

***Srok Koh Thom, Khet Kandal***

**Site Interview for Mapping Project  
conducted by Youk Chhang, CGP Program Officer (2/29/96)**

**Interviewee #1 (photo attached) :**

Ke Kep, 50, male, born in Phum #1, Khum Porban, Srok Koh Thom, Khet Kandal.

Kep reported that Khmer Rouge (KR) came to control his village in 1973. He was single and lived with his parents. Many villagers tried to escape to Phnom Penh, but found it very difficult to get to a safe access road. He was drafted by KR to work for an irrigation project near by his home village.

In 1976, KR sent him and his parents to Phum Ka-Orm Sam Nor, Khum Ka-Orm Sam Nor, Srok Leuk Dek, Khet Kandal, situated on the border of Cambodia and Viet Nam. He thinks that Ka-Orm Sam Nor borders Srok Ang Phu, Khet Ang Yang of Viet Nam. This was done in order to protect the territory of Cambodia. He started that the area was frequently attacked by the Vietnamese from 1976 until 1979. And there were many casualties, mostly Democratic Kampuchea (DK) soldiers and villagers.

Kep said that the Vietnamese were the ones who started the attacks on Cambodia, not the KR. He started that KR was clearing mine fields which were laid by the Lon Nol Regime, in order to open up farming land for the villagers. But there was disagreement on the exact location of the Vietnam-Cambodia border. And that was how the attacks began between the Vietnamese and KR. Later KR fought back strongly to warn the Vietnamese and to also defend Cambodia's national border, said Kep. There was a big battle between the KR and the Vietnamese in 1978.

Kep said that there were no killing sites or prisons in Ka-Orm Sam Nor during the DK. All criminals defined by Angkar were sent to Koh Ta Choeung which near Khum Peam Reang, Srok Leuk Dek, Khet Kandal.

Kep returned to his home village in 1979 and found his house had disappeared. Later he rejoined his parents and got married to his present wife. He now has 5 children. None of his family died during the DK.

Kep said that KR should not come back to join society. He is still afraid of the KR because of how they forced him to work days and nights without enough food. However, if they are allowed to come back to society, Kep added that he would be totally dependent upon the RGC to keep the KR from killing again. RGC has to secure safety for all Cambodians. He expressed that he has no confidence in the RGC's ability to deal with KR.

Kep said that in 1979 he came to visit the killing site (now is Koh Thom Genocide Memorial). He knew that this memorial site which full of mass graves was located near Munti #18 (Security Center #18) during the DK, because he used to do farming near by. He thinks there are at least 56 mass graves in this location. Kep reported that there are two more 2 killing sites and 1 prison in zone #25. They are :

**1. Killing site #1 (converted into a memorial in 1982)**

**Wat Chrung Romeas  
Phum Chrung Romeas  
Khum Kampong Kong  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal**

**2. Killing site #2  
Wat Prek Reusei  
Phum Prek Reusei  
Khum Kampong Kong  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal**

**3. Prison or Munti #15 (Security Center #15)  
Kep said that Munti #15 was directly under the control of zone #25 (zone level).  
It is located near Ong Ko (Cambodia word for a Vietnamese temple), Phum #1,  
Khum Chrouy Takeo, Srok Koh Thom, Khet Kandal.**

**Interviewee #2:**  
Sam Vichet, 16, male.  
Phum Por Tonle  
Khum Koh Thom "Ka"  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal

He said that he had visited Koh Thom Memorial Site many times. Indeed, he came here to play hide and seek with his friends. He started that he heard about Pol Pot when he was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, or perhaps even before that in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. He is now in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. He said his teacher told him that Pol Pot is very bad and killed many Cambodians.

**Interviewee #3 (photo attached):**  
Ngim Srin, 38, female.  
Phum Por Tonle  
Khum Koh Thom "Ka"  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal

In 1979, when she was 22, her parent ordered her to get married with Sron Torn, 21. Torn served in the DK army from 1973 until 1979 at Phum Ka-Orm Sam Nor, on the Viet Nam border. During the DK regime, Ngim worked for a DK supply team in Ka-Orm Sam Nor. Torn also used to work in Phnom Penh before transferring to Munti #15, then Ka-Orm Sam Nor. She reported that Phum Koh Kor (an island facing her village of Por Tonle), Khum Roka Khpos, Srok Sa-Ang, used to be one of the biggest prisons during the DK. The KR called it Munti #8. In 1981, according to another witness, Mr. Neang (who is now living on the island), CPP converted this prison into a re-education camp for about 1000 prostitutes. The old Munti #8 or Koh Kor now has a new image. YMCA and UNICEF in conjunction with RGC have built a housing project for single mothers with children.

Ngim confirmed that Munti #15 existed in Srok Koh Thom, Khet Kandal, and that the KR used it as a prison.

**Interviewee #4 (photo attached):**

You Huy alias Him Huy, 50, male  
Phum Anlong San  
Khum Prek Sdei  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal

His (parents) home village:

Phum #3  
Khum Chrouy Takeo  
Srok Koh Thom  
Khet Kandal

Huy stated that his home village was liberated by KR in 1972. In 1974, Munti #15 was created in Phum #2, Khum Chrouy Takeo (this information confirmed that Phum #1, Phum #2, Phum #3 were among other villages under control of Munti #15).

Huy served in DK central army in 1974 under the command of comrade Son Sen. He said he used to work in Phnom Penh at Chak Angre Electrical Factory. In July 1977, he was transferred to work at Munti #21 which known as Toul Sleng Prison or S-21.

Huy thinks that Santebal means re-education center; and Santesok means Security center. "S" stands for Santebal or Santesok. S-21, he thinks, originally came from the name of a DK prison previously located at Phum Prey Sar (near Stung Mean Chey Radon Station), Khum Prey Sar, Srok Chaom Chao, Munti #21. Prey Sar used to be the biggest prison during the Lon Nol Regime. Later, he believed, KR moved its prison to Toul Sleng High School inside Phnom Penh, but kept the original designation of S-21. He also stated that all of the supplies for S-21 were still coming from Prey Sar after the prison moved to Phnom Penh.

21 could be the identification of a location of DK administration. KR soldiers did farming East of Prey Sar.

**The Toul Sleng Prison System, according to Him Huy:**

**LEADERSHIP**

**Director (Comrade Duch)**  
**Deputy director (Comrade Hor)**  
**Member (Comrade Him Huy)**  
**Member (Comrade Thy)**  
**Member (Comrade Peng)**

**TEAMS**

S-21 is divided into 5 teams (or division or department)

1. Interrogation Team

2. Guard Team
3. Cook Team
4. Commerce Team
5. Children Team (later worked as prison guard)

### **Duty and Responsibility:**

#### **Comrade DUCH**

Duch is originally from Khet Kampong Thom, but was raised in the West Zone, according to Huy. Huy does not know the name of Duch's village. Duch is a core member (*penngsit*) of communist party.

Duch is responsible for the Interrogation Team. Almost all of staff in Interrogation Team were recruited from the DK Central Army (*yothea ma-chhim*), Battalion #703. Battalion #703 served in the special zone, including Kandal and Takeo. Some of Interrogation staff were ex-army commanders, or Duch's messengers. All of them were male.

Duch reported directly to Pol Pot in Phnom Penh, claimed Huy, The location of Pol Pot's office or house in Phnom Penh during DK remains unknown as of today.

#### **Comrade HOR**

Hor is from Srok Prek Touch, Khet Kandal. Hor also served DK Central Army. Hor was responsible for collecting all reports from Huy and Thy and other group leaders in the prison. (Thy was a chief of prison, said Huy). Hor was also directly responsible for the Guard Team. Most of the S-21 guards were recruited from zone 31 and 32 of the Western Zone. Zone 31 is Khet Kampong Chhnang; and Zone 32 is Khet Kampong Speu.

All of the guards were male. Some of guards were also recruited from Battalion #703. Later, guards from the Western zone were transferred to Interrogation Team in 1977. The wives of S-21 staff worked as seamstresses at the prison. They sewed clothes for the soldiers.

#### **Comrade HUY**

Huy was also responsible for the Guard Team. He claimed that his main duty was to receive prisoners. He received prisoners from such places as Battambang, the DK army (*yothea*), the DK ministries, etc. He was also responsible for prisoners' logistics, including how many chains or keys were needed to lock up the prisoners in cells. He was also responsible for supervising the execution of prisoners, overseeing when and where this would be done.

Prisoners always arrived at S-21 by truck (*Camion*). Huy was responsible for making a list of all arriving prisoners and making sure that his list matched the list of the person delivering them. Huy does not know who delivered prisoners, even their name. They usually took turns to make "deliveries" to S-21. Huy said that the prisoners lists were always signed by a Munti Chief of Security Chief.

Huy conducted daily meetings every evening after dinner with all the guards. Topics discussed were prison security, and self-criticism.

### **GUARD TEAM**

The Guard Team was divided into 4 groups (or more). Each group had 10 to 12 persons. Each group has its group leader, a deputy, and members. 2 or 3 groups each day would take turns guarding S-21, with each of three groups working an eight hours shift to cover 24 hours. Nonetheless, some prisoners still managed to escape from S-21 in 1977, said Huy.

### **Comrade THY and Comrade PENG**

Huy reported his list of prisoners each day to Thy. Thy is from Srok Prek Touch, Khet Kandal. Thy also served in the DK Central Army. He is a core member of Communist Party. Thy reports to Hor. Thy would ask permission from Peng, if he wanted to see a prisoner. Peng is also from Srok Prek Touch, Khet Kandal. Peng also served in the DK Central Army. After Thy received a list of prisoners from Huy, Thy would then inform Peng so that Peng can proceed to put prisoners into their respective cells. Peng had the complete authority to deal with prisoners, including killing them, said Huy. Peng received orders directly from Duch with regard to whom should be killed, added Huy.

The Interrogation Team was not allowed to operate in the detention cells. They would have to tell Peng to bring out whoever they wanted to interrogate. The Interrogation Team could get inside the cells, but to only indicate the individual they wanted to interrogate, and Peng or Thy must be present at all times. Huy believed that Peng had some authority to interpret Duch's instructions on who was to be killed, but that he always was the one to transmit an order to kill. Peng held all the keys to cells and prisoners.

### **INTERROGATION TEAM**

Interrogation Teams contained from 10 to 12 persons. Its consisted of a group leader, a deputy and members. The S-21 administration did not change between his assignment there in July 1977 and the end of operations at the beginning of 1979, reported Huy.

### **COOK TEAM**

The Cook Team was divided into 3 groups, one set of Cooks for the guards, one for the Interrogators, and one for the prisoners. Duch did not allow different groups of people to eat together for security reasons.

### **COMMERCE TEAM**

There were only 3 persons who worked for Commerce Team. They carried food supplies from Phum Kbal Tumnob, Khum Beoung Tumpun, Srok Mean Chey, and Prey Sar such as water grass, fish etc. They also raised pigs inside the prison to supplement the daily food supplies.

The Commerce Team picked up rice, fish sauce, salt, and MSG (*bicheng*) from the Commerce Department in Phnom Penh. The S-21 Commerce Team was responsible to find food for the S-21 staff and prisoners. Huy says that he has forgotten the name of the S-21 Commerce Chief: Ta.....?

## **CHILDREN TEAM**

S-21 recruited children from army battalions who had worked as commander's messenger. Later they would join the S-21 Guard Team, when they grow old enough to carry a gun. (May be at 12 Years old?) There are about 20 to 30 children per team. Huy does not remember how many teams there were during that time.

## **CONFLICT**

Huy stated that there was conflict between Duch and Hor in 1978. Duch and Hor came from different zones and different backgrounds. Duch came from Khet Kampong Thom of the Central Zone ( or Northern Zone, according to the DK map printed in 1976) and associated himself to the Western Zone. Hor came from Kandal of SW Zone and was associated with Battalion #703, from which many commanders were eventually arrested and sent to S-21. Because Hor was connected to Battalion #703, Duch no longer trusted or in 1978, and begin to secretly investigate Hor. Huy found out about it when he asked a prisoner from Battalion #703 who told him that Hor was on the list of prisoners. Huy confirmed that Duch controlled all the lists of to-be-arrested prisoners.

Huy said that Son Sen alias Khiev came to give a speech at S-21 on 4/17/78. The topic was "Attacking the Vietnamese." Khiev also talked about the use of the terms, party and Angkar. On 1/24/96, I had obtained an original document from Toul Sleng making reference to this speech. Huy asked Son Sen for permission to return to his unit (Battalion #703). Son Sen said "no" to him. Huy was afraid that he will also be executed because he was connected to Hor.

## **ESCAPE**

Huy believes that Peng is with Duch now. Huy stated that in 1979 when the Vietnamese came to Phnom Penh, Duch ordered his staff to escape to Pursat with him. He told the guard and interrogation teams to escape through road number 4 toward Northwest. Then they all were to meet in Pursat. Huy remembered that they ran away from S-21 somewhere between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1979. The Vietnamese army chased them out of S-21, said Huy. It took them about a month to arrive in Pursat, traveling by foot. In Pursat, about 20 of the top S-21 personnel reunited. They stayed in a village at first, then later moved into the jungle. At that point, Huy believes Duch killed Hor.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is much more to be learned about S-21: A Bureaucratic Center of Death. I would like to stress that the mapping project *should not* concentrate only on particular provinces or zones. It should be nation-wide. The major killing sites in every

provinces are easy to locate. There are many documents at Toul Sleng Genocide Museum related to the KR cadre (S-21 personnel) who were responsible for the killing are available to conduct a proper investigation at the provincial level. The reports on the death toll conducted by Renakse are also available to use as a background. Hundreds of thousands of pages of petitions written by the villagers are now found and can be used as a source to located mass graves and a useful source to identify the killers or security chiefs. The report on genocide sites finished by Genocide Research Committee in 1983 is also available. The Toul Sleng Genocide Museum also has some communications from Munti Chiefs to Duch. Finally, Huy confirmed us that he had received prisoners from almost everywhere during the DK Regime. So, it is clear that there were Munti(s) or Security Center(s) in every DK zones which held prisoners who later were sent to be executed at S-21 (*for important suspects*), or were sometimes killed in the respective zone (*for regular victims*). This killing system can be completely identified through the mapping team, if we really wish to see what happened. End./....