Delegate for Military Affairs); Hing Kunthou (Delegate for Economic, Financial and Development Affairs); Im Chhoudet (Delegate for Internal Affairs); Prum Vet (Delegate for Cultural, Social and Religious Affairs); Neang Chin Han (Secretary General); Boun Say (Deputy Secretary General for Administrative and Financial Affairs); and Abdul Gaffar Peangmet (Deputy Delegate for Foreign Affairs). Under the Executive Committee, there were two councils. (1) Council of Wise Men included: Chheam Vam, Sim Var, Huy Kanthol, Nong Kimny, Lim Kry, Thon Ouk, Chay Thoul and Savkam Khoy. (2) Military Council included: Sak Sutsakhan, Thach Reng, Im Chhoudet, Ea Chuor Keum Meng, Thou Theup, Prum Vet, Kev Chuon, Liv Ne, Ket Ret, Chea Chhut, and Leuang Sinak. (Source: The National Army for the Liberation of the Khmer Populace and the National Front for the Liberation of the Khmer Populace compiled by Stephen R. Heder, Box 38, DC-Cam’s archives). According to the source, the KPNLF originated from a group called Khmer Sar (White Khmer), the remnants of the Khmer Republic (Lon Nol’s) forces which fought with the KR for the entire period of 1975-1979 with the support from Thailand. During the KR reign, the Khmer Sar operated in various places as separate groups with no unity and different names. They consisted of five major groups: (1) Reaksa Sambok Movement led by Im Chhoudet and based at Phnom Dangrek; (2) Kok Sar Movement led by Kev Vibol; (3) Khleang Meuang Movement led by Prum Vet based at Phnom Kravanh Mountain; (4) Nen Raung Movement led by Siem Sam Un alias Ta Luot; and (5) Baksei Chamkrong Movement led by Kev Chuon and based at Phnom Dangrek.
6. The KR forces in Pailin relied on valuable gem stones and timber which were traded to Thailand. More than fifty Thai companies invested millions of dollars in Pailin’s rich gem stones. The KR in Anlong Veng relied heavily on timber exports to Thailand. Between fifty to sixty Thai trucks transported timbers from Anlong Veng to Thailand both day and night. Ta Mok sold hundreds of thousands of cubic meters of timbers to Thailand. Thieb was the name of the man who helped Ta Mok in organizing the logging and selling of timber to Thailand. This special trade helped build strong relations between the KR forces in Anlong



Veng, particularly Ta Mok, and the Thai authorities. The KR relied upon this relationship, not only for leverage in obtaining supplies, but also facilitating the KR's escape whenever fighting with the government took place. In this sense, the timber trade was a pivotal factor in KR's ability to continue their struggle despite all odds.

7. Interview with Kin Nan.
8. With the information about the defection plan of Ieng Sary's group, the KR radio in Anlong Veng began to attack Ieng Sary and the Pailin. On August 6, Pol Pot's radio based in Anlong Veng accused Ieng Sary of being Vietnamese agent who had hidden in the party for years. The broadcast which was read by Khieu Samphan also accused Ieng Sary of stealing the party's money and announced the arrest and execution of Ieng Sary and his cliques including 415 Division commander Y Chhean and 450 Division commander Sok Pheap. In response, on August 7, the Pailin radio broadcast which was read by Long Norin, Ieng Sary's chief spokesman, accused Pol Pot and Nuon Chea of being "the cruelest and most savage murderers of mankind." The radio announced the sentencing of Pol Pot and Nuon Chea to death and made a clear cup between Pol Pot and the leaders and people in Pailin. On August 15, Ieng Sary announced the creation of a new party called the Democratic National Unity Movement with Ieng Sary as President, Y Chhean as Vice President and Long Norin as Secretary General. This party aimed at countering the KR leaders and armed forces in Anlong Veng.
9. Some KR forces in Samlot defected to Funcinpec while some others joined the CPP. This division led to clashes between forces loyal to Funcinpec and those of the CPP. After the July 5-6, 1997 event, the former KR soldiers and cadres in Samlot ran into the forest again. They reintegrated into the royal government for the last time in 1998 along with the KR remnants in Anlong Veng.
10. Interview with Neak Vong. Prom Sou is Nhek Bun Chhay's uncle.
11. Dy Khamboly interview with Uon Yang, Veal Veng District, Pursat Province, January 11, 2012. Uon Yang was appointed Governor of Veal Veng district after the integration. In 2011, Yang retired and stayed as Head of Veal Veng District Council. Interview with Ek Sophal. Ek Sophal is the member of the Veal Veng District Council. Sophal was Huo Youn's body guard between 1970 and 1972.
12. Dany Long interview with Keo San in Bro Maury Village, Bro Maury Commune, Veal Veng District, Pursat Province, May 21, 2011.

### ***Chapter 12: The Dispute between Pol Pot and Ta Mok***

1. According to the interview with Le Rin and interview with Chhoun Chhun, Pol Pot wanted to use the trip to Pailin as a trick to kill Ta Mok. So Sarouen informed Pol Pot that Ta Mok made the problem in Pailin and Malai become worse.
2. Interview with Chhoun Chhun; Dy Khamboly interview with Le Rin, O Korki Kandal Village, Lom Torng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 27, 2012; Dy Khamboly interview with Le Rin in O Korki Kandal Village, Lom Torng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 27, 2012.
3. Video footage of the interview with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Anlong Veng on February 4, 1998. Unofficial translation by Men Pechet, (DC-Cam's Archives). The

account was also confirmed from the interview with Chhoun Chhun by Peou Dara Vanthan and Uk Sok by Dany Long.

4. Interview with Nhep Ha.
5. The killing of Son Sen could possibly be on June 10, 1997. The killing took place at mid-night of June 9, and the act of killing could cross onto the morning of June 10.
6. Vannak Sok interview with Chheang Chhin, female, a former weaver, Tumnop Thmei Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 1, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Chheang Chhin"]
7. Dany Long interview with Heng Viech, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier of Division 920, Aphenwat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012.
8. According to the interview with Heng Viech, Chhoam Se and An Sopheap, Sarouen had vindictiveness against Son Sen since the 1975–79 period when Sarouen was the chief of Division 801 in Ratanak Kiri province. At that time, Son Sen received reports from the soldiers in Division 801 that Sarouen committed moral mistakes with women. Son Sen called Sarouen to Phnom Penh for education in which Sarouen turned down the order several times. Annoyed by Sarouen, Son Sen arrested Sarouen's son who was studying communication skills in Phnom Penh. Later when the KR escaped and regrouped in Mountain 1001, Pol Pot recommended that Sarouen look after the military affairs in the Mountain at which time Son Sen objected. Sarouen resented that Son Sen did not recognize his efforts for the KR cause. Instead Son Sen only admired his younger brothers Ny Kan and Son Chhum. In this regard, Sarouen appeared to take full advantage of the opportunity to take revenge on Son Sen and his family.
9. Dy Khamboly interview with Le Rin in O Korkei Kandal Village, Lom Torng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 27, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Le Rin"]
10. Vantha Peou Dara interview with Yun Hak, male, a former soldier of district, Srah Chhouk Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 24, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Yun Hak"]
11. Interview with Lorn
12. Interview with Yuk Ham.
13. Vannak Sok interview with Doep Ham, male, a former soldier in Division 920, Trapeang Tav Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 28, 2012.
14. Dy Khamboly interview of Miech Saravuth in Preah Brolay Commune, Trapeang Prasat District, Oddor Meanchey Province, May 25, 2012.
15. Interview with Hem Moeun. Miech Saravuth broke open the tiger cage and escaped with his colleagues one of whom is Loeun, who is currently a police chief of Trapeang Prasat district. Before escaping, Saravuth was allowed to occasionally get out of the cage to cook food for all the prisoners. One day, Saravuth made an attempt to escape. He told the guard that he ran out of salt and asked the guard to take salt for him. Saravuth assured the guard that he would not be able to escape since the place to take the salt was just several meters away. As the guard went out, Saravuth in collaboration with his prisoner fellows used all their energy to pull the iron bars apart. They were very skinny and they managed to pull the bars far enough apart that they could slip through the cage. They ran as fast as they could out of the prisons and went to Saravuth's house. Saravuth's wife, who was the daughter of So Sarouen, did not even recognize

her own husband because Saravuth had, at this point, grown hair as long as a woman. His face was covered in facial hair, and his shirt was dirty and torn. For fear of arrest, Saravuth escaped to live in his father's home village in Prek Prasab district, Kratie province, for one year. Miech San's wife, Vin, who is sister of Aom An—former Secretary of Region 41 of the Central Zone—went to live with her brother in Kamrieng district, Battambang province.

### **Chapter 13: The Arrest & Trial of Pol Pot**

1. Dany Long interview with Maol Mao, male, cow-herder, Chheuteal Chrum Village, Thlat Commune, June 22, 2012 [hereinafter "Interview with Maol Mao"]; Dy Khamboly interview with Le Rin in O Korki Kandal Village Lom Tornng Commune, Anlong Veng District, June 27, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Le Rin"]
2. Dany Long interview with Heng Viech, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier of Division 920, Aphenwat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 19, 2012.
3. At the time of the prosecution, Pol Pot was already suffering from many different health problems, including heart failure and a stroke that he suffered in 1995. At this point, the left side of his body was dysfunctional and his left eye was almost blind. He could walk only with the assistance from the young KR soldiers.
4. Long Dany interview with Chak Chhun, female, a former medical staff, Yeang Khang Cheung Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 19, 2012. [hereinafter interview with Chak Chhun]
5. Long Sarin, "The Trial of Pol Pot in Anlong Veng on July 25, 1997," a documentary film by Long Sarin, DC-Cam's Archives. Long Sarin was Funcinpec's Second Deputy Secretary of the Cambodian Embassy in Bangkok.
6. Long Sarin, "The Trial of Pol Pot in Anlong Veng on July 25, 1997," a documentary film by Long Sarin, DC-Cam's Archives.
7. Long Sarin, "The Trial of Pol Pot in Anlong Veng on July 25, 1997," a documentary film by Long Sarin, DC-Cam's Archives.
8. Long Sarin, "The Trial of Pol Pot in Anlong Veng on July 25, 1997," a documentary film by Long Sarin, DC-Cam's Archives.
9. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Chhoun Chhun, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.
10. Video footage of the interview with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Anlong Veng on February 4, 1998. The footage is provided by James Gerrand, transcript and unofficial translation by Men Pechet. (DC-Cam's Archives)
11. Interview with Yim Phanna.
12. Interview with Yim Phanna.
13. Interview with Yim Phanna.
14. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Tuon Chhin *alias* Chuon Rong, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier in Kampong Chhnang, Kandal Krom Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012.

15. Interview with Em Oeun.
16. Interview with Yim Phanna.
17. Interview with Yim Phanna.
18. Dany Long interview with Nop Socheat, male, former Battalion Chief, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.
19. Ta Mok and Nhik Bun Chhay had negotiated an alliance just briefly before this turmoil. The KR faction in Anlong Veng agreed to throw their support to the Funcinpec-initiated NUF. The two leaders were able to reach a deal on July 4 because Pol Pot was arrested and Ta Mok was able to consolidate all power. This alliance would give Funcinpec party a counterweight to the CPP, which obtained a number of the KR forces from Pailin and Malai in the prior year. The alliance triggered a deadly armed conflict, which some observers called a coup, within the Funcinpec-CPP coalition government on 5-6 July 1997.
20. The National Congress of the National United Front was held in Chaktomok Hall in Phnom Penh on February 27, 1997. The Congress was compromised of the Funcinpec Party, Sam Raingsy's Khmer Nation Party (KNP) and Son Sann's Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party (BLDP). Sok Pheap, KR military commander in Malai, and Prum Sou, KR military commander in Thmar Pouk, were also present. The Congress elected First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Rannariddh as its President. Ieng Say's DNUM party stayed silent to the appeal of the NUF.
21. Dany Long interview with Nop Socheat, male, former Battalion Chief, Aphewat Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012. According to Nop Socheat, the KR forces in Anlong Veng kidnapped a British Christopher Howes and his interpreter Houn Hourth, who worked for the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) on March 26, 1996. The two were eventually executed. The KR leaders in Anlong Veng instructed the soldiers and civilians not to talk about the arrest of this foreigner.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Some observers and researchers called the 5-6 July 1997 event a coup d'état, which Hun Sen strongly rejected. Nhik Bun Chhay, who initially denounced the coup, later called it the internal military clash within the Royal Government of Cambodia. Foreign countries including the US chose not to use the word "coup." The 5-6 July event provoked fighting between the KR in Samlot and the government forces in August, one month after the event. The rebel leaders included Ny Kan (who had defected earlier), Iem Phan, Meas Muth and So Hong, who did not participate in the fighting. Ny Kan, Iem Phan and Meas Muth were arrested by the Pailin's forces of Y Chhean and were detained in Pailin for several months. All of these rebel leaders later agreed to join the government in December 1997.
25. Video footage of the interview with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Anlong Veng on February 4, 1998. The footage is provided to DC-Cam by Jame Gerrand, unofficial translation of the footage by Men Pechet. (DC-Cam's Archives)
26. Video footage of the interview with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Anlong Veng on February 4, 1998. The footage is provided to DC-Cam by Jame Gerrand, unofficial translation of the footage by Men Pechet. (DC-Cam's Archives)
27. Video footage of the interview with Ta Mok, Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan in Anlong

Veng on February 4, 1998. The footage is provided to DC-Cam by Jame Gerrand, unofficial translation of the footage by Men Pechet. (DC-Cam's Archives)

28. Interview with Yim Phanna.
29. Interview with Yim Phanna.
30. Interview with Tuon Chhin.
31. Dany Long interview with Kim Nan, male, former soldier, Or Angre Village, Trapeang Tav Commune, Trapeang Tav District, March 27, 2012.
32. Interview with Yim Phanna.
33. Sorpong Peou (January-February 1999). "Cambodia in 1998: From Despair to Hope?" *Asian Survey*, 39:1, A Survey of Asia in 1998, p.21.
34. Interview with Tuon Chhin.
35. Dany Long interview with Keo Peak, female, former Agricultural worker, Kandal Leu Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 18, 2012.
36. Interview with Sam Phin; In the book by Fawthrop and Jarvis, *Getting away with Genocide? Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal*, at 132, the co-authors state that the United States pressured Thailand to discontinue their support and shelter for Ta Mok, who was forced by Thai authority to leave Thailand. The Cambodian government, upon receiving this secret information, sent forces to the area to arrest Ta Mok, who was delivered through helicopter for detention in Phnom Penh. (Page 158 in Khmer in Chapter 7)
37. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Tuy Thoeun, male, a former children Unit, Thnol Bambek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012.
38. Interview with Nop Sophea.

### **Chapter 15: Anlong Veng in Retrospect**

1. Interview with Thin Ben.
2. See David M. Ayres, *Anatomy of a Crisis: Education, Development, and the State of Education in Cambodia, 1953-1998*, 10 (Silkworm Books: Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2000); See also Interview with Chhit Thy.
3. Interview with Chhit Thy; See Interview with Yim Phanna.
4. See Interview with Chhit Thy; See also Interview with Mey Chheng.
5. See e.g., Dany Long interview with Mech Savet, Dany Long in Tik Chum Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, February 25, 2012. (describing her life as a singer in the 1980s for the KR regime and how songs focused on defending Cambodia against Yuon [Vietnamese]).
6. See Vannak Sok interview with Roeun Rem, Thnal Bombek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012.
7. Interview with Yim Phanna.
8. Interview with Em Oeun.

9. Interview with Koy Thuon.
10. Dany Long interview with Moul Nen, male, villager, Trapeang Trav Village, Trapeang Tra Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 28, 2012.
11. Morm Sovann interview with Buo Channa, female, member of Mobile Unit, Thnal Keng Village, Pha-av Commune, Trapoang Nhek District, February 12, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Buo Channa"]
12. Peou Dara Vanthan interview with Long Ly, female, wife of KR cadre, Koh Thmei Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 18, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Long Ly"]
13. Vannak Sok interview with Roeun Rem, female, former cadre in Region 106, Thnal Bombek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012.
14. Interview with Pok Toeuk.
15. Interview with Uk Sokh.
16. Interview with Koy Thuon.
17. Interview with Buo Channa.
18. Dany Long interview with Chum Chuong, Koh Thei village, Anlong Veng commune, Anlong Veng District, April 18, 2012. (hereinafter "Interview with C.C1")
19. Interview with Aom Koeum.
20. Dany Long interview with Moul Nen, Trapeang Trav Village, Trapeang Tra Commune, Anlong Veng District, March 28, 2012.
21. Interview with Aom Koeum.
22. Phat Kosal interview with Kang Saray, Pro Lean Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, February 15, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Kang Saray"]
23. Phat Kosal interview with Saing Vy, Kandal Leu Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, February 13, 2012. [hereinafter "Interview with Saing Vy"]
24. Dany Long interview with Chhouk Yan, Akphevath Village, Anlong Veng District, April 20, 2012.
25. Interview with Kang Saray.
26. Interview with Aom Koeum.
27. Phat Kosal interview with Im Lot, Kralanh Village, Lum Tong Commune, Anlong Veng District, 2011. [hereinafter "Interview with Im Lot"]
28. Vanthan Peou Dara interview with Tuon Chhin *alias* Chuon Rong, male, a former Khmer Rouge soldier in Kampong Chhnang, Kandal Krom village, Anlong Veng commune, Anlong Veng district, April 22, 2012.
29. Dany Long interview with Mech Savet, Tik Chum Village, Trapeang Prey Commune, Anlong Veng District, February 25, 2012.
30. Interview with C.C1.

31. Interview with Aom Koeum.
32. *See e.g.*, Vannak Sok interview with Roeun Rem, Thnal Bombek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 21, 2012 [hereinafter "Interview with Roeun Rem"]; Interview with Koy Thuon; Interview with Yim Phanna.
33. Interview with Long Ly.
34. Interview with Im Lot.
35. Interview with Roeun Rem.
36. Interview with Im Lot.
37. Interview with Saing Vy.
38. Interview with Yim Phanna.
39. Interview with Kang Saray.
40. *See* Interview with Im Lot, "Young people now want to stop doing the agricultural work. I think that we cannot do it, [stop doing the agricultural work.] And for this reason, I continue to grow crop."; *See also* interview with Em Oeun.
41. Vannak Sok interview with Ul Sarat, Thnal Bambek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, April 21 2012. (hereinafter "Interview with Ul Sarat")
42. Interview with Aom Koeum.
43. Interview with Thin Ben.
44. Interview with Kang Saray.
45. Interview with Koy Thuon; Interview with Ul Sarat.

### **Chapter 16: Anlong Veng Stories**

1. Interview with Uk Sokh.
2. Dany Long interview with Yem Hun, Rumchek Village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, May 21, 2012.
3. Interview with Pok Toeuk.
4. Christopher Dearing interview with Min Myam, at Thai village, February 12, 2014.
5. Interview with Aom Koeum.
6. Interview with Buo Channa.
7. Interview with Im Lot.
8. Interview with Uk Sokh.
9. Dany Long interview with Taeng Ang, Kandal Kroam village, Anlong Veng Commune, Anlong Veng District, April 22, 2012.
10. Interview with Uk Sokh.





## **Authors' Biographies**

### **DY KHAMBOLY**

Khamboly heads the Genocide Education Project and is the author of the textbook, "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975–1979)". Khamboly was born and raised in Kratie province, a province in the northeast of Cambodia.

Khamboly has worked for the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) since 2003. His textbook, published in 2007, has been endorsed by the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport as mandatory reading for secondary school students nationwide. He is currently the Director of School of Genocide, Conflict and Human Rights Studies of the Sleuk Rith Institute.

Khamboly received a B.A. in English from the Royal University of Phnom Penh and a B.A. in Business Administration from the National University of Management. He has interned at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and Voice of America. Khamboly received an M.S. in Global Affairs from Rutgers University in 2009 and is currently pursuing his Ph.D. there.

### **CHRISTOPHER DEARING**

Christopher has worked for the Sleuk Rith Institute/ Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam) as a legal advisor, educational consultant, and researcher since 2007. As an educational consultant, he published (with co-author Dr. Phala Chea) the teacher's guidebook, "Teaching the History of Kampuchea: Teachers' Guidebook", which provides teachers across Cambodia a variety of lesson plans and materials on genocide education. Christopher also wrote, under the auspices of DC-Cam, a chapter on the crime of forced transfer and the events that occurred at Tuol Po Chrey. On August 7, 2014, the Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers of the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) issued their Judgment for the Accused in Case 002/01, in which the Chamber endorsed the chapter as a judicial reparation.

Outside of Cambodia, Christopher has worked in a variety of fields from government and military to humanitarian and international investment. This book is dedicated to his mother, Andrea Dearing.



