

## Phok Chhay

### Democrat or Communist?

Born into an extremely poor family in a village in Samraong district of Takaev, Phok Chhay spent much of his youth deposited in pagodas. In 1949, he passed an examination that allowed him to study at a primary school in Takaev town. The following year, he joined other pupils who were organized by the Son Ngoc Thanhist faculty there into a procession that condemned the provincial governor as a "lackey of the French," and was duly expelled. However, he managed to pass the entrance exam and scholarship competition for a college in Kampot, where he studied from 1952 to 1956. From there he came to a Phnom Penh in which he had no relatives and where he lived in a pagoda, but after again winning a scholarship was able to study at the prestigious French-language Lycée Descartes from 1956 to 1958. He gave up hopes to study abroad after his father died, and in 1959 enrolled instead at the Faculty of Law and Economics. Lacking other means of support, he began teaching in small private schools, giving no thought to their political affiliations. These included Lon Non's Khemera School, where he taught in 1960-1961. However, after he met Uch Vaen (then both Secretary of the Law Library and Chairman of Lycée Chamraoen Vicchea Association) while still studying at the Faculty of Law in 1961, he was persuaded to teach at Chamraoen Vicchea, which he did in 1961-1962. Uch Vaen also persuaded Chhay to write articles for the leftist, but state-approved French-language newspaper *La Dépeche*, which was edited by Chav Seng, then the Minister of Information, with Uch Vaen as his deputy. He became a member of a team of writers that included Foreign Ministry employees Pok Deuhkomar and Ruoh Chetthor and member of parliament Sou Naem. Hu Nim also occasionally wrote for *La Dépeche*, but not under his own name. By 1962, Chhay was enamoured of something called "revolution" and things "progressive," but remained unaware of Uch Vaen's Party connections. He had also started having political conversations with Hou Youn, who taught him economics in 1961-1962 at the Faculty of Law, was Secretary of State for Finances, and whom he considered a model progressive.<sup>1</sup>

In July 1963, Chhay married the cousin of the "reactionary capitalist" Nguy Kan, a Chinese trader from Posat who did business with Prince Sirik Matak. The uncle's family left Cambodia for Hong Kong when Sihanouk nationalized the banking and export-import sectors of the economy in November 1963.<sup>2</sup> Through his wife's relatives and colleagues at the Bank, Chhay met Van Teup Sovan, an anti-Sihanouk veteran of the Issarak armed struggle in Batdambang with connections to both Siv Heng and Kav Tâk who in the early 1960s was a currency-trader and general wheeler-dealer and also had connections both to Hou Youn and Uch Vaen through his membership in both the Kampucheabot and Chamraoen Vicchea Associations.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, as a student at the Faculty of Law, Chhay helped set up, with advice from Uch Vaen, the University Students' Association that would later be expanded into AGEK.

---

<sup>1</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.2-4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, pp.1-2; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.1; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.1-3; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March, 1977, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, p.6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, p.4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, p.2; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.2; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.5-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.4-5.

Upon graduation in April 1963, Chhay got work at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the help of Pok Deuhkomar and Sarin Chhak. However, both he and Deuhkomar resigned from the Ministry at the end of the year, disgusted at corruption that they attributed to Huot Sambat. While continuing to write for *La Dépeche*, Chhay and Deuhkomar moved to the Inadana Jati (National Credit) Bank, which Sihanouk had set up in December 1963 following the nationalization proclamation that had prompted the flight of Chhay's in-laws. Uch Vaen, who had been appointed the Bank's Deputy Director General under Chav Sav, encouraged this move, as did Van Teup Sovan, who stressed that the pay was better, and Chhay and Deuhkomar were both appointed department heads. In this period, he was interested in Communism, but still had no formal relation to the Party, and followed his own ideas about opposing the Sihanouk regime. These were rooted in his hatred of "feudal privilege," but also reflected the influence of Sihanouk's "capitalist" critics. As a matter of principle, he refused to join the Sangkum Reastre Niyum, but his newspaper articles concentrated on opposing US aid and interference in Cambodia, and, according to his "confessions," his immersion in the elite and bourgeois milieux of Descartes, the Foreign Ministry and the Bank "separated him from the masses and working people." He supposedly began to "overestimate" himself and deeply absorbed French, "feudal and bourgeois views."<sup>4</sup>

According to Chhay's "confessions," during early 1964, he attended a series of secret meetings at which the idea of creating a General Association of University Students (AGEK) was discussed, among others, with Hou Youn, Hu Nim, Uch Vaen (then Chairman of the Chamraoen Vicchea Association) and Van Teup Sovan, with the latter two being the most enthusiastic. Van Teup Sovan purportedly immediately saw the Association as a possible basis for an eventual overthrow of the Sihanouk regime, a prospect that excited Chhay. Hu Nim purportedly hoped the Association could eventually be transformed into an anti-imperialist political party under his leadership. Then, around mid-year, at an event organized by Hou Youn at the Kampuchebot Lycée, Chhay was introduced to Koy Thuon by Chhun Sok Nguon and Tuon Sok Phälla, who were then students at the Faculty of Engineering and identified Thuon as their former teacher in Kampung Cham. This was supposedly followed by a meeting at which Thuon, Hu Nim, Hou Youn, Tiv Ol, Van Teup Sovan and Chhay discussed the political mobilization of the masses in Phnom Penh, including through the creation of AGEK. The idea was then promoted in articles by Tuon Sok Phälla and Van Piny that were published in *Le Dépeche*. The Association was formed in December 1964 with Chhay as Chairman, Van Piny (representing the Royal Administration School) as First Vice Chairman, Chhun Sok Nguon (representing the Engineering Faculty) as Second Vice Chairman, Tuon Sok Phälla (also representing the Engineering Faculty) as Secretary-General, Kâng Sarân as First Deputy Secretary-General, Mai Sakhân (representing the Royal Administration School) as Second Deputy Secretary-General and In Sopheap as Treasurer. Publicly, AGEK was portrayed as a welfare organization for students, and sought and received financial contributions not only from such leftist luminaries as Hou Youn, Hu Nim, Chav Seng and Uch Vaen, but even from Prince Sihanouk himself, as well as from Koy Thuon. Initially, the emphasis was on obtaining the largest possible student membership, not only its political indoctrination. In early 1965, Chhay was very active visiting every

---

<sup>4</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.4-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, p.3; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.5; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.3-5. These latter "confessions" mention that he was introduced to Van Teup Sovan by his "immediate colleague" at the Bank was Meuan *alias* Reut, who was a senior cadre of the DK Ministry of Commerce. According to Chav Sav, the political orientation of himself and Phok Chhay at this time was "democratic" and "anti-imperialist," but not "Communist". Author's interview, Phnom Penh, 13 December 1974.

university faculty to sign members up. Its early membership of 200 to 300 hundred grew by leaps and bounds as they did.<sup>5</sup>

As Chhay's "confessions" put it, the 1964 decision to establish AGEK took place in the midst of a growing student movement, and the original idea came only in part from those whom he would later learn were Communists, like Uch Vaen. Its initial membership comprised students from the Faculties of Law and Medicine, but soon incorporated students from Pedagogy and the Khmer-Soviet Technical Institute. It was an "open Association" most of whose members came from well-to-do families. However, more radical students, Communist and non-Communists, particularly from Chamraoen Vicchea, Kampucheabot and Ta Khmav Lycées, used it as a cover for progressive political activities. From what Chhay could see, the key figure in this regard was Kae Keum Huot, who was influenced by Tiv Ol.<sup>6</sup>

According to Chhay's "confessions," he had not met Tiv Ol before 1964, but was sought out by him on the recommendation of Hou Youn. Chhay puts Ol in the centre of an interlocking set of associations in which he was a more or less active participant: the Chamraoen Vicchea Association, the Primary School Teachers' Association, the Professors' Association, The Educational Staff Association, the Lycée Students' Association, the Kampucheabot Association, the Lycée Ta Khmav Association, AGEK, The Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association and, finally, the Organization of Mixed Associations. In Chhay's "confessions," all of this is portrayed as contributing to the expansion during the mid-1960s of a non-Party, anti-Sihanouk "third force" mass base among intellectuals in Phnom Penh, with Hou Youn as the doyen, Hu Nim as an acolyte and professors like Kae Keum Huot, Sang Rin and Thuch Rin as the main activists and admirers of Tiv Ol.<sup>7</sup> The existence of this force, according to the "confessions," created "contention and contestation" within the revolutionary ranks that weakened the revolution by undermining the Party's leadership of it, including by pursuit of an openly confrontational stance vis-à-vis Sihanouk. It eventually expanded to include not only the above-mentioned associations, but also those of the staff of various government ministries, the Journalists' Association, a Monks' Association, an Artists' Association and a Coolies' Association, among others. To the extent that it was later brought under CPK leadership, it supposedly still constituted an "undercover" CIA force that threatened to overthrow by a coup d'état from within.<sup>8</sup>

At one point, Chhay "confesses" that he hoped AGEK could form at least part of the basis for an opposition political party.<sup>9</sup> This is part of a larger portrayal of his activities and those of Hou Youn, Hu Nim, Tiv Ok, Uch Vaen, Pok Deuhkomar, Tauch Pheuan and Kae Keum Huot as aiming to establish an anti-Sihanouk "third force" beyond the control of the Party, which he ultimately "confesses" was pursuant to a CIA plot. This force would supposedly unite progressive intellectuals with some former Pracheachun Group members who remained in Phnom Penh to seize leadership of the revolution from the Party. AGEK, the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association and the Organization of Mixed Associations were all, in this presentation, a threat to the revolution because they were an alternative to the Party's leadership. The supposed fact that some of the non-Party activists involved in these

---

<sup>5</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, pp.3-5; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, pp.1-2; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.6-7,10; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.7-8.

<sup>6</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.6-7.

<sup>7</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Tiv Ol's Traitorous Activities," 13 April 1977, pp.1-5.

<sup>8</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 9 April 1977, pp.2,5.

<sup>9</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.1.

associations were planning their own armed struggle is put forward as further evidence of the danger to the revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Chhay first learned of the existence of the KWP in 1965, but remained ignorant of its "strategic and tactical line," as were Hu Nim and Pok Deuhkomar. In the Party's eyes, they were, like him, merely progressive intellectuals among "the masses," and Van Teup Sovan was even further removed from the Party, despite his advocacy of preparations for armed struggle. However, Chhay became aware that Uch Vaen was a KWP member and told Vaen he was interested in joining. Vaen pretended not to know what he was talking about and otherwise deflected these requests, although he did occasionally show Chhay the samizdat Party publication, "Working People" (*Pracheapulakâr*). Chhay later realized his requests were rejected because his politics were so different from those of the KWP, sometimes "right" and sometimes "left" of the Party line.<sup>11</sup>

According to Chhay's "confessions," the idea of establishing a "Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association" was also discussed at secret meetings in late 1964 chaired by Hou Youn, at which it was decided that Hu Nim should play the key role in an organization that was then chaired by the non-progressive Leng Ngaet. The progressives asserted their influence during elections for the Associations' Steering Committee in early 1965, which saw Chhay enter it as First Deputy Secretary-General under Hu Nim. Sou Naem became Second Vice-Chairman and Van Teup Sovan a member of the Committee. In a further election in February 1966, Chhay became Secretary-General.<sup>12</sup>

Chhay joined the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association as a way of meeting other "progressive intellectuals" and because he was attracted by the radicalism of the Cultural Revolution, something which he later regretted as demonstrating his lack of independence/mastery. He was most pleased to have an opportunity to become further acquainted with Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn and Hu Nim, whom he saw as "model revolutionaries." This was something he again would later "confess" to regretting as demonstrating a woeful ignorance of the realities of the KWP.<sup>13</sup>

Also problematic in KWP eyes were the results of the tour of China that Chav Seng arranged for Chhay in August 1965. He returned enthusiastic about his own positive interpretation of what he had seen there, which he proceeded to convey to in lectures to the growing membership of AGEK.<sup>14</sup>

According to Chhay's "confessions," the landing of large-scale US forces in Viet Nam in early 1965 provoked a crisis atmosphere in Phnom Penh, and at a March meeting with Hu Nim, Tiv Ol, Van Teup Sovan, it was concluded that Cambodia could not avoid being engulfed in war itself. Therefore, they should all make preparations for fleeing into the jungle to oppose any US invasion and pursue the struggle against Sihanouk when that happened. Together with Van Teup Sovan, Chhay began thinking about which students in AGEK might be prepared to follow this path. They explored possible locations for their maquis during a trip to Batdambang during Khmer new year in April 1965. Later, Chhay

<sup>10</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 7 April 1977, pp.1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.7-8; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.10-11.

<sup>12</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, p.13. The Association Chairman was still Leng Ngaet, with Kae Nai as First Vice-Chairman.

<sup>13</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.8-9.

<sup>14</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, p.11.

"confesses," he reported all this to Uch Vaen, under whom he continued to work at Inadana Jati.<sup>15</sup>

Chhay "confesses" that in June 1965, he met at Lycée Kampuchéabot with Hou Youn, Hu Nim, Mey Man, Tiv Ol, Kae Keum Huot and Van Teup Sovan, among others, to establish a clandestine Mixed Committee of Association Organizations, with Youn as Chairman and Nim as Vice-Chairman, Mey Man as Secretary General, Tiv Ol as Deputy Secretary General and Van Teup Sovan as an "advisor". Through them and others, it incorporated AGEK, the Chamraoen Vicchea and Kampuchéabot Associations, the Teachers' Association, the Land Surveyors' Association, the Railway Workers' Association and representatives of Lycée Ta Khmav. In a speech to the gathering, Hou Youn declared that the Committee's purpose was to unite the growing numbers of people enrolled in mass organizations politically under a secret leadership that would direct their mobilization.<sup>16</sup>

### The Crises of the Late 1960s

Phok Chhay first became acquainted with Thuch Rin through AGEK, when Rin was active at Lycée Ta Khmav with Sang Rin and Kae Keum Huot as part of a network that Chhay's "confessions" characterize as "CIA," and also with Tiv Ol in the Association of Educational Staff. He heard that Thuch Rin was a native of Kampung Cham who had studied there with Tuon Sok Phâlla and Chhun Sok Nguon, and whose father was a well-to-do lawyer. Siblings had purportedly studied in the US.

As of 1965-1966, Thuch Rin was both a professor at Ta Khmav and a student at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. It was in the latter capacity that he was selected, in early 1966, as a delegate to represent students of this Faculty in AGEK, of which Phok Chhay was Chairman. This was at a time when AGEK had a two-tiered leadership: a Central Committee of 18 to 20 members made up of two representatives from each tertiary faculty; and an Executive Committee of eleven to 12 members selected by the Central Committee.

Thuch Rin was a member of the Central but not of the Executive Committee. His friends from Kampung Cham Tuon Sok Phâlla and Chhun Sok Nguon put him forward for Executive Committee membership, hoping that he would help them with publication of the AGEK magazine, but Thuch Rin said he was already too busy with his activities in the Association of Educational Professionals and the Ta Khmav Students' Association. However, he did agree to help with the magazine, and in any case Thuch Rin was always there whenever there was something to do.<sup>17</sup>

Chhay knew the engineer Seang Pao Sae as a Vice-Chairman of the Land Surveyors' Association, which was one of the constituent parts of Hou Youn's Mixed Association Committee.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, pp.5-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.8-9; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.8-9.

<sup>16</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, p.6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.9-10. In an interview in Phnom Penh on [check date], Mey Man confirmed that those named were involved in attempting to launch such an organization, the purpose of which was to "end dictatorship" in Cambodia and "oppose US aggression" in Indochina.

<sup>17</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Entanglements with Thuch Rin," 12 April 1977, pp.1-2.

<sup>18</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.1.

In January 1966, according to his "confessions," Chhay presided over a reelection of the AGEK leadership. Although Chhay wanted to resign because he was no longer a student, Hou Youn insisted that he stay as head of AGEK, arguing that his leadership was needed to ensure the transformation of AGEK into a more political organization. Chhay was duly voted in, with Chhun Sok Nguon as First Vice-Chairman (replacing Van Piny, who had resigned), Mav Run as Second Vice-Chairman, Tuon Sok Phâlla as Secretary-General, Mai Sakhân as Deputy Secretary-General, Pok Kanael as Treasurer and In Sopheap and Chhay's brother, the engineering student Phok Ki, as accountants. By this time, AGEK membership had reached 2,000, but was split between a militant tendency dedicated to the overthrow of Sihanouk and those who wanted to limit the Association to legal and educational activities only. The militant tendency was concentrated among students from Chamraoen Vicchea, Kampuchebot and Lycée Ta Khmav, while the "legalists" were based at the Khmer-Soviet Technical Institute. Because he continued to believe that one day AGEK would form a recruiting base for a radical armed struggle against feudalism and imperialism, Chhay put himself on the side of the first tendency, in which Chhun Sok Nguon, Tuon Sok Phâlla, Mav Run and Mai Sakhân were also prominent. To create venues for promoting their views, Chhay formulated an AGEK programme of holding public events and student outings, as well as publishing a magazine. He also suggested that AGEK's relations with other associations could be strengthened by inviting their members to join its outings. The first of these was held at the resort of Kirirom in March 1966, and during it Chhay lectured those present on "the role of youth in society and in the struggle for social development." Meanwhile, Chhay and Van Teup Sovan purportedly continued to explore Batdambang's possibilities as a base for a future armed struggle. Chhay then sounded out Chhun Sok Nguon, Tuon Sok Phâlla, Mav Run and Mai Sakhân about whether they were willing to participate in such a struggle, and they not only replied positively, but suggested others who might also agree to fight. They expressed reservations, however, about Pok Kanael, In Sopheap and Phok Ki, whom they said were more interested in having a good time than serious political activity.<sup>19</sup>

In May 1966, Chhay was also appointed, through arrangements made by Chav Seng, Chairman and Director General of SONAPRIM, a state import company with some 400 employees. However, he resigned his post three months later amidst growing political tension in Phnom Penh.<sup>20</sup>

Another favour passed on by Chav Seng was Chhay's opportunity to join a delegation that visited Cuba in July 1966. According to Chhay's "confessions," he came back with works by Che Guevara on guerilla warfare and other Cuban revolutionary materials that considered applicable to preparations for an armed struggle in Cambodia, which received a positive response from AGEK leaders Chhun Sok Nguon, Tuon Sok Phâlla, Mav Run and Mai Sakhân.<sup>21</sup> By this time Chhay was convinced that Sihanouk would not be able to prevent a coup by Lon Nol, and that when that happened, preparations would have to be in place for a rurally-based armed opposition.<sup>22</sup>

In mid-1966, Chhay "confesses," the Committee of the Organization of Mixed Associations was expanded with the addition of representatives of state and private factory workers. This was purportedly effected during a meeting at Lycée Kampuchebot over which

<sup>19</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, pp.7-8; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.11-13; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.10-11.

<sup>20</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.15-16.

<sup>21</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, p.16; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 20 March 1977, p.21; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.12.

<sup>22</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 9 April 1977, p.5.

Hou You presided. Those present supposedly agreed to a request from Hu Nim for assistance in putting on an exhibition of Chinese artefacts on behalf of the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association. However, the key role in its activities was played by a bloc centred around AGEK and the Associations of Chamraoen Vicchea, Kampucheabot and Lycée Ta Khmav. AGEK began publishing a magazine, which Chhay financed.<sup>23</sup>

From August 1966, Chhay was under constant police surveillance, but he nevertheless participated in another AGEK outing that month along with Chhun Sok Nguon, Tuon Sok Phâlla and Mai Sakhân. Police informers reported to the Prince that those present had discussed "the heroism of youth in the struggle" against him, and in mid-September he declared that AGEK should be abolished.<sup>24</sup> In this period, according to his "confessions," Chhay fell out with Chhun Sok Nguon and Tuon Sok Phâlla because they insisted, against his advice, on continuing to confront the Sihanouk regime through leafletting campaigns. They angrily accused him of being afraid of the Prince.<sup>25</sup> However, Chhay's "confessions" insist, after the September 1966 elections changed the composition of the national assembly for the worse and Lon Nol assumed the prime ministership in October, he became more convinced than ever that Cambodia was entering a political crisis period which would only be resolved by an armed struggle in which he would participate on the side of the revolution. He spent much of his time in further reading on guerilla warfare.<sup>26</sup>

During 1967, the political situation in Phnom Penh became increasingly tense.<sup>27</sup> Early in the year, the Khmer-Chinese Friendship Association became a focal point for confrontation with Sihanouk when it defied his wishes and went ahead with exhibition of Chinese antiquities, which the Mixed Committee wanted to use as an occasion for a performance by an art troupe formed by Tiv Ol and Kae Keum Huot. Chhay's "confessions" portray Ol as recklessly provoking Sihanouk through the content of its performance, which Chhay also condemns as including acts slavishly copied from Chinese models. In any case, the confrontation came to a head when Sihanouk denounced the exhibitors for having displayed a portrait of Mao Zedong more prominently than his, and Association Chairman Leng Ngaet blamed Hu Nim for the faux pas. After Ngaet and Sou Naem resigned, Nim became the Association's acting chairman, with Chhay as acting Secretary-General. Then, Sihanouk suddenly announced that Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn, who was a member of the Friendship Association Committee, had "disappeared." Chhay met immediately with Hu Nim, who told him not to worry and said that he was taking over as Chairman of the Organization of Mixed Associations in Hou Youn's place. However, from May onward, Chhay's home was virtually surrounded by police, and he was largely cut off from contact with anyone except at the Inadana Jati Bank, where he continued to work. Then on 14 September, Sihanouk announced that AGEK was "closed", and on 30 September he shut the Friendship Association. Hu Nim called for a final act of defiance against the latter order by inviting Chhay and other members to a ceremony marking the end of the Association's activities. Chhay attended this event, at which stewards from Chamraoen Vicchea kept more than 50 policeman at bay while Hu Nim delivered a speech and Tiv Ol's and Kae Keum Huot's art troupes gave last performances. Sihanouk reacted the next day with vociferous denouncements of Hu Nim and other participants, and four days later, Hu Nim "disappeared." Six days after that, Chhay was arrested.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, pp.8-9; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 24 March 1977, pp.16-18.

<sup>24</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.16-17.

<sup>25</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 20 March 1977, p.25.

<sup>26</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 24 March 1977, p.16.

<sup>27</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 30 March 1977, p.9.

<sup>28</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 24 March 1977, pp.18-21; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Tiv Ol's Traitorous Activities," 13 April 1977, p.5; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.12-13.

As Sihanouk's repression intensified, Chhay had asked Uch Vaen to help get him to the countryside, but got no joy. After his arrest, Van Teup Sovan attempted to enlist the aid of Sirik Matak in getting him released. However, after seven months in police and military jails, Chhay was tried and sentenced to death along with Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn and Hu Nim, who were condemned in absentia. After a stay on death row, Sihanouk commuted his sentence to life in April 1968, and he was placed in isolation. Eventually, a trustie brought him messages from the Pracheachun Group prisoner Non Suon, whom he had never met, but he was then moved to prevent continuation of this contact. However, after a while, his guards allowed him an occasional brief conversation with Suon, and finally he was authorized to see his wife from time to time. Nevertheless, he was unaware that his wife had intervened with Sihanouk's mother to have him released with the help of Sirik Matak. Sihanouk's decision to do so was announced in December 1969, and he left prison in February 1970, although he remained under close police surveillance. He no longer had even indirect contact with the Party, because - as he only learned after his release - all those with whom he was acquainted had already left for the countryside.<sup>29</sup> Just before the coup of 18 March 1970, he "confesses", his wife's "reactionary capitalist" relatives invited him to work for their newly reestablished business, and he agreed.<sup>30</sup>

### The Five-Year War

Immediately after the coup, Chhay was approached by these relatives, this time to ask whether he was prepared to make a public denunciation of Sihanouk and work with the main author of the Prince's overthrow, Sirik Matak. According to Chhay's "confessions," he turned this offer down because he preferred to join the Communist-led "people's war," but he hesitated to completely cut his links with Phnom Penh and other political alternatives. However, he was also approached by Pheuan's nephew Mai Sakhân, another ex-AGEK prisoner, who declared he was going to join other former members in the maquis and said that if Chhay wanted to do the same, he should contact Tauch Pheuan.<sup>31</sup>

It was only after the coup that Chhay for the first time met Tauch Pheuan, who was then Director-General of SONATRAC, but was working covertly to supply the "liberated zones" with items such as typewriters and watches. During a series of discussions between April and July 1970 meeting, Pheuan told him that if he wanted to go into the liberated zones, it would be good if he would go with a large cash contribution for the Organization. He emptied his personal savings from his time at Inadana and SONEXPRIM to do so, giving the money to Pheuan. In late July 1970 he arrived in the Southwest Zone, staying first at the old base area of Srae Andaung, and then at the Zone Office at Phnum Pih, where he arrived in September and stayed until the Office was moved to Amleang in December. He was sent to the Southwest Zone Military Office in early 1971, at a time when it was still dominated by Cambodian "regroupees" who had arrived from north Viet Nam. These included the younger brother of then Southwest Zone Deputy Secretary Chong. According to Chhay's "confessions," he did not get along with these regroupees because he did not approve of their seeming admiration for all things Vietnamese. They were also "in contradiction with" Zone Secretary Mok, and they accused him of being Mok's "spy." Life improved for Chhay when Zone Deputy Secretary Chong arrived and set up camp nearby, because Chong was solicitous of him. However, when Chong badmouthed Mok, Chhay opted to inform Mok of this. A

<sup>29</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.10-11; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.2; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, p.17; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 24 March 1977, pp.22-27; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.13-17.

<sup>30</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.17.

<sup>31</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.18-19.



startled Mok then decided, in mid-1971, to take Chhay with him to the southern half of the Southwest Zone. Chhay lived at Mok's own office and accompanied Mok to various Southwest Zone battlefields, speaking at rallies in pagodas and elsewhere. From 1972 to the end of 1973 he spent much time on the front lines, reporting military developments to the Organization and doing propaganda work on its behalf.<sup>32</sup>

In late 1970, Chong was in charge, along with the former Kampuchea professor and Hou Youn protégé Keum Yean *alias* Yin, of the Southwest Zone Economy Office. Under its auspices they had organized a "mixed association" comprised mostly of ethnic Chinese traders who were authorized to move and sell goods in the liberated zones and whose head was allowed to travel back and forth to Phnom Penh to procure needed items. Chhay struck up an acquaintance with this person, Kim Hieng, from whom he made the occasional purchase and who brought him news of events in Phnom Penh. Chhay continued to have contact with both Keum Yean and Kim Hieng into 1971, and they arranged to bring his wife out of Phnom Penh to the Southwest. According to his "confessions," this entailed secret contacts between Chhay and his wife's traitorous relatives.<sup>33</sup>

Chhay would later learn that the regroupees he had met at the Southwest Zone military office had all been "smashed" by the Organization.<sup>34</sup> More generally, by 1974, "the Khmer from Hanoi" had been "completely dispersed."<sup>35</sup>

After spending some time with the Party's former Phnom Penh courier Sae, by late 1970, Phok Chhay was with Thuch Rin (*alias* Krin), who was then the Chairman of the Southwest Zone Culture Office, together with Chhun Sok Nguon and other old society teachers. Tauch Pheuan also arrived. Meanwhile, Chhay learned from Thuch Rin that Sang Rin had been designated Secretary of Southwest Zone Sector 33, whereas Kae Keum Huot was Secretary of a district in Posat province that was attached to the Southwest. Thuch Rin explained that in 1970 he had been the political commissar of a Zone battalion, but, contrary to his wishes, the Zone had transferred him to the Culture Office. His advice to Chhay was to get into the Party, and in March 1971, he proposed to the Zone that Chhay be accepted as a Party member, but the Zone rejected this. However, in May 1971, after Chhay began working as Mok's personal propagandist, the Zone Secretary authorized his entry into the Party. Thuch Rin also succeeded in enrolling other ex-AGEK activists in the Party, including Chhun Sok Nguon *alias* Saom and Mai Sakhân *alias* Sâm.<sup>36</sup>

Chhay also became reacquainted with Seang Pao-Sae, who as Chairman of the Special Zone Economy Office was responsible for working with traders coming from Phnom Penh.<sup>37</sup>

In 1972, an "Intellectuals' Conference" was convened in the Southwest. Chhay "confesses" this was an opportunity for a secret meeting with Hou Youn and Seang Pao Sae.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.11-13; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, pp.3-4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 18 March 1977, pp.20-21; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 20 March 1977, pp.33-35; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, pp.1-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.20.

<sup>34</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.5. By context it appears that Chhay heard this in 1974 or 1975.

<sup>35</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 7 April 1977, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Entanglements with Thuch Rin," 12 April 1977, pp.2-3; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 20 March 1977, p.35; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, p.1.

<sup>37</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.2.

In early 1972, Thuch Rin and Phok Chhay accompanied Hou Youn on a one-month propaganda tour of the Southwest Zone, setting up rallies attended by thousands of local residents at which Youn called on ordinary people and monks to support of the revolution. Although these events were immensely popular and Youn received a hero's welcome everywhere he went, almost all his speeches and declarations were written by his chaperones. Once, however, in Kah Kong, he insisted on giving a speech that he had written himself promising that the revolution would deliver equality to both ethnic Khmer and ethnic Thai there. Chhay then accompanied Youn on to the Northwest Zone, finally returning to the Southwest in April, where he had the opportunity to meet Keum Yean. Before Hou Youn left the Southwest, according to Chhay's "confessions," he surreptitiously revealed his belief that the CPK comprised two separate networks, one of which was Pracheachun and the other Communist.<sup>39</sup>

By April 1972, Ta Mok no longer allowed the Southwest Zone Economy Chairman Keum Yean to procure supplies in Phnom Penh via Kim Hieng.<sup>40</sup>

In April 1972, Chhay returned to do frontline propaganda work in the northern part of the Southwest, and he continued such work in the southern half of the Zone from March 1973. He spent most of the rest of 1973 there, while Thuch Rin (*alias* Krin) did propaganda work in Sectors 32 and 33, meeting often with Sector 32 Secretary Sang Rin (*alias* On). Chhay saw Thuch Rin occasionally in this period, but never met him again. In November 1973, Chhay went back north and discovered that Ta Mok had ordered the closure of markets there, removed Keum Yean from all posts and arrested Kim Hieng and all his trading links. They had been accused of having given information to the enemy that had resulted in B52 bombing strikes in April on the old Southwest Zone headquarters in Amleang. This news struck fear in Chhay that he might come under Ta Mok's suspicion because of his previous dealings with the accused.<sup>41</sup> According to Chhay's "confessions," he also now found the Southwest Zone atmosphere intolerably restrictive, and decided to try to get transferred to the Special Zone in order to resume his grassroots activism in Sector 25, where Non Suon was Secretary and happy to have him take charge of propaganda and economic matters so that Suon could concentrate on military affairs.<sup>42</sup>

Instead, in early 1974, Chhay was summoned by the Organization to work with it, and from April, he was with Pol. Pol took personal responsibility for Chhay's further ideological refashioning. He found himself in situation where comings and goings were strictly regulated, and he himself was not allowed to go anywhere. However, Chhay would later "confess," his attachment to "private property" remained deep.<sup>43</sup>

Meanwhile, Chhay had his only, and brief, meeting with Hu Nim during the entire five-year war.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>38</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Entanglements with Thuch Rin," 12 April 1977, pp.3-4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, pp.6-8; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, pp.21-22.

<sup>40</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, p.8.

<sup>41</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Entanglements with Thuch Rin," 12 April 1977, p.4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, pp.8-10.

<sup>42</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.23.

<sup>43</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.13-14; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.5.

<sup>44</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.4.

According to Chhay's "confessions," this occurred during a September 1974 "life-style session" at which he also met Tauch Pheuan and Hou Youn. However, he found the atmosphere on this occasion "diametrically different" from their previous much happier encounters. At first, all three simply avoided him. Eventually, however, he managed to extract from Tauch Pheuan the information that the Organization was going to denounce Hou Youn for plotting against the CPK line, and Pheuan advised him to pretend he did not know Hou Youn or anything about any such matters. Hu Nim then supposedly told Chhay that given the circumstances, he had concluded he had no choice but to switch his loyalties from Hou Youn to the Party. He also advised Chhay just to keep his mouth shut.<sup>45</sup>

After this CPK study session in 1974, Chhay recognized fully that in CPK eyes, his previous admiration for Khieu Samphan, Hou Youn and Hu Nim was contrary to the Party's line against "individualism." At the same time, his own attacks on fellow intellectuals were, he was given to understand, personal in a way that was also contrary to the Party line. He was admonished by "the Brothers" for speaking his mind, and instructed by them to follow their practice of "saying little while giving things lots of thought."<sup>46</sup>

#### 1975-1977: With the Organization in Phnom Penh

From April until August 1975, Chhay worked at Pochentong airport, where he clashed with the leading military cadre there, Sou Met, whom, his "confessions" say, he did not "respect." He was subjected to "re-education and rectification" by the Organization to get him not to "adversely affect solidarity" with Met.<sup>47</sup>

From August 1975 until January 1977, Chhay "lived with the Standing Committee," and was again personally "re-educated and indoctrinated by the Brothers" there, above all "Brother Pol." Once again, he found himself in a "constricted context," from which contact with the outside world was virtually impossible because the Organization "did not allow any holes or gaps." However, he would later "confess," he remained both "happy-go-lucky" and lacking in "revolutionary courtesy." This meant that he "talked a lot and had a lot of views" to express during meetings. Moreover, at meetings of his Party branch and at the two major Party study sessions he was allowed to attend (in November 1975 and November 1976), he conducted "criticism and refashioning" of his superiors "without the least bit of hesitation," thus carrying out what he "confessed" were *ad hominum* attacks on them that "served the American imperialist and CIA enemy." Still, "Brother" relied on him to complete the writing of the CPK Four-Year Plan by August 1976, but he disappointed Brother when he indiscretely delivered the final product to a meeting about which he was not supposed to know.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile, according to Chhay's "confessions," he had a surreptitiously conversation with Hu Nim during the November 1975 Party School, at which he asked Nim what had happened to Hou Youn. Nim replied that Youn had been "removed from his post."<sup>49</sup> Nim explained that this had happened because "in the end, Hou Youn had openly opposed the setting up of cooperatives, measures to close markets and the evacuation of people." These

---

<sup>45</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.24.

<sup>46</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, p.10.

<sup>47</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, p.14; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.5.

<sup>48</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.15-16; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.6.

<sup>49</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.5.

views, Nim said, were shared by others, but only Hou Youn had dared to voice them. Nim warned Chhay to be careful and try to survive by working hard at his assigned tasks.<sup>50</sup>

When he arrived at the Organization's Office, Chhay found that living and eating there was collectivized. Indeed, all the "cadre working in Phnom Penh had to come eat in the Office." At Chhay's table were Koy Thuon, Thuon's brother-in-law Yaem and Deuan.<sup>51</sup>

On the work front, the assignment of Chhay and Yaem was to take notes on Standing Committee meetings, with Chhay responsible for discussions related to the economy, trade and industry and Yaem responsible for discussions about the grassroots. However, as a Central Committee members, Deuan himself took notes a "major matters and military and security tasks."<sup>52</sup> Deuan normally attended all Standing Committee meetings and was responsible for drawing up their "work programmes" and "agendas." Chhay notes that Standing Committee meetings usually took place at night, with no more than five or six persons present inside a double cordon of guards: an inner cordon 200 meters from the meeting place, and an outer cordon 500 meters beyond that.<sup>53</sup>

Chhay's tasking placed him in the "Political Department" of the Organization's Office, which Deuan chaired. Chhay describes it as a "constricted" place to work, with very few staff. Moreover, he explains, "the Organization's Office was divided into many departments, each of which was separate from the other and had no contact with the other, as was the case, for example, with the Political, Economic and Organizational Department, the Security Department, the Motor Pool Department and the Supply Department, etc."<sup>54</sup>

Formally speaking, Koy Thuon, although a "Central Committee cadre," was "not inside the Office structure," but merely eat collectively with other leading cadre there. However, according to Chhay's "confessions," Thuon was - via Deuan - "the major leader" of treason within the Office and the person who linked treason there with that in other ministries and offices.<sup>55</sup>

Chhay "confesses" that Koy Thuon supplied him and Yaem with various items for personal use, and that in December 1975, Thuon came to see him and told him about his contacts with other intellectuals, including Hu Nim, Tiv Ol and Tauch Pheuan. Then, in January 1976, Thuon supposedly took Chhay and Deuan for a ride when "the Standing Committee" was absent from the Office, contrary to Organizational discipline.<sup>56</sup>

After Yaem was transferred to Foreign Affairs in February 1976, Chhay took over his responsibilities for taking notes on developments in the grassroots. He passed on information about important developments to Deuan, who quietly told him in March that Koy Thuon was in trouble. Explaining that the Organization no longer trusted Thuon and was going to strip him of his post, Deuan advised Chhay to watch his step and act as if he had never known

---

<sup>50</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.25.

<sup>51</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, p.1; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Traitorous Links with Whom I Had Contact in the Organization's Office," 6 April 1977, p.2.

<sup>53</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Responses of Phok Chhay-Tauch: Activities from the War Period Through the Present," 10 April 1977, p.2.

<sup>54</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Traitorous Links with Whom I Had Contact in the Organization's Office," 6 April 1977, p.1.

<sup>55</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Traitorous Links with Whom I Had Contact in the Organization's Office," 6 April 1977, p.1.

<sup>56</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, p.2.

Thuon. In April, Deuan surreptitiously informed Chhay that Thuon had indeed been demissioned.<sup>57</sup>

Sometime after February 1976, the Organization's Offices were relocated and Chhay was given the additional assignment of keeping track of international news and make personal reports to Pol. He was cut off from official relations with other Office cadre, but he continued to supply Deuan with information. He was nevertheless removed from much of the action during the months of March and April 1976, when "the Standing Committee met very frequently to set up the Assembly and the new Government" and had important secret meetings. However, from May 1976 on, Chhay went frequently to accompany the Standing Committee on tours of the countryside, while again making unauthorized reports to Deuan until the latter was appointed Thuon's replacement at the Commerce Ministry in July. Thereafter, the Organization's Office was put under the personal charge of Nuon and Khieu Samphan. However, according to Chhay's "confessions," one of Samphan's couriers was disloyal and was used by him and Deuan to pass information back and forth.<sup>58</sup> Another source of information for Deuan was the former Khmer-Soviet Technical Institute student Mav Khaem Nguon *alias* Phum, who around this time was given new duties in the Organization's office as its "special courier" and as its "Chairman for the Maintenance of Order and Security." Chhay identifies him as a traitorous link belong to Deuan, to whom he answered on political matters in his other capacity as Vice Chairman of the Party School, while answering to Chheum Sâm-aok *alias* Pâng on administrative and organizational matters.<sup>59</sup>

In this period, Chhay met Ya for the first time, when the latter visited Phnom Penh, but they discussed nothing.<sup>60</sup>

Then, in August 1976, the Organization's Office was revamped. The previous collectivity was abolished. Those Brothers who were in charge of Ministries went to live with them, while others spent an increasing amount of time in the countryside. Chhay was cut off from other departments of the Office and reassigned to assist Khieu Samphan in the review and translation of "foreign economic documents." Documents he had previously collected were taken away from him. Deuan managed to tell him to be "more careful" and not to leave his place of work. From this point on, Chhay lived a solitary existence, mostly alone in his room, only going out once every one or two months. The seal he had previously applied to certify minutes he recorded was taken away from him, and he felt himself to be under suspicion. He occasionally gathered materials from the Organization's library to read.<sup>61</sup>

Finally, in November 1976, Chhay was allowed to attend a Party School. According to his "confessions," this gave him an opportunity to meet Hu Nim, who told Chhay he, too, had been told by Deuan to be careful and was now living in fear. A clearly depressed Nim purportedly said, "I always have this feeling that somebody is coming to surround my ministry and arrest me," adding that if the Organization wanted to act against him, he would be powerless to defend himself because no one in the ministry was armed. His only option

<sup>57</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, pp.2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, pp.3-4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 7 April 1977, p.7.

<sup>59</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, p.5; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Traitorous Links with Whom I Had Contact in the Organization's Office," 6 April 1977, pp.3-4; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 7 April 1977, p.8.

<sup>60</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report the to Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.25.

<sup>61</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, pp.5-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, p.6.

was to continue trying his best to do his job. After the School, Chhay did have the occasion to see Deuan, who merely told him to try and do his work as if things were normal.<sup>62</sup>

In February 1977, Chhay was transferred out of the Organization's office to a post where he was supposed to write articles for the newspaper *Patevoat* and teach its "brother and sister" staff the rudiments of journalism. However, he was also supposed to learn from these grassroots elements how to be a better Communist, because they were superior to him "politically, ideologically and organizationally."<sup>63</sup>

### In S21

On 15 March 1977, Chhay addressed a report to "the Party Organization, the [Special Branch] Ministry and the Brothers." He told them he was trembling so much in fear that he could barely hold the pen to write. He compared himself to a "tiny pebble that had fallen into an infinitely deep and dark whirlpool, with no bottom or shoreline visible." His last hope was that the Party might allow him to live. Recalling that the "Party Organization" was already fully aware of his background, weakpoints and shortcomings, he asked for its "final forgiveness." He described himself as "ignorant and naïve," expressed his gratitude for the earlier kindness of "the Brothers" in allowing him to live with them, and his great regret that his "non-revolutionary stance" had separated him from "the great movement for socialism."<sup>64</sup>

In this early document, Chhay denied allegations put to him by Duch that he had secretly called in airstrikes on the Southwest Zone or was somehow responsible for Khmer Republic military successes.<sup>65</sup>

Addressing himself to the Party Organization, he swore he had never thought in terms of betraying the revolution or serving the US or the USSR. He conceded that he had failed in major ways to fulfill the tasks assigned to him, and attributed these to his "petty bourgeois class-ness." He swore he would try harder to correct his errors and serve the Party unconditionally, and said he would be happy to be an ordinary "people," if only his life was spared.<sup>66</sup>

In "confessions" dated 17 March 1977, Chhay continued to insist that he was not a conscious traitor. Instead, he argued that his various "anti-Party" activities showed that he had "fallen for the tricks of US imperialism" in a way that turned him into a "tool" serving it without realizing it. He pleaded with the "Party Organization" to allow him to live, explaining that even if it did not execute him, he would probably soon die from a chronic illness. If he could not be spared, then he wished that his wife and two children (one as yet unborn) not be killed. He also tried to ingratiate himself with his tormentors by declaring that he was in "total unity" with all the "measures" that had been taken against other former AGEK activists.<sup>67</sup>

---

<sup>62</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977, pp.5-6; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On Additional Traitorous Links with Whom I Have Had Contact," 22 April 1977, p.5; Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 31 March 1977, p.26.

<sup>63</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.15-16.

<sup>64</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.1-2.

<sup>65</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.12-13.

<sup>66</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization, the Ministry and the Brothers," 15 March 1977, pp.17-19.

<sup>67</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "Report to the Party Organization," 17 March 1977, pp.1,7-8.

In early April, Chhay was still refusing to "confess." Therefore, according to an interrogator's note dated 6 April, torture had been applied and he was instructed to write about his contacts with Deuan and Phum. The same day, Chhay produced a document in which he implicated both, as well as Hu Nim, about whom he had been given no instructions, as well as several couriers and drivers in the Organization's Office.<sup>68</sup>

Although he now finally "confessed" to being involved in CIA plots, he still claimed that he had not consciously joined them, but had only found out after the fact that those whom he had thought were revolutionaries were in fact agents of US imperialism. S21 found this result still unsatisfactory in part because like Koy Thuon, he was implicating people he was not supposed to implicate and vice-versa. A note by an interrogator on Chhay's 7 April text, "On the CIA's Plans" told him to rewrite it to eliminate "confusion" in his "differentiation between revolution and treason." It warned him not to try to play the trick of "destroying revolutionary forces and preserving traitorous forces in order to further destroy the revolution." If he continued doing this, he would "be tortured to death, a bit at a time, that is, die in the utmost agony." He was also informed that there was no place in "confessions" for vague summaries or use of the imprecise "etc."<sup>69</sup> The day after this death threat, Chhay duly rewrote his text to give much more prominence to the supposed role of regroupee "Khmer from Hanoi" in colluding with dissident intellectuals against the CPK leadership. He also provided more details about supposed plots hatched by Koy Thuon and Deuan after 1975 to violently overthrow the "Party Organization."<sup>70</sup>

Finally, by 23 April 1977, the overall contents of Chhay's "confessions" were satisfactory to S21, and its Chairman Duch could only find a few relatively trivial errors for him to "correct".<sup>71</sup>

Chhay was executed on 6 July 1977.<sup>72</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On My Activities in the Organization's Office," 5 April 1977. The interrogator's note is signed Pon and addressed to Duch.

<sup>69</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 7 April 1977, pp.1-2. The note, by interrogator Pon, is dated 9 April 1977.

<sup>70</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "On the CIA's Plans," 9 April 1977.

<sup>71</sup> Phok Chhay *alias* Tauch, "My Entanglements with Kim Hieng," 16 April 1977, p.1. The marginal note, signed by Duch, is dated 23 April 1977 and relates to the dates on which certain cadre held certain posts. Duch was evidently concerned to make sure that Chhay got these uncontroversial facts straight in order that errors of this sort would not undermine the credibility of Chhay's "confessions" as regards matters of political substance.

<sup>72</sup> Chandler database.