

THE CAMBODIA - DISASTER

The crimes of the Khmer Rouge: photos and descriptions



Alexander Goeb

Born 1940 in Düsseldorf, he was an editor for various newspapers and magazines from 1964 to 1983. Following this, he was a freelance author and has visited numerous conflict areas in the world. In 1979 Goeb was the only journalist from the Federal Republic of Germany who was able to take part in the tribunal against Pol Pot and Ieng Sary. Over almost thirty years this developed into a number of radio programs for the WDR and news features. He published the book "Kambodscha: Reisen in einem traumatisierten Land" [Cambodia: Travelling in a traumatized Country]; Verlag Brandes & Apsel 2007



Vann Nath

Born 1946 in the province of Battambang. He studied art, worked as a painter and commercial artist. In 1977 he was separated from his family and thrown into the torture prison Tuol Sleng (S-21). He was reunited with his wife in 1979, his two sons had died though. Vann Nath was one of the seven prisoners who survived because he was ordered to paint portraits of the Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot. Since his release in 1979 he paints scenes of torture from memory and from descriptions by other prisoners. For the International Tribunal Vann Nath is one of the most important witnesses of the crimes in Tuol Sleng.



Heng Sinith

Born 1968 in the province of Kandal. A large number of his family lost their lives during the time of Pol Pot. Sinith survived the time of genocide as a cow herder and from 1984 he studied at the college of art in Phnom Penh. From 1994 he decided to become a photographer and he has since worked for several Cambodian newspapers. Today he takes photos for the news agency AP. From 2002 Heng Sinith started following the traces of former Khmer Rouge on behalf of the Documentation Center of Cambodia. He photographed the subordinates of murder and torture who still live freely in the provinces of Cambodia.

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THE PEACEFUL CAMBODIA



Cambodia: A far away country. A dark country. An eerie country. But also a country of smiles. Most people have heard of Pol Pot: a Khmer Rouge, a criminal, a murderer who together with others has to answer for the deaths of seven million people, a quarter of the whole nation. Three years, eight months and 20 days, all Cambodians know this time span. It is the time of the Khmer Rouge tyranny from 1975 to 1979. Thirty years ago the Khmer Rouge fled from the advancing Vietnamese army in the direction of Thailand. Subsequently there was a brutal, almost 20 year long civil war. Some of the commanders of the genocide of the own people survived and today are old men. The others died or were murdered. A tribunal may now bring late atonement. The people are gaining a little hope.



Tuy Kin, 61 years old, soldier of the Khmer Rouge

"I got to know all the battle fields from 1970 to the liberation of Phnom Penh on April 17th, 1975. Then I was put in Prey Sar prison. I did not know why. There I was forced to work. After the time of the Khmer Rouge I went to prison again.

I had a baby which was seven months old. My husband found another woman when I was four months pregnant. I swear that I did not kill any of my fellow countrymen. If I am lying God will punish me."





**Him Huy, 53 years old,
Security chief of S-21**

“To tell the truth, I did not want to work there. I asked Son Sen if I could go somewhere else. But he refused. I was the only one who dared to ask such a question. I asked because I was afraid that if I stayed

I would be killed. I did not feel good to see the people when they died one after the other. I would have rather gone home to my parents. The people still denounce me as Tuol Sleng staff. I would not have been there vo-

luntarily. They forced me to work in the prison. If I would have refused they would have killed me. If I get summoned before the tribunal I will not hesitate to testify what I did in prison and for what reasons I did it.”



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Soan Nim, 60 years old, Khmer Rouge group leader

“1974 the KR began recruiting for the army. I joined up voluntarily because I thought that it was better than building dikes and trenches like normal citizens, that I would get better food. My father did not want that, but I was determined to do so, because I did not want anyone to look

down on me. My father was a very strong man but on the day I left he cried. The KR destroyed my family. During their regime we suffered hunger and were separated. We rarely met. I did not believe what they taught me but I could not do anything because everyone was under their control. To save our lives we had to do what we were told.”



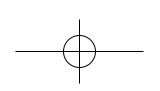


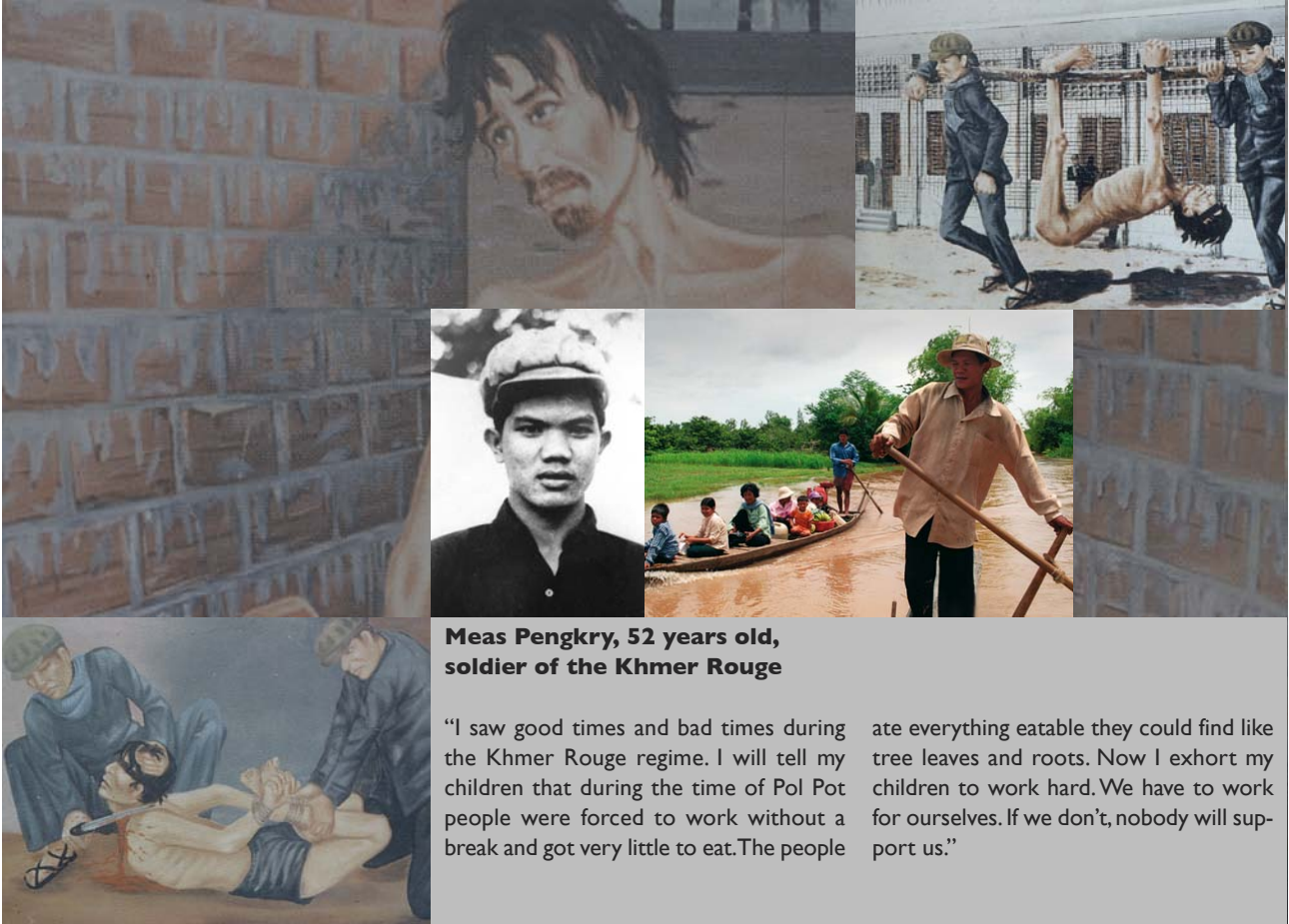
Suos Thy, 56 years old, worked in the office of S-21

“1976 I worked in the documentation department of S-21. I thought that they had appointed me to this job because I had experience of writing. 1983 I went to prison for three years. I thought it was very unfair to be in prison while the KR

leaders were free. The murderous regime was created by them and they have to be charged for it. I am not trying to defend myself. When I heard that the leaders of the KR were saying that they did not know anything about the existence of

Tuol Sleng prison I had to laugh out loud. It was a large prison, not a small one, and the founders must have had top positions in the revolution. Prisoners from all over the country were brought there. The leaders are definitely lying to us.”

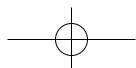


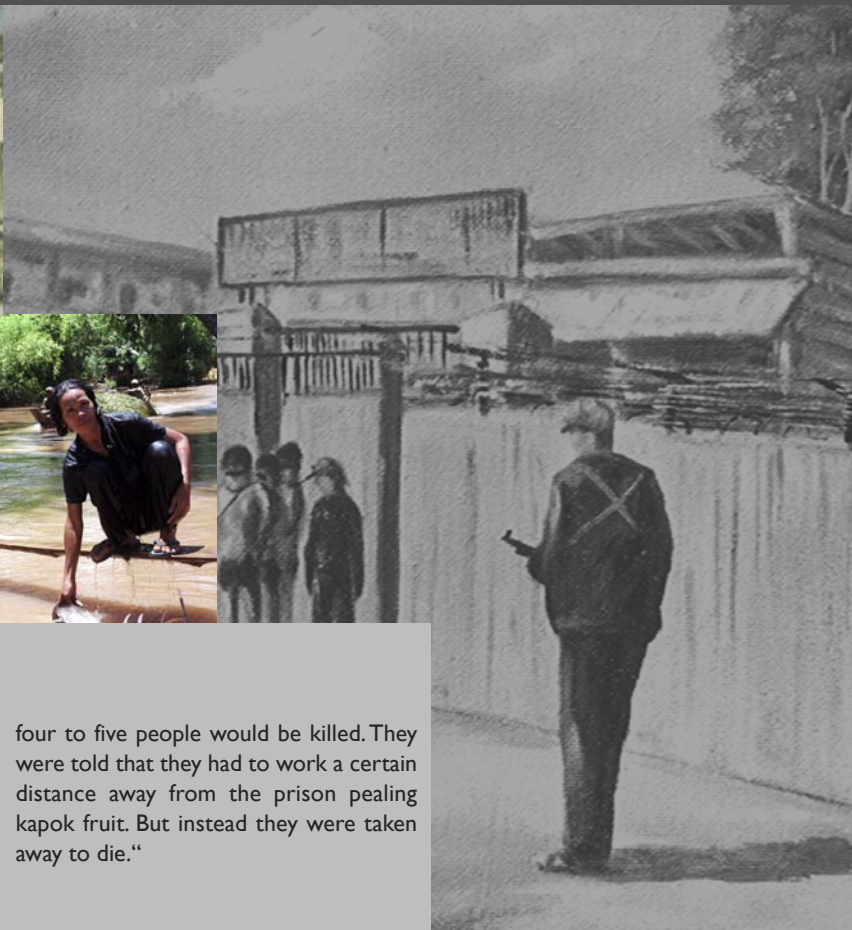


Meas Pengkry, 52 years old, soldier of the Khmer Rouge

"I saw good times and bad times during the Khmer Rouge regime. I will tell my children that during the time of Pol Pot people were forced to work without a break and got very little to eat. The people

ate everything eatable they could find like tree leaves and roots. Now I exhort my children to work hard. We have to work for ourselves. If we don't, nobody will support us."





**Lo Sim, 55 years old,
Khmer Rouge group leader**

"I don't know what to say about the KR leaders. They were cruel, they killed their own people. In Prey Sar prison I displayed honesty and obedience and I worked very hard so they would spare me. Every night

four to five people would be killed. They were told that they had to work a certain distance away from the prison peeling kapok fruit. But instead they were taken away to die."





**Nheb Ho, 57 years old,
Khmer Rouge group leader**

“All the KR leaders who said that they did not know of the existence of the Tuol Sleng prison tried to defend themselves as they all worked with Pol Pot, the founder of this one square kilometre compound.

They should not be able to charge the man in the street in order to hide their own crimes. That is unfair. The people in the village called me pro Pol Pot. I do not hold it against them, as it is true that I

worked for the KR. Most of the villagers know that I worked in Tuol Sleng prison. I do not regret it, but I feel for my wife and my children when they suffer from what people say about me.”





គីន . ហុន

Nuon Hong, 49 years old, soldier of the Khmer Rouge

“During the rule of the Democratic Cambodia I continuously lived in fear of being taken away. Everyone felt it. Every few days a truck full of people would be taken away

without giving clear reasons. One lived in continuous fear of making a mistake, being arrested and being killed. Once you were in prison the chance of survival was small.”



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គីន . ហុន

វ៉ាន់ . ហុន



ឆន់ ចាន់ តី

Im Chanta, 52 years old, soldier of the Khmer Rouge

“In Prey Sar prison I lost a knife. My colleague had hidden the knife. My boss therefore hit me with a stick. The KR leaders should be executed for their cruel murder of people and because they hurt me.”



ស៊ុន ធីតា

ឆន់ ចាន់ តី

វ៉ិ. ស៊ីម

អៀន ត្រី

វ៉ិលីម - ហ្សា

THE PERPETRATORS



Ieng Sary was “brother No. 3” and a close friend of Pol Pot. He was born in the South Vietnamese province of Vinh Long as Kim Trang. The year of his birth is not exactly known. It is said that he was born between 1922 and 1925, but 1929 is also mentioned. His father was Vietnamese, his mother a Khmer-Krom, which is the ethnic Khmer who live in South Vietnam. The parents were wealthy landowners. Ieng Sary later tried to cover up his Vietnamese heritage. He visited the Sisovath-Lyzeum and went to Paris to a business school in 1950. 1955 he became the chairman of the Khmer Student Association and returned to Sisovath-Lyzeum as a teacher in 1957. Like Pol Pot he went into hiding in the jungle in 1963.

Khieu Samphan was born 1931 in the province of Svay Rieng as a son of a low state official. 1954 he went to Paris and studied law and economics. 1959 he did his doctorate on the topic “The Economy of Cambodia and the Problems of Industrialisation”. After his return from Paris he at first edited a newspaper, was briefly arrested and then taught at the renowned Sisovath-Lyzeum in Phnom Penh. A turning point for Khieu Samphan, who was later considered the “gentleman” among the Khmer Rouge, was an uprising in 1967 in the province of Battambang for which the “left” and the “communists” were blamed. It was, however, the local farmers who were protesting against the low price of rice and the arbitrary confiscation of rice by the military. Prince Sihanouk, the head

of state, threatened with military courts and death sentences. Khieu Samphan decided to flee into the jungle.



THE PERPETRATORS



Nuon Chea was “brother No. 2” and deputy of Pol Pot. He was born in Battambang in 1927 and is of Thai-Chinese descent. At the end of the 1940s he worked in the Thai Foreign Ministry. 1951 he went to Hanoi for three years and after his return became deputy Secretary General of the Cambodian Revolutionary Peoples Party. Nuon Chea is considered the chief ideologue of the Khmer Rouge. After 1975 he was Prime Minister for some time. His vision of the future of Cambodia: “For the coming ten, hundred, thousand, ten- and hundred thousand years it will be our duty to defend Cambodia and its workers and peasants, organized in communes, and in huge strides build up a new society.” Until his arrest in 2007 he lived as a “simple farmer” in vicinity of Pailin on the Thai border.

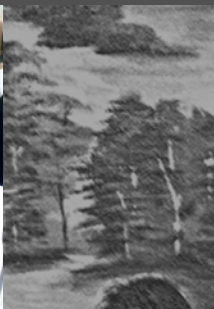


Ieng Tirth, former Social Minister of the Khmer Rouge and member of the Party's Central Committee was born as Khieu Tirth and is the wife of Ieng Sary. Her older sister Khieu Ponnary was the first wife of Pol Pot. Ieng Tirth held especially extreme views of the Khmer Rouge. She focused totally on the young and ruthless guards which had run through proper

indoctrination camps: “We do not need the old generation anymore because they can not change their thinking.”



THE PERPETRATORS



Kaing Guek Eav called Duch, was the warden of the torture prison S-21 Tuol Sleng from 1976. He was born in 1942 close to the town of Kampong Thom, comes from a Chinese-Cambodian family and visited, similar to most of the other leading Khmer Rouge, the Sisovath grammar school. Later he was arrested as a “leftist” under Sihanouk, but was able to then defect into the jungle. Him Huy, the late security chief of S-21 who was charged with more than 2.000 murders, commented about him: “He was strict but fair: What he said was done.” In the 1990s Duch turned to evangelical communities and converted to Christianity. Only in 1999 a journalist was able to reveal his identity. Thereupon Duch was arrested and imprisoned. In November 2007 he was transferred to the International Tribunal.

Pol Pot, real name Saloth Sar, was the dreaded “brother No. 1” of the Khmer Rouge. He was born in 1928 in the province of Kampong Thom. His parents were wealthy for Cambodian standards and the mother was Chinese. He graduated from a technical middle school in Phnom Penh, he learnt to be a carpenter and joiner and in 1949 he went to Paris to study radio engineering. After he failed the exam three times he returned to Phnom Penh in 1953. Some said that he was more interested in politics and French literature. Verlaine was one of his favourite poets. Later Saloth Sar taught at Lyzeum Kamputh Both and belonged to several leftist groups. In 1963 he defected into the jungle. For many years nobody knew who was behind the assumed name Pol Pot. It was not until 1977

when a photo of him was published in China that he was recognized as Saloth Sar. Pol Pot died in 1998 in the vicinity of Anlong Veng in the north of Cambodia.



THE TRIBUNAL



The International Tribunal

called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia is a unique construction which has to do with Cambodian history. Over more than several decades the UN Security Council ignored the genocide in Cambodia. China and the USA prevented every criminal prosecution and even agreed that the Khmer Rouge represented Cambodia at the United Nations after 1979. This also has a historical reason. In 1975 the small Vietnam had militarily defeated the large USA, and Vietnam had also liberated Cambodia from the terror regime of Pol Pot which had been supported by China. Vietnam re-

mained the occupying power in the country of the Khmer until 1989. After a project by the UN which cost billions in 1992/93 and which should end the civil war, the refugee problem and introduce democratic conditions, the UN Human Rights Commission firstly addressed the prosecution of those responsible for the genocide in 1997. In 2001 the Cambodian National Assembly finally passed the law for the creation of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the prosecution of crimes during the time of the Democratic Cambodia. In March 2003 there was an agreement with the UN.

In May 2003 the UN General Assembly ratified the tribunal resolution which was signed by both sides. According to the resolution the court is based in Cambodia and employs mainly Cambodian judges. Nevertheless, at least one international judge has to agree to a majority decision. From August to November 2007 four people who belonged to the leadership of the Khmer Rouge were arrested and taken to the tribunal prison. The former director of the infamous torture prison Tuol Sleng (S-21), Duch, who had been in a military prison since 1999, was also turned in to the tribunal.



VANN NATH: DIALOG WITH A MASS MURDERER

Around 1995, a number of Khmer Rouge soldiers surrendered to the government.

I was told by a friend that Huy, a former butcher of Tuol Sleng, had defected to government authorities in Sa'ang district, Kandal province, where he admitted killing more than 2,000 people. A friend showed me his photograph.

With one glance at the photograph, I recognized him to the bone. But when he confessed that he had killed only 2,000 people, I thought it was too few. In 1978 alone, tens of thousands of people were taken to Tuol Sleng. There were just a few guards who killed the prisoners, and Huy was one of them. So the 2,000 people he said he had killed must have been just a fraction of the total number.

After I heard about Huy's defection, I could not remain peaceful. I remembered the corpses stacked on top of each other. I could still see the guards' jubilant faces when they beat people. It was incredible that a butcher who had killed thousands of people now had the right to live happily with his wife and children.

I had determined in my mind that I must meet Huy.

One day as I entered the prison and walked towards the painting room, I saw the

director in the yard. One of the staff walked to me and said in a low voice:

"Uncle! There — it's A-Huy! You want to see him? He's over there!"

I was startled and asked, "What? What did you say?"

"I said that A-Huy is right over there," the man stressed.

I stopped about two meters from him and looked him in the eye. He did not notice my presence. My voice seemed very distant when I began speaking.

"You are Brother Huy, aren't you?"

A-Huy turned to me quickly and spoke in a gentle manner. "Yes, it's me," he said, turning away to watch the scenery without paying much attention to me.

He did not know that I was staring at him to the bones.

"Do you know me, Brother?" I asked.

This time, he turned to me, looked at me a bit longer, and then said, "No, I don't."

"But I know you very well. Why don't you know me? You used to be the chief of security in this prison," I said.

As I spoke, the expression on his face greatly changed.

"Do you recognize me? I was one of the four or five painters who worked in that room," I said pointing at our former workroom. "You used to go there often."

"At that time I was told to take the prisoners for them. How could I get away

from following their orders?" he said.

"How many people did you kill?" I asked with emphasis.

"I was forced then ... I killed about four or five people, because I could not avoid doing that," he said.

I laughed and thought that even though he had turned from a cruel young man to quite an old man, his heart and mind had not changed, as none of his words were true.

"According to the reports, when you defected you confessed that you had killed more than 2,000 people. What do you think?" I asked this question to probe further, but he in turn gave me a tricky answer.

"First I told them the truth — just three or four — but they didn't believe me and they kept asking. I thought that if I told a small number, they wouldn't believe me. So I told them this big number — 2,000 — and they believed me."

I shook my head, feeling confused.

"Huy, I don't have any ill intention against you. If I did, you wouldn't be able to stand in front of me now."

I asked if he had seen the paintings I had hung in the museum. He said he had.

"What do you think of the paintings? Are they too exaggerated?" I asked.

"No, they are not exaggerated," he said. "There were scenes more brutal than that."

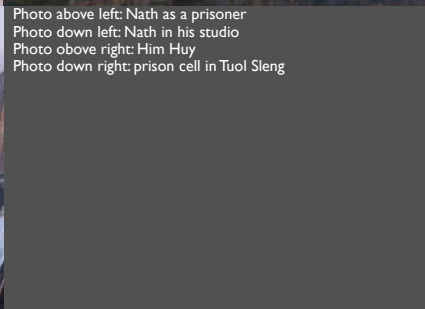
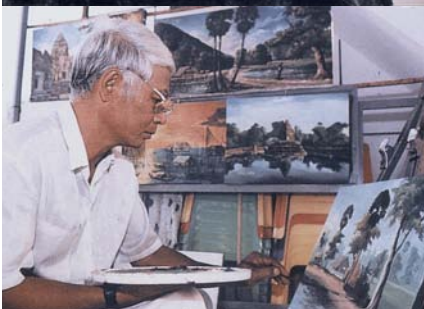


Photo above left: Nath as a prisoner
Photo down left: Nath in his studio
Photo above right: Him Huy
Photo down right: prison cell in Tuol Sleng