

# មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា PHNOM PENH LIBERATION

**(Excerpts and translated from Documentation Center of Cambodia Document Number D00710, A Khmer Rouge commander's description of the liberation of Phnom Penh, as recorded by him at Khao-I-Dang refugee holding Center, Thailand, in 1979. Source: Youk Chhang)**

April 17, 1975: is the day of failure of the Khmer Republic and the day of triumph of the Khmer Rouge.

## 1. Military activities

Khmer Republic: Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, at 05:00.

At 0100, there were two A2-jeps of Division 3, with a white flag as a sign of peace driving from the Phnom Penh boundary along with an announcement: "We all have to throw down weapons and begin negotiations with the side that has just received peace. We have to raise the white flag, the sign of peace."

At 01:30, there was an order from General of the Army Lon Nol to fire 105 mm canon as a sign of accepting peace.

At 02:45, the front lines at the Phnom Penh boundaries absolutely had to demobilize, by collecting and placing weapons in respective military units.

At 06:00 helicopters were flying away from Phnom Penh in a westerly direction. They were everywhere in the sky.

## 2. Military Activities: Phnom Penh April 17, 1975

At 06:15 the Khmer Rouge soldiers marched into Phnom Penh.

All were equipped with weapons made in Peking's China.

[They were] in black with a [Chinese style] cap, and rubber-sole sandals.

[They] were in lines.

In the direction of Wat Phnom.

Following the directed targets set by their party.

## 3. The Khmer Rouge targets in Phnom Penh

1. Soldiers from Eastern Zone: [assigned] to enter by National Road 2.
2. Soldiers from Northern Zone: [assigned] to enter by a newly built bridge at the head of Chroy Changva's bridge.
3. Soldiers from Northwest Zone: [assigned] to enter by National Road 5.
4. Soldiers from Western Zone: [assigned] to enter by National Road 5.
5. Soldiers from Southwest Zone: [assigned] to enter by National Road 3.

6. Soldiers from Special Zone: [assigned] to enter by National Road 2.

These six Khmer Rouge military groups from the six military zones meet together at Wat Phnom Daun Penh.

### **3.1 The Khmer Rouge targets for people distribution**

The Khmer Rouge's Angkar used the Phsar Thmei market as a central base for evacuating Phnom Penh dwellers to provinces categorized by zones.

1. Eastern and Southern areas of Phnom Penh: people in these areas [were to be] moved to Eastern Zone: Prey Veng and Svay Rieng Provinces.

2. Eastern and Northern areas of Phnom Penh: people in these areas [were to be] moved to Northern Zone: Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom and Siem Reap Provinces.

3. Areas northwest of Phnom Penh: people in these areas [were to be] moved to Northwest Zone: Kampong Chhnang, Pursat and Battambang Provinces.

4. Areas southwest of Phnom Penh: people in these areas [were to be] moved to Western Zone: Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Speu Provinces.

5. Areas southwest of Phnom Penh: people in these areas [were to be] moved to Kampot and Ta Keo Provinces along National Road 2.

4. People's Activities Phnom Penh: April 17, 1975 at 06:15 into how many categories were the Phnom Penh dwellers divided?

1. Those who had trends, that is, who used to serve the Khmer Republic administration. This sort of people were very frightened. They stayed in their houses, waiting to hear news about the resumption of peace negotiations between the two sides.

2. Those who were not satisfied with the Khmer Republic under Lon Nol's administration marched towards Phnom Penh to greet the Khmer Rouge. They were in lines along the both sides of the streets, shouting together: "Bravo! Bravo!" which echoed throughout the city.

3. Those who were separated from family members, who had gone out for work, or for medical treatment in state-run or private clinics, were very anxious and did not keep moving along the streets. As a result, some were killed by the Khmer Rouge, who had guns in hand.

4. Those who had joined the Khmer Rouge from the very beginning dressed in black and went out of their homes in search of their partisans. They moved here and there guiding and showing the way for the Khmer Rouge soldiers. They looked for individuals they had known or considered to be Lon Nol's civil servants, etc.

5. Soldiers of the Khmer Rouge party from the six zones planned to meet together at Wat Phnom on April 17, 1975 at 06: 30 the soldiers of the Khmer Rouge party attacked and broke through the front lines of Phnom Penh, dividing the city into zones from the gardens in front of the railway station to Tonle Chaktomuk.

### **5.1**

On April 17, 1975 at 06:45 the Khmer Rouge party of the Southwestern Zone announced, via Phnom Penh-based radio:

1. This time our party has gained victory a hundred percent throughout the country.
2. Our party needs to seek peace by peaceful means on non-party-ism basis.
3. Our party would like to invite excellencies, trended (i.e., Khmer Republic) groups, those in authority, and institution groups to meet together at the Ministry of National Propaganda. Reasons: To negotiate peace for the people throughout the country by peaceful means.

### **5.2**

On April 17, 1975 at 07:15, the Khmer Rouge party of the Western Zone announced via Phnom Penh-based radio:

1. Our party has gained victory a hundred percent over the traitorous Khmer Republic led by Lon Nol.
2. Our party obtained this victory at gunpoint.
3. Our party doesn't need to negotiate with any individual or party.
4. Traitors have to be defeated. No one will receive the failure for them.

### **5.3**

On April 17, 1975 at 07:30, the Khmer Rouge party (using three-wheeled motor-driven carts) announced via megaphone?

1. All people, please don't be chaotic, crossing here and there.
2. Enter your respective houses.
3. Be prepared for moving out of the city for a period of time, maybe three days.
4. Move three kilometers from the city.
5. Move by the ways directed by the party.
6. Don't need to bring along too many things.
7. [You] have three days to leave the city.
8. Don't walk in any direction but those set by the party.

## **6. Reasons for the party's evacuation orders**

1. Angkar's need to sweep up enemies.
2. Prepare everything in accordance with the party's directions already set.
3. Angkar has a duty to protect the people's lives as well as the city.
4. Angkar had been alerted that Americans and their lackeys had prepared to attack our city by bigger fighter planes.

### **6.1 April 17, 1975 at 07: 45**

The Khmer Rouge soldiers moved along small side streets to expel Phnom Penh dwellers from the city. Anyone who refused would be shot dead.

## **6.2 The Khmer Rouge plans to check evacuees at the city's exits**

Each Zone had prepared check points and was responsible for the below-mentioned points. For each zone, there were three checkpoints. Examine and search for:

1. High ranking officials.
  2. Soldiers of the Khmer Republic (led by Lon Nol).
  3. Spies Sédok and Co. (groups of people in the Bureau of Investigation of the Khmer Republic).
  4. Those who had defected from the party to the Lon Nol administration.
- Observation: At that time, the Khmer Rouge party organization arrested 100 to 300 Lon Lon soldiers every day.

### **(First confession, first section)**

We wanted to divide Phnom Penh into four [sections] as mentioned earlier.

1. The people living to the east of the Mekong River were divided into two categories:

a) The Khmer Rouge evacuated people living in the areas east of the Mekong River to Svay Rieng and Prey Veng Provinces by National Road 1. But many people did not follow Angkar's instructions. At Prek Nak Loeung, west of the river, some people started separating. Some made their way to Ka-am Sam Nar, where upon reaching a cross road leading to Cham Bak, Ta Keo, along National Road 2, they tried to walk towards their homes in Ta Keo and Kampot. Some could not reach their assigned destinations, because the Khmer Rouge's Angkar allowed them to walk for only 15 days from April 17 to May 1, 1975. By the end of that period, those who stopped at any places, would be allowed to live at that place.

b) The Khmer Rouge evacuated people in the areas north of Tonle Chaktomuk to Prey Veng and Kampong Cham Provinces along a newly built road serving the Chroy Changva's bridge.

Like people mentioned above, not all people arrived in Kampong Cham in due date set by Angkar. Because some tried to flee to their homes, when the final day came, they had to remain where they were.

Then the Khmer Rouge's Angkar considered the people in the upper part of Phnom Penh as 'people and loot' of the Eastern Zone. Those people could go anywhere they wished within the territory of Prey Veng, Svay Rieng and Kampong Cham Provinces. When the time limitation for travel expired, all were required to settle wherever they happened to be, in locations directed by Angkar.

When evacuating and arranging people to live in rural villages, the Khmer Rouge village chiefs told the people: "Brothers and parents, you don't need to travel by yourselves any more, since your homesteads are so far away. Please stay here for a period of time, and Angkar will provide vehicles to take you to your homesteads. It will be easier by this way". This was the second trick used by the Khmer Rouge to delude people.

2. People in Northern part of Phnom Penh was divided by the Khmer Rouge's Angkar into two categories:

a) People in the northeastern part of Phnom Penh, from the railway station to the Mekong River were considered as 'people and loot' of Northern Zone. Those people had to walk along National Road 5 and cross the Mekong River to National Road 6 for Kampong Thom and Siem Reap Provinces.

b) People in the northwestern part of Phnom Penh from the railway station to the east of Tuol Kork were considered as 'people and loot' of Northwest Zone. Like people bound for the Northern Zone, these people had to leave Phnom Penh along National Road 5 for Pursat and Battambang Provinces.

People in this zone were unable to reach their targets due to the delusive words of the Khmer Rouge.

3. People in western part of Phnom Penh were divided into two categories:

a) People in the Northwestern part of Phnom Penh from Charles De Gaul to Toul Kork were considered as 'people and loot' of the Western Zone. The chief of the zone had to move people to Kampong Chhnang Province through Thnal Tortoeng, Kandal Province, and Oudong District of Kampong Speu Province.

b) People in the southwestern part of Phnom Penh from Charles De Gaul to "March 18 School" were considered as 'people and loot' of the Western Zone. The chief of the zone decided to take people from these areas to Kampong Speu Province through Stung Mean Chey, O'Bek Ka-am along National Road 4.

4. People in southern part of Phnom Penh were divided into two categories:

a) People in the southwestern part of Phnom Penh from "March 18 School" to Boeng Trabek were considered as 'people and loot' of the Southwest Zone. The chief of this zone decided to evacuate these people from Phnom Penh to Kampot Province through Stung Mean Chey Street, crossing Ba Kou stream.

b) People in southeastern part of Phnom Penh from Monivong Blvd to the river were considered as 'people and loot' of the Western Zone. The chief of the zone decided to evacuate these people from Phnom Penh to Ta Keo Province through Kbal Thnal along National Road 2.

### **Confession 1, section 2**

Why the evacuation?

1) The Khmer Rouge followed the Angkar's directions based on the theory of the Haed of the Communist Party of China: "Must sweep clean the internal enemy before fulfilling other tasks".

2) The communist party [of Kampuchea's] goal was to make people aware of difficulties in order to break up and convince people to follow the guidelines of the communist party one hundred percent when fulfilling the task of building the party in Kampuchea.

3) The communist party aimed to select those who were to be considered as party elements and those who were to be smashed based on a theory that “Keeping you is no gain; pulling you out is no loss.”

4) The communist party intended to kill people considered to be untrustworthy, such as former civil servants and soldiers, preventing the local public and international opinion from observing their acts on the basis of a slogan: “Try not to make waves while dragging the boat, and not to contaminate the water while catching fish”.

5) The communist party intended to make the people forget about the loss of their property, which would be difficult to control in the future.

6) The communist party had already planned to prevent people from having their own personal property.

7) The communist party aimed to make their acts parallel their persuasive words to convince cadre members and people through propaganda where they had prepared their forces to smash the liberal regime: “Brick house, villa, car, and diamond being consumed by the capitalists and feudalists stem from the exploitation of the farmers and workers. So, we have to try our best to have a successful liberation for the Angkar of the party, mothers and comrades. By doing so, we will chase them out and then eat and sleep as they have done.”

8) The communist party was based on a theory: “When we have liberated the country from the liberal order, we must restore the country by transforming rural areas [into towns]. “

9) “In order to build the country from poor to rich, we must take the feudalists and capitalists (i.e. the city dwellers), as well as their property, to rebuild the country, rather than to let them spoil.

### **Confession 1, Section 3**

Before the evacuation of people from the city

Based on [our] observation, there were well organized plans to evacuate the population of Phnom Penh, because there were vehicles, motorbikes, bicycles and loud speakers arranged, and because the words used [during the evacuation in different parts of the city] were also uniform.

[Examples]

1) Phnom Penh dwellers, no matter who they are, must move three kilometers away from the city.

2) For only three days.

3) Don't need to bring any belongings, which will create difficulties.

4) Our Angkar will be there, wherever you are, for the support of everything. Angkar will evacuate brothers and sisters for a period of time to liberate and send all of you back, who have separated from relatives in the rural areas due to the traitorous Khmer Republic led by Lon Nol who had forced people into the city. [That's it for confession 1, section 3. More documents related to this confession have yet to be uncovered]. END.