

THE CHAIN OF TERROR:
The Khmer Rouge Southwest Zone Security System

Meng-Try Ea

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មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

Searching for the Truth

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For my mother, Tea-Hong

CONTENTS

Foreword		iii
Acknowledgements		vi
Chronology		vii
Preface		viii
Chapter 1: Democratic Kampuchea's Security Centers		1
Structure of the Security Centers		2
The Number of Security Centers and Prisoners		3
The Ideology of Enemies		3
Operations: "Sweeping the Enemy Clean"		7
Chain of Command		15
Chapter 2: The Southwest Zone		23
Geography		24
Characterization of Security Centers		27
The Killing Fields of the Southwest Zone		31
The Execution Chain		31
Chapter 3: The Subdistrict Militia Centers		39
Center Characteristics		40
Labor		41
Security		41
The Prisoners		42
Food Supply		43
Interrogation and Torture		44
Executions		45
Operations and Contacts		46
Relationship of the Subdistrict and District Reeducation Centers		49
Chapter 4: The District Reeducation Centers		59
Profiles of Selected Centers		60
The Prisoners		63
Food Supply		70
Arrests		72
Interrogation and Torture		72
Executions		79
Relationship to the Regional Security Center		85

Chapter 5:	The Region Security Centers	97
	Center Sites.....	97
	The Prisoners	99
	Food Supply	103
	Interrogation and Torture.....	104
	Executions	108
	Operations	110
	Relationship to the Party Center	110
Chapter 6:	The Southwest Zone Security Center	117
	The Prison Site	117
	The Prisoners	118
	Offenses.....	118
	Labor and Food Supply	119
	Interrogation and Torture.....	119
	Executions and Killings	120
	Ta Mok.....	121
	Conclusions.....	123
	Appendix A: Confession of Neang Ny	129
	Appendix B: Current Provinces and their Divisions	
	in the Southwest Zone	131
	Bibliography.....	133

FOREWORD

It was during 2002 that I first saw Meng-Try Ea's draft manuscript of *The Chain of Terror* in the Khmer language. The author asked me to assist him with the English translation. Little did I realize then how much this work would come to haunt me during the next two years.

I recall as if it were yesterday sitting at a desk in the Thai Armed Forces Intelligence Operations Center in Bangkok during mid-1975 as a young Army NCO, reading the first Thai intelligence reports of the barbarity that swept Cambodia. My immediate reaction was that the reports were incredible, over the top. My assessment – propaganda.

My experience a decade later as an Air Force human intelligence officer interviewing former inmates of the communist prisons and reeducation camps in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam had, I thought, hardened me to the cruelty of prisons and interrogations. More recent memories of interviewing former Khmer Rouge cadres after the United Nations brokered “peace” in Cambodia convinced me I knew what evil these creatures, so unlike us, were capable of carrying out in the name of “The Organization.”

Translating *The Chain of Terror* was a fascinating opportunity to learn more about the evil perpetrated by interrogators and guards inside prisons that operated far beyond the pale of human decency. For months afterward I would recall at odd times one female witness's description of the sounds of clubs smashing the skulls of victims kneeling at the edge of freshly dug pits, “the sounds of coconuts falling to the ground.”

Then late one night in early October 2003 I found myself in the “hardsite” at Abu Ghraib, Saddam Hussein's version of Pol Pot's S-21, just a few yards from Saddam's infamous death chamber, and life changed forever. Standing there in shock, I recalled a phrase from a Khmer Rouge interrogator's notebook – “*When the interrogator is clear in his emotions and principles that the enemy arrested and brought in by the Party is a 'spy,' the interrogator can successfully carry out his duty. Success is digging up the mysteries hidden by the prisoner and demonstrating to the Party that the prisoner was involved with the enemy.*” Upper echelon wanted answers, and wanted them now. I soon left, ashamed at being unable to perform my duty.

When I sat down my first “terrorist suspect,” I began with the question, “Why were you arrested?” Immediately I thought of the testimony of one of the witnesses in *The Chain of Terror*: “*When I arrived at the interrogation room, the*

investigator told me to sit in the chair and began asking questions. The first question every time was, 'Do you realize why Angkar brought you here?' Seldom does any interrogator really have any reliable information about the prisoner who sits before him. The interrogator must harden his heart sufficiently to act as if he already knows the guilt is there, so he can apply the necessary pressure to convince the prisoner that confession is the only avenue out of a bad situation. Just part of the job, I told myself, "Angkar [The Organization] has never made a mistaken arrest."

Late one night during November 2004 at the American military prison at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, I stood in the prisoner in-processing room, and listened to a young MP reading the "house rules" to a just-unblindfolded and still trembling "Taliban suspect." The MP read the rules verbatim from a sign posted on the wall behind the prisoner's back. My mind flashed to the Ten Rules of Santebal [Special Security] written on the blackboard at Pol Pot's House of Horrors, S-21. Every prison has to have rules, I assured myself. I watched the stunned expressions of newly arrived Afghans, and saw the same expressions once registered in the in-processing mug shots taken at S-21. Exploiting "capture shock" is a necessary part of the game, I told myself. Ugly, but unavoidable.

As I questioned an Afghan prisoner accused by an unknown paid informant of working against US Forces, I went after the identities of anyone he knew who was cooperating with the Taliban, but was distracted by the recollection of Khmer Rouge interrogator Pon telling his prisoner Sen, *"Brother if you report the secrets of your party, meaning you betray your party and join with us, we will not be afraid to use you. But Brother, if you do not report, that means you are stubborn and are protecting treasonous forces."*

One night in the prison at Bagram I was interrogating an older man, a man my own age, a former Mujahidin cadre who had successfully fought with American support to drive the occupying Soviet Army from his land. A former Afghan communist prison commander, educated and trained by the Soviets, had recently taken a security position with the new free Afghan government and reported to US Forces that my prisoner was cooperating with radical Taliban mullahs. My prisoner had been "implicated," to use the Khmer Rouge jargon. My prisoner had once been jailed by the Russians. I began describing how the Khmer Rouge had turned on their own cadres and tortured them to extract phony confessions, this during roughly the same era when the Afghan jihad against the Russians was occurring. I was preparing to make the point that he could trust an American interrogator to treat him with more respect than the Russians had. I was stunned to see this dignified man completely collapse in

tears, unable to speak. After my interpreter and I gave him a chance to gather himself, he said, "*I fought the Russians, our common enemy, and now you Americans have imprisoned me on the word of a son of the Russians. This is my reward.*"

Prisons and interrogations are by their very nature inhumane. Our leaders have taught us that taking a life on today's battlefield can be a righteous and patriotic act, an act of bravery or self defense, a "preemptive" necessity in the new age of the war on terror. "Precautionary murder" is the term once used by T.E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia). Former conventions regarding the treatment of prisoners are now considered quaint, obsolete. But a prisoner is as defenseless as a passenger held hostage on an aircraft. There is little honor to be found in exploiting his fears, no matter how pressing the requirement. Bringing to light the testimony of victims of human rights violations, as Meng-Try Ea has done so brilliantly here in *The Chain of Terror*, helps protect us from falling into the trap of imitating the "evil-doing" which we accuse our enemies of initiating.

Rich Arant

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I would like to express appreciation to several scholars of Cambodia: David Chandler, Alexander Hinton, Craig Etcheson, Steve Heder, Henri Locard, and John Ciorciari. Finally, I want to thank Rich Arant, who generously translated this paper, and Wynne Cougill, who edited the book through several drafts.

My work would not have been possible in its current form without the assistance of my tutors and friends at Coventry University, UK. During my 2002-2003 master's degree program, Coventry and Germany's Ecumenical Scholarship Program provided me with grants and fellowships. Finally, I would like to thank Andrew Rigby, Alan Hunter, Carol Ranks, Deepak Naik, and all my colleagues for their help, which has continued since I returned from England. Despite the important contributions of these and other friends, however, I take responsibility for the final content of this paper.

Last, I would like to thank my dear respected mother, Tea-Hong, and my dear father, Ea Bun-Yi, who raised and looked after me so well. Finally, my wife, Siv Teang, spent endless hours providing encouragement and enduring absences while I was in England and the field. Most important, she and our children, Ea Sou-Eng and Ea Chung-Leng, brought me light when I needed it.

CHRONOLOGY

French colonial rule began	1863
Pol Pot (Saloth Sar) born in Kampong Thom province	1925
Ta Mok (Ung Choeun) born in Takeo province	1926
Ieng Sary born in Preah Trapang province (today, in Vietnam)	1926
Nuon Chea born in Battambang province	1927
Khieu Samphan born in Kampong Cham province	1929
Independence from France	1953
Ta Mok joined the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK)	1963
Ta Mok became secretary of the Southwest Zone	1968
Sihanouk deposed	18 March 1970
Khmer Republic regime began	9 October 1970
U.S. bombing of Cambodia ended	15 August 1973
Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh	17 April 1975
DK constitution went into effect: Democratic Kampuchea (DK) regime began	5 January 1976
Party Center delegated power to the lower levels to “smash enemies”	30 March 1976
Tram Kak district of Takeo province received an Honorary Red Flag Award from the CPK	30 June 1977
Peoples Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) regime began	7 January 1979
Paris Peace Agreement signed	23 October 1991
National election (UNTAC)	July 1993
US Congress signed the Cambodian Genocide Justice Act into law	30 April 1994
Ieng Sary defected to the government	August 1996
Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan defected	26 December 1998
Son Sen murdered	9 June 1997
Cambodian government requested UN and international assistance “in bringing to justice those responsible for the genocide and crimes against humanity during the rule of the DK from 1975 to 1979”	21 June 1997
Pol Pot died	15 April 1998
Ta Mok arrested	6 March 1999
National election	July 1998
Duch arrested	May 1999
Ta Mok indicted with genocide under a decree issued by the PRK in 1979	7 September 1999
Ke Pauk died	15 February 2002
Ta Mok indicted for crimes against humanity	4 March 2002
UN and the Cambodian government signed an agreement on the Prosecution under Cambodian Law of Crimes Committed During DK (Khmer Rouge Law)	6 June 2003
National election	27 July 2003
Cambodia’s National Assembly approved the Khmer Rouge Law and agreement	October 4 and 5, 2004
KR Law promulgated by the acting head of state, Chea Sim	October 27, 2004
UN and Cambodia agreed on a tribunal budget of \$56 million	December 10, 2004

PREFACE

I was born in 1973, two years before the Khmer Rouge overthrew the Lon Nol regime and immediately set out to transform Cambodia into a pure agrarian society.¹ For the next nearly four years, the Khmer Rouge pursued radical communist policies in Cambodia that resulted in the deaths of at least a quarter of the population through execution, starvation and disease.

After the Democratic Kampuchea regime was defeated in 1979, my family continued living in Kandal province, where the Khmer Rouge had placed us following the forced evacuation of Phnom Penh in April 1975. I remember my mother warning me not to associate with children whose parents had been Khmer Rouge cadres. She explained that if a quarrel arose, their parents would beat me. She said those children were bad because they were the sons and daughters of bad people who had killed villagers (including my uncle) during the regime. Over the years, I asked my mother many questions: what caused the deaths of so many Cambodians during the regime, how were the executions organized and carried out on such a massive scale, and why did the killings happen? She could not answer.

These and other questions still plague Cambodian society.² For example, a 45 year-old widow named Phum said: “How can I feel happy when Chhoch, the one who killed my husband, freely rides his bicycle past my house every day?”³ Sam, a former cadre at S-21 (the Khmer Rouge’s secret police headquarters known as Tuol Sleng),⁴ feels inferior to everyone in his family and community. He stated, “At that time, every comrade had to do as they were commanded, otherwise they would be killed.” But Sam refuses to divulge any details about his experience at S-21 – even to his wife and children – as he fears that it would only bring more hatred upon him. “There were so many people killed there,” he said simply. Kheng, who was also an S-21 cadre, went right to the point: “If my comrades had survived, what would they say about the Khmer Rouge tribunal? They surely would be more anxious than me.”⁵

Phum wants the lower-level perpetrators who killed her husband to be punished. Kheng and Sam, by contrast, are themselves lower-level perpetrators and want only the top Khmer Rouge leaders to be prosecuted. They claim that they were ordered by their superiors to commit offenses, and because their choice was to obey or die, they do not feel personally responsible. But one thing that all three have in common is that they cannot understand why the killing occurred.



Comrade Him Kheng aka
Kheng, S-21 Comrade, 1977



Him Kheng, farmer, 1999



Comrade Pan Sam aka
Sam, S-21 Comrade, 1977



Pan Sam, farmer, 1999

To help answer this difficult question, Chapter 1 examines the ideology of the Khmer Rouge, who believed that Cambodian society was besieged by enemies. About half of the people in the country's cooperatives, for example, were thought to be traitors to the revolution and were counted among the regime's "internal enemies."⁶ The Khmer Rouge estimated the number of its internal enemies to be: "Enemies in the zones, ten percent, enemies in the regions, twenty percent."⁷ Not content with merely identifying enemies from within, they also had "external enemies," which included the CIA, KGB, and later in the regime, the Vietnamese. To their minds, both categories of enemies were continually attempting to seize power and destroy the revolution, both on the battlefields and in the rice fields.

To defend their position of power and create a pure society, Khmer Rouge leaders issued a variety of political principles and methods to be applied in wiping out both categories of enemies. As they saw it, "The danger to the Party Center is very great ... We must absolutely defend the Party leadership apparatus. If we defend that, we can defend everything."⁸

The main vehicle for wiping out the regime's foes was the Khmer Rouge security organization. Employing systematic operating practices, its extensive network of security centers maintained a tight and comprehensive communications system, reaching both down from the top and up from the bottom of the ranks.

These centers employed a number of effective methods for "smashing" enemies.⁹ They exhibited a regular pattern, beginning with ferreting out "traitors." After detaining and interrogating their enemies, the Khmer Rouge executed them at or near the security center without any form of judicial hearing. Security cadres often believed that when they executed prisoners, they were merely applying the Khmer Rouge's ideological doctrines to defend their revolution and create a pure society.

The infamous "Office S-21" or Tuol Sleng prison was at the top of the system and took more than 14,000 lives during Democratic Kampuchea. The atrocities committed there are well-documented, and today it is a genocide museum. Historian David Chandler asserts that "Given its prisoner intake and the number of inmates who were executed by the facility, S-21 was probably the most efficient institution in the country."¹⁰

Considering the emphasis that the Party Center placed on protecting itself from "enemies," S-21 was the most important security center for high-ranking officials of the Communist Party of Kampuchea.¹¹ However, some of the district and region security centers executed more people than S-21 (e.g., Kraing Ta Chan in Takeo province, the Region 25 security center in Kandal province, Sa-ang district security center in Kandal province).¹² The operations of the base-level security centers are less well known than those of S-21, but documents from the regime indicate there were millions of Party enemies at the base level.¹³ The zone committees had these "enemies" arrested and sent to the district and region security centers for execution.¹⁴

The focus of this monograph is the structure of the security system in the Southwest Zone. There is a wealth of information on this zone, and one of its districts (Tram Kak) was considered a model for the revolution.

A poignant illustration of the power of the security centers is the 1 November 1975 confession of Neang Ny, who was evacuated from Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975.¹⁵ Six months after being relocated to Sa-ang district in Kandal province of the Southwest Zone, she was arrested by the subdistrict chief and imprisoned at Sa-ang security center. She disappeared thereafter.

It began at dusk when two people rode up on bicycles to call me from the base, saying that the owner of the house had called me to a meeting. I rode my bike along behind them. I never imagined that I would be brought to this place. When I asked if I was a prisoner, Uncle said “No.” How could it be “no” when I am in shackles and held in a locked room?

When I write out my detailed life history according to the questions ... can I return home or not? I have no such hope at all because I have ceased trusting *Angkar*.¹⁶ I request that Uncle take me out and shoot me, or tie my body to a stone and cast me into the river, because I do not want a life like this. It is a first life, a life so very ashamed of its nature, of myself.¹⁷

Ny’s confession, the recollections of witnesses (125 victims and 18 former Southwest Zone security cadres were interviewed for this study) and documents held at DC-Cam and the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum indicate that three operations were the responsibility of the security centers: arrest, detention and interrogation, and execution. Carrying out this responsibility resulted in an estimated two million people losing their lives throughout Cambodia; at least 153,000 of them died in four of the Southwest Zone’s prisons.¹⁸

The evidence of systematic arrests, forced confessions, and executions in the Southwest Zone strongly suggests that the Khmer Rouge leaders intentionally formulated policies (which were implemented at the lower levels) that led to crimes against humanity. Yet many former Party leaders still deny culpability for the deaths of their countrymen. As former Deputy Party Secretary Nuon Chea told the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in July 2001, “A number of people lost their lives, but they only died from lack of food and disease. We never issued any political goals to kill people.”¹⁹ This monograph seeks to dispel the myth of innocence created by those who were Khmer Rouge leaders.

The remaining chapters explore the Khmer Rouge security system in more detail. Chapter 2 begins with general information on the Southwest Zone, and then reviews the characteristics and operation of the Khmer Rouge security system there. Chapter 3 focuses on the subdistrict militia centers, exploring how prisoners at the lowest level of the system were reeducated to become better members of the revolution. Chapter 4 examines the district reeducation centers, why prisoners were arrested and how they were killed there. Chapter 5 discusses the region security centers and their relationship to both the lower (district) and higher (central) levels. Chapter 6 examines the zone security center. The conclusion argues that the Khmer Rouge established its security system to oppress and execute those who opposed their communist ideology.

End Notes

¹ “Khmer Rouge” is the French term for *Khmer Kroham* or “Red Khmer.” It was first used by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in the mid-1960s to refer to Cambodians who were members of the Communist Party and other left-wing organizations. This paper uses the terms “Khmer Rouge” and “Democratic Kampuchea” to refer to the regime that ruled Cambodia from 1975 to 1979 (“Khmer Rouge” is also used to refer to individuals who worked for the regime). For different views on the Khmer Rouge, see *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 6, June 2000.

² Although the Khmer Rouge has been disbanded, several of its members now hold positions in the Royal Government of Cambodia. As of 2004, only four former Khmer Rouge leaders have been imprisoned (several lower-level cadres were imprisoned by the Vietnamese and Peoples Tribunal in 1979, however). The first is Ta Mok, who was secretary of the Southwest Zone from 1975 until 1978 and commander of the Khmer Rouge Army from 1980 until 1988; he is profiled in Chapter 2. The second is Kang Kek Ieu (revolutionary name: Duch), chief of S-21 (the infamous Tuol Sleng prison). The third is Sam Bit, former chief of Region 35 of the Southwest Zone and later the zone’s deputy secretary. In 1996, he joined the Royal Government as a commander and on 22 May 2002 was arrested on the charge of ambushing a train south of Kampot province in 1994, which resulted in the deaths of 14 Cambodians and 3 French, English, and Australian nationals. With Sam Bit was former Khmer Rouge commander Nuon Paet, who was arrested on 1 August 1998. In September 2001, Sam Bit was sentenced to life imprisonment. Ta Mok, Duch, and Nuon Paet are being detained in a military prison in Phnom Penh while awaiting trial.

Other Khmer Rouge leaders, however, remain free, including Deputy Party Secretary Nuon Chea, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ieng Sary, Chief of State and Chief of Munti (office) 870 Khieu Samphan, and Minister of Social Welfare Ieng Thirith. Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan live in Pailin and occasionally travel to Phnom Penh; Ieng Sary and his wife Ieng Thirith live in Phnom Penh.

³ Author’s interview with Phum, former Kandal Stung prisoner, at Kandal Stung district, Kandal province, 6 May 2001.

⁴ Youk Chhang, “The Poisonous Hill that was Tuol Sleng,” *Phnom Penh Post*, 3-15 May 1997. Also known as S-21, Tuol Sleng prison was the Khmer Rouge’s secret security center. See also David Chandler, *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot’s Secret Prison* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

⁵ Meng-Try Ea and Sorya Sim, *Victims and Perpetrators? Testimony of Young Khmer Rouge Cadres* (Phnom Penh, Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2001), p. 45.

⁶ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, Documentation Center of Cambodia, D00512. Cooperatives were associations organized by type of labor (agriculture, mechanics, etc.). Generally, they would cover one to a few villages in a commune (subdistrict). Cooperatives were first formed in Cambodia in 1970; by 1977 most of the population had been placed into these associations.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Honorary Red Flag*, Issue 4, April 1978, Documentation Center of Cambodia, D21926.

⁹ The Khmer Rouge used the terms “smash” and “eliminate” in place of “kill.” See Heder, Stephen with Brian D. Tittmore, *Seven Candidates for Prosecution: Accountability for the Crimes of the Khmer Rouge* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2004).

¹⁰ Chandler, David, *Voices from S-21*, op. cit., p. 41.

¹¹ “Note on the Decisions of the Central Party on Miscellaneous Matters,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00693. This monograph uses the term “Party Center” to refer to the Communist Party of Kampuchea’s Central Committee (*Kanak Machim Pak Kommanist Kampuchea*), while some scholars use the term “organization” (*Angkar*). Members of this committee included Secretary Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Son Sen, and Ta Mok. “Standing Committee” (*Kanak Achentrey*) refers to the top-most part of the Central Committee; its members were Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, and Ta Mok.

¹² See, for example, “Kraing Ta Chan Torture Center Will Serve as a Meditation Place,” *Reasmei Kampuchea*, 7 November 2002, and DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team report, Kandal province, 1996.

¹³ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit. Many former security cadres and prisoners interviewed for this study stated that they burned documents before they left their security centers when the Vietnamese invaded in January 1979. Bun Than explained that Region 25 security center cadres burned documents, but not all of them were destroyed. Author’s interview with Bun Than, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thmei subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 2 May 2001.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ The author chose a name for this victim because the signature and name on her confession were illegible. The full text of this confession appears in Appendix A.

¹⁶ *Angkar* referred to the inner circles of the Communist Party of Kampuchea. Officially, it was not to be used to refer to an individual, although the general population did so.

¹⁷ “From me to the uncle who controls this place,” Tuol Sleng T177.

My uncle, Tea Peng-Kung, also died in the Sa-ang center. My mother said about him, “I wished he would have been shot dead before he was put there and suffered such horrible torture.” A good sister, she wanted her younger brother to have died immediately, to spare him pain. Author’s interview with Tea-Hong, at Phnom Penh, 2001. For more information on the evacuation of my family to Sa-ang district, see Ea, Meng-Try, “Three Days or Three Years?” *Phnom Penh Post*, May 2004.

¹⁸ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Takeo province, 1995. See also Etcheson, Craig, “The Number: Quantifying Crimes against Humanity in Cambodia” (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 1999, unpublished manuscript, available at www.dccam.org).

¹⁹ Chaumeau, Christine, “More Denial,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 July 2001. See also “Nuon Chea spoke in Pailin. The DK did not kill people,” *Koh Santepheap*, 10 October 2001.

In March 2002, however, Nuon Chea partially recanted this statement. He explained that as one of the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, he had to assume some responsibility, adding that he himself did not issue orders for killings. Nuon Chea said that he welcomed a tribunal for Khmer Rouge leaders because it might show his innocence and humanity. "Nuon Chea accepts responsibility," *Cambodia Today*, 15 March 2002.

Other former Khmer Rouge leaders have likewise protested their innocence. Khieu Samphan, former chief of state and chief of Munti 870 (a central body in charge of relations between the Party Center and the base), denied any knowledge of the mass killings that took place in Preah Vihear province. He professed that he only learned about them by accident in 1978, and at that time was only an "ordinary member of Office 870." "Public Letter of Khieu Samphan to his Fellow Countrymen, Pailin, 16 August 2001," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 21, September 2001.

1

DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA'S SECURITY CENTERS



From Left to Right: Vorn Veth, Ieng Sary, Noun Chea, Khieu Samphan, Thioun Prasith Pochenton [Phnom Penh] Airport (1977) receiving a Chinese delegation

We won and circumstances were different from before because we came to hold power nationwide. If there were any mistakes in this stage, those [making them] were considered guilty and if the guilty were found out, there would be punishment ... because they did that on purpose and were assigned to do that in a systematic way. They can be taken to either the security [center] or farming production.²⁰

Pol Pot, 13 July 1978

The Khmer Rouge formed security centers to eliminate the regime's enemies: those who opposed (or appeared to oppose) the idea of creating a pure society. And since its enemies were everywhere, it set up security centers at all political levels throughout the country in accordance with the policies of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK, the so-called party of the laboring class).²¹ These policies included setting the direction for the country to follow, formulating a process for development, and implementing the process.²² The operational methods of these centers were uniform and employed widely. In addition, there was coordination among all levels of security centers, with communications going both up and down the chain of command.²³

According to Pol Pot:

All of the Khmer Rouge army is not responsible for security matters. Its duty is to defend the country. However, when under special situations, there is a need for an army to help to carry out a security task, the army must respond to the request positively.²⁴

The Khmer Rouge army, which was under the direction of the CPK, was divided into three basic categories: the regular forces at the zone and central levels, the regional army, and cadres (those who worked for the Khmer Rouge at all levels).²⁵ In general, the regular forces and regional army were used in combat, while the lower-level cadres formed the bulk of the staff at the security centers. Thus, the Khmer Rouge military was charged with defending Democratic Kampuchea against its enemies, both internal and external. But, as demonstrated below, priority was given to destroying the regime's internal enemies. To carry out this task, the Khmer Rouge army formed security centers.

STRUCTURE OF THE SECURITY CENTERS

There were five categories of security centers in Democratic Kampuchea. At the lowest level were subdistrict militia centers. They were used to detain a few inmates, who would generally be set free after a short period, including those sent up the chain for committing an infraction (for example, stealing food) during their stay at the subdistrict militia center.

The district reeducation and region security centers were the next levels up in the security system. Both were used for detention, interrogation and execution. Prisoners at the district centers were held for a variety of offenses, including being soldiers or civil servants of the Lon Nol regime (Khmer Republic), stealing, running home, or speaking ill of *Angkar*. Those held in the region security centers were mostly Khmer Rouge cadres accused of betraying the revolution.

The fourth category was the zone security centers. These huge prisons held a thousand or more prisoners: Khmer Rouge soldiers and their family members, as well as those who had committed offenses at the zone level. These centers served as both hard labor and execution sites.

The fifth level of the system was the central-level security center, better known as S-21 or Tuol Sleng prison. Because S-21 was not within the Southwest Zone,

it is not examined in detail here.

Many Southwest Zone security centers were housed in pagodas or schools, and sometimes smaller government buildings or structures built specifically as detention centers. Sometimes, separate buildings were used to detain men and women (the men were always shackled, while the women sometimes were not and children never were). Generally, light and serious offenders were also kept in separate areas of a facility.

The centers formed a close network, and detainees could be moved from one level of the prison system to another. In general, prisoners were transferred up the chain, reaching certain death if they were sent to S-21. Henri Locard asserts: "The percentage of release, which could be 20 to 30% in the smaller prisons, was reduced to 0% in Tuol Sleng: the higher a prison was situated in the hierarchy of goals, the less likely were the inmates to survive."²⁶

Some prisoners, particularly those who were base people (see the box on the base and new people in this chapter), were transferred down the chain after their imprisonment, mainly from security centers to hard labor camps. Once there, they were made to perform such tasks as building houses, planting vegetables and cooking. Many of these prisoners were released from the security centers before 1976. However, after 1976, almost none of the prisoners at the district and region security centers were released.

THE NUMBER OF SECURITY CENTERS AND PRISONERS

DC-Cam's mass grave mapping teams have located 189 Khmer Rouge security centers at the zone, region, and district levels of Democratic Kampuchea to date. This is quite a high number for a country whose leaders once denied the existence of any prison within its borders.²⁷

THE IDEOLOGY OF ENEMIES

Angkar designated two types of enemies of the state: external and internal.

External enemies included the United States, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union. The Khmer Rouge viewed them as threats with both external (military) and internal (subversive) dimensions:

We clearly knew that the American imperialists intended to overthrow us six months after the date of liberation of the nation [17 April 1975]. This attempt to overthrow the revolution occurred by attacks from the outside and the inside, conducted in cooperation with the American enemies, the KGB and Vietnam. But we defeated the enemies' plan in a timely manner. The Vietnamese army was attacked by us and defeated, and we also arrested many traitors within the Party.²⁸

According to the notebook of an S-21 cadre, "The new strategic line fixes the enemies of the revolution: the CIA, KGB, and the Yuon [Vietnamese] running dogs. The Yuon running dogs are especially vicious and dangerous to the revolution."²⁹

Internal enemies, which are the focus of this study, were thought to be more worrisome than external enemies. As Party Secretary Pol Pot announced in 1977: "External enemies are the type easily recognized. The external enemies have been successfully blocked by the courageous army combatants and the help of our great Chinese friends. What is difficult to solve are the internal enemies." To him, these enemies were "hard to locate and considered more dangerous."³⁰ The leadership of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) distinguished three types of internal enemies:

The first was former policemen and soldiers of the Lon Nol regime, who were considered to be feudalists and capitalists.³¹ On the celebration of the 17th anniversary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, Pol Pot named Cambodia's classes: laborers, farmers, petty bourgeois, capitalists, and feudalists.³² As for the fate of the latter two types of enemy, Deputy Party Secretary Nuon Chea advised: "The old soldiers, don't keep them for anything, since they cannot easily abandon their old ideas. So smash and destroy them all."³³

The second class comprised Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres accused of treasonous activity against *Angkar* or who had expressed dissatisfaction with the party line of the socialist revolution. An example of this type of "traitor" was those who collaborated with external enemies:

Activities against the Party by the CIA, KGB, and Vietnamese agents were external disputes. Methods of solving internal disputes included persuasion, self-criticism, and other means. When they were ineffective, the CPK used new methods by inspecting the true individual nature of the cadres. These last methods achieved satisfying results for the CPK by continuously identifying enemy agents. These enemy agents, in fact, were

resistance cadres captured by the enemy, trained, and transformed into clandestine enemies inside the CPK.³⁴

People who were connected with or accused of being involved with class politics, political “trends” and enemies of *Angkar* were the third major type of internal enemy in the Khmer Rouge lexicon. The Khmer Rouge defined people involved in class politics to include the husbands, wives, children, parents, and other relatives of *Angkar*’s enemies, who they believed were influenced by the political activities of their family members. A trend was defined as a bias toward the political opposition or an inclination toward another person’s political point of view because of a lack of self-initiative. This category would include, for example, a base person who was manipulated by a negative political influence and did not believe fully in *Angkar*.

The first group to be eliminated was those who had been soldiers and police of the Lon Nol regime, and those in the feudalist and capitalist classes. Next were people who might sympathize with these groups or had similar ideas, including those in the bourgeois class or who leaned toward capitalism. An example of such guilt by association was Bam Oeun, who was reported to *Angkar* at Tram Kak district for making an accusation against the Party. In his confession, he complained that: “*Angkar* said to get rid of only capitalists and soldiers, but now there is no Buddhism, no monkhood, and no schools, no teachers, no markets.”³⁵

Millions of Cambodia’s 7.7 million people – both base and new, and at all levels of society – were thought to be internal enemies.³⁶ According to the CPK magazine *Honorary Red Flag*, “The majority of internal enemies are from the petty bourgeois; a few come from the farmer class, but [they are] farmers without the nature of farmers: phony, playful bourgeois.”³⁷ The enemy, as defined, constituted “10 percent of the zones, 20 percent of the regions, 20 percent of the districts, and 40-50 percent of the cooperatives.”³⁸ While this statement may seem counter-intuitive, it was intended to give Party members the feeling that such enemies were pervasive nationwide.

Base and New People

Base (or old) people generally lived in rural areas liberated prior to 17 April 1975. They were classified as either full-rights or candidate people. Those with full rights had no relatives associated with the Khmer Republic. They were members of the poor or lower-middle classes, were farmers and laborers, and had the rights to vote and run for election. They often became chiefs of cooperatives and other units. The candidate

people were those who had relatives associated with the Khmer Republic; they were tolerated as long as they worked hard. From the lower, middle, or upper petty bourgeoisie classes, their ranks included students, traders, and well-to-do farmers. The candidate people had the right to give advice, but no rights to make decisions or become leaders.

New (or April 17) people were evacuated from cities or towns to villages in other areas. These people, who were also classified as “parasites,” had no rights (or sometimes fewer rights than old people). The majority of them were city dwellers or provincial town residents. For example, old people ate meals at 11:00 a.m., while the new people were fed at noon. The Khmer Rouge designated new people to live under the houses of the old people, in small huts along the edges of villages, or in remote foothills.

Ngin Hean, a former medical worker in Tram Kak district hospital, said that parasite people were never tolerated. They had no right to marry a full-rights person, for example. It was *Angkar's* plan that they wait for death. The Khmer Rouge had a slogan: “The April 17 group are the losers of the war. Wherever they are, that place does not prosper.” The minutes of the permanent committee of the CPK's visit to the Northwest Zone in July 1975 read “new people must be subservient to cooperatives both in politics and economy.”

Source: Ysa, Osman. *Oukoubah: Justice for the Cham Muslims under Democratic Kampuchea* (Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2002).

The CPK believed that internal enemies carried out various acts of sabotage to oppose the Party. These included such minor infractions as stealing coconuts, which were seen as attempts to destroy the revolution:

In growing rice, there are two battles. First, a battle with nature. Second, the battle with destructive enemies. The enemy destruction begins with the breaking of stalks during transplanting seedlings; they don't transplant from the stalk and roots at all – they wreck the stalks to destroy them, they destroy during the harvest, they destroy during transport, and they destroy during threshing. Raising crops is a technical struggle, a class struggle, a struggle between revolution and no revolution.³⁹

Duch, the chief of S-21, commented on those who committed the major infraction of “boring into the Party membership and leading its cadres astray.” He described them as: “wood-borers in a tree, penetrating oil, maggots, or germs that came from the CIA, Vietnam and others to attack and destroy the courageous revolutionaries.”⁴⁰

Anyone arrested and brought to a security center was thought to be an enemy

who was in total opposition to *Angkar*, and was no longer considered a Cambodian under the DK regime. This sentiment was also extended to the people who were named in their confessions.

In the minds of security center cadres, the presence of an “enemy” at the center meant that a life-and-death conflict between the revolution and the enemy had to be resolved. The conflict was predominantly class-based: “Before deciding a cadre’s conflict, [you] must first observe his class, which causes the conflict.”⁴¹ Security center cadres were to carry out their class struggle duties intensely and uniformly: “Santebal duty is class struggle duty; it is the duty to dig out the oppressor class by the roots. This duty is really the defense of the nation and the creation of socialist revolution.”⁴² One cadre’s diary gives an example of a method the Khmer Rouge used to analyze “conflicts”:

We see the enemy acting already, but we say “Not a problem.” This comes from our instructions on not yet being hot. As when the enemy drinks palm sugar water, and then defecates in the drinking tube, we say that he is lazy, not that he is an enemy. In fact, he is an enemy.⁴³

According to the Party’s theory of dialectics, conflict caused loyal people with minor faults to unknowingly transform themselves into the enemies of *Angkar*, since everything was inter-related and would eventually lead along the chain to treason. Other activities that qualified for this charge could be as minor as breaking a plow blade or rice seedling while working in the fields, and taking food or another form of collectively-owned property.

Private ownership, which was an act of the capitalist oppressor class, was a far more serious charge. As one Party leader counseled:

Be careful in seeing private ownership as a minor thing; the material may in fact be minor, but in actuality it is collectively owned. Methods to eliminate private ownership are political, ideological, and organizational, all in order to strengthen the collective ownership of the proletariat class.⁴⁴

OPERATIONS: “SWEEPING THE ENEMY CLEAN”

National defense and continuing social revolution are the sweeping clean of non-socialists and the clearing of obstacles along the way to socialism. Anyone who is not a socialist must be cleaned out.⁴⁵

[The methods to smash internal enemies must be carried out by] watching personal histories and lifestyles, doing this carefully and rigidly, like a net, a close woven net, that even a tiny shrimp could not escape through.⁴⁶

Echoed in countless memoranda and speeches, the main operations of the DK security centers were actions to “sweep clean” the enemies of the revolution. These actions began with the mass evacuations from urban to rural areas in 1975. Later, they primarily constituted tracking people down, and arresting and imprisoning them. While in prison, the regime’s victims were subjected to forced labor, “reeducation” (also called “reforging” or “refashioning”), interrogation, torture, and eventually, execution.⁴⁷

Evacuations



Khmer Rouge Soldiers, 17 April 1975

Mass evacuations were an important part of the CPK’s plans to sweep clean *Angkar’s* enemies and move manpower to the agricultural areas in order to increase farm production. The first such evacuation began immediately after the victory of 17 April 1975 with the forced movement of people from the cities and provincial towns to the countryside. In the second, which took place in late 1975, many of the same people were moved again, mainly to Battambang, Pursat and Kratie provinces.⁴⁸ No one is certain of the exact number of people evacuated in late 1975, but it is known that 1.5 million people

were evacuated from Phnom Penh on 17 April.

A few reasons were given for the evacuation. The Khmer Rouge viewed most people who lived in Phnom Penh as feudalists and capitalists. These people were enemies of the DK regime, together with the imperialists. As a Khmer Rouge cadre wrote in his notebook: "We drove all the foreign imperialists from Kampuchea [Cambodia]. On 17 April we evacuated the feudalists and capitalists out of the cities to become farmers."⁴⁹ For DK Minister of Defense Son Sen, the main reasons for the evacuation were first to divide and destroy the strength of the enemies, and second to protect the Party. He claimed: "If we had not evacuated the people from the cities, our nation and people would not be able to live in this peace today."⁵⁰ Nuon Chea announced the success of this form of sweep to a delegation from Denmark: "Right after liberation, we evacuated all the people from the cities. Then agents of the CIA, KGB, and the Yuon had to go along to the countryside and were unable to carry out their pre-conceived plans."⁵¹

During the evacuations, the Khmer Rouge announced that those who had been soldiers, teachers, and officials of the Lon Nol regime should gather in one place so they could be sent back and put in their old positions. Instead, they placed the former Lon Nol civil and military staff in temporary security centers (mostly pagodas and schools) and later shot them there or in a nearby forest. Then some of these temporary facilities were dismantled, while others were turned into permanent security centers.

A Khmer Rouge cadre named Em Min (aka Sen)⁵² testified that former officials were targeted among those evacuated from the cities:

According to Party plans, [we] had to prepare to receive the people evacuated from Phnom Penh and various provincial cities, and keep them under control in one place in the villages and subdistricts of the [base] people. Those who concealed themselves among the people had to be removed to one place for clear identification and investigation of this group. If it was found that anyone was an official they were killed one at a time.⁵³

Tracking

DK Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary stated that after people were evacuated from the cities, the Party sought out large quantities of weapons and

ammunition that Lon Nol soldiers and police had hidden in order to overthrow Democratic Kampuchea.⁵⁴ Subsequently, the Party announced the presence of enemies in Cambodia and its plans to seek them out and smash them.⁵⁵ The remnants of the Lon Nol regime were among the first of the internal enemies to be executed (they were still being hunted down until late 1978). The Party gave orders to Toy to find and execute enemies.⁵⁶ He stated that during 1975, he arrested many former Lon Nol soldiers in his subdistrict and sent them to the Prey Kabass district security committee.⁵⁷

The Khmer Rouge were not content to purge only those of the deposed Lon Nol regime. They soon began to categorize and seek out the enemies within their own ranks: "The masses were good, mediocre, and weak. The masses within the Foreign Ministry included the progressive, mediocre, and the incorrigible."⁵⁸

Priorities changed in late 1976 and early 1977. The mission of seeking out alleged traitors for arrest was an essential part of a revolutionary combatant's work and was highly valued by the Party as promoting the cause of "national defense and building the nation."⁵⁹ This mission sometimes took precedence over other activities and was always thought to be at least as important, as exemplified by the slogan, "One hand raises the crops, the other hand attacks the enemy."⁶⁰

A variety of means was used to track the State's enemies, including having villagers turn one another in, surveillance, reports, personal histories, and confessions. San Soeum related how his district's committee organized members of the army to conduct surveillance of soldiers and police throughout the cooperatives and districts. He stated that both the subdistrict and cooperative committees cooperated in this respect. After the enemies were discovered, the district army reported their names to the committees and then arrested them immediately.⁶¹

In July 1977, Nuon Chea instructed the army and other cadres in the North Zone on the Party's plans to "follow up by doing personal histories and then sweep clean" the enemies who had infiltrated the leadership ranks, especially in the cooperatives.⁶² The method of taking personal histories was thought to be highly successful, as Nuon Chea explained: "Doing the cadres' personal histories showed us that a number of our cadres were enemy agents."⁶³

Punishment

The Party's Central Committee issued instructions that defined levels of punishment for different categories of enemies. Notes from various Party meetings show three categories in this regard:

Category 1: dangerous, must absolutely be screened out. Category 2: ordinary "free": must be reeducated continuously in our reeducation schools. Category 3: those recently incited by the enemy, only beginning to believe the incitements, as a first step they must be educated not to believe the enemy any further.⁶⁴

Those in Category 3, who were also called "confused" enemies, were to be "rebuilt" (reeducated), and those in Category 1, who deliberately opposed the revolution, were to be "smashed":

Our Party has the following line: First, for all those in the CIA or KGB from 1946-1962, they are to be without punishment, if later they did not act in treason. Second, those in the CIA or KGB from 1968-1970, the Party does not assign punishment as long as they committed no treason. Third, for those joining the CIA or KGB during 1970-1975, if they did not commit treason, the Party assigns no punishment. Fourth, for those who quite intentionally oppose the Party, they must be smashed. As for the second category, who have abandoned their treason, beginning in March 1977 our Party will not punish them and will rebuild them into good people to defend and build the nation.⁶⁵

A security center cadre wrote in his study notebook:

After 17 April 1975, regardless of when you joined the CIA, if you acted systematically without stop opposing the revolution, you must be punished. As for the Yuon and KGB, that is the same as with the CIA; if after 17 April 1975 [you] did not stop, [you] must be punished.⁶⁶

Reeducation

A Khmer Rouge notebook states that the reeducation centers (also called camps or schools) were "To help misled people become well again" and receive "political and ideological training to help individuals break from their families, break from their dirty, obscene friends."⁶⁷ Although this statement implies training, or even brainwashing, prisoners undergoing reeducation (also called

reforging) received little in the way of instruction in Party politics. Plans for the treatment of inmates at these camps were fairly rigidly prescribed:

Interrogating all Cambodians without beatings, and to reach an 80 percent confession rate. It was not necessary to beat [them] and have 70 percent confess in great detail. As for foreigners, the CIA of the imperialists, we still implement absolutely, totally, and permanently all special security methods.⁶⁸

Most of the prisoners in the subdistrict militia centers were viewed as “confused,” rather than as enemies of the State. Thus, they were generally not tortured or executed. They were instead forced to do manual labor. Once they demonstrated their respect for the Party by being reeducated (working hard), the prisoners at these facilities were sent back to their villages.

Imprisonment

Pol Pot told a delegation from Belgium: “We do not have prisons and we do not even use the word prison. Bad elements are sent to farming production.”⁶⁹ Instead of using the term “prison,” everyone interviewed for this study – including former security cadres and prisoners – used the term “reeducation center” and “security center” to refer to what Pol Pot called “farming production.”

The Khmer Rouge reeducation and security centers were not merely in the business of imprisoning people as punishment. They also used imprisonment to obtain confessions and to dismantle the plots of suspected conspirators against *Angkar*.

Conditions at the reeducation and security facilities varied from those with seemingly “free” surroundings (light guards and no shackles at the subdistrict militia centers) to those with very tight security. Likewise, the treatment of prisoners varied widely, from the hard labor and poor food experienced by those in the subdistrict militia centers, to the addition of torture at the upper levels, and last, to a near-constant state of torture at the central facilities.

Interrogation and Torture

Historian David Chandler concluded that S-21 was the site where most judicial torture took place in Cambodia. He asserted, “Thousands of men and women

charged with lesser offenses or imprisoned as class enemies succumbed to malnutrition, illness, and savage treatment in provincial prisons, but in general these people were not tortured to produce evidence of their crimes.”⁷⁰ However, it appears from the interviews and other research conducted for this study, as well as the work of DC-Cam mass grave mapping teams, that S-21 had no exclusive claim on barbarity. Indeed, interrogation and torture were common at most of the Khmer Rouge security centers, especially at the district and region levels. Although not every prisoner was interrogated and tortured, these techniques were used throughout the DK security system to extract confessions of guilt.

In the lower-level security centers, for example, the interrogator took notes and would hit or threaten to hit the accused, who squatted in front of him with his arms tied behind his back. In the higher-level security centers, two interrogators would write confessions into exercise books or on sheets from which summaries would be made and sent to decision-makers. In both types of facilities, prisoners would be sent back and interrogated again after a day or two. Some died in the night and their corpses were removed the next morning. A few became free prisoners, doing hard labor in the daytime and returning to their shackles at night, or were taken to another building where prisoners were no longer tied and received better treatment.

Execution

According to Chapter 7 of the Constitution of DK, which went to effect on 5 January 1976:

Article 9

Justice is administered by people’s courts, which represent and defend the people’s justice, defend the democratic rights of the people, and punish any act directed against the people’s State or violating the laws of the people’s State. The judges at all levels shall be chosen and appointed by the People’s Representative Assembly.

Article 10

Actions violating the laws of the people’s State are as follows:
Hostile and destructive activities that threaten the popular State shall be subject to the highest level of punishment.

Other cases shall be handled by means of constructive reeducation in the framework of the State of people’s organizations.⁷¹

The Constitution does not specifically mention the death penalty. However, both it and regulations of the CPK implied such actions through their statements about “the severest form of punishment” and talk of “enemies intending to oppose the revolution and destroy the Democratic Kampuchea regime as a result.”⁷²

And the death penalty was indeed implemented. The most common (and possibly a conservative) figure cited for the number of deaths during Democratic Kampuchea is 1.7 million. Historian Ben Kiernan assumes that executions accounted for 31 percent of all deaths during the regime.⁷³ Demographer Marek Sliwinski’s figure is about 40 percent.⁷⁴ Political scientist Steve Heder’s figures on the death toll attributed to execution was about 33 percent among the “new people” and 50 percent among the “base people.”⁷⁵ Applying Kiernan’s and Sliwinski’s percentages to the 1.7 million deaths would mean that roughly 527,000 to 680,000 people were executed during the regime.

Execution was common at most of the Khmer Rouge security centers above the subdistrict level. As noted above, the numbers of victims executed at some district and region security centers were much greater than at S-21 in Phnom Penh.

While the CPK’s Central Committee issued instructions to punish small transgressions (e.g., stealing food) by “educational instruction” or “reeducation,” those classified as “enemies” were to be eliminated. Evidence of the Khmer Rouge’s preference for the latter method is found in its slogan: “Executing in confusion ten innocent persons is better than releasing a single guilty one.”⁷⁶ Vann Nath used this slogan to illustrate the Khmer Rouge’s rationale for killing several members of his village. In 1976, he lived in Au Tany village in Battambang province, where there was a campaign to arrest a teacher named Nhanh. The Khmer Rouge arrested everyone in the village with the name Nhanh, including a water carrier and electrician.⁷⁷

Documents from the Tram Kak district reeducation center show that almost every subdistrict chief in Tram Kak reported to the district committee and center chief about former Lon Nol soldiers and their families. For example, according to a 1977 report by Chun, chief of Popel subdistrict, 106 families of Lon Nol soldiers (393 people) had been arrested in his subdistrict and sent to the Tram Kak district reeducation center.⁷⁸ If each of Tram Kak’s 10 subdistricts held as many Lon Nol families as Popel, it is fair to estimate that nearly 4,000 Lon Nol soldiers or policemen and their families may have been arrested and sent to the Tram Kak district reeducation center alone as of May 1977.

The executions of enemies during Democratic Kampuchea were of two types:

- 1) Executions immediately following arrest, which were decided by the chief of the region, district and subdistrict or the cooperative committee immediately after 17 April 1975.
- 2) Executions after arrest, detention, and confession at a DK security center from late 1975 to late 1978.

The CPK Central Committee issued political principles and instructions that led to the executions. It then distributed these instructions to all the levels below it throughout the country for implementation. In the implementation stage, the lines of communication formed a sort of circuit, with instructions, reports, and decisions coming from the top to the lower levels, and information on arrests, detentions, interrogations, confessions, and executions being transmitted continuously from the lower levels up to *Angkar*. The structure of this circuit was codified in Chapter 3 of the Party's regulations. It specified that each level of the lower echelons must report to the upper echelon on its situation and all of its activities, while the upper echelon was to transmit instructions and information on the general situation to the lower echelons.⁷⁹

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Everything is related. Everything evolves. Everything that evolves goes from low to high, from small to large, both in quantity and quality. Everything involves contradictions.⁸⁰

Reporting

CPK regulations specified that security centers must operate and communicate with one another without any gaps. "All levels of Party organization must implement missions among the masses and must report on the situation and missions that they carry out at specified intervals."⁸¹ Communications among levels were conveyed through a range of means, including reports on various organizational decisions, study sessions, magazines, and documents. These communications covered such topics as security issues, Party-assigned tasks, and military, agricultural, and other activities. A daily report provides an example:

Respects to the Beloved 870 Committee. We request to report a number of situations as follows: 1) On the enemies boring from within. During this dry season some enemies remain and have raised their heads again to act against us in the agricultural site areas ... We know their faces clearly and have swept them clean in stages. Today the situation is quiet, the soldiers and policemen and a number of officials fled after we smashed about twenty of them. We are acting to arrest them.⁸²

Chain of Command for Executions

The CPK Central Committee delegated autonomous rights to every region, zone, and ministry to plan and make decisions in defending the revolution. Among these was a 30 March 1976 CPK decision to delegate the power to “smash” enemies throughout the country. It gave autonomous decision-making authority to the following bodies:

- At the base-level structures (subdistricts and districts, regions, and zones), decisions rested with the zone standing committee, which was made up of members of the zone Party. The zone Party, in turn, comprised members of the region and zone committees. (However, it also seems plausible that the zone standing committee could delegate execution rights to the base-level centers.)
- Around the Party Center, decisions rested with the central party committee.
- At the independent region, the central Standing Committee [whose members included Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, and Ta Mok] had decision-making authority.⁸³
- For the central army, the general staff (whose members included Minister of State Security Son Sen, Ta Nath, and Ta Pin) made decisions.⁸⁴

Pol Pot believed that delegating these rights to a lower level made a contribution to national stability. He declared, "Our security is the public security guaranteed by the people themselves. It is our policy that prevents insecurity from occurring. Meaning that the people solve conflicts large and small and first, among themselves in their own sphere."⁸⁵

End Notes

²⁰ Pol Pot, "View on the Current Situation of the Revolution of Kampuchea," Documentation Center of Cambodia D02180.

²¹ *Notebook*, Documentation Center of Cambodia KNH 187.

²² *Notebook*, Tuol Sleng TSL N97 (held at DC-Cam).

²³ The channels of communication between the upper- and lower-level security centers documented here may help fill a gap in David Chandler's book *Voices from S-21*, in which the author states that he did not know clearly about the relations between the arrests and transport of prisoners from the base areas to S-21. Op. cit., p. 80.

²⁴ "Conversations of Pol Pot with the Delegation of the Belgium-Kampuchea Society, 5 August 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00108.

²⁵ "Content," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00484.

²⁶ Locard, Henri, "The Khmer Rouge Gulag 17 April 1975 - 7 January 1979" (unpublished, 1998).

²⁷ DC-Cam mass grave mapping teams investigate security centers, killing sites and mass graves, primarily at the district, region and zone levels. Generally, they do not study lower-level security centers (subdistricts) because there were very few executions there.

²⁸ "Statement of the CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13311.

²⁹ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit.

³⁰ Chandler, David, *Voices from S-21*, op. cit. p. 43.

³¹ "Feudalist, meaning mandarin, [is an] official or royal who has the power to oppress the people and who has tens of thousands of hectares of land. Capitalist means one with much property who spends extravagantly and knows no needs." *Notebook of Comrade Ieu Pech, 1975*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D00713.

³² "17th Anniversary of Independence Day," Documentation Center of Cambodia D21464.

³³ "Confession of Chou Chet, Secretary of the West Zone," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00456.

³⁴ "Statement of the CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark," op. cit.

³⁵ "Confession of Bam Oeun," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00215.

³⁶ Population figures for 1977 were taken from *The Party's Four-Year Plan*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D00591.

³⁷ *Honorary Red Flag*, Issue 4, April 1978, op. cit.

³⁸ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit.

³⁹ *Honorary Red Flag*, Issue 4, April 1978, op. cit.

⁴⁰ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit. See also David Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, op. cit, p. 44.

⁴¹ *Notebook of a Foreign Ministry Cadre*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D00588.

⁴² *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), Documentation Center of Cambodia D00075.

⁴³ *Notebook of Comrade Khin Sauphan*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21726.

⁴⁴ *Notebook of a Foreign Ministry Cadre*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ “Memorandum of a Meeting of Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Divisions on Enemies Trending Toward Class Politics and Independent Regiments Chaired by Comrade Son Sen [DK minister of national security], 1 March 1977,” Documentation Center of Cambodia L00045.

⁴⁶ *Notebook of a Foreign Ministry Cadre*, op. cit.

⁴⁷ Deputy Party Secretary Nuon Chea made several statements to the effect that the revolutionary combatant’s participation in sweeping the enemy clean meant participating in the national defense and the building of socialism. He noted that the duty of DK cadres and soldiers was to “find and destroy the enemy...suppress and smash the enemies of revolutionary cadres in order to defend the party and build the nation.” “Statement of the CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark,” op. cit.

⁴⁸ “By late 1975, *Angkar* had plans to move the people who had been moved from Phnom Penh to Srei Santhor district in Region 22 of the East Zone on to the North Zone. After that move to the North, we wrote another letter in September 1975 to Comrade Sreng to have him uncover another group of soldiers who were their siblings and friends.” “Confession of Young Peou, Chief of Security for Region 106,” Documentation Center of Cambodia J03824. The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum also houses a map of the evacuation.

⁴⁹ “Brief History of Our Revolutionary Movement of 17 April (1975),” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00712.

⁵⁰ “Notes of the Meeting of Secretaries and Deputies of Divisions and Independent Regiments, 9 October 1976,” Documentation Center of Cambodia L01500.

⁵¹ “Statement of the CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark,” op. cit.

⁵² Party members and Khmer Rouge cadres alike were given “revolutionary names” that were generally one syllable in length (here, denoted by aka). Multi-syllable names were regarded as a sign that a person was a member of the bourgeois.

⁵³ “Confession of Em Min, called Sen,” Documentation Center of Cambodia J00374.

⁵⁴ Heder, Stephen, interview with Ieng Sary, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Democratic Kampuchea, 17 December 1996.

⁵⁵ Author and Vannak Huy’s interview with Phe Phai Pheap, called Hor, former deputy of the 704th Special Forces Battalion, 703rd Division, at Kraing Yaur subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 16 October 2001.

⁵⁶ Author’s interview with Toy (an alias assigned by the author because this source would not agree to the publication of his name), former Kampeng subdistrict militia chief, at Prey Kabass district, Takeo province, 8 May 2001.

⁵⁷ During the DK regime, subdistricts, districts, regions, and zones (see Appendix B) were governed by two-member committees under the command of a secretary. The committees were responsible for both economic and military (security) matters. However, the word “committee” in this monograph generally refers to the committee in charge of security matters.

⁵⁸ *Notebook of a Foreign Ministry Cadre*, op. cit.

⁵⁹ Ser, Sayana (compiler), “Selected Khmer Rouge Slogans” (Documentation Center of Cambodia, unpublished, 1999).

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Author’s interviews with San Soeum, former Rumlech subdistrict militia chief, at Rumlech subdistrict, Bakan district, Pursat province, 31 January 2002; and Sien, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

⁶² Cambodian Genocide Program, Yale University, Documentation Center of Cambodia, and University of New South Wales. *The Cambodian Genocide Databases*, Records Y01062, mfn 515. Sydney: UNSW, version 1.2, August 1999. See also BK.PPR.PP.347.

⁶³ “Statement of the CPK to the Labor Party of Denmark,” op. cit.

⁶⁴ “Notes of the Meeting of Secretaries and Deputies of Divisions and Independent Regiments, 9 October 1976,” op. cit. Pol Pot, perhaps to soften the image of Democratic Kampuchea for European audiences, named only two categories, and spoke in terms of reeducation rather than punishment: “Those with ordinary faults must produce with the people. Consistent perpetrators must produce in separate work or agricultural sites to rebuild themselves.” “Conversations of Pol Pot with the Delegation of the Belgium-Kampuchea Society, op. cit.

⁶⁵ “Instructions of the CPK Central Committee Regarding Political Policy toward those Who in Confusion Joined the CIA or became Agents of the Yuon, or Joined the KGB to Oppose the Revolution and Democratic Kampuchea,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D01399.

⁶⁶ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Conversations of Pol Pot with the Delegation of the Belgium-Kampuchea Society, 5 August 1978,” op. cit.

⁷⁰ David Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, 1999, op. cit, pp. 120-121.

⁷¹ *Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21447.

⁷² Several memoranda and telegrams of Khmer Rouge cadres allude to the death penalty. For example, Production Unit 870 described the capture of 209 Vietnamese soldiers who had hidden inside Cambodian territory. The unit requested that *Angkar* decide on the executions. “Request the opinion of *Angkar*. Production Unit 870 proposes immediate high-level (punishment). I await approval to carry this out.” “Telegram 07 (545) of Production Unit 870 written by comrade Vy to *Angkar*, with copies to comrades Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary, Vorn, Khieu, center and files,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D01649.

⁷³ Kiernan, Ben, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 456. See also Craig Etcheson, “The Number,” op. cit.

⁷⁴ Sliwinski, Marek, *Le Genocide Khmer Rouge: Une Analyse Demographique* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1995), table 11, p. 82. See also Craig Etcheson, “The Number,” op. cit.

⁷⁵ Heder, Steve, personal communication.

⁷⁶ Author’s, Osman Ysa’s and Sorya Sim’s interview with Vann Nath, called Heng Nath, former S-21 prisoner, at Phnom Penh, 1999.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ In closing his report, Chun noted that there were still 231 families (872 members) of Lon Nol soldiers left in the subdistrict.

⁷⁹ “Content,” Documentation Center of Cambodia, op. cit.

⁸⁰ *Notebook of Comrade Srey Hun*, “The Theory of Cause and Effect,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D21835.

⁸¹ *Notebook*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21701.

⁸² “Telegram 313 (502), Comrade Se to 870 Committee, 20 March 1978, copy to Uncle Nuon [Nuon Chea], Brother Van [Ieng Sary], Bother Vorn [Vorn Vet], office and documents,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D02074.

⁸³ “Note on the Decisions of the Central Party on Miscellaneous Matters,” op. cit.

⁸⁴ Ieng Sary told Stephen Heder that the decisions to arrest and kill people in the zones were the personal decisions of the secretary and zone committee. "In the Southwest Zone, Ta Mok made the decisions to arrest, to kill immediately; he did not ask anyone else." Heder, Steve, interview with Ieng Sary, *op. cit.*

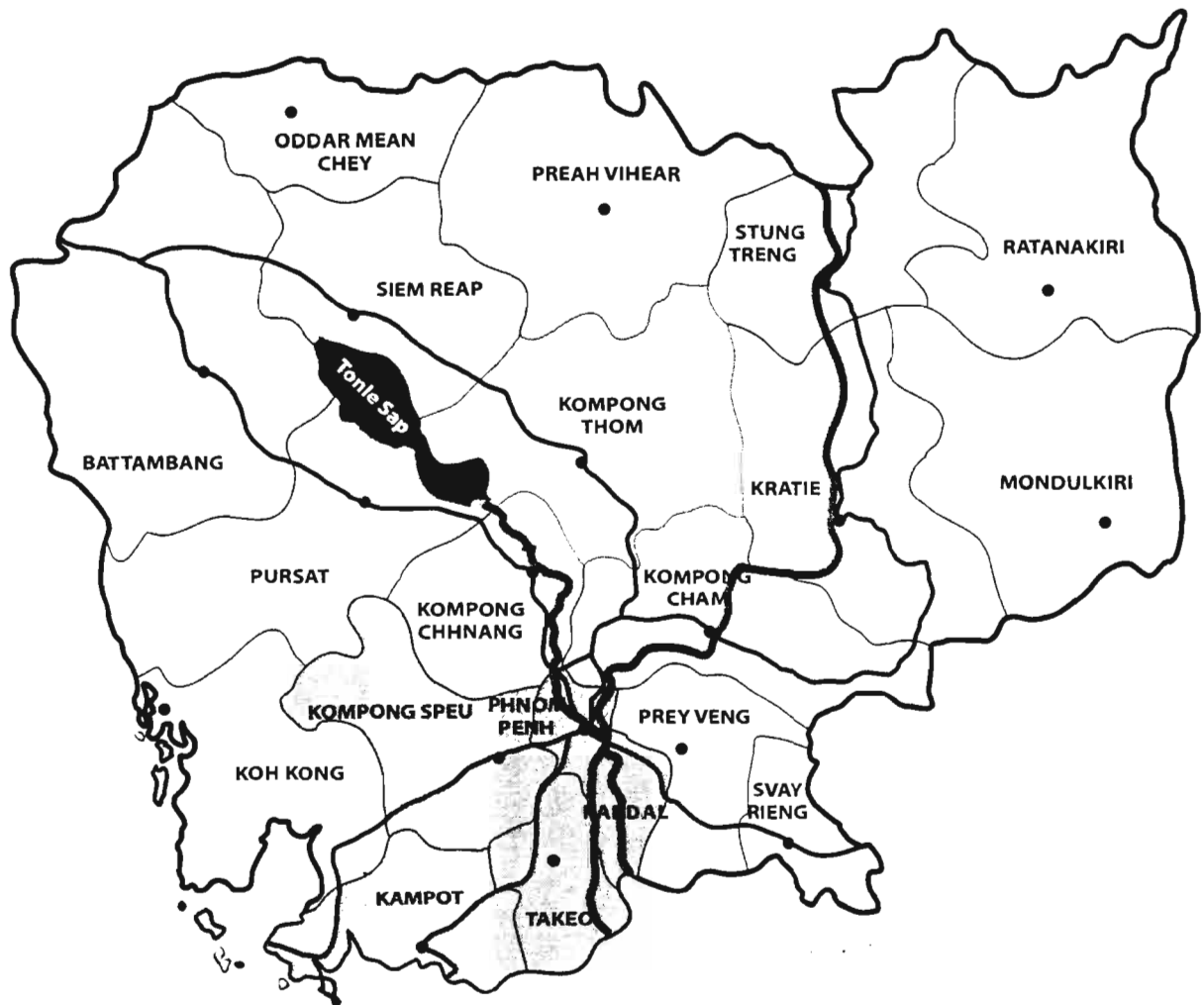
⁸⁵ "Conversations of Pol Pot with the Delegation of the Belgium-Kampuchea Society, 5 August 1978," *op. cit.*

2

THE SOUTHWEST ZONE

Under the supervision of some comrade division commanders, we took about 200 rifles from the [Lon Nol] police and soldiers. The Southwest is the best.⁸⁶

Pol Pot



The Southwest Zone (gray area)

The Khmer Rouge praised the Southwest Zone perhaps more than any of the other five zones of Democratic Kampuchea (the North, East, West, Northeast and Northwest). Their regard for this zone extended to both the “period of political strife” (1970-1975) and the period after the 17 April 1975 “liberation.” As a token of the nation’s gratitude, the Southwest Zone received an Honorary Red Flag award for its work in 1976, which included the outstanding output of its paddy fields and the revolutionary fervor of its people.⁸⁷

GEOGRAPHY

The Southwest Zone contained tropical forests and agricultural lands to the southwest of Phnom Penh. One of the more densely populated areas of Kampuchea, its 1977 population was 1,500,000, primarily ethnic Khmers.

Regions

Like other geographic units of Democratic Kampuchea, the Southwest Zone did not follow the political lines of demarcation established by the French. It contained four regions, which encompassed all or parts of four pre-existing provinces.⁸⁸

Region 13. This region, which encompassed five districts of present-day Takeo province, contained Norkor Phnom, where the Khmer empire was founded in the first century. It is regarded as the heart of Khmer culture and civilization. The region's vast temples, which were built immediately after the Angkor era, include the 14th century Bati temple.

The primary occupation in Region 13 was growing rice (it had the second-highest productivity in the country). Many of its people also cultivated palm sugar.

Between 1970 and 1975, the Khmer Rouge established three bases in Region 13:

- Trapang Thom village (Trapang Thom subdistrict)
- Cheang Tang village (Cheang Tang subdistrict)
- Damrey Romeal mountain in Tram Kak district.

The region became well known for its leaders and services for the Party, and was thought to be an ideal of Khmer Rouge society. The author's search of Khmer Rouge records revealed, for example, that more soldiers were recruited from Regions 13 and 25 to work at S-21 than any other. Southwest Zone Secretary Ta Mok was born and raised in Takeo province.

Region 25. This region encompassed five districts of Kandal province. Its main sources of employment were fishing and cultivation. The living standard and educational levels of its people were about the same as in Region 35, but much higher than in Regions 13 and 33. Vast numbers of Region 25 children

served the Khmer Rouge revolution, largely to help save and restore Sihanouk's throne and in reaction to the U.S. bombardment of the region's villages during the war in Vietnam.

Between 1970 and 1975, the Khmer Rouge established six bases in Region 25:

- Svay Chau village (Koh Khel subdistrict)
- Seda village (Vihea Sau subdistrict)
- Kampong Chamlang village (Kampong Chamlang subdistrict)
- Sa-ang district
- Thnaot village
- Khsach Kandal district.

Region 33. This region covered six districts of Kampong Speu province. It was full of paddy fields and mountains. In addition to cultivation, palm sugar was a main occupation of its people.

During 1970-1975, the Khmer Rouge established three bases in Region 33:

- Brambey Mom subdistrict
- Oral subdistrict
- Chreav subdistrict.

Region 35. This region encompassed five districts of Kampot province. Its people made their living predominantly by fishing and cultivation. This region also had a number of tourism sites in the mountains and along the seacoast.

Between 1970 and 1975, the Khmer Rouge established six bases in Region 35:

- Prey Veng village (Sre Khnong subdistrict)
- Trapang Thom village (Sre Khnong subdistrict)
- Damnak Snuol village (Sre Khnong subdistrict)
- Prey Chek village (Sre Khnong subdistrict)
- Damnak Changkrang village (Sre Khnong subdistrict)
- Sre Cheng subdistrict.

Districts and Subdistricts

The regions of the Southwest Zone were further divided into districts and subdistricts:

- Region 13: 5 districts, 50 subdistricts
- Region 25: 5 districts, 61 subdistricts
- Region 33: 6 districts, 74 subdistricts
- Region 35: 5 districts, 40 subdistricts.

Southwest Zone Political Divisions*

Region Number, Province Name (Headquarters)	District Number and Name	Number of Subdistricts
13		
Takeo (Takeo)		
	105. Tram Kak	10
	106. Angkor Chey	6
	107. Treang	16
	108. Koh Andet	7
	109. Kiri Vong	11
25		
Kandal (Ta Khmao)		
	14. Leuk Dek	8
	16. Kean Svay	13
	18. Koh Thom	10
	20. Sa-ang	15
	154. Kandal Stung	15
33		
Kampong Speu (Kampong Speu)**		
	51. Srong (now Baset)	10
	52. Kong Pisey	10
	53. Tram Khna (now Thpong)	11
	54. Samrong	10
	55. Prey Kabass	18
	56. Bati	15
35		
Kampot (Kampot)		
	Prey Noup***	5
	72. Chhouk	10
	78. Dang Tung	9
	77. Kampong Trach	9
	75. Touk Meas (now in Chhouk district)	7

* Today, the number of subdistricts and districts differ somewhat, as many subdistricts and villages have been relocated to a new district.

** The Kampong Speu districts of Samrong, Prey Kabass, and Bati are now situated in Takeo province, while Kampot province's Prey Nup district lies in Sihanoukville. The Angkor Chey district of Takeo province is now in Kampot province.

*** The number of this district could not be determined. It was described as an area of many Khmer Rouge defectors. Author's interview with Ung Nak, at Koh Sla, Ta Ken subdistrict, Chhuok district, Kampot province, 5 May 2004.

CHARACTERIZATION OF SECURITY CENTERS

As for the enemy situation, they must absolutely be removed. The "free" groups must be assembled in one unit to produce. The "involved" groups must be reeducated and gathered in one place.⁸⁹

According to DK officials, the Southwest Zone held 250 security centers:⁹⁰ 225/ at the subdistrict level, 21 at the district level, 3 at the regional level, and 1 at the zone level.⁹¹ As in the rest of the country, the zone's security centers were created for the purposes of detaining, reeducating, interrogating and executing prisoners.⁹²

Generally, fewer prisoners were held at the lower (subdistrict) level, with the number increasing at the higher-level centers. Of course, because there were more centers at the lower levels, these centers also held more prisoners in total. However, torture, interrogation, and executions were more frequent at the mid-level security centers. Execution rates at the zone center were low because it functioned as a hard labor camp, primarily for the relatives of people who had already been arrested and executed.

Subdistrict Militia Centers

The subdistrict militia centers were populated by those who had committed such minor offenses as stealing small amounts of fruit, laziness, and inactivity. Most of these centers served as temporary detention. A few did not hold prisoners, but sent people to work at the hard labor sites. Typically, three to ten prisoners (who *Angkar* called "free people") were held at a time in these centers, guarded by three to four subdistrict cadres.⁹³

When the prisoners were first taken to the subdistrict militia center, they were interrogated and reports were written on them. At this stage, the interrogations did not generally involve heavy beatings or other excessive treatment. Although the prisoners were locked in their cells, not all of them were shackled. In the

hard labor sites, prisoners sometimes had to work until midnight before they were allowed to return to the center.⁹⁴

Prisoners at the subdistrict militia centers generally faced one of two possible fates: 1) they were released after a period of reeducation through labor or 2) they were sent to the district reeducation center (on occasion, these centers were also used as transit facilities for prisoners who were being sent to district security centers). The reason for releasing prisoners and returning them to their unit or cooperative was that they had "passed" their reeducation training and were perceived to have developed and transformed themselves for the better. If they were sent on to the district reeducation center, it was because they were seen as unaltered.⁹⁵

District Reeducation Centers

These ironically-named centers were under the control of region and district *Angkar* and the center chief, and were used to imprison people (often, soldiers and policemen accused of being enemies of *Angkar*). Generally, 10 to 15 cadres worked in a reeducation center, which housed 80 to 400 prisoners at a time.⁹⁶ The functions of these centers included imprisoning, interrogating, and executing prisoners.

The cells at the reeducation centers were divided into separate areas for light and serious offenders. Light offenders performed such economic tasks as planting rice or cooking during the daytime, while at night, they were shackled in large cells. Serious offenders were held in small cells that were separated from those of light offenders, and were chained continually in rows of 15 to 20 persons. Their foot shackles consisted of a long bar about the diameter of a thumb, which was passed through a U-shaped bar with hooks on each end. Their arms remained free. The rations at these facilities consisted of thin rice gruel, served once at noon and again in the late afternoon.

Children who were arrested with their parents were held in their mothers' cells. Because their mothers were considered enemies of *Angkar*, they were held in tight-fitting foot shackles, but the children were not confined. Numerous interviews with people who had been held in these centers as children show that they were in a constant state of fatigue, hunger, and illness.

It is probable that most of the people sent to these centers died, with the number of deaths fluctuating according to the number of prisoners in a center.

The main causes of death were: 1) being killed during interrogation (torture) or dying shortly thereafter as a result, 2) illness or exhaustion, 3) starvation, and 4) execution. The primary implements of death included knives, swords, axes, hoes, cart axes, and bamboo clubs. Generally, the executions started in the evening and continued until midnight.

Region Security Centers

These centers were run by the region committee and the security center chief. Like the district reeducation center, the region security center was used to imprison, interrogate, and execute people, the majority of whom were Khmer Rouge cadres accused of conspiring to commit treason, former soldiers, or policemen of the Lon Nol regime. These centers also housed prisoners sent from the district reeducation centers. But unlike the latter, the regional centers held largely high-level offenders, who were termed "enemies of *Angkar*."

A region security center typically held between 200 and 800 prisoners,⁹⁷ with light and serious offenders housed in separate areas. The conditions at these centers were very much like those at the district centers, except that the rooms for serious offenders held more prisoners (20 to 30 at the region centers vs. 15-20 at the district centers). The causes of death were identical.

The Southwest Zone Security Center

This center, which was called Phnom Sanlong, was located in Sanlong village, Treang district, Takeo province. It was created in 1976 to imprison Khmer Rouge cadres accused of rebellion, as well as their wives, children, and other relatives, who were subsequently also accused of being enemies of *Angkar*. The Phnom Sanlong center was under the command of the security center chief and the Secretary of the Southwest Zone, Ta Mok.⁹⁸



Ta Mok with his Chinese associates

Ta Mok

Ung Choeun or Chhit Choeun, also known by his revolutionary names – Ta Mok and Ta 15 – was secretary of the Southwest Zone. He was born in 1926 in Prakiep village of Takeo province. His father Ung Preak and mother Touch Soch had eight children; Ta Mok was the eldest.

Ta Mok attended a village school in Trapang Thom subdistrict. At the age of 15, he moved to Phnom Penh to continue his studies and live with his father, who was the chief of monks at the Moha Man Trey temple. Ta Mok was awarded a *preahtraipedok* certificate for having completed monk's secondary school. He then married Uk Khoem, with whom he had four daughters.

In 1949, Ta Mok became the chief of the Issarak movement in Tram Kak district. He joined the Indochinese Communist Party in 1950 and its Central Committee in 1963. In 1968, he became secretary of the Southwest Zone and in 1971 a member of the Standing and Military Committees of the CPK. In 1978, Ta Mok was appointed second deputy secretary of the Party Central Committee. While secretary of the Southwest Zone, he appointed several of his family members and neighbors to important positions in Tram Kak district.

After Deputy CPK Secretary Nuon Chea, Ta Mok probably played the most important role in defending the Party, especially in security matters. DC-Cam holds hundreds of pages of "confessions and reports" implicating Ta Mok in the purge process. For example, at least five S-21 prisoners' confessions have handwritten notations instructing that a copy of a confession be sent to Ta Mok, indicating a prisoner was to be arrested and sent to S-21.

On 6 March 1999, Ta Mok was captured by the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces and sent to a military court prison in Phnom Penh on charges of rebellion. On 4 March 2002, the Cambodian government decided to hold Ta Mok for an additional three years on charges of crimes against humanity.

Although there are no statistics available on the number of Khmer Rouge cadres who staffed this center, it held 5,000 to 10,000 people. From 1976 to 1979, Phnom Sanlong served as both a hard labor and security center. Those who committed “additional” offenses while at the site, including stealing collective property, attempting to escape, or working at less than an all-out level, were often sent to the security center built north of Phnom Sanlong and executed at the forest nearby.

THE KILLING FIELDS OF THE SOUTHWEST ZONE

DC-Cam’s mass grave mapping teams have located the following sites to date in the Southwest Zone:

Southwest Zone Security, Execution, Mass Grave and Memorial Sites*

Province	Security Centers	Execution Sites	Mass Grave Sites	Memorials
Kampong Speu	4	16	1,400	2
Kampot	8	15	2,366	4
Kandal	17	25	644	9
Takeo	9	22	1,622	8
Total	38	78	6,032	23

* This table includes only security centers that also contained execution sites, mass grave sites, and/or memorials. It does not include subdistrict militia centers.

THE EXECUTION CHAIN

The CPK Central Committee delegated the right to ministries and centers throughout the Southwest Zone to smash the Party’s enemies, explicitly encouraging the systematic arrests and executions of thousands of people.

The ordinary people, along with village and subdistrict chiefs, reported transgressions and enemies up the chain to the district committees. After

reviewing these reports, the district committee made decisions to have people arrested. Light offenders (those not involved with “political trends”) were imprisoned at the subdistrict militia centers for “reforging,” while more serious perpetrators were sent on to the district reeducation centers.

The chiefs of the district reeducation centers detained and interrogated prisoners, sending reports on them and their confessions to the region committees, which in turn issued orders to the district chiefs to execute prisoners. But if the district or region committees felt that a prisoner was involved in a “chain” of conspiracy or treason with the enemy, the prisoner was sent on to the region security centers.

The region security cadres or chief interrogated prisoners and sent reports and confessions to the zone committee. After checking the reports and confessions, the committee ordered the region security chief to carry out the executions. But if the committee felt that a prisoner was involved with enemies of the State or was planning subversive activities relating to the Central Committee, the zone committee reported the case to the Party Central Committee.⁹⁹ This Committee then checked the reports and confessions, and ordered Duch to arrange for S-21 cadres to travel to the zone and take custody of the prisoner.¹⁰⁰

When the prisoners had been arrested and brought to S-21, they were detained and interrogated. Next, S-21 officials sent their reports and the confessions to the Party Central Committee for its inspection. The committee, in turn, reviewed the reports and issued orders to the S-21 committee to execute the prisoners.¹⁰¹

Lists of names that appeared in S-21 confessions were sent to the Party Central Committee. It passed them down so that the zone organization could arrest them. A former S-21 cadre described this process: “Nuon Chea and Son Sen were responsible for important things, including deciding to arrest and kill prisoners.”¹⁰² An S-21 cadre notebook provides more detail: “Those arrested by the Party are of two types: those who acted strongly at the base in all kinds of opposition, freely and constantly communicated outside of the [official] framework, and through our Santebal reports the Party has already clearly followed them.”¹⁰³

On one confession, Son Sen wrote, “This document is most clear that it is related to comrade Mok. The majority is related to Regions 33 and 35. 23 May 1977.” Son Sen inspected the confession and sent it to Brother Nuon: “To Brother Nuon in person.” After checking the confession, Nuon Chea assigned

Ta Mok to arrest those listed as enemies and transport them to S-21. "Extract sent to Ta Mok already," he noted.¹⁰⁴

The table below depicts the responsibilities of the parties in the security chain of the Southwest Zone, as well as their operations and the connections among them.

Operations and Connections among Southwest Zone Security Units

The populace	People who witnessed a misdeed reported it to the chief of a group, unit, village, subdistrict, or cooperative. ¹⁰⁵
Group, unit, village	Received people's reports and passed them on to the subdistrict cooperative committee. ¹⁰⁶ Reported to the subdistrict committee when observing any wrongdoing. ¹⁰⁷ Arrested and transferred prisoners on the orders of the subdistrict or cooperative committee. ¹⁰⁸
Subdistrict and cooperative	Decided on behalf of the group, unit, village or subdistrict chief to arrest prisoners and transport them to the subdistrict militia center. Reported arrests to the district committee. ¹⁰⁹ Arrested and transported prisoners to the district reeducation centers on the orders of the district committee. ¹¹⁰
Subdistrict militia center	Made arrests and imprisoned suspects at the subdistrict militia center. "Reforged" prisoners, and then released them or sent them on to the district reeducation center. ¹¹¹
District	Inspected the reports of the subdistricts and cooperatives. Decided to make arrests and imprison those arrested inside the district reeducation center. ¹¹²
District reeducation center	Imprisoned and interrogated prisoners. Sent reports and prisoners' confessions for examination by the region committee. ¹¹³ Sent prisoners to the region security center.

Region committee	<p>Made decisions on arrests and sent prisoners to the region security center.</p> <p>Examined reports and prisoners' confessions received from the district reeducation center, and issued orders for the chief of the district reeducation center to carry out executions.¹¹⁴</p>
Region security center	<p>Arrested, imprisoned, interrogated, and executed prisoners.</p> <p>Sent prisoners to S-21.¹¹⁵</p> <p>Sent reports and prisoners' confessions to the zone organization for examination.¹¹⁶</p>
Zone committee	<p>Ordered the arrests of people to be imprisoned at the zone security center.¹¹⁷</p> <p>Examined reports and prisoners' confessions made at the region security centers.¹¹⁸</p> <p>Sent reports and confessions made by prisoners to the Central Committee.¹¹⁹</p>
Zone security center	<p>Although the zone security center was not tightly linked to the lower-level security centers, its secretary did receive arrest orders from S-21 and the Party Central Committee.</p>
S-21	<p>Accepted prisoners from the region security centers.</p> <p>Arrested those to be imprisoned, interrogated, and executed.¹²⁰</p> <p>Sent reports and prisoners' confessions to the Party Central Committee for examination.¹²¹</p> <p>Sent lists of enemy names that appeared in confessions to the zone secretary for arrest.¹²²</p>
Party central committee	<p>Examined the confessions of region and S-21 prisoners.</p> <p>Ordered the S-21 cadres to make arrests according to information in prisoner confessions.¹²³</p> <p>Ordered the S-21 committee to take prisoners for execution.¹²⁴</p>

With this as background, the following chapters present details on the operations of all levels of the security centers of the Southwest Zone: the subdistrict militia center, the district reeducation center, the region security center, and the zone security center.¹²⁵ They also discuss the structural and functional connections between the lower and upper echelons of the Zone's security system.

End Notes

⁸⁶ “17th Anniversary of Independence Day,” op. cit.¹

⁸⁷ *Honorary Red Flag, Special Issue, 1977-1978*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21421.

⁸⁸ The following discussion is drawn from “Notes of the Meeting of Secretaries and Deputies of Divisions and Independent Regiments, 9 October 1976,” op. cit.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *DK Geography*, a Khmer Rouge text describing Democratic Kampuchea’s administrative and political geography for Grade 2 (Phnom Penh: DK Ministry of Education, 1977), page 10, and author’s field visits.

⁹¹ While there was also likely a security center at Region 13 (Takeo province), no information could be found on it.

⁹² The Khmer Rouge created reeducation camps for almost every district and region security center for prisoners who had committed light offenses and those released from the security centers. Instead of being sent to their home villages or cooperatives, prisoners were sent on to the reeducation camps where they were required to work in the fields.

Although most people appear to have been arrested on trumped-up charges, occasionally, the accusations were true. For example, Deu Loh was arrested because he intended to flee to Vietnam. He stated that another prisoner, Sarat, really did eat grains of rice that he had broken off rice plants. But when asked why people did such things, Deu Loh explained that it was “due to the pressure and abuse that was always increasing from day to day.” Author’s interview with Deu Loh, former prisoner at Prey Khnang subdistrict center and Region 35 security center, at Prey Khnang subdistrict, Dang Tung district, Kampot province, 20 January 2001.

⁹³ Author’s interview with Sakhan, former Lumchong subdistrict militia center cadre, at Lumchong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 6 May 2001. Author’s interview with Nang, former Thlea Prachum subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Thlea Prachum subdistrict, Koh Andet district, Takeo province, 30 December 2000. Author’s interview with Nhien, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 27 March 2001.

⁹⁴ Author’s interviews with Seng Ly, former base person of Po Chreaneang village, at Po Angkrong subdistrict, Baset district, Kampong Speu province, 6 May 2001; and Mak Tauch, brother of a prisoner at Po Angkrong prison (a subdistrict militia center), at Po Angkrong subdistrict, Baset district, Kampong Speu province, 6 May 2001; Prum Nai, former crop and fodder transporter of Wat Champa, at Ang Popel subdistrict, Kong Pisey district, Kampong Speu province, 10 September 2001; and Deu Loh, op. cit.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Author’s interview with Thuon, former Treang district reeducation center cadre, at Roneam subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 December 2000; Huoy, former Treang district

reeducation center cadre, at Roneam subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 December 2000; Sok Chantha, called Duch, former Tram Kak district reeducation center typist cadre, at Udomsoriya subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2000; Soy Sen, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001; and Saut Saing, former Tram Kak district reeducation center cadre, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 1 October 2001. See also Tram Kak district reeducation documents held at DC-Cam.

⁹⁷ It is impossible to know the exact number of prisoners held at the region security centers as no records or other documents on them have been located. However, according to interviews with former prisoners and cadres of such centers, they held hundreds of prisoners at a time.

A deputy secretary of Center 24 (Prey Sar) stated that: "There were more than 1,000 prisoners held in the Region 22 security center of the East Zone." "Confession of You Pengry, called Mon, Deputy Chief of Center 24," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00047.

⁹⁸ A fourth-grade text describes this facility as a "hell-on-earth, a site of tragedy, and a mass grave for students, young men, and women." "Torture at the Phnom Sanlong Prison," *Grade 4 Schoolbook* (Phnom Penh: Peoples Republic of Kampuchea, Ministry of Education, 1980).

⁹⁹ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit. "Confession of Moeng Teng, called Moeng Samnang, Chief of the Region 25 Security Center," Tuol Sleng M122; "Confession of Kuong Kien, called Vet, Secretary of 631st Battalion, 63rd Regiment, 164th Division," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00300; "Confession of Tim Sen, called Sit, Secretary of Koh Thom District," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00141; "Confession of Pen Mut, Division 502 Cadre," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00855; "Confession of Sao Than, called San, Center Cadre," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00328; "Confession of Thou Hai, Saw Mill Worker," Documentation Center of Cambodia J00043; and "Confession of Saom Chea, called Chea, Secretary of Region 25, 25 May 1978," Tuol Sleng S214.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. An S-21 messenger unit was staffed by 62 comrades, 42 guards, 8 catchers, 10 drivers, and 2 nurses. *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), op. cit. Khieu Ches and Him Huy used to travel to the provinces to arrest prisoners. Ches explained that the catcher comrades usually went out to arrest prisoners in Jeeps. Author's interview with Khieu Ches, called Peou, former S-21 cadre, at Baribo district, Kampong Chhnang province, 17 December 1999.

¹⁰¹ Among the members of the CPK (Nuon Chea, Son Sen, Ta Mok, and Yun Yath, with Pol Pot as secretary), deputy secretary Nuon Chea was the most active and decisive in Central Committee security matters. Twenty-seven prisoner confessions from a number of regions were found at S-21 that were marked for transmittal to Nuon Chea. One was for Pol Pot, two for Ieng Sary, seven for Ta Mok, four for North Zone Secretary Ke Pauk, and seven for 502 Division Chief Sou Met. See, for example, "List and the translation of the cover pages of the 'at risk' documents bearing signatures, and notes of the Khmer Rouge leaders," Documentation Center of Cambodia, n.d.

¹⁰² Author's interview with Khieu Ches, op. cit.

¹⁰³ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), op. cit.

¹⁰⁴ "Confession of Kuong Kien," op. cit.

¹⁰⁵ Author's interviews with Lim Teng, former Popel subdistrict cadre, at Popel subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2000; Teng, former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Dach subdistrict, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province, 4 July 2001; Seng Ly, op. cit; and Mak Tauch, op. cit.

The Khmer Rouge's cooperatives began to be formed as early as the 1970s, and encompassed one or more subdistricts by 1977-1978 (for example, a district that contained five subdistricts in 1976 might hold four cooperatives in 1978). In some cases, however, subdistricts continued to exist in 1977-1979.

¹⁰⁶ People were trained by the Party to secretly report acts of theft and non-revolutionary speech to the chiefs of groups, units, and villages. Sometimes people copied the reports and used them as models in the hope of currying favor with their unit or group chiefs, or to help settle a personal score. For further information, see "Report of the Reeducation Chief to Tram Kak District Angkar," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00205.

Author's interviews with Teng and Seng Ly, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ District 105 Reeducation Documents, Documentation Center of Cambodia D00206, D00216, D00218, D00219, D00220, D00222, D00229, D00231, D00232, D00235, D00236, D00238, D00239, D00241, D00243, D00244, D00245, D00250, D00258, D00261, D00262, D00263, D00264, D00268, D00269, D00272, D00277, D00287.

Author's interviews with: Teng, op. cit; Nho, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001; Samnang, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001; Soy Sen, op. cit.; Sok Chantha, called Duch, op. cit.; Neang Dam, former cadre and prisoner at the Tram Kak district reeducation center, Udomsoriya subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2000; and Thuon, op. cit.

¹¹⁰ "To Brother An," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00278; and "To Brother San," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00282.

¹¹¹ Author's interviews with Deuk, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center deputy chief, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 May 2001; and Nhien, op. cit.

¹¹² Documentation Center of Cambodia D00026, D00217, D00242, D00248, D00255, D00266, D00276, D00285, and D00288.

¹¹³ Documentation Center of Cambodia D00211, D00270, and D00273.

¹¹⁴ "Confession of Sek Sat, called Prak, Secretary of Region 25, 7 November 1978," Tuol Sleng S326; and "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Author's interviews with Lach Mao, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Po Ban subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001; and Chan Vooun, former Region 25 security center cadre, at Koh Thmei subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 12 September 2001.

¹¹⁶ "Confession of Sek Sat," op. cit.

¹¹⁷ On 2 April 1976, Pok reported to comrades Nuon Chea and Pol Pot on the situation in the North Zone. "As for the activities of these enemies, the zone has taken measures by instructing the regions to be on alert and inspect all these activities. Specifically, we arrested these people, all of whom were formerly cooperative chiefs..." "Report of Comrade Pok, Telegram 27," Documentation Center of Cambodia N01187.

Some examples of communications in regard to arrests at this level include Ta Mok, who ordered Region 25 Secretary Saom Chea to arrest all the rebel contacts of senior Region 25 comrades Sok Botchamroeun and Huot Se so that all of them could be smashed. Also, during 1972, when Region 25 was under the authority of the Special Zone, Brother "K," chief of the Special Zone headquarters center, had several communications with Ta Chey in the regional headquarters center regarding Chuon Bon, a resident of Prey Toteung village, Sa-ang district, who had incited villagers to drive Vietnamese soldiers out of their village. Together, they determined that this action was divisive of Kampuchean-Vietnamese solidarity. According to Ta Chey, "he had me investigate and arrest Chuon Bon, and take him to security for interrogation on the case. I carried out those instructions and arrested Chuon Bon, and took him for detention and interrogation under the accusation that he was an enemy of *Angkar*. I arrested Chuon Bon in July 1972." "Confession of Saom Chea," op. cit.

¹¹⁸ "Confession of Sek Sat," op. cit.

¹¹⁹ "Confession of Sao Than," op. cit.; and "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

¹²⁰ Comrade Duch, chief of S-21, wrote the reports and confessions of high-level prisoners held at S-21, and sent them on for examination and decision by the Party Central Committee.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit. "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.; "Confession of Kuong Kien," op. cit.; "Confession of Tim Sen," op. cit.; "Confession of Pen Mut," op. cit.; "Confession of Sao Than," op. cit.; "Confession of Thou Hai," op. cit.; and "Confession of Saom Chea," op. cit.

¹²³ Ibid. Author's interviews with Khieu Ches, called Peou, op. cit.; and Vann Nath, called Heng Nath, op. cit.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ No study has been conducted of arrests in the military divisions or other units outside this structure.

3

THE SUBDISTRICT MILITIA CENTERS



Genocide Memorial in Kraing Ta Chan, Takeo province, 1982

The Southwest Zone contained 225 subdistricts.¹²⁶ Because each of the 165 subdistricts visited during the course of this study had a militia center, it is possible to infer that all 225 subdistricts contained such a center. The sites generally had a building that served as a subdistrict militia center as well as a temporary detention center. A few subdistrict militia centers did not hold prisoners; instead, they sent those accused of “crimes” to work at hard labor sites.

The majority of men and women housed at these locations were base people who had been accused of stealing collectively owned vegetables and fruits, and new or base people who were accused of being apathetic about their duties. The detainees normally faced one of two fates:

- Work at a hard labor site before being released back to their units or cooperatives in the case of prisoners who had undergone a “reforging” period and were seen as having reformed.
- Transfer to the district reeducation center, as prisoners were only temporarily detained at the subdistrict militia center. Those viewed as not

having changed for the better or who remained “unreformed” were sent to labor sites.

CENTER CHARACTERISTICS

The subdistrict militia centers in the Southwest Zone differed from each other in terms of their physical structures and geographical settings. However, they were similar in size and operation. For example:

The Kus subdistrict militia center was located in Ang village and was 4 by 9 meters in size. Its chiefs were Soeun and Yi.¹²⁷

The Lumchong subdistrict militia center was located in Kdol village. The home of a person named Ouen, it was 6 by 10 meters and was controlled by Saroeun, the chief of the Lumchong reeducation center.¹²⁸

The Thlea Prachum subdistrict militia center was located in ROUNG village, at the house of a person named Sok, and was 5 by 9 meters in dimension.¹²⁹

The Sauphy subdistrict militia center was located at the home of a Lon Nol-era captain in Chamkar Daung village, Region 33. The center was surrounded by coconut trees on a 2-hectare site. The concrete building used to hold prisoners was 5 by 8 meters.¹³⁰ This center differed from others of its type because it also functioned as an execution site. The reeducation leaders assigned there were both guards and executioners.

The Po Angkrong subdistrict militia center was located in a mango orchard in Po Chreaneang village of Region 33 (today, it lies in Baset district). This 4 by 6 meter wooden center was run by Neang, the chief of subdistrict reeducation.¹³¹

The Preah Nipean subdistrict militia center was located in Tuol Thnuong village, Kong Pisey district, Region 33 in the house of Tel and Khon. This 5 by 7 meter center was run by subdistrict chief Hean and the chief of subdistrict reeducation, Ham.¹³²

Deu Loh described a typical reeducation center as open, with planked walls on two sides and a thatched roof through which the sky could be seen. Some prisoners spread coconut fronds and other leaves on the floor to make bedding. But even though these structures were somewhat open, those inside had little freedom. Deu Loh recalled that while he was being held in the Prey Khnang

subdistrict militia center during 1977-1979, he saw his child walking past, but could not call out to let him know that he was inside.¹³³

LABOR

Prisoners in the subdistrict militia centers awoke at dawn and were compelled to perform hard labor until dusk. Their work included cutting trees, making charcoal, and planting crops at work sites whose distance from the center varied. The only rest periods were at the noon meal breaks and during the evening, and even these had to be approved by the reeducation cadres.

On occasion, the prisoners worked in ways similar to ordinary laborers, but no contact or communication with the outside was permitted. Conditions were also harsh. Khut described the prisoners he saw plowing rice fields at the Ang Ta Saom subdistrict militia center as “skin and bones.” He stated that the prisoners worked hard and took no rest: while the people in adjacent collectives rested for their noon meal, these prisoners continued working. Khut reasoned that even the people without blame worked very hard, so prisoners must have been forced to work even harder.¹³⁴

The task of guarding prisoners could be compared to an employer watching over hired laborers: ordinarily, guards would stand and watch, issuing orders while the prisoners worked. Nhien, who had been a Sauphy subdistrict cadre, explained that his daily duty was to guard prisoners, while that of the prisoner was to cut trees, gather grass and plant crops. After the work was done, the guards led the prisoners back to the reeducation center and locked them up.¹³⁵

SECURITY

Former prisoners in the Southwest Zone’s subdistrict centers revealed that the prisoners were not guarded very tightly. However, only a very small number of prisoners decided to flee. There are several possible explanations for this:

- Malnourishment and hard labor made people feel that they did not have the physical capacity to escape.
- Prisoners did not trust the reactions of subdistrict militia center cadres: Chea, a former Sauphy subdistrict cadre, explained that prisoners were very afraid of him, even though he never beat or persecuted a single one. He also

stated that the majority of prisoners were eventually released to return to their cooperatives.¹³⁶

- Even if they did escape the subdistrict militia center and make it to a cooperative, prisoners would face the same working conditions there.
- If a prisoner was re-arrested and returned to the reeducation center, the consequences would be worse than simply staying put. Khut stated that such an attempt would be very dangerous, inevitably leading to torture and possibly death for the captured escapee.¹³⁷
- Prisoners feared that reprisal measures would be taken against their family members.

According to Chey Kan, a man named Vou escaped and was re-arrested at his home. Upon returning to the Po Angkrong subdistrict militia center in Baset district, he was beaten to death in front of other prisoners as a lesson.¹³⁸ Samrong subdistrict prisoner Sarat decided not to escape: “Even if I did escape, I did not know where to hide myself. I could not go back to my village and certainly not to any other village. Furthermore, if I fled, I feared my wife and children would not survive.”¹³⁹

Deu Loh agreed, explaining that even though the reeducation centers were somewhat open and seemed escapable, no one dared try: they were too malnourished, too weak from hard labor, did not know where to run, and would be seen by guards who were posted around the center.¹⁴⁰

Some, however, did manage to escape. Kan claimed he ran from the Sauphy subdistrict militia center to Sa-ang district while digging a canal in a swampy forest. He was later recaptured by the Sa-ang district cadres and sent to Bati district, where he was handed over to Phoeung, the district chief. Phoeung sent him to Trapang Kruos subdistrict. Kan stated that Phoeung was later accused of betraying Angkar, arrested, put in a car, and taken away to be executed.¹⁴¹

THE PRISONERS

Prisoners held in a subdistrict militia center were called “the free people” by Minister of State Security Son Sen.¹⁴² Most in this group were base people.¹⁴³ The reasons for their arrests included accusations that they had stolen collectively-owned foodstuffs, were lazy in performing their assigned duties,

had the “rabbit disease,”¹⁴⁴ or had fled from their units and cooperatives to visit their families.¹⁴⁵

People accused of committing such offenses were arrested and brought in for “reforging.” The method of arrest was simply to tell a lie to induce the arrestee to leave his or her cooperative. For example, a subdistrict cadre would tell a prisoner to go to the subdistrict militia center because *Angkar* (the subdistrict cadre chief) needed his or her service. Or “*Angkar* asked you to attend the meeting this evening at the subdistrict militia center.” When prisoners arrived at the center, usually in the evening, the cadres arrested and locked them up. Then subdistrict cadre asked them to confess to a crime. Finally, the cadre wrote a report on each prisoner.¹⁴⁶

The Khmer Rouge Constitution and Son Sen did not consider “the crimes of the free-group people” as being part of a systematic process to betray *Angkar* that were to be punished at the highest level (execution). The sentence for the crime of being “free” was “education and rebuilding within the state organizational framework” and “concentration for reforging.”¹⁴⁷

Occasionally, however, free people were executed for their crimes by subdistrict militia center cadres. Oeun reported that his son Samnang was arrested by subdistrict cadre Khon in 1975 for stealing collectively-owned rice. He was sent to the Lumchong subdistrict center and never heard from again. Oeun assumed that his son was executed, adding that, “He certainly must have died and left me forever.”¹⁴⁸

Chey Kan’s son Vou was also sentenced to death by the Khmer Rouge. Vou was arrested and sent to the Po Angkrong subdistrict militia center on the charge of stealing rice planted in a pond. Kan explained that Vou was executed when he was captured along the road while returning to his home after an escape attempt.¹⁴⁹

FOOD SUPPLY

While Cambodia’s city dwellers traditionally ate three meals a day, the country’s rural people generally ate two, as did the prisoners held in subdistrict militia centers. Prisoners awoke before dawn and worked until 11:30 a.m. or noon before being permitted to stop for a meal. After lunch, they continued work until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. when they were permitted to break for the evening meal. Food at both meals generally consisted of thin rice gruel or morning glory

plants.¹⁵⁰ Nhien, who was a cadre in Sauphy subdistrict, reported that at times prisoners were fed small fish and vegetables that they found and cooked themselves, but this occurred only infrequently and in very small amounts.¹⁵¹ Seng described the food rations of prisoners at Bot Rokar: "The regular rations for the prisoners consisted of one small bowl of thin rice gruel. Sometimes there was salt, sometimes one crab leg divided between four or five persons."¹⁵²

When Tauch learned that his younger brother Tam, who was held in the Po Angkrong subdistrict militia center, did not have enough food, he risked taking Tam a package of rice. When he reached the agricultural work site of Po Angkrong, they were unable to meet since Tam had been dispatched to herd livestock. A prisoner named Ta told Tauch that he had to herd the stock along with Tam, and Tauch could leave the rice for him to pass to Tam. Tauch did this, but the force of Ta's hunger led him to betray his fellow worker Tam.¹⁵³

INTERROGATION AND TORTURE

Interrogation

While interrogation was a major feature of life at other levels of the security system, it was not used extensively at the subdistrict militia centers. Here, inmates tended to be questioned briefly only when they arrived at the center, not repeatedly as they were in the higher-level facilities.¹⁵⁴

Torture

When torture occurred at the subdistrict level, it generally took place during the questioning period when a prisoner arrived at the subdistrict militia center. In addition, a number of prisoners who were seen as not working at full strength or who had dissatisfied reeducation personnel were beaten and tortured.¹⁵⁵

After being arrested and upon arrival at the Samrong subdistrict militia center, Sarat was beaten by the reeducation chief. He recalled: "At first the despicable Chhon tied me in a half-sitting, half-standing position, and then he beat me and questioned me about stealing rice. When I replied that I had not stolen, he gave me a kick, and after that if he asked 'west,' I understood 'east,' and I was confused for seven or eight days."¹⁵⁶

During June 1976, Kan was arrested by two Sauphy subdistrict cadres named Doek and Chea, and taken from Phnom Tauch village to the reeducation center. They hung Kan upside down from a mango tree and beat him with a palm leaf branch while writing their report. The report explained that Kan was charged with two offenses: he had been a Lon Nol soldier and had stolen collectively owned rice.¹⁵⁷ When interviewed, Chea admitted that he beat Kan, but only with a soft palm branch with the leaves removed, and did not beat him hard. "I only hit him for the reeducation chief to observe. If I had not beaten him, the subdistrict reeducation chief would have been looking for trouble and would have executed me for not respecting higher echelon orders."¹⁵⁸

Panh, chief of the Prey Neam subdistrict militia center, ordered Tauch and prisoners in his group to beat a man who had just been arrested and brought in from Prey Neam village. They followed Panh's orders and each clubbed the prisoner three times. Tauch related:

If we had not beat him, they would have beaten us. Panh had us club [the prisoner] hard, and if it was not hard, they would beat him again. I really did hit him, Sir, but I did not want to. Several days later that prisoner was sent on to Wat Cheung Chab, the site of the Treang district reeducation center.¹⁵⁹

Executions

The Khmer Rouge seemed to genuinely seek to reeducate the base people (whom it praised as ideal for its brand of agrarian communism) rather than execute them. While the subdistrict militia centers, which were primarily populated by base people, did experience a far lower rate of execution than the higher-level facilities, the killing of prisoners was not an unknown phenomenon.

Former base people and subdistrict cadres claimed that the Sauphy subdistrict militia center was both a prison and an execution site. Former cadres Hoeun and Chea explained that their reeducation center was located in Chamkar Daung village and housed a killing site, but this site did not execute the type of people held in the subdistrict militia center. Most of those killed were new people and former Lon Nol soldiers and policemen.¹⁶⁰

None of the four former Sauphy subdistrict cadres interviewed for this study confessed to personally participating in any execution, although they admitted

that prisoners were executed there. Nhien, the youngest, denied involvement. He explained that because of his young age, he was not assigned to execute prisoners, only to cook and guard.¹⁶¹ Sakhan denied that their cadres had any execution duties. He explained that the "Deaths of people occurred in the subdistrict militia center, not due to execution, but only due to starvation and various illnesses."¹⁶²

Former subdistrict chief Duk Huoy explained that prisoners in the centers were under a regime of heavy labor with little food, but executions were very rare. The exception was prisoners who committed additional offenses while imprisoned (e.g., escape attempts, theft of food). However, Duk Huoy explained that executions ordered by the subdistrict and cooperative committees became more numerous between 1976 and 1979.¹⁶³

OPERATIONS AND CONTACTS

The factor of the "people's participation" has been a decisive victorious factor in tracking down and arresting concealed enemies during the period since 1976. This experience has been a good one that must be continually implemented to all regions of the nation.¹⁶⁴

An editorial in the magazine *Honorary Red Flag* also explained the basis for the Khmer Rouge victory:

We incite the masses; the masses have confidence and trust. If they trust the ministry committee, they report to the ministry committee. If they are not yet warm toward the ministry committee, they report to the Party Center. These reports are not anonymous. That is, they are fully responsible. According to this experience, the bases may be able to do this as well.¹⁶⁵

Intra-Subdistrict Operations

Any victory the Democratic Kampuchea regime achieved in capturing its enemies at the subdistrict militia centers resulted from the participation of the people and their chiefs, who reported offenders and arrested and sent off prisoners, respectively.¹⁶⁶ In some cases, after the reeducation center chief saw people commit multiple violations, he had them arrested and sent directly to the district center. But in most cases, the subdistrict committee and the reeducation chiefs first examined reports made by the people and the village and unit chiefs.

They then ordered the subdistrict cadres to make arrests.¹⁶⁷

An example is the case of Nhem Mok, who was arrested during March 1977 because he complained of food shortages and forced labor to his fellow worker Soeung. Soeung then reported Nhem Mok's complaints to the subdistrict committee:

According to the report of cadre An, sent to regional *Angkar* describing the arrest of Nhem Mok, the cause was that "He walked around blaming the revolution" and told comrade Soeung that "the matter of three meals a day was not just for a few months because all the plans were always late." Soeung grasped this treasonous activity and reported it immediately. According to his confessions, that is all there is. 8 March 1977.¹⁶⁸

Another event illustrates the chain of reporting within the subdistrict. On 7 March 1978, Thong and Mut were arrested because their unit chief saw them committing an offense and reported them to the subdistrict chief. The report of Cheng, chief of Unit 5, to Chun, chief of Popel subdistrict, described the theft of potatoes by two members of Unit 5. "The youths are named Thong and Mut."¹⁶⁹

Chea was a Sauphy subdistrict cadre. He reported that the subdistrict committee and reeducation chief issued the orders to the reeducation center to arrest people. The arrests were a result of reports made by the people, the group chiefs, village chiefs, and the cooperative committees.¹⁷⁰ Deuk explained that a number of group and village chiefs arrested people under their control whom they observed doing wrong and handed them over to the reeducation chief straightaway.¹⁷¹

Former Popel subdistrict cadre Teng described how he gave the people under his control two or three chances to change their behavior: "As for me personally, when I controlled Chen village, I always instructed my people to try hard in their work. When they committed an offense, I reeducated them myself. I never reported any member of my group to the subdistrict committee."¹⁷²

Subdistrict-District Contacts

On 11 April 1976, Chun, chief of Popel subdistrict, arrested several men and sent them to the subdistrict militia center. Then he reported the arrests to the Tram Kak district chief:

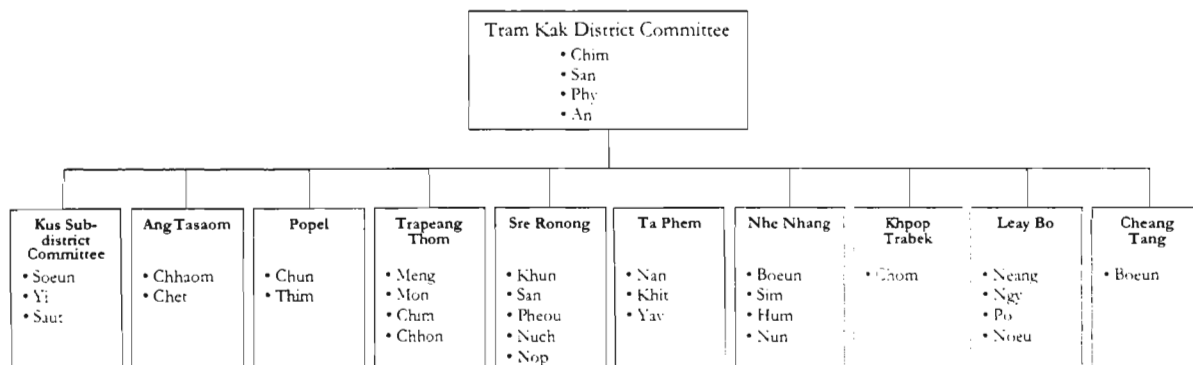
I called into my place an inciting enemy named Lim Song and ranking enemies [former Lon Nol soldiers]. I request *Angkar's* opinions or decisions to be passed down to the base level. As for the speech of this new youth, how does *Angkar* decide? Should I send him, or what? I have brought this new youth, named Lim Song, to my place. As for the ranking ones, I will keep on sending them. As for some teachers and soldiers who are opposing and destroying our revolution, request *Angkar's* opinion or let the base make the decision if that is *Angkar's* opinion. Absolutely determined to smash all espionage to create socialist revolution for the Party and the people. 11 April. Popel Subdistrict (Chun).¹⁷³

In a report dated 4 May 1977, Soeun, the chief of Kus subdistrict, wrote to Tram Kak district concerning the arrest and imprisonment of two first lieutenants of the Lon Nol army. Soeun wrote that after interrogating the two prisoners, he had decided to send them from the Kus subdistrict militia center to Tram Kak district for further interrogation. He noted: "Captured and sent those with rank to special security as named below: 1) Chao Oury (spy chief), Khmer Kroam (second lieutenant), and 2) Bech Nen, military policeman, Khmer (second lieutenant). Questioning shows that [they] left Phnom Penh, but ask that comrade brothers question them further Soeun."¹⁷⁴

The case of Neang Dam provides another example of the contact between security centers at the subdistrict and district levels. A cadre in the Tram Kak district reeducation center from 1973 until 1975, he was reassigned to base-level duties as the result of a "moral" mistake. Later, Neang Dam was arrested and sent back to the Tram Kak center. He was arrested on the report of a man named Hour who had once lived in the same village. Hour, who accused Neang Dam of verbally attacking the revolution, reported this to Boeun, chief of Cheang Tang subdistrict. Hour's report stated that Neang Dam said: "I was once with the special security, and I saw the Party's injustice more than [you did] because I carried it out with my own hands and killed many, could do nothing about it under their state authority. Like Yon in Trapang village, he was loyal to *Angkar* but was taken off and killed."¹⁷⁵ Neang Dam remembered the cause of his arrest: "I thought we were all mutually respecting friends who could speak, but he reported me and imprisoned me. When it all broke up, I looked for him; I could have killed him."¹⁷⁶

RELATIONSHIP OF THE SUBDISTRICT AND DISTRICT REEDUCATION CENTERS

Organization of Tram Kak District and Subdistrict, 1975-1979



Source: Tram Kak district reeducation center documents and author's interviews.

Some of those detained in a subdistrict militia center were held from one day to several months before being sent to a district reeducation center. Those held temporarily fell into two categories: 1) people who were accused of being involved in class and political trends during the Lon Nol regime and 2) prisoners who were judged by the subdistrict chief and the subdistrict reeducation chief as having committed additional offenses during their time at the subdistrict militia center.

Roeun, the Sauphy subdistrict reeducation chief, sent Kun, Phon, and Chak from his center to the Bati district reeducation center. All three were accused of being Lon Nol military. Chak remembered that “Deuk was the one who escorted us to the Bati center.”¹⁷⁷ Responding to Chak’s accusation, Deuk explained, “I took prisoners from the subdistrict to the district twice. I did not know their names, but they did not include Uncle Chak.”¹⁷⁸ Another Sauphy cadre, Nhien, claimed that Deuk was the deputy chief of the Sauphy center. Taking prisoners in or out was the responsibility of the chief and his deputy, and younger cadres like himself did not perform such duties since the reeducation center chief did not trust them. According to Nhien, only a few prisoners were moved from the subdistrict to the district reeducation center.¹⁷⁹ These were generally people the district committees had reported as “serious offenders.”¹⁸⁰

Chhel was arrested and sent to the Ta Lon subdistrict militia center because he could not implement a plan to construct a water wheel and a boat within 10 days; this work entailed cutting 75 cubic meters of wood with 29 other prisoners. Chhel was accused by Hom, a Ta Lon subdistrict cadre, of being in

the KGB and opposing *Ankegar*, saying that Chhel had verbally attacked *Angkar* about cadres destroying a Buddha image at the Po Prek Sleng temple. As a result, Chhel was sent on to the Sa-ang district reeducation center on Koh Kor Island.¹⁸¹ Likewise, as the result of an offense, Kim Vanny was required to dig canals and raise dikes. But later, he cursed a fellow laborer for “having put too much dirt [in Vanny’s basket],” an act that resulted in the subdistrict reeducation chief sending him to the Tram Kak district reeducation center.¹⁸²

An, Chief of the Tram Kak District Reeducation Center

An’s full name was Leng An. He was born in 1938 at Toteung Thngai village, Cheang Tang subdistrict of Takeo province. His subdistrict was adjacent to Trapang Thom Tbaung subdistrict, the home of Ta Mok. While there is no evidence that they knew each other, villagers in nearby rural areas were frequently acquainted. Four of his eleven siblings are alive today, as are three of his four children.

An studied until reaching grade 6. He left school to help his parents, working in the field for a few years before joining the Khmer Rouge revolution in the 1970s at Tram Kak district. An worked in Kean Svay district of Kandal province for a few months before taking charge of the Tram Kak center in early 1975. He died in the forests from malaria sometime during 1979-80.

Source: Author’s interviews with Leng Tong and Leng Meay, An’s elder brother and sister, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 June 2001.

Both Sakhan and Teng, who were cadres in Lumchong and Popel subdistricts, respectively, saw many subdistrict prisoners being sent to the district reeducation center.¹⁸³ They explained that serious violators were not kept at the subdistrict level at all, but were sent directly to the district center.¹⁸⁴ Their claim is supported by documents found in Tram Kak district.¹⁸⁵ The process of sending prisoners from subdistrict militia centers to district reeducation centers was run via a district committee. First, the subdistrict chiefs reported people in their centers to the district committee. After examining the reports, the district committee asked the district reeducation center chief to take prisoners from the subdistrict.

For example, a 4 May 1977 document by Chun reported to the Tram Kak district committee that the relative of an enemy named Than Ny and two youths had escaped and been captured. A communication from Chun, the Popel subdistrict committee chief, to San, chief of Tram Kak district, reads:

Respectfully report to Tram Kak district Angkar as follows:

This female is named Than Ny, age 24 with one child. Born in Phnom Penh. Her father was a teacher. She is the wife of a Khmer Kraom who was sent on 3 April 1977. On 7 March 1978 two youths traveled without a permit. We send these two youths for Angkar to solve; according to our questioning, they fled from Kampong Chhnang. For Angkar's information and receipt. With careful respect. Chun.¹⁸⁶

On the same day he received Chun's report, San decided to send the prisoners to the district reeducation center. He explained to An about the two enemies: "For An's information. These two fled from Vietnam with those other two the other days. 7 March (1978)."¹⁸⁷

Similar reports of the arrest and transfer of prisoners were written in Cheang Tang and Trapang Thom Khang Cheung subdistricts. On 5 August 1978, the respective chiefs, Boeun and Meng, reported on bad elements in their areas to Tram Kak district.¹⁸⁸ Boeun reported on two widows named Nai Chy and Phana: "1) She refuses to do any work. 2) Since July, she fled for one night and two days. These two cannot be trusted, because they have many conflicts."¹⁸⁹ After receiving the two reports from the subdistricts, San ordered district reeducation cadres to make the arrests.

Beloved Comrade Chhoeun

As for the prisoners in Cheang Tang subdistrict, bring any child that cannot be broken away from the mother. If there are any older children, send them to a mobile unit or children's unit there. After questioning them on the entire matter, smash them all. As for the widows from Trapang Thom Khang Cheung, now at comrade Meng's place, smash them.¹⁹⁰

Ang Ta Saom subdistrict chief Chhaom took the opportunity in his agricultural report to ask the opinion of Tram Kak district about two enemies he had arrested, Phuong Phalla and Benn Aun. Both men were detained at the Ang Ta Saom reeducation center. According to Chhaom's report, they had committed the following offense: "breaking open rice bags to steal rice to cook and eat." Chhaom asked Tram Kak, "What is Angkar's decision?" Immediately after receiving Chhaom's report, San decided "As for Phuong Pholla and Benn Aun, I have decided that Elder Brother Chhaom send them to District 105 [Tram Kak district reeducation center]. 18 October 1977. San."¹⁹¹

After receiving orders from the district level, the subdistrict reeducation chiefs immediately began fulfilling their missions. Deuk escorted prisoners from the

Sauphy subdistrict militia center to the Bati district reeducation center. He revealed that the arrests and transport of prisoners to district reeducation centers were carried out on the orders of subdistrict chief Phoeung and the subdistrict reeducation commanders Touch and Roeung. Deuk explained, "Sometimes the orders were prepared by letter and sometimes they were given directly and orally."¹⁹²

Prisoners were sent to the district reeducation centers to be interrogated in order to follow up on their chain of contacts, who would then be arrested and smashed. For example, on 25 October 1977 Pheou, chief of Sre Ronong subdistrict, sent a prisoner to the Tram Kak district *Angkar*. Pheou wrote: "This Chay person has implicated another one, but he refuses to provide the name. So, really question him."¹⁹³

Khon, a military captain "chief resident," was arrested on 14 October 1977 because Chom, chief of Khpop Trabek subdistrict, reported on his history to Tram Kak district committee member Kit.¹⁹⁴ After examining the report, Kit ordered Chom to arrest Khon and send him directly to the Tram Kak district reeducation center.¹⁹⁵

The arrests of people in Kus subdistrict appear to have taken place after subdistrict reports were examined. For example, on 9 September 1977, Soeun requested a decision from district *Angkar* on seven enemy first lieutenants in that subdistrict. Soeun explained that: "All these people will be arrested and transported on September 9th or 10th, or else whatever Angkar may order."¹⁹⁶ On the same day, the Tram Kak district secretary sent a letter to An, chief of the Tram Kak reeducation center, to arrest the enemies proposed by the Kus committee. "Beloved Comrade An, contact Kus and make these arrests. 9 September 1977. Signed, Kit."¹⁹⁷

In the same document Kit wrote that he decided An should smash all of the enemies arrested in Kus. "As for the two implicated in the confession of the enemy named Len, born in Phnom Penh, and Sou, born in Maot Chrouk [Chau Doc, Vietnam]. Contact the subdistrict to make arrests and get detailed confessions. These two are now at Sre Krou village. 31 August Revolutionary Mission."¹⁹⁸ After he received this order, An sent an order to the Cheang Tang subdistrict:

For comrade Boeun's information, organize a reeducation force to arrest these two enemies at Sre Krou village; that is Len, from Phnom Penh, and Sou, from Moat Chrouk. Both these two plan to flee to Vietnam and

both are implicated in the confession of Ing and Thon who we arrested earlier. So, for your information. Respect the revolutionary mission. 1 August 1977.¹⁹⁹

The process of arresting people via reports occurred throughout the Southwest Zone.²⁰⁰ For example, two former cadres of the Treang district reeducation center, Huoy and Thuon, stated that people were arrested through the reports of the chiefs of units, villages and subdistricts. In the cooperatives, the chiefs wrote the reports and made the arrests. According to Thuon, “Puth [one-armed] was the youth chief. If any youth violated moral standards, [he] reported it and had the reeducation make the arrest right away.”²⁰¹

Chaey, Ly, and Moeun were arrested by their subdistrict chief and sent to their district reeducation center in the same fashion. The offenses of all three were reported by their cooperative committee to the reeducation chief, who later decided to have the district center make the arrests. After the chief interrogated them, they had the impression that he had already received reports on their offenses. However, the three stated that they did not know what offenses they had committed before being interrogated.²⁰²

End Notes

¹²⁶ The number of subdistricts and districts in the zone vary in different sources because some villages and subdistricts were removed from a district and used to create new districts. For example, the Peoples' Republic of Kampuchea' 1990 book, *Party Center Cabinet* (Phnom Penh: Peoples Republic of Kampuchea, 1990), states that Kandal, Takeo, Kampong Speu, and Kampot provinces contained 33 districts, 119 subdistricts and 2,922 villages.

¹²⁷ Documentation Center of Cambodia document numbers D00131, D00206, D00176, D00192.

¹²⁸ Author's interview with Sakhan, op. cit.

¹²⁹ Author's interview with Nang, op. cit.

¹³⁰ Author's interview with Nhien, op. cit.

¹³¹ Author's interviews with Seng Ly, op. cit.; and Mak Tauch, op. cit.

¹³² Author's interview with Prum Nai, op. cit.

¹³³ Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Author's interview with Khut, former base person of Tram Kak district, at Ang Ta Saom subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 5 December 2000.

¹³⁵ Author's interview with Nhien, op. cit.

¹³⁶ Author's interview with Chea, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001.

¹³⁷ Author's interview with Khut, op. cit.

¹³⁸ Author's interview with Chey Kan, mother of a man executed at Po Angkrong subdistrict militia center, at Po Angkrong subdistrict, Baset district, Kampong Speu, 6 May 2001.

¹³⁹ Author's interview with Sarat, former Samrong subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Samrong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 13 December 2000.

¹⁴⁰ Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit.

¹⁴¹ Author's interview with Kan, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center and Bati district reeducation center prisoner, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 19 March 2001.

¹⁴² "Notes of the Meeting of Secretaries and Deputies of Divisions and Independent Regiments, 9 October 1976," op. cit.

¹⁴³ According to a 16 August 1973 entry in the notebook of female comrade Kham Chan Boppha, "The true nature of the people's state authority was unconditional service to the

people, the total defense of the free rights and benefits of the people, especially the base people, and absolute opposition to the enemies.” *Notebook of Comrade Kham Chan Boppa*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21716.

¹⁴⁴ Cambodians consider the rabbit to be an animal full of trickery, and used the phrase “to have the rabbit disease” to refer to people who pretend to be ill in order to rest and evade their assigned tasks.

¹⁴⁵ The Khmer Rouge did not consider people guilty of stealing as enemies who intended to betray the revolution. However, if they were new people, former soldiers or policemen of the Lon Nol regime, or were connected through family ties to such enemies of *Angkar*, they would have been sent to the district reeducation center since the thievery would be in addition to their being enemy contacts. For further information, see “Report to Tram Kak District,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00274.

¹⁴⁶ Kim Chan, Samoëun and Khun Heng were told by Soeun, chief of Sithbo cooperative, to help carry areca nuts at the Sithbo subdistrict militia center. When they arrived at the center, they were all arrested. Later, Kim Chan was released. Soeun told Kim Chan that carrying nuts was just *Angkar’s* pretext to arrest Samoëun and Khun Heng, and that they were arrested because they were married to Lon Nol soldiers who had been executed by *Angkar*. Author’s interview with Kim Chan, former base person of Pou village, at Sithbo subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 22 October 2003.

¹⁴⁷ *Constitution of Democratic Kampuchea*, Chapter 6, page 9, op. cit.; and “Notes of the Meeting of Secretaries and Deputies of Divisions and Independent Regiments, 9 October 1976,” op. cit.

¹⁴⁸ Author’s interview with Oeun, father of a man who disappeared at the Lumchong subdistrict militia center, at Lumchong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 15 May 2001.

¹⁴⁹ Author’s interview with Chey Kan, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰ While food in the countryside had always been less plentiful than in the cities, neither gruel nor morning glory had ever been regular staples in the rural areas.

¹⁵¹ Author’s interview with Nhien, op. cit.

¹⁵² Author’s interview with Seng, former Bot Rokar subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Bot Rokar subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 4 July 2000.

¹⁵³ Author’s interview with Mak Tauch, op. cit.

¹⁵⁴ Author’s interview with Sarat, op. cit.

¹⁵⁵ Author’s interview with Mak Tauch, op. cit.

¹⁵⁶ Author’s interview with Sarat, op. cit.

¹⁵⁷ Author’s interview with Kan, op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ Author's interview with Chea, op. cit.

¹⁵⁹ Author's interview with Mak Tauch, op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Author's interview with Hoeun, former Suaphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001.

¹⁶¹ Author's interview with Nhien, op. cit.

¹⁶² Author's interview with Sakhan, op. cit.

¹⁶³ Author's interview with Duk Huoy, former Sre Chea Khang Cheung and Sre Chea Khang Tbaung subdistrict chief, at Dang Tung district, Kampot province, 18 January 2001.

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, *Honorary Red Flag, 1976*, Documentation Center of Cambodia D21421, D21432 and D21926.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Members of the general populace became informers on theft and non-revolutionary speech. They were trained to report their observations to their group, unit, and cooperative chiefs. Often, their reports mimicked those of the cadres with the hope of receiving the approval of their chiefs and because of personal disputes and grudges. For further information, see "Report of the Reeducation Chief to Tram Kak District Angkar," op. cit.

¹⁶⁷ Author's interview with Toy, op. cit.

¹⁶⁸ "Report on Prisoners," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00273.

¹⁶⁹ "Report to Tram Kak District," op. cit.

¹⁷⁰ Author's interview with Chea, op. cit.

¹⁷¹ Author's interview with Deuk, op. cit.

¹⁷² Author's interview with Lim Teng, op. cit. Teng's description may be credible since neighbors claimed that he was a gentle and helpful person and remains so today. People formerly under him still visit him and some even send him presents.

¹⁷³ "Report," 4 May 1977, Documentation Center of Cambodia D00275.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ "Report on Neang Dam," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00222.

¹⁷⁶ Author's interview with Neang Dam, op. cit.

¹⁷⁷ Author's interview with Chak, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center and Bati district reeducation center prisoner, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 May 2001.

¹⁷⁸ Author's interview with Deuk, op. cit.

¹⁷⁹ According to Tram Kak district reeducation center (Kraing Ta Chan prison) documents, the subdistrict committees reported people they felt were serious offenders to the district committees.

¹⁸⁰ Author's interview with Nhien, op. cit.

¹⁸¹ See "Complaints of the People from Kandal Province," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00821.

¹⁸² "Confession of Kim Vanny, Age 22, Ethnic Chinese," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00273.

¹⁸³ Author's interview with Sakhan, op. cit.

¹⁸⁴ Author's interview with Lim Teng, op. cit.

¹⁸⁵ Some have interpreted such events to mean that the subdistrict reeducation/reforging center was a temporary prison for those on their way to the district reeducation center. However, the author has found it likely that every subdistrict, especially in the Southwest Zone, had a reeducation center, a number of which were used to hold prisoners for periods of up to a few months. Many of these prisoners returned to their communities after being "reeducated."

¹⁸⁶ "Report to Party District 105 (Tram Kak) District," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00227.

¹⁸⁷ "To Beloved Comrade An," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00266.

¹⁸⁸ See, for example, "To Respected Brother," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00184.

¹⁸⁹ "To Comrade Brother Responsible for District 105 Reeducation Center," Documentation Center of Cambodia D000189. Boeun was the wife of Chun, chief of Popel subdistrict.

¹⁹⁰ "To Beloved Comrade Chhoeun," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00189.

¹⁹¹ "Report to Party District 105," op. cit.

¹⁹² Author's interview with Deuk, op. cit.

¹⁹³ "Report of Comrade Pheou, Chief of Sre Ronong Subdistrict, 25 October 1978," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00283.

¹⁹⁴ "Report to Party District 105," op. cit.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ "To Beloved Comrade An," op. cit. See also "Report from Khun to Kit and a Note of Kit to Khun," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00188.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ “To Beloved Brother An,” op. cit.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

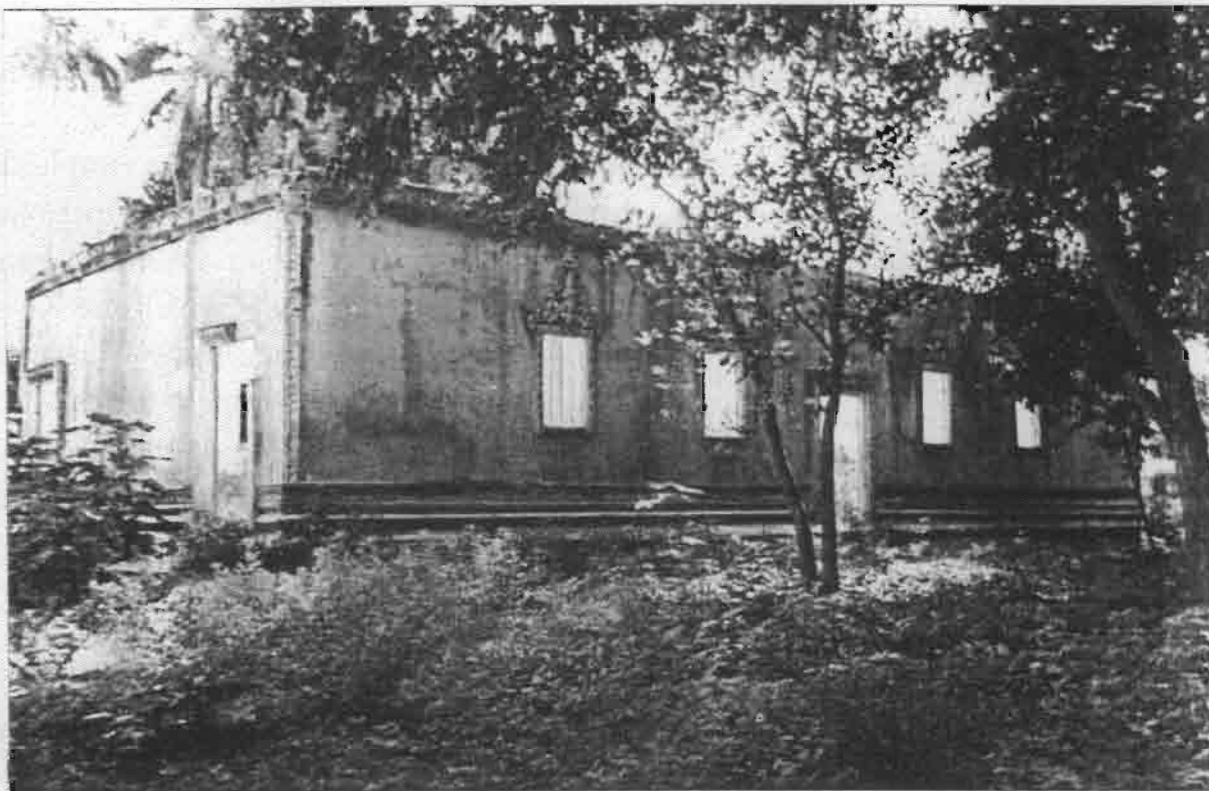
²⁰⁰ In a few cases, arrests originated directly from the decisions of the subdistrict committees and cooperatives, after which prisoners were sent to the district reeducation center. Also, when the subdistrict committee saw people commit offenses in the cooperatives, they were arrested and sent to the district reeducation center without asking the permission of district-level *Angkar*.

²⁰¹ Author’s interviews with Thuon, op. cit.; and Huoy, op. cit.

²⁰² Author’s interview with Chaey, former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Dach subdistrict, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province, 4 July 2001; and Pheng, Pong Rasy, interview with Ly, former Samrong district reeducation prisoner, and Moeun, former Kean Svay district reeducation prisoner, Kandal province, March 2001.

4

THE DISTRICT REEDUCATION CENTERS



Kok Sang (Sang Prison) in Kandal province
(Former USAID Teachers Training School built in 1953)

Temples housed 15 of the Southwest Zone's 21 district reeducation centers. The rest were in schools and other buildings modified to serve as security facilities. Each center might hold 80 to 400 prisoners, with the number fluctuating after a series of arrests or executions.²⁰³ The Tram Kak center provides an example. In July 1977, it was reported to house 81 prisoners.²⁰⁴ In November, the number rose to 184, but in the same month, "92 were swept clean. Six died of illnesses. One was removed to the Region. Eighty-five remain."²⁰⁵

The center cells were divided into at least two areas: one for serious and one for light offenders. The disposition of women prisoners varied by facility. "Female prisoners at the Tram Kak district reeducation center were shackled apart from the males, but inside the same room."²⁰⁶ However, at the Leuk Dek center, females were held in separate cells.²⁰⁷ Cells had containers such as buckets, jars or ammunition cans to hold human waste. These waste containers were collected and their contents discarded by light offenders approximately once a week.²⁰⁸

PROFILE OF SELECTED CENTERS

Wat Kokoh (Kokoh Pagoda), Bati District Reeducation Center. Also called Wat Sauphy, this Buddhist temple was about 50 kilometers from Phnom Penh. During the Lon Nol regime, it was governed by an abbot named Lay Hun. The Khmer Rouge forced him and other monks to leave their temple. The sanctuary, monks' quarters and school at the wat were used to hold prisoners. The monks' residence west of the sanctuary was turned into an interrogation room. In early 1980, holes were found in the sanctuary walls, which the Khmer Rouge had drilled to anchor leg shackles. There were three rows of shackles; each could hold 30 to 40 persons. The monks' residence south of the sanctuary was used to house interrogators. The fields surrounding the temple in all four directions and the pond in front of the sanctuary became killing fields and gravesites. About 60,000 people were executed at this temple.²⁰⁹

Wat Kampong Tralach, Kampot District Reeducation Center. This temple is located in Kampong Tralach village, Chre Thom subdistrict.²¹⁰ From 1975-1979, the sanctuary, monks' quarters and dining room became detention cells and interrogation sites. Inside the sanctuary, four rows of iron bars were used for shackling prisoners.²¹¹ Prisoners were taken to the forest behind the temple to be killed and buried.²¹² According to documents of the Peoples Revolutionary Committee of Kampot, the Khmer Rouge executed 21,151 people at this temple.²¹³

Wat Mony Sovann, Kean Svay District Reeducation Center. Located in Chompuch Ka-aek village, Prek Bra subdistrict, this temple was about 25 minutes' drive south of Phnom Penh. It was also called Wat Chompuch Ka-aek or Center 06.²¹⁴ The Khmer Rouge used the sanctuary, monks' quarters and school rooms as cells, and the *chedi* spire became an interrogation room. The center's killing and gravesites were located northwest of the sanctuary. In 1980 a number of corpses were exhumed and the skulls placed in a *stupa* east of the temple where they remain today. This center was governed by Thlang.²¹⁵

Wat Preah Theat, Kiri Vong District Reeducation Center. This wat was located in Kbal Damrei village of Takeo province. The 12x15 meter concrete dining building was turned into a holding cell. The monks' quarters became an interrogation site and living quarters for reeducation cadre. The killing sites were behind the temple; approximately 17,000 people were killed at this wat.²¹⁶ The corpses of executed prisoners were exhumed here in 1980, and the skulls placed in a *stupa*, where they reside today.

USAID Teachers' School (Kuk Sang), Kandal Stung District Reeducation Center. This center, which was built by the US Agency for International Development in 1953, was about 70 kilometers from Phnom Penh. In 1972, the Khmer Rouge turned the school into a district reeducation center. The student dining room became a detention area and the surrounding areas to the north and south became killing sites. A large pile of skulls was later exhumed and arranged in one of the school's badly damaged buildings. In 1999 the remains were relocated to a *stupa* at the west corner of the compound.²¹⁷



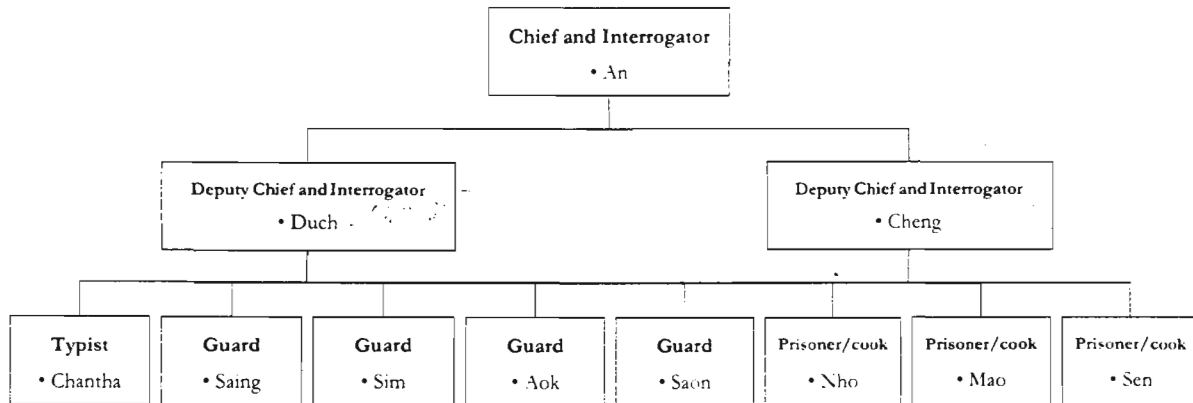
Skulls inside the former USAID Teachers Training School grounds, 1996

Island Centers. Three district reeducation centers in Region 25 were located on islands: the Sa-ang district center on Koh Kor Island in Svay Prateal subdistrict, Leuk Dek on Koh Kontheay island in Prek Dach subdistrict, and Koh Thom on Koh Po Tonle in Koh Thom subdistrict. The last center was also called "Center 08"; the Khmer Rouge killed an estimated 35,027 people there.²¹⁸ A *stupa* holds the skulls of victims today (no bones are displayed in memorials at the other two island sites). The center contained four wooden 8x12 meter buildings, two of which were detention cells, one a supply store, and one a cadre work center. The execution sites were at the upstream and downstream ends of the island. Some corpses were buried on the islands, while others were simply thrown in the river.²¹⁹

The Tram Kak District Reeducation Center. Also called Kraing Ta Chan prison, this was the only center, until recently, where documents were found. It was located in Kraing Ta Chan village in Kus subdistrict, a one-hour drive from Phnom Penh. It was built around 1973 and operated until 1979. Its chief was An, while the district chiefs were Chim and San, and the district chief of security was Phy (who became security chief of Treang district in 1977). All

four men were born in Tram Kak district, and were assigned to the security center from 1973 until 1979.²²⁰ Chim, Phy, and An were born in the same village as Ta Mok (Trapang Thom Tbaung) and knew him well.²²¹

Organization of Tram Kak District Reeducation Center, 1975-1979



Source: Tram Kak district reeducation center documents and author's interview.

This center was located on high ground surrounded by large trees. It housed two buildings for cells and one for supplies. All of the buildings were made from wood and had tin roofs. The interrogation room and execution site were located south of the cells.²²² Today the area holds a 3x5 meter wooden building housing human remains and a 5x8 meter *sala* structure that was built to perform annual ceremonies for the estimated 10,045 people who died here and whose bodies rest in 21 mass grave sites.²²³

Its former cadres and prisoners stated that a barbed wire fence was erected about 500 meters from the center, encompassing rice fields and farmland. They noted that the two cell buildings separated light from serious offenders. The wooden interrogation room was built behind a tamarind tree on the south side of the facility. The area around the perimeter was used as execution and burial sites.²²⁴ Mao stated that both cells were 4x8 meters. The cells consisted of plank walls topped with dense barbed wire. The beam of the eastern cell building held a sign: "Stay and live, run and die."²²⁵

Chhong recalled that there were 42 prisoners in the western cell building where he was held. His job at the center was delivering food and water to the eastern building, which held 37 prisoners (documents held at DC-Cam state that this facility held 81 prisoners in July 1977).²²⁶ He also confirmed the existence of the "Stay and live, run and die" sign, which he said had rotted away by late 1975.²²⁷

From 1973 to 1975, Dam was a cadre assigned to Tram Kak. He stated that he was arrested and detained there in late 1977.²²⁸ The reason for Dam's arrest was

that he had spoken against the revolution.²²⁹ Dam remembered that the wooden cells were rectangular and two meters high. Prisoners were shackled in two rows; each held 20 to 30 prisoners. He said that because of the waste containers and the fact that prisoners were not allowed to bathe for months, the cells smelled terribly.

Keo Mao was imprisoned at Tram Kak in early 1975. He called the cell in which he was held for a year “a hell. No shame or embarrassment, male or female. A pot for defecating handed back and forth from one another and put in an earthen jar.” He explained that the filth caused maggots and fleas to swarm on all the walls.²³⁰ Soy Sen recalled the insects that tortured him, “Not a few prisoners got sick and died due to living with the lice and bugs. I got ill from the constant flea bites but got used to it, but the white lice that came out of the sleeves and seams really itched and were difficult to stand.”²³¹

Areas Surrounding the Centers. Prior to 17 April 1975, the Tram Kak reeducation center was not heavily utilized. But after the evacuation of Phnom Penh, the number of its prisoners increased. Likewise, the people living near the Samrong district reeducation center were not evacuated, but after 17 April were gradually moved out. Sien, whose house was next to the center, explained why: “Then there were many arrests and executions. The Khmer Rouge wanted no violations of secrecy.”²³²

After being evacuated from their homes, the people were absolutely forbidden to return to them. Likewise, their fruit, rice and vegetable harvests no longer belonged to them, but were controlled by the reeducation center cadres. Soeun explained that cadres controlled ten hectares of land around the reeducation center, and no one could walk near it. He also noted that “the cadres raised many dogs to help guard and keep the people from approaching the reeducation center. If anyone wandered and got near the center, the dogs surrounded and bit them.”²³³ Former Samrong district reeducation center cadre Thuon explained the reason behind the security measures taken at his facility: “All those cadres defended their center perimeters for two reasons: to maintain secrecy and to guard the crops, fruits, and rice to keep for themselves to eat.”²³⁴

THE PRISONERS

The majority of those arrested in mid-1975 and 1976 were Lon Nol soldiers and policemen. After 1976, this group expanded to encompass their families and members of the general population. Several of the people interviewed for this

study observed the arrests and executions of Lon Nol soldiers and policemen in mid-1975. Nhean lived near the Kandal Stung district reeducation center. He noted that the majority of the people brought there were men around 30 years of age with the build and manner of soldiers and policemen. Teng and Chaey observed that the high percentage of soldiers and policemen held at the Leuk Dek prison decreased as the “political and class inclined” rose during 1977 and 1978. Chhin, Bati district chief from 1970-1975, saw lists of prisoners held at the district reeducation center. He explained that those on the execution lists were listed by name and duty. He observed that in early 1976, there were many more Lon Nol soldiers and policemen than those in other categories.²³⁵

1975-1976: Former Lon Nol Soldiers and Policemen

In mid-1975, Toy, chief of Kampeng subdistrict, received the district Party’s plan to seek out, arrest, and send Lon Nol soldiers to the upper echelon. After obtaining their personal histories, Toy ordered the arrest of many, and sent reports on them to the Prey Kabass district committee. He stated: “After arresting and sending them to the district committee, my mission was done. I did not know where the district sent them.”²³⁶

Tram Kak district chief Him reported on an enemy named Meas Samon, a Khmer Rouge soldier who was accused of committing treason and joining the Lon Nol regime. After 17 April 1975 he was evacuated to Tram Kak district. According to Him, his “daily activities are nothing remarkable or impressive. So this above report is sent for *Angkar*’s examination and decision.”²³⁷

The Tram Kak district committee prepared plans for the lower echelons to compile the histories of villagers in their subdistricts.²³⁸ As a result, Nheng Nhong subdistrict chief Sim found 11 Lon Nol elements in his subdistrict.²³⁹ Mien, chief of the plowing unit of Nheng Nhong subdistrict, found and reported to Tram Kak district *Angkar* on four former Lon Nol soldiers and policemen in his unit: 1) Lau Eng Try, a pilot, 2) Yuon Han, secretary for war materials, 3) Suos Ty, a chief of the police center, and 4) Bang Nan, a corporal.²⁴⁰

Chhaom, chief of Ang Ta Saom subdistrict, proved to be an efficient gatherer of Party enemies. After sending a number of them to the district-level *Angkar*, he kept looking, feeling that enemy elements were still hiding in his subdistrict. For example, in a report to the Tram Kak *Angkar* on 26 April 1977, he wrote: “Let me explain further on one or two ranking persons about whom we have contacted comrade Yon in the district military and who he took away this

afternoon. For *Angkar*'s information."²⁴¹

Former Popel subdistrict cadre Teng stated that in mid-1975, his subdistrict chief organized the village and team chiefs to obtain personal histories of the people in Popel. He explained that in compiling histories, cadres obtained detailed information on names, duties, spouses, children and occupations. "After the personal histories were done, Chun sent the reports to the district committee, and after that, those in Popel who had been Lon Nol soldiers or policemen began regularly disappearing."²⁴² Chun's report to Tram Kak *Angkar* confirms Teng's accusations: "The families of soldiers that were smashed by *Angkar* total 106 families or 393 persons. Remaining are another 231 families of soldiers, with 872 persons." In closing his report, Chun noted that he was still searching out the families of soldiers, especially those among the new people.²⁴³

A 9 September 1977 report by Soeun, chief of Kus subdistrict, shows that six former Lon Nol soldiers were sent to the Tram Kak district reeducation center on 6 September, and that he had discovered seven more. "What does comrade elder brother think about this? Should I arrest and send them or what? We, as always, are ready to carry out brother's decisions."²⁴⁴

Saut Saing took custody of former Lon Nol soldiers and policemen arrested by the subdistrict committee and sent to the Tram Kak reeducation center. He explained that "In mid-1975, a terrible number of prisoners were brought in, day and night, night and day. There was no sleep."²⁴⁵ Likewise, base person Nom alleged that in mid-1975, "lines of April 17 people, white and chubby, and carrying suitcases and handbags were marched into the Tram Kak district reeducation center."²⁴⁶

Kun, Phon, and Chok were arrested and sent to the Bati district reeducation center after they were accused of having contacts with Lon Nol soldiers. They stated that most former Lon Nol soldiers and policemen were executed after interrogation. As for themselves, the three were base people and no hard evidence was found against them. Because they had expertise as carpenters and sugar makers, they were kept for further use at the reeducation center.²⁴⁷

1976-1978: Those with Political "Tendencies," Relatives, and Others

Mid-1976 was the beginning of a campaign to arrest and smash people who were "political trenders," relatives of Lon Nol-era soldiers and policemen, teachers, feudalists, and landowners, as well as those who fled their units or

cooperatives, spoke against the revolution, or committed moral violations. The campaign continued until late 1978. An article in the magazine *Honorary Red Flag* announced the results: "Developments are better than ever, both in amount and quality." But the presence of concealed enemies continued, so "What is the solution in the future?" Two were proposed:

Must have the clear opinion and stance that the battle against the internal enemies is not finished. The old remnants of the enemy remain concealed, and might expand again.

There must be absolute measures to eliminate them, no compromise, no hesitation or delay whatsoever.²⁴⁸

This article did not detail the measures to be taken to eliminate enemies beyond those the Party had set down in the past. Measures to be taken for the lower echelons included:

Incite and train the masses in the *Angkar* core group, in the revolutionary army, in the people, to clearly see that concealed enemies are actively boring at us from within and to take action to find and attack the enemy... The essence of the research to uncover the internal boring enemies must be used to implement the Party line, the Party ideology, and the Party organization properly.²⁴⁹

Among the 500 prisoners on the execution lists of the Tram Kak district reeducation center for 1977 and part of 1978, 252 were class/political trenders, Lon Nol officials, and escapees. These prisoners were no longer marched to the district reeducation center in large groups. Instead, they were arrested individually, with cadres saying such things as "*Angkar* has asked you to attend a meeting" or "*Angkar* needs your services elsewhere."²⁵⁰

Foreigners who lived and worked in Cambodia were included in the "trenders" and internal enemy categories. Between 8-12 April 1976, 36 foreign prisoners were arrested in Regions 25 and 33 of the Southwest Zone. Of these, 13 were Indians, 17 were Pakistanis, and 6 were Arabs. After they were arrested, all 36 were sent for interrogation and imprisonment at S-21.²⁵¹

Composition of Prisoners and Crimes

The 1977 and 1978 Tram Kak prisoner lists contained the names of 450 people. Of the 73 names on one of this center's execution lists, 5 were female; 4 of them

were arrested for being wives of *Angkar*'s enemies and the other for intending to flee to her home district. Of the eight children on the list, four were accused of being traitors and the rest were arrested for "wandering around."²⁵²

Those of middle age predominated among the groups arrested and executed. Of the 187 people on a Tram Kak's execution list, 108 were middle aged (ages 17-45), 71 were older (over 45), and 8 were children (ages 1-14).²⁵³ Samnang was one of the eight children held at this center, but his name was not on the list of those to be smashed because his mother had not yet been listed as an enemy, as had the parents of the other seven. Samnang stated that he and the other children, who were all skin and bones, cried, and crawled around their mothers, who were chained, to look for food. He explained that aside from the children who were executed, a number died from illness and starvation.²⁵⁴

Political "Trenders." Lim, Ha, and Hum were arrested by Chhon, the chief of Trapang Thom Tbaung subdistrict. In his 13 December 1977 report to the Tram Kak district reeducation center, Chhon stated their offenses:

These three are named Lim, Ha and Hum. Lim (crippled leg) says that he presently lives like an animal, a prisoner without freedom of religion (infidel). Lim also said that in August 1977, 40 Vietnamese tanks entered Cambodian territory. Then Ta Mok ordered 1,000 rounds fired back at Vietnam... As for Hum (farmer) he said that during the upcoming Cambodian New Year there will be chaos in Cambodia... after the war we Khmer will return to a free system and will be red [communist] for only a short period. Ha (auto owner) said that [*Angkar*] would not let the new people into the fields in the dry season for fear they would flee to Vietnam, which is only 12 kilometers from here.²⁵⁵

Mao was arrested and sent to the Tram Kak center after being accused of criticizing conditions at Medical Center 22A, a Khmer Rouge military hospital.²⁵⁶ Sou Choal, called Reach, was arrested and sent to the center because he made negative predictions about the future of the revolution (he is assumed to be dead, as he has not been seen since the day of his arrest by Phon). Sou Choal's confession and Teng's explanation of the revolution's future were identical: "Thunder booms, grandfather clasps his arms and cries out, the shrimp lay eggs on the mountain tops."²⁵⁷ This expression meant that a revolution would occur soon and that the Democratic Kampuchea regime would collapse, with its cadres fleeing to live in the mountains.

Family and Other Relations. Being related to an enemy was fraught with danger. Kaing Kim Suor, Pring Ren, But Chanphol and But Channy were

arrested and sent to the district reeducation center on 18 May 1977 because they were relatives of a woman who had been declared an enemy of *Angkar*. Chanphol and Channy were the children of Mum Lai, who “poisoned” the people in Popel cooperative. “This family was all smashed, only these two remain and are sent to *Angkar*.”²⁵⁸

Nho and nine of his children, nieces and nephews were arrested and sent to the Tram Kak district reeducation center in June 1976 because they were related to an enemy named Kun, who the Khmer Rouge accused of opposing the cooperative. Four members of Nho’s family survived execution.²⁵⁹ Som Rim was arrested and taken to the Kandal Stung reeducation center in July 1977 with her two children. Her offense, too, was being related to a proclaimed enemy of *Angkar*. While under arrest, Som Rim was nearly full term in her pregnancy. Her husband had been arrested in January 1977; he was accused of being a KGB agent.²⁶⁰

Sarom and Khom were sent to the Koh Thom district reeducation center after being accused of being married to colonels of the Lon Nol regime.²⁶¹ Sun became a prisoner at Kandal Stung in a different way. She wondered why her husband had not come to visit her, as it was apparently a nationwide policy to allow married couples to meet every fortnight. Sun learned that her husband had been imprisoned at Kandal Stung and traveled to visit him. A young cadre saw Sun walk into the reeducation center and called out to her: “The moth fears not the flame.” Sun became a prisoner with her husband until January 1979 when he was executed at the reeducation center.²⁶²

Sexual Offenses. Contacts between the sexes was an offense called “moral incorrectness” under Democratic Kampuchea. People caught committing such offenses were arrested and sent to the reeducation center.²⁶³ Mou Phon was arrested on 28 April 1977 for not being dedicated and secretly making love with a woman named Than.²⁶⁴ Mon committed a moral indiscretion and was arrested and sent to Tram Kak on 7 December 1977. Khun, chief of youth at Sre Ronong, saw the event. He wrote a report to An, chief of Tram Kak district reeducation center, stating, “Mon committed an immoral act with a female named Nang and even incited Nang to flee from the unit.”²⁶⁵

Prisoners held at the Treang district reeducation center also included moral offenders. Former cadre Thuon stated that: “Puth, chief of a youth unit, often went out of the reeducation center. Puth was missing one arm, but he was very strong, he gave no quarter. Any youth, male or female, who violated morals and could not be reeducated was arrested, imprisoned and executed.”²⁶⁶

Confession Contacts. Men and women were arrested when their names appeared in the confessions of those imprisoned in reeducation centers. Under torture, prisoners reeled off the names of people they knew or worked with, including relatives. Chaey, for example, was arrested and sent to the Leuk Dek center during late 1975. He said that when cutting timber in some foothills to the west, he met a man named Thach Muon. After they finished cutting timber, Thach Muon returned to his village, and was arrested and imprisoned for four years. Chaey stated: "I was arrested because Thach Muon confessed that I was in his network of contacts. In fact, we only knew one another from working together on that timber cutting team."²⁶⁷

Kuong Chhoem was arrested and sent to Koh Andet district reeducation center because he was a traitor contact of Chhin and Ros Ao, who were arrested during 1977 for opposing *Angkar*. Under interrogation by Ngon, chief of the Koh Andet center, Kuong Chhoeum gave the names of ten persons who were in his traitor chain of contacts: three organizers and his wife and six children.²⁶⁸

Len and Sou were arrested on 1 August 1977 because their names appeared in the confessions of Ing and Thon, who were accused of intending to flee to Vietnam. Ming Sun, Khhuon Ang, Uch Top, and Iem On were arrested on 16 September 1977 because all four of their names were in the confession of Phuong. Under interrogation, Ming Sun confessed to two traitor contacts, Sou Loy and Sou Leat.²⁶⁹ Teng, a former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoner, stated that he was arrested after his name showed up in the confessions of Thach Muon and a man who had been arrested on the same day as Teng for the same offense.²⁷⁰

Light and Serious Offenders. Prisoners at the district reeducation centers were divided into two categories:

Serious offenders were those involved in political and class trends. They were placed in leg shackles made of long iron bars that could hold 10 to 20 individuals in a row, who were chained at the ankles.²⁷¹ These prisoners were not permitted to go outside the prison, even to use the toilet. Especially serious offenders were those who had committed two crimes at once, meaning that they were political and class "trenders," as well as having committed other offenses.

Categorizing serious offenders seemed to be a response to the 20 June 1978 Party Central Committee instructions on dividing the enemies of the revolution. As for category 1 prisoners ("the dangerous type" who were both trenders and counter-revolutionaries): "They must absolutely be screened out."²⁷²

Light offenders were those who had committed such offenses as stealing communally-owned property or fleeing from the units and cooperatives. They were held in leg shackles at night and worked outside the prison during the day. Duties for light prisoners were economic tasks, which were usually related to picking vegetables, cooking food and feeding the prisoners, disposing waste, and carrying the corpses of those who died in their cells out for burial.²⁷³

Chhong and Amseu were arrested because they went to visit their families without permission.²⁷⁴ According to notes made by Tram Kak district reeducation center chief An, four other youths were arrested for "fleeing their unit and walking around without a destination."²⁷⁵ Nhoung Tim was arrested for breaking a plow blade and beating a cow while plowing a field on 9 October 1977.²⁷⁶

The number of light prisoners was related to the amount of work that had to be done in each reeducation center. For example, at Leuk Dek, there were eight light prisoners including the craftsman team and the economic team. But at the Tram Kak reeducation camp,²⁷⁷ there were only light offenders; they were made to grow and forage vegetables, and to cook for prisoners. The majority of light prisoners evaded death because of the 7 January 1979 Vietnamese invasion. However, a number of light prisoners were executed before this.

On occasion, prisoners could change designations. For example, Nho became a "serious offender" prisoner at Tram Kak after her husband was proclaimed to be an enemy of *Angkar*. However, after a cook was executed, Nho took her place and became a light offender.²⁷⁸ Likewise, serious offenders Keo Mao and Soy Sen were held in leg shackles and arm chains for three months at Tram Kak. But because of a labor shortage, An assigned them to find morning glory and water plants, and to cook vegetables. They then became light offenders; they worked outside during the daytime, but were rechained at night.²⁷⁹ Last, Teng and Chaey were serious offenders at Leuk Dek for two months before being assigned to cut wood, construct a building, and perform other duties in the center.²⁸⁰ Teng stated that during the day the craftsman teams sawed wood; they also broke down religious sites and used the bricks to make buildings.²⁸¹ In the evening they returned to their cells and their leg shackles.

FOOD SUPPLY

Prisoners in the district reeducation centers ate two meals daily, one at 11:00 a.m. and one at 6:00 p.m. Their meals consisted of several tablespoons of thin rice gruel with morning glory plants and banana stalks. Sometimes, a hundred

prisoners received six or seven tins of rice and two or three handfuls of salt for one meal (the tins were the size of a can of condensed milk). Shortages became worse when the number of prisoners increased.

In November 1977, the Tram Kak center held 184 prisoners, who together received 16 tins of rice and 3 tins of salt each day. At that time, the designated amount of salt was one-half tin for 12 prisoners per meal, but instead there was one-half tin for 62 prisoners.²⁸² Nho was a cook at Tram Kak; he explained that when the number of prisoners increased to 300 or 400, the rations remained the same.²⁸³

Insufficient rations were also the norms at other district reeducation centers.²⁸⁴ At Kandal Stung, 100 prisoners received one large pan of water and 4 or 5 handfuls of rice at each meal. When the number of prisoners rose to 500, the water rations increased, but rice and salt did not. Cooks Tam and Chhon recalled that several handfuls of rice were put in a large pan for over 500 prisoners to eat.²⁸⁵ At Leuk Dek, prisoners received one large pan of water and two kilograms of corn, which was occasionally mixed with some finely chopped banana tree stalks and a pinch of salt. The result was that each prisoner received 10 to 20 kernels of corn, which had a slightly salty taste.²⁸⁶ Former prisoners Him Leh and Mat Toulas stated that food at the Koh Thom center consisted only of rice bran, thinly chopped papaya stems, and chopped banana stalks mixed with thin rice gruel that resembled pig slop. Prisoners had to force themselves to eat even tiny lizards and various insects in order to live.²⁸⁷

Mao observed a difference in the rations given to serious and light offenders, stating that “light offenders might have the chance to hunt frogs and shellfish to barbecue, but the serious offenders just starved, that’s all.”²⁸⁸ Teng had the opportunity to pick fruit when he was working outside the reeducation center. “Mangoes, ripe fallen papaya, if you saw them and picked them up to eat, that was alright, but pick them up and put them in your pockets that was out of the question, I don’t know why.”²⁸⁹ Huoy explained that the punishment for picking fruit while working outside was an unmerciful beating to the head with a club, a kick, or a punch.²⁹⁰

Those who were cooks and prisoners at the district reeducation centers allege that some prisoners died of starvation. Former Tram Kak cook Nho said: “God, some died from lack of food and water, but don’t be angry with me, that was what they demanded. I could not help anyone, even my own children, I could not help them.” Nho related that the center’s chief An said that because prisoners were “not worthwhile, there was no purpose in letting them eat much.”²⁹¹

When Nho had the chance, she would hunt frogs, shellfish and fruit, which she could hide and eat. One day she saw a dog with a leather cattle cord. She took it from the dog and hid it in a bush. Later, when she was out searching for firewood, she would cut off a piece and cook it for her children to eat.²⁹² Nho's son Samnang recalled, "I lived because of that leather cattle tie, lizards and rats. Whatever could run and bite, we caught and ate it straight away."²⁹³

With such shortages of food, it was not long before some prisoners became malnourished, lost weight, got dysentery, and contracted skin and other diseases. Teng stated that at times five or six prisoners died from starvation during the same night at the Leuk Dek center.²⁹⁴ Saing, a Tram Kak cadre, explained the causes of death of sick prisoners as, "most importantly weakness from lack of food and medical attention."²⁹⁵ If a prisoner died during the night, the Khmer Rouge cadres did not take the body away immediately; they left the corpse until dawn or the next afternoon when the light offenders returned from work and could carry it away for burial.

ARRESTS

Prisoners who were arrested and sent to the Tram Kak district reeducation center had their hands tied with nylon rope, *kramas* (traditional scarves), or cattle ties, and were led by guards to the center. Former cadres Chantha and Saing reported that its prisoner escorts rang a bell that hung from a mango tree just west of the center. Upon hearing the bell, the cadres came out to meet the prisoners and led them to cells inside.²⁹⁶

Bati district had a different way to signal the arrival of prisoners. While escorting prisoners from the Sauphy subdistrict militia center to Bati, Deuk fired one round of his weapon into the air, and the cadres came out to take his prisoners. Deuk then returned to his workplace.²⁹⁷

INTERROGATION AND TORTURE

Adjustments for future implementation. Have the prisoner write or talk about the matters surrounding his arrest, personal conflicts in the performance of present duties in the military, ministry, center, or cooperative, in specific detail. The subject's detailed personal history and those with whom he has regular contact, friends, former and current close associates. Grasp his weak points closely. Break him by political

indoctrination and torture. Analyze the confession in order to make the report.²⁹⁸

Interrogation

The interrogation tactics of Khmer Rouge cadres in the reeducation centers of the Southwest Zone were orderly and sequential, and very similar to those used at S-21. The similarities included training on having no hesitation regarding guilt and being “absolute” toward the enemy.²⁹⁹ The enemies that the Party arrested were to be imprisoned, starved, deceived, questioned forcibly and bluntly, cursed, and tortured in order to get their confessions.³⁰⁰ Success was getting the prisoner to confess and explain the reason for his arrest, and describe the chain of contacts in his “organization.”³⁰¹

Interrogation at the district level followed an S 1 manual, which stated, “The people the Party arrests and brings here are of two categories: 1) enemies in the base areas and 2) the type that the Party has examined and followed clearly through the reports of security center cadres.”³⁰² Through extensive indoctrination, interrogators were made to believe that each and every prisoner who arrived at a security center was an enemy of *Angkar*. As Pol Pot had remarked: “Those enemies must not be considered as people at all.”³⁰³ There were no exceptions, no doubts, even if the prisoner was a relative of a security center cadre. Examples can be found in the notes of interrogators: “The interrogator must have absolute faith in the Party, no hesitation, no doubts in his ideology, even if the prisoner is a personal relative.”³⁰⁴ When the interrogator was clear in his ideology and principles that the enemy arrested and brought in by the Party was a “spy,” the interrogator could successfully carry out his duty. Success was digging up the mysteries hidden by the prisoner and demonstrating to the Party that the “person [was] involved with the enemy.”³⁰⁵

Among the interrogation tactics used, the most important was “Proselytize, sooth and coax, make the prisoner unclear on the matter of life and death. Pressure them on the clarity of the Party in making the arrest. Break the prisoners so that they no longer trust one another and their leaders, and keep the prisoners alive for a long time in order to get confessions for the Party.” The results were great victories that made the “masses happy and made the Party expand and make a great miraculous leap, and not make the masses wither and dry in that backward movement.”³⁰⁶

Specific interrogation tactics must absolutely “do politics to sooth and coax,

and [use] torture.”³⁰⁷ There were nine points involved in “doing politics,” which included providing food, hinting that prisoners would return to their families, explaining that a prisoner had only committed a minor offense, promising position and duties, and hinting that there would be no punishment. One example of coaxing and soothing to get a confession concerns Pon and a prisoner named Sen:

Brother, if you report the secrets of your party, meaning you betray your party and rejoin our Party now, our Party would not be afraid to use you. But if you, Brother, do not report, that means you are stubborn and are protecting your treasonous forces, protecting plans to destroy our Party further. So, in the name of defending our state authority and Party, the Party will absolutely not make allowances for you.³⁰⁸

These tactics caused some prisoners to confess to an offense in the hope of receiving mercy. But the opposite occurred. After confessing, the Party marked them for execution. Sen agreed to confess under the coaxing of Pon, but in the end he was condemned to death on 10 January 1977.³⁰⁹ Another prisoner named Chek Brahim attempted to fabricate a confession for his interrogator to gain a reprieve. Brahim wrote in his confession that “Only now do I truly believe that the revolutionary organization wants loyalty for future cooperation.” But Brahim was sentenced to execution on 26 May 1976.³¹⁰

The interrogation process was used to break a prisoner’s spirit completely. An important and efficient way to get a confession was “hot questioning” by torture. The hot methods used by An were very effective, and always got An what he was looking for. For example, under interrogation and torture by An, the number of Nop Try’s treasonous contacts increased from 18 to 27 persons.³¹¹

Stages. Prisoners at the district, region and central (S-21) levels were interrogated many times to obtain complete confessions. This meant that all traitor contacts had to be uncovered, as in the Khmer Rouge slogan that “when digging grass, you must dig up the roots.”³¹² The stages of interrogation were laid out in a Santebal S-21 book and confirmed by former interrogators cadres interviewed for this study:

1. At first, lift his information.
2. Next, assemble many points to pressure him so he cannot raise his head.
3. Proselytize and squeeze him politically.
4. Question him hard and curse him.
5. Torture him.

6. Examine and analyze his confession to use in interrogating him again.
7. Examine and analyze his confession to prepare a report.
8. Watch over him closely. Don't allow him to die. Don't let them hear one another.
9. Maintain secrecy.³¹³

Occasionally, the interrogation would temporarily stall at the first stage. Vann Nath, a former S-21 prisoner, still does not know why he was arrested. He described the question his S-21 interrogator asked: "Why were you arrested? I do not know. *Angkar* never arrested anyone who did not commit some offense. Confess to your offense."³¹⁴

Facilities. Interrogation was a secret Party task to resolve a conflict of the revolutionary toward the enemy.³¹⁵ Thus, the interrogation rooms at district reeducation centers were always in buildings that were separate from the holding area. They often contained a recorder's table and a chair for the prisoner. The room was tightly enclosed with wooden planks and thatch, making it easy to conceal a prisoner's screams. The interrogation room at the Samrong center was north of the holding area. Yan, who was a cadre there, stated that prisoners who were to be interrogated were first led out of the cell and walked to a tightly closed room near the temple. The interrogators ordered the prisoner to sit in a chair and began questioning him or her as normal, but if the prisoner refused to answer, he would certainly be tortured.³¹⁶

Chantha, alias Duch, a typist cadre, described the location and process of interrogation at Tram Kak, stating that prisoners were led from the cell to a separate interrogation room. Prisoners and cadres who were not involved were not permitted to go in and out of the room. Chantha was stationed north of the interrogation room, so he often heard screams coming from it. He explained that torture occurred when the prisoner did not satisfy the interrogator, and torture was sometimes carried out until the prisoner was bloodied from head to toe, became unconscious, and occasionally reached the point of death.³¹⁷

Confessions. As in other parts of the security system, prisoners in the district reeducation centers were asked about their personal histories, families, residences, activities and close associates. "Traitor contacts" who appeared in confessions made at these centers were few when compared the number of contacts named by almost all prisoners at S-21. Instead, the district-level offenses tended to be of a more personal nature or related to treason rather than to any group or conspiracy. For example, Sou Phally said that her father Sou Chaol was arrested because:

He was dissatisfied with the Khmer Rouge because they worked him far too hard and forced his daughter Sou Sida to marry without his knowledge. So my father walked around stating these Buddhist predictions and attacking the Khmer Rouge. When I forbade him to say such things, he said that he had lost his fear of death, and anyone who wanted to take him anywhere to kill him should do so. Finally, a subdistrict reeducation man named Phon arrested him in 1978 when he was in the hospital at Ang Kuoy in Leay Bau subdistrict.³¹⁸

In his confession, Tep Theng stated the reason for his arrest: he had been an artilleryman during the Lon Nol era.³¹⁹ Tep Sary explained that her older brother Theng had been an artilleryman stationed in Takeo and Kampot provinces, and had transferred to Phnom Penh in 1975. He went to his birthplace at Leay Bau subdistrict in 1975, and was arrested by subdistrict chief Neang in early 1978; after that he disappeared.³²⁰

Reports. The Tram Kak center had a two-stage interrogation process. First, An asked questions and Cheng took notes. Cheng wrote down the prisoners' confessions in a book (in some cases, however, security cadres used tape recorders). Later those confession notes were provided to An. Next, An gave the book to Chantha for typing. Chantha explained that next, "An took the confessions that I had typed and sent them to the higher echelon for examination and decision."³²¹ His explanation was confirmed by surviving documents found at the Tram Kak center in 1979. Fifteen pages bearing notes written by Prak, the chief of Region 13, show that An sent the typed confessions of his prisoners to the region committee, and Prak's notes show that he received the reports and decided the prisoners' fates of being "smashed" or "interrogated further."³²²

The same process occurred at the Leuk Dek and Samrong centers. Teng remembered that when being taken for interrogation at Leuk Dek, he saw two cadres in the interrogation room: one questioner and one recorder. He explained that there was a typewriter in the center, and every four or five days, cadres took various reports to the upper echelon.³²³ Chaey heard reeducation cadres at Leuk Dek saying to one another, "Today you must take documents to the upper echelon."³²⁴

Chhin and Chak saw documents at the Bati district reeducation center shortly after the Khmer Rouge were overthrown in early 1979. They explained that some confessions bore red ballpoint script saying: "The decision is to smash." Among thousands of pages of documents Chhin found was the confession of one of his younger siblings who had been arrested and executed at the Bati

center during 1977. In that confession, he saw the names of his parents and siblings, along with his own.³²⁵

Torture

Torture occurred when a prisoner was taken from a cell for interrogation. Common torture tools used at the district reeducation center included billy clubs, sticks, whips and tree branches.

After being imprisoned underground for three days, Keo Mao was taken to the interrogation room to make him confess to being a leader of the rebellion at Medical Center 22A. Immediately after entering the room, An ordered him to sit, and began questioning him in a coaxing way about his offense. Then An yelled at Mao to confess. Mao refused. Next, An pointed a rattan billy club at him and screamed, “I don’t believe (you). The cake rises because of the cook, if there is no cook it does not rise by itself.” Before An finished his sentence, Mao was hit on the back with the billy club, making him bend over in pain. An continued to question Mao, hitting him with the club. Finally, Mao confessed that he was the leader of the rebellion.³²⁶

Samnang remembered that prisoners walking back from interrogation staggered “as if they were drunk, blood dripping from their bodies.” He recalled his interrogation by Sim when he was ten years old:

“Did you steal fermented fish or not?” I said no. “If [you answer] no, I’ll kill you.” And he pointed a CKC rifle bayonet at me and poked me until I bled. I was so afraid. I said, that yes, I stole it. He asked, “How many times?” I answered, twice. “Who had you steal it?” I answered that my mother had me steal it. But in fact that was not true at all, I did not steal it, did not even know where their fermented fish was kept.³²⁷

After being imprisoned without food and water for two days at Leuk Dek district reeducation center, Chaey was taken for questioning. In the interrogation room, many instruments of torture were on display, like pincers, whips, clubs and handcuffs. The interrogator tied Chaey’s hands behind him and began asking questions. Initially, the interrogator spoke in a normal voice. He claimed that there were only three responses needed at that time: “Yes, It’s true, and Yes, sir. As for the interrogations to come there will be pincers to pull out fingernails and whips, that’s for sure.” Chaey recalled the questions and his answers: “‘Did you destroy the cooperative?’ I said, yes. ‘Did you break a plow?’

I said, yes, sir. I was happy to answer and die straight away rather than undergo the beating and torture. It was tough, screaming loudly Oy! Oy!, Don't beat me, I know nothing."³²⁸

Teng, a Leuk Dek district reeducation prisoner held with Chaey, described his interrogation: "What did you do before?' I said I was a craftsman. The interrogation was not going as he desired, so the interrogator pointed to the walls and asked, 'Which one do you like?' I looked and I saw whips, clubs and pincers. I said I liked the pincers. He took the pincers and twisted the flesh of my thigh. It hurt so badly." Teng says that at that time if there had been a gun on the wall, he surely would have chosen the gun. He said, "It hurt so badly, I'd have had him shoot me so I did not have to live."³²⁹ Like Chaey, Teng was allowed to live because he was a carpenter.

Methods of Torture Used in the District Reeducation Centers

Kick and stomp

Use clubs, bamboo or rattan whips

Break the arms and legs

Brand with a hot piece of metal*

Push the prisoner into a hole filled with ash and lime, then cover the hole with planks

Beat with gunstocks

Stab with bayonets

Use a press to squeeze the head, temples, and chest

Stuff the prisoner in a bag

Pump the prisoner full of water**

Use pincers to twist the earlobes or thighs

Club the kneecaps

Beat with chains or wheel wrench†

Beat the stomach

Immerse the prisoner in a water jar.

* DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1998.

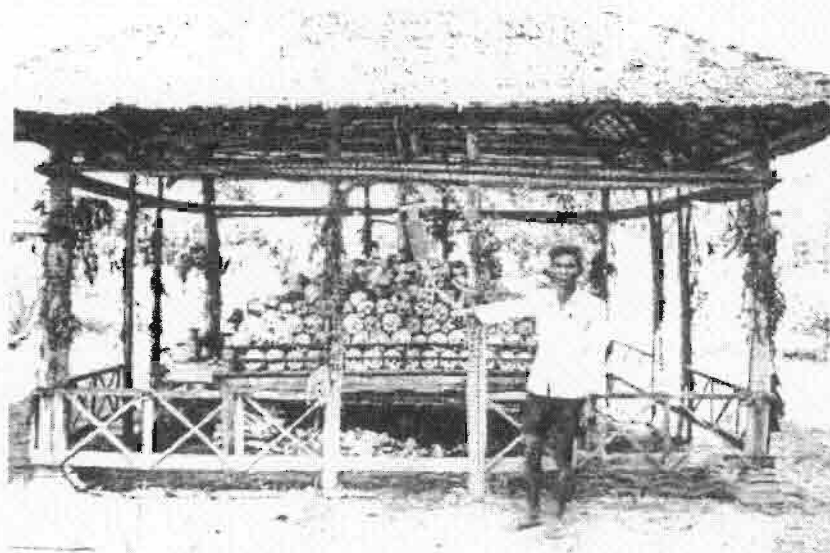
** Some of the basis for claiming this method of torture may constitute hearsay.

† According to Sau Nho, "I was beaten with a tire wrench by Put, chief of the Bati reeducation center. My ribs were broken and I still hurt today. I saw with my own eyes prisoners being beaten and persecuted every day. Put slit one's prisoner's throat." Report of DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Bati district, Takeo province, 1998.

Carrying Waste. Punishing prisoners by forcing them to carry human waste also occurred in the district reeducation centers. Prisoners Khom, Kosal and

Hul had to carry human waste at the Khsach Kandal and Koh Thom district reeducation centers.³³⁰ According to Khom, "They had me carrying an excrement jar. When I could no longer carry it, they beat me and kicked me down. One of my children held upstairs in the building saw this and yelled out, 'I am in leg shackles, and cannot help you.' Several days later they took my child out for execution."³³¹

Sexual Abuse. The rape of female prisoners was another form of torture that occurred despite its prohibition.³³² Former Tram Kak prisoner Soy Sen, and Bati prisoner Chak stated that a number of female prisoners were raped and sexually abused by reeducation cadre.³³³ According to Thuon, who had been a female cadre at Treang, no rapes occurred there. Chantha, who was a typist at the Tram Kak, supported Thuon. He explained that it would have been difficult for such acts to occur because: 1) the prisoners all smelled bad and were dirty, 2) cadres who violated morals rules would be seriously tortured themselves, and 3) if there had been a rape, only a high-level chief could have committed such an act.³³⁴



Killing field in Kor Koh, Takeo province

EXECUTIONS

In 1980, the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea prepared reports on the crimes of genocide committed by the Democratic Kampuchea regime against the people of Takeo province.³³⁵ Although the composition of this province changed during the regime, the data give an indication of the scale of killings. These reports show that over 190,000 people were executed in the security centers of Takeo province.

Executions in Takeo Province during Democratic Kampuchea

District	Status During KR	Current Status	Number of Executions
Tram Kak	Region 13	Takeo Province	32,228
Angkor Chey	Region 13	Kampot Province	32,447
Treang	Region 13	Takeo Province	15,748
Koh Andet	Region 13	Takeo Province	4,937
Kiri Vong	Region 13	Takeo Province	17,398
Daun Keo	Region 13*	Takeo Province	7,352
Subtotal			110,110
Prey Kabass	Region 25	Takeo Province	27,663 Bati
Region 33	Takeo Province	33,718	
Samrong	Region 33	Takeo Province	14,100
Borey Chularsar*	Region 13	Takeo Province	6,200**
Total			191,791

* Although the people living in Daun Keo and Borey Chularsar area were always part of Region 13, they were officially counted as parts of other districts. They became districts of Takeo province in the 1980s.

** Pheng Pong Rasy, Sin Khin, Ouch Samoeun, Helen Jarvis and Kosal Phat, "Master Genocide Data Table" (unpublished, May 2003).

Source for remaining figures: From petition documents collected in 1980 by the People's Republic of Kampuchea appealing to the United Nations to have the Khmer Rouge's seat at the UN withdrawn and its leaders tried.

Claims about the number of people killed and corpses exhumed around the district reeducation centers differ. Prak San, former chief of the Kandal Stung district peoples committee, stated that 5,111 people were executed at the Kandal Stung reeducation center. But the remains of only 2,563 people were exhumed. The venerable monk Keo Kosal, residing at Wat Kokoh, the site of the Bati center, assumed that out of every five persons executed at the center, only one body was found and exhumed.⁵³⁶ It is likely that the number killed was higher than the number exhumed because not all sites were excavated and some skeletal remains deteriorated or disappeared.

The reports Tram Kak chief An sent to Tram Kak district *Angkar* show that he ordered the executions of 15,000 people. However, only 10,045 remains had been exhumed by 1980.⁵³⁷ Soy Sen, a former Tram Kak prisoner, stated that "Some corpses were buried in scattered locations around the center. Many were killed, not just 10,045."⁵³⁸

The case of former cadre Neang Dam illustrates one of this facility's many executions. After being fired from his position for having sexual relations with a woman, Neang Dam was accused of speaking ill of *Angkar*, arrested, and sent to the Tram Kak center in 1977. He told a man called Hour, who was a patient in the communal hospital in the district, that it was boastful for *Angkar* to proclaim that it was fair. Neang Dam also expressed some remorse for his role in the center's executions: "I was there and I knew this. I have committed with my own hands many unfair actions including executing many innocent people who were faithful to the party, as in the case of Yan from Trapang Khna village. Although he was a perfect man, *Angkar* killed him, too."³³⁹

Chak was a prisoner at the Bati center who was present at some executions and participated in the excavation of graves during 1980. He reported that the number of remains exhumed at the Bati center was one-third or one-half of the actual total executed there during 1975-1979.³⁴⁰

The majority of those executed in the district reeducation centers were soldiers and police of the Lon Nol regime. Tram Kak execution lists show that of the 500 killed in 1977 and part of 1978, 252 were Lon Nol-era soldiers and policemen. For example, on the list of 40 proposed executions for 9 August 1977 were 26 former members of the Lon Nol regime (soldiers, policemen, advisors, and students). A list dated 2 September 1977 shows that all of the 22 executed were first and second lieutenants in the military and police centers.³⁴¹ The 26 proposed for execution on 15 May 1978 included Lon Nol military and private citizens.³⁴²

The Stages of Execution

The chain leading to executions at the district reeducation sites had four consecutive stages.

- The general population and village, subdistrict, and cooperative chiefs reported on the enemy elements in their areas of control to district-level *Angkar*.
- District *Angkar* reviewed the reports and made decisions on the arrest and transport of prisoners to district reeducation centers.
- District reeducation center chiefs sent the confessions to the region committees for study and decision. (The region chiefs acted as anonymous "courts and the

judges,” and their decisions were responsible for the vast majority of executions.)³⁴³

- District reeducation chiefs and district chiefs carried out the executions of prisoners.³⁴⁴

By the time new prisoners arrived at the center, most of the inmates who had come before them had been executed. On execution days, two or three cadres would enter the cells and call out the names on their lists. They told the prisoners that *Angkar* had decided to release them. Prisoners whose names were called had their shackles removed and were taken out. When reaching the gate, their hands were tied behind them and they were blindfolded and led to pre-dug pits. Upon reaching the pits, the cadres ordered the prisoners to kneel. No bullets were wasted: the cadres used hoes, oxcart axles or heavy bamboo to break the prisoners' necks. Their throats were then slit and the bodies pushed into the pits.³⁴⁵

Executions at the district centers were concealed to maintain maximum secrecy. However, the execution sites were located not far from the detention cells, creating some measure of difficulty.³⁴⁶ Thus, executions were often held at night when people were sleeping. To cover the sounds of the clubbing, the cadres created loud noises by, for instance, chopping wood or talking on a loudspeaker.

Execution at the Specific Reeducation Centers

Tram Kak. Soy Sen was a prisoner at this site. He reported that prisoners were walked to the southeast corner of the center for execution. He could not remember the names of everyone executed, but claimed that Nop Nem, a famous movie star during the Sihanouk era, was executed there in 1975. He listed the names of five perpetrators he could recall: Saing, Sang Sim, Uok, San, and Chantha. Three of the men denied Soy Sen's accusations. Sang Sim, however, described the process of taking prisoners for execution:

First the cadres opened the cell door and held their noses with one hand. Then they called out, “Now a number of brothers and sisters have been released by *Angkar* to return to their cooperatives. Upon arrival there you must be good, and not get into conflicts with them or steal from them.” Upon hearing this, the prisoners clapped their hands loudly, filling the cell with the sound of applause. Then the cadres called the names, A, B, C, D, four at a time and walked them out of the cell. Once outside, their hands were tied and they were blindfolded and walked to the grave pit.

The cadres told them to kneel, and then clubbed them from behind, slit their throats with long swords, and, dead or not, pushed the bodies into the pit and covered them up right away.³⁴⁷

Former prisoner Nho related that when prisoners heard the cadres call their names, they struggled to walk to the door. Some were happy, thinking they were being released. Others were afraid, thinking they were being taken to be killed. A prisoner with a crippled leg who was shackled near Nho, upon hearing his name, crawled toward the door, where two cadres grabbed him up, put him in a basket, and carried him to the pit where they threw him in alive and buried him. Nho claimed that up to 100 people at a time were executed at Tram Kak in late 1978. The elderly were pushed into the pits: “The sounds of the impacts were like coconuts falling to the ground, just like that.” Nho said that she saw the killings of young children by peering through the cracks in the boards of her cell. She claimed that the Khmer Rouge did not use swords or knives: “they beat them against tree trunks and pitched them into the pits.”³⁴⁸

Samnang was imprisoned at Tram Kak when he was ten years old. He recalled that he saw cadres using swords and knives to execute prisoners when he was looking for firewood. He described the swords and knives as being “well-polished with polished grips and bright reflective blades.”³⁴⁹ Dam alleged that execution was a routine task the cadres had to perform. He also explained that most executions took place at night.³⁵⁰

Former prisoner Mao observed that each time Phy (the Tram Kak security chief) arrived at the reeducation center, there were celebrations and eating and drinking from dawn until afternoon. After the parties the cadres rested until 2 or 3 p.m. and then began the executions. The process was orderly. First the prisoners were brought out of the cells two or three at a time and taken to the grave pit. Then they were made to kneel and clubbed from behind. Last, their throats were slit and they were pushed into the grave.³⁵¹

Bati. Executions at Bati were similar to those at Tram Kak, including the presence of the district chief during the killings, and the celebrations, eating, and drinking wine. Chak, a prisoner and cook at Bati, noted that each time an execution was planned, dogs were caught to make curry for a party and there was happy drinking. Before the executions began, all travel was forbidden. He explained that there were announcements on a loudspeaker: “Wherever you are, remain there. If you have entered, do not leave, if you have already exited, do not re-enter.” Then the executions began. The cadres checked the execution lists and called the names of four to ten people at a time; as the victims walked

out, their names were crossed out with a red ballpoint pen. They were tied and blindfolded, then led to the grave pits, their necks hacked or stabbed, and pushed into the pits. Chak remembered that executions began at 3 p.m. and sometimes went on until midnight.³⁵²

Chhin a saw pile of Bati center documents in 1980. He noted that names on the execution list were written in blue ballpoint pen, with some names marked in red with the word "smash." He saw his own name and that of his first cousin on one list. His cousin's name was marked in red ballpoint, but his own name was not his cousin was executed at the center during 1977.³⁵³

Other Causes of Death

Some prisoners died in their cells of disease or the effects of torture. Two prisoners at Tram Kak died of illness in July 1977 and another six in November.³⁵⁴ Former cadre Sim explained the causes of death:

The prisoners had no food, and were very thin and weak from the beatings during the interrogations. There were diseases; there was a lack of hygiene; there was dysentery, constant lice, starvation, and fatigue, a regular weakening. So every evening at least two or three died. The bodies were left until the next afternoon when the light prisoners returned from work outside the compound, and then they were carried off for burial in the pits.³⁵⁵

The regular deaths of prisoners shackled near Mao gave him insomnia. He explained that if it was an execution night, he feared he would be taken, and if not, the prisoners nearby screamed from pain until dawn. Some evenings they screamed until they died.³⁵⁶ In addition to being a prisoner, Teng was an undertaker at the Leuk Dek. One morning when it was time to get up for work, a prisoner shackled near him did not move. Teng tried to awaken the man, who had slept in his arms the night before.³⁵⁷ Chaey stated that the corpses he carried to bury were all very emaciated. "One hammock could hold three corpses, which was carried off as if it were weightless."³⁵⁸

Chhuon, a prisoner at Kandal Stung, alleged that at least eight to ten prisoners died in their cells each night.³⁵⁹ Although this number may seem a little high, his account confirms the mortal conditions under which people lived in the district reeducation centers throughout the Southwest Zone.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE REGION SECURITY CENTER

After prisoners were interrogated at the district reeducation centers, the center chiefs sent their confessions to regional *Angkar* for examination and decision.³⁶⁰ The important task of deciding which of *Angkar*'s enemies to execute was ultimately the responsibility of the Party Central Committee. But the committee also delegated that task to the zone secretaries and through them, down to the region committees. In the end, the region committees were responsible for deciding on a victim's fate, and the executions were carried out at the district reeducation centers.³⁶¹

The majority of the prisoners who confessed to treason were executed at these centers. A small number who confessed to having a network of enemy contacts or who had high-level positions in the Lon Nol regime went to the region security center for continued interrogation.

Several Khmer Rouge documents illustrate the relationship between the district and region centers. In a 30 July 1977 communication, Tram Kak district reeducation center chief An sent three prisoner confessions (Un Ly, Sin Yang, and Chan Soeun) to Prak, secretary of Region 13. A week later, the region committee decided that all three would be executed.³⁶² Another confession named Ying Kean, Ul Hieng, and Voal Chea as ranking officials arrested by *Angkar*. The region committee sentenced all three to death on 27 August 1977.³⁶³

Soeun Chau (aka Chao) was a Khmer Kraom colonel and the younger brother of Soen San, the former director of the Bank of Kampuchea during the 1950s.³⁶⁴ Khun, chief of Koh Thom district, sent him from the Koh Thom reeducation center to the Region 25 security center on 20 September 1975. A prisoner named Song made the same journey:

At first there were more than twenty of us called to a boat that set out from the Koh Thom district reeducation center. We had been held there for four or five days when suddenly there were orders for all of us to get into the boat and go to the Region 25 security center. As far as I can remember, we rode in a boat numbered 08 and sat in two rows facing one another with our feet shackled.³⁶⁵

Four prisoners named Sen, Hour, Ut and Yin were sent by Lon, the chief of the Leuk Dek reeducation center, to the Region 25 security center on 9 June 1976. Lon's letter to the chief of the Region 25 security center stated that "aside

from the four prisoners named above, there are two more for whom measures were being taken to seek them out. With high revolutionary readiness to smash the enemy.³⁶⁶

Prisoners were transported from Leuk Dek, Koh Thom, and other region security centers by large boat. Teng, who was a Leuk Dek reeducation prisoner, stated: "Prisoners were taken from the cells, tied, and walked to the boat. This was a large boat that might hold fifty persons."³⁶⁷ Upon reaching Koh Thmei (the Region 25 security center), the prisoners were released from their shackles, taken off the boat, and walked onto the island heading straight for their cells. Pan explained that prisoners were brought from all districts of Region 25.³⁶⁸

After examining the prisoners' confessions, the region chief made notes and sent all memoranda to the district reeducation chief and district chief for implementation. Upon receiving rosters from the region to execute prisoners, the chiefs chose the date for implementing the region's decisions. Chak was a prisoner at the Bati center. He claimed that cadres there prepared tables and chairs in advance to receive the husband and wife team of Chhan and Chim, and the center's chief and deputy chief, who were always present during the executions. These high-level cadres examined the rosters of names marked with red ballpoint pen and walked back and forth looking down their noses at the surroundings. The executioners were the district reeducation cadres.³⁶⁹

The presence of senior district committee cadres (such as Phy, Chim, and San) at the Tram Kak, Bati, and Treang reeducation centers during executions shows that the district committees were under their region's control.³⁷⁰

End Notes

- ²⁰³ Former cadres Thuon, Huoy, Chantha, and former prisoners Sen, Mao, Chhong, Chaey, and Teng, said that the number of prisoners ranged between 40 and 300. If more than 300 prisoners were brought in, they would likely be killed rather than imprisoned in order to solve the capacity problem.
- ²⁰⁴ “Report of July 1977,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00195.
- ²⁰⁵ “Report of November 1977,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00173.
- ²⁰⁶ Author’s interview with Nho, *op. cit.*
- ²⁰⁷ Author’s interview with Teng, *op. cit.*
- ²⁰⁸ Author’s interview with Chaey, *op. cit.*; and Keo Mao, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001.
- ²⁰⁹ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Takeo province, 2000. The Global Positioning System reading for the Wat Kokoh site is GPS Lat N 11° 16’ 45.79” Long E 104° 49’ 59.25”.
- ²¹⁰ Today, this pagoda is located in Sangkat Chrei Thom subdistrict, Khann Kep district, Kep city.
- ²¹¹ Author’s interview with Seng, former base person of Kampot district, at Kampot district, Kampot province, 8 July 2001.
- ²¹² “Documents of a Peoples Revolutionary Committee of Kampot,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00552.
- ²¹³ An estimated 100,899 people were executed in Kampot province during the Democratic Kampuchea regime at such sites as Prey Ta Koy, Au Ta Bao, Phnom Krel, Phnom Sramaoch and Phnom Kraing Treng. “Report of the Research Team of the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea in 1981,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00572. The Global Positioning System reading for the Wat Kampong Tralach site is GPS Lat N 10° 32’ 47.5” Long E 104° 18’ 13”.
- ²¹⁴ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1996.
- ²¹⁵ Author’s interview with Chum Yan, former agricultural worker at Prek Koy subdistrict, Saang district, Kandal province, 22 October 2003. The Global Positioning System reading for the Wat Mony Sovann site is GPS Lat N 11° 28’ 53” Long E 104° 57’ 42”.
- ²¹⁶ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Takeo province, 1998.
- ²¹⁷ The Global Positioning System reading for the Kuk Sang site is GPS Lat N 11° 20’ 59” Long E 104° 49’ 43”.
- ²¹⁸ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1996. The Global Positioning

System reading for the Koh Kor site is GPS Lat N 11° 24' 11" Long E 105° 01' 03". The Leuk Dek center is on Koh Kontheay island in Prek Dach subdistrict. The Global Positioning System reading for the Wat Kontheay site is GPS Lat N 11° 10' 20" Long E 105° 13' 55". The reading for the Koh Po Tonle site is GPS Lat N 11° 09' 29" Long E 104° 03' 59".

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ "Report to Tram Kak District," op. cit.

²²¹ Author's interview with Soy Sen, op. cit. The Global Positioning System reading for the Wat Kokoh site is GPS Lat N 10° 57' 59" Long E 104° 35' 32".

²²² "Report on Neang Dam," op. cit. Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit.

²²³ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Takeo province, 1997. Documentation Center of Cambodia. Kim, Keokannitha, "Festival of the Dead, Sacrifices to the Souls of My Grandparents and Parents," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 21, September 2001.

²²⁴ Author's interview with Mao, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ "Report of July 1977," op. cit.

²²⁷ Author's interview with Chhong, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001.

²²⁸ Author's interview with Neang Dam, op. cit.

²²⁹ "Report on Neang Dam," op. cit.

²³⁰ Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit.

²³¹ Author's interview with Soy Sen, op. cit.

²³² Author's interview with Sien, former base person of Samrong district, at Samrong district, Takeo province, 5 December 2001.

²³³ Author's interview with Soeun, former base person of Kraing Ta Chan village, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 6 December 2001.

²³⁴ Author's interview with Thuon, op. cit.

²³⁵ Author's interviews with Nhean, Teng, Chaey, op. cit.; and Chhin, Bati district chief from 1979-1982 and former prisoner at Treang district, Takeo province, 20 September 2001.

²³⁶ Author's interview with Toy, op. cit.

- ²³⁷ "Report on the Enemy," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00260.
- ²³⁸ See, for example, "Confession of Chou Chet," op. cit.
- ²³⁹ "Report from Nheng Nhong Subdistrict of 18 April," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00254.
- ²⁴⁰ "Report to the Party District District 105," op. cit.
- ²⁴¹ "Letter Asking for Measures of 26 April 1977," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00243.
- ²⁴² Author's interview with Lim Teng, op. cit.
- ²⁴³ "Report of 6 May 1977," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00203.
- ²⁴⁴ "To Beloved Comrade An," op. cit.
- ²⁴⁵ Author's interview with Saut Saing, op. cit.
- ²⁴⁶ Author's interview with Nom, former base person of Kraing Ta Chan village, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001.
- ²⁴⁷ Author's interviews with Kun, former Bati district reeducation center prisoner, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 28 March 2001; Chak, op. cit; and Phon, former Bati district reeducation center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 28 March 2001.
- ²⁴⁸ *Honorary Red Flag, Special Issue. 1977-1978.* op. cit.
- ²⁴⁹ Ibid., See also "Notes of a Meeting of S-21 Cadres," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00508.
- ²⁵⁰ Author's interviews with Lim Teng, op. cit.; Teng, former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Dach subdistrict, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province, 4 July 2001; and Seng Ly, op. cit.
- ²⁵¹ See, for example, the prisoner list of S-21. See also Ysa, Osman, *Oukoubab*, op. cit.
- ²⁵² "Prisoner Lists of Tram Kak District Reeducation Center," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00209, D00210, D00211, D00213.
- ²⁵³ Ibid.
- ²⁵⁴ Author's interview with Sannang, op. cit.
- ²⁵⁵ "Report by Comrade Chhon, Chief of Trapang Thom Tbaung, to Comrade An, Chief of Tram Kak Reeducation Center," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00268.

²⁵⁶ Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit.

²⁵⁷ "Confession of Sou Choal, called Reach," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00173. Author's interviews with Sou Phally, daughter of Sou Choal, called Reach, at Leay Bo subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001; and Teng, op. cit.

²⁵⁸ "Report by Comrade Chun, Chief of Popel Subdistrict, 18 May 1977, to District Angkar. Request to Inform Respected Angkar," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00286.

²⁵⁹ Author's interview with Nho, op. cit.

²⁶⁰ *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 9, September 2000.

²⁶¹ "Document of Complaint of Prum Sarom, a Resident of Prek Samrong Village, Rokar Khpuos Subdistrict, Sa-ang District, Kandal Province, circa 1980," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00788.

²⁶² *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 10, October 2000.

²⁶³ "The Sixth Point of the Twelve-Point Code of Conduct," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 15, March 2001.

²⁶⁴ "Report of 28 September 1977," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00242. On 28 September 1977, Kit, the Tram Kak district chief, issued an order to arrest Mou Phon.

²⁶⁵ "Report of Comrade Khun, Chief of Sre Ronong Subdistrict, to Respected Comrade Uncle An," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00285.

²⁶⁶ Author's interview with Thuon, op. cit. Koy Nim explained that Puth's family name was Him, and today he is deputy chief of the Kampot military staff. During Democratic Kampuchea, he was deputy youth chief for District 107, Region 13. A man under the Puth's command hacked a child to death. Sorya Sim's interview with Koy Nim, Phnom Penh, 3 December 2001.

²⁶⁷ Author's interview with Chaey, op. cit.

²⁶⁸ "Confession of Kuong Chhoem, Prisoner at Koh Andet District Reeducation Center," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00190.

²⁶⁹ "Report to the Respected Party," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00229.

²⁷⁰ Author's interview with Teng, op. cit.

²⁷¹ The Khmer Rouge used five-to ten-meter long leg shackles made of iron rods throughout the country. Prisoners' ankles were put inside U-shaped iron rings with hooks on each end of the U, which were then slipped over a rod, and the rod was locked at each end to a wall. Each cell had four or five rows of prisoners held this way, foot to foot, head to head. Females were in one row, males in another.

Some security centers used wooden shackles with cut-outs for ankles at the bottom and locks

at the top. These five- to six-meter long shackles held 10 to 15 prisoners per row. Osman Ysa's interview with Sok Chea and Ysa Thea, former cadre and prisoner at Krauch Chhmar district reeducation center, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, 21 February 2001.

²⁷² "CPK Central Committee Instructions on Party Policy toward Confused Persons Who Join the CIA, become Yuon Agents, Join the KGB, Oppose the Party and Revolution, and DK," Documentation Center of Cambodia D01399.

²⁷³ Author's interview with Keo Mao, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁴ "Report to Comrade An," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00240. See also "Report to the Party District 105," *op. cit.* Author's interview with Chhong, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁵ "Report of 6 May 1977," *op. cit.*

²⁷⁶ "Report of District 195," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00227.

²⁷⁷ Camps were sub-units attached to some of the reeducation centers.

²⁷⁸ Author's interview with Nho, *op. cit.*

²⁷⁹ Author's interviews with Keo Mao, *op. cit.* and Soy Sen, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁰ Author's interviews with Teng, *op. cit.* and Chaey, *op. cit.*

²⁸¹ Some Buddhists believe that the destruction of a temple or Buddha image is a sin. My believed that Ta Mok's daughter Khom went insane because she ordered the destruction of a temple and one of its Buddha images. San, Kalyan, interview with My, Ta Mok's younger sister, at Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 26 July 2000.

²⁸² "Report of the Reeducation Chief to Tram Kak District Angkar," *op. cit.*

²⁸³ Author's interview with Nho, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁴ Min recalled: "Some ate half of their sleeping mats. Salty, [soiled with] urine and feces, they chewed away." Tam stated: "We lay face upwards, not seeing anything other than the bamboo tubes they set up. We were not afraid of rat bites." Ysa, Osman, interview with Min, a former prisoner at Krauch Chhmar district reeducation center, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, 21 February 2001; *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 8, August 2000.

²⁸⁵ *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 8, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁶ "The only food was morning glory plant mixed with thin rice gruel. No spoons, no dishes, they ate with their hands from a pig trough." Author's interviews with Teng and Chaey, former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoners, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁷ Ysa, Osman, interviews with Him Leh, former Koh Thom district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 9 November 2000; and Mat Toulas, former Koh Thom district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Thmei

subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal Province, 21 March 2000.

²⁸⁸ Author's interview with Keo Mao, *op. cit.* The testimony of Huoy, a former cadre at Treang district, confirms this: "When prisoners escorted outside dared to pick up fruit or food, they were sure to be killed or to receive punishment from the guards." Author's interview with Huoy, *op. cit.*

²⁸⁹ Author's interview with Teng, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁰ Author's interviews with Huoy, *op. cit.*

²⁹¹ Author's interview with Nho, *op. cit.*

²⁹² *Ibid.*

²⁹³ Author's interview with Samnang, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁴ Author's interviews with Teng and Chaey, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁵ Author's interview with Saut Saing, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁶ Author's interviews with Sok Chantha, called Duch, *op. cit.* and Saut Saing, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁷ Author's interview with Deuk, *op. cit.*

²⁹⁸ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), *op. cit.*

²⁹⁹ According to Sok Chea, "The interrogator and high-level prisoner are different. The prisoner is the enemy and a traitor to the nation. Even birth parents are divided like this." Ysa, Osman, interview with Sok Chea, *op. cit.*

³⁰⁰ Author's interview with Saut Saing, *op. cit.*

³⁰¹ On 26 December 1977, comrade An, chief of the Tram Kak reeducation center, reported to the Party on the investigation of a woman named Huot in Ang Ta Saom subdistrict. An told the Party that "This female, [confessed] only when questioned 'hotly.' The Ang Ta Saom military place has no appropriate questioning place. For *Angkar's* information." Documentation Center of Cambodia D00272. The district committee's instructions to An were to: "Interrogate harshly so he will answer about all his group." Documentation Center of Cambodia D00217.

³⁰² *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), *op. cit.*

³⁰³ Chandler, David, *Voices from S-21*, *op. cit.*

³⁰⁴ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), *op. cit.* Author's interviews with Tum Sat, called Sat, former S-21 cadre, at Baribo district, Kampong Chhang province, 17 December 1999; Him Kheng, called Kheng, former S-21 cadre, at Baribo district, Kampong Chhang province, 17 December 1999; Khieu Ches, called Peou, *op. cit.*; and Chum Pan, former Region 25 security center cadre, at Koh Thmei subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 12

September 2001. Ysa, Osman, interview with Sok Chea, op. cit.

³¹⁵ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), op. cit.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ "Confession of Sen, Notes by Comrade Pon to the Party Dated 15 November 1976," Documentation Center of Cambodia D01434.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ "Confession of Chek Brahim, Lieutenant Colonel during the Lon Nol Regime," Documentation Center of Cambodia D02687.

³²¹ "To Brother San. The confession of the traitor Nop Try at Ta Phem subdistrict who you questioned in general and who confessed [to you] that there were 18 persons, when he got here he confessed to me that there were 27... If you have any decision, I will implement it. 2 October 1977. An." The Trak Kak district chief answered, "Beloved Comrade An. Propose the arrest of all his contacts too, and be careful always, don't let things go at all. 3 October 1977. Kit." Documentation Center of Cambodia D00282.

³²² See, for example, "Confession of Chey Suon, called Sen, Secretary of Region 25," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13848. Chey Suon was interrogated 13 times.

³²³ S-21 Santebal statistics book, *Politics, Ideology, Organization*, op. cit. The slogan on the outer cover reads: "Determine to stop lying down in questioning. Determine not to hesitate during interrogations of the enemy. Determine to attack in interrogating, to get a confession to send to the Party."

³²⁴ Author's interview with Vann Nath, op. cit.

³²⁵ "Report of the Reeducation Chief to Tram Kak District Angkar," op. cit. Author's interview with Saut Saing, op. cit. Ysa, Osman, interview with Sok Chea, op. cit.

³²⁶ Author's interview with Yan, former Samrong district reeducation center cadre, at Samrong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 13 December 2000.

³²⁷ Author's interview with Sok Chantha, called Duch, op. cit.

³²⁸ Author's interview with Sou Phally, op. cit.

³²⁹ "Confession of Tep Theng," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00173.

³³⁰ Author's interview with Tep Sary, younger sister of Tep Theng, at Laey Bo subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

³³¹ Author's interview with Sok Chantha, op. cit.

³²² "Reports on Chen Sidin," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00168, D00295 and D00298.

³²³ Author's interview with Teng, op. cit.

³²⁴ Author's interview with Chaey, op. cit.

³²⁵ Author's interviews with Chhin, op. cit.

³²⁶ Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit.

³²⁷ Author's interview with Samnang, op. cit.

³²⁸ Author's interview with Chaey, op. cit.

³²⁹ Author's interview with Teng, op. cit.

³³⁰ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1998, op. cit.

³³¹ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1996, op. cit.

³³² "The Sixth Point of the Twelve-Point Code of Conduct," op. cit.

³³³ Soy Sen claimed that a female prisoner Rat (an alias) was raped by Chantha repeatedly after being called out of her cell when other prisoners were asleep. Sen knew of this because he was shackled near Rat. Chantha denied any reeducation cadres ever committed rape, but he said that if it did occur, only the big chiefs could have done it. Author's interviews with Soy Sen and Sok Chanta, op. cit.

Chak claimed that Bati reeducation cadres raped a Muslim woman named Ream. The rapist impregnated her and she was executed when three months' pregnant. Chak recalled that before being taken out for execution Ream said farewell to him. "If you survive and go back to the village, make an offering of rice and water for me." Author's interview with Chak, op. cit.

³³⁴ Author's interview with Sok Chantha, op. cit. Also see "Sexual Violation," *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 9, September 2000.

³³⁵ The PRK (the government that succeeded Democratic Kampuchea) also conducted a nationwide mass grave excavation campaign during the 1980s. The graves were excavated using manual labor and the skulls discovered were placed in two or three memorials per district.

³³⁶ "From the beginning our smashing of the enemy until today totals 15,000. (The number is not quite clear.) For the Party's information. Tram Kak district reeducation center. An." Documentation Center of Cambodia D10840.

³³⁷ This figure is from documents prepared in 1980 by the Kampuchean National Unity Salvation Front (a front created in 1980 by the PRK). However, the figures produced by the Front are disputed by Cambodian and foreign researchers alike because its counts were not done scientifically. For example, the Front claimed that some 3.3 million people died during

Democratic Kampuchea, which is higher than the commonly accepted figure of 1.7 million. This difference arises because the Front did not take proper account of birth and death rates or the percentage of those living outside the country. There was also considerable double counting.

³³⁸ Author's interview with Soy Sen, op. cit.

³³⁹ "Report on Neang Dam," op. cit.

³⁴⁰ Author's interview with Chak, op. cit.

³⁴¹ "Prisoner Lists of Tram Kak District Reeducation Center," op. cit.

³⁴² "Report of Comrade An to Region 13 Committee," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00502.

³⁴³ Author's interviews with Chaey and Nho, op. cit.

³⁴⁴ "To Comrade Brother Kit." Documentation Center of Cambodia D00188. "To Beloved Comrade Chhoeun," op. cit. Author's interviews with Sang Sim, former Tram Kak district reeducation center cadre, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 1 October 2001, and Chak, op. cit.

³⁴⁵ Author's interviews with Chaey, Nho, and Kun, op. cit.

³⁴⁶ Author's interview with Nho, Sannang, Soy Sen, Keo Mao, Sang Sim, Chaey, Teng, and Kun, op. cit. DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kandal province, 1997. Tieng, Sopheak Vichea, interview with Kim Sau, at Rumlech subdistrict, Bakan district, Pursat province, 21 April 2001.

³⁴⁷ Author's interview with Sang Sim, op. cit.

³⁴⁸ Author's interview with Nho, op. cit.

³⁴⁹ Author's interviews with Sannang, op. cit. and Neang Dam, op. cit.

³⁵⁰ Author's interview with Neang Dam, op. cit.

³⁵¹ Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit.

³⁵² Author's interview with Chak, op. cit.

³⁵³ Author's interview with Chhun, op. cit.

³⁵⁴ "Report of Comrade An to Region 13 Committee," op. cit.

³⁵⁵ Author's interview with Sang Sim, op. cit.

³⁵⁶ Author's interview with Keo Mao, op. cit. See, for example, "Confession of Sou Chal, called Reach," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00173; and "Report of July 1977," op. cit.

³⁵⁷ Author's interview with Teng, op. cit.

³⁵⁸ Author's interview with Chaey, op. cit.

³⁵⁹ *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 9, September 2000.

³⁶⁰ Author's interview with Sok Chantha, op. cit.

³⁶¹ Author's interview with Thuon, op. cit.

³⁶² "Report to the Party on the Confessions of the Following Prisoners," Documentation Center of Cambodia D00186. "Confession of Sek Sat," op. cit.

³⁶³ "Report to the Party on the Confessions of the Following Prisoners," op. cit.

³⁶⁴ Soen San's grandfather was Soen Kuy, who Cambodians considered to be a national hero because he committed suicide during the movement for independence for Kampuchea Kraom and Buddhism from the Vietnamese government. Soen San survived the Democratic Kampuchea regime and died on 19 December 2000 in Paris.

³⁶⁵ Author's interview with Song, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thom B (Khor) subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001.

³⁶⁶ "Report on Transport of Prisoners from District 14," Documentation Center of Cambodia D01111.

³⁶⁷ Author's interview with Teng, op. cit.

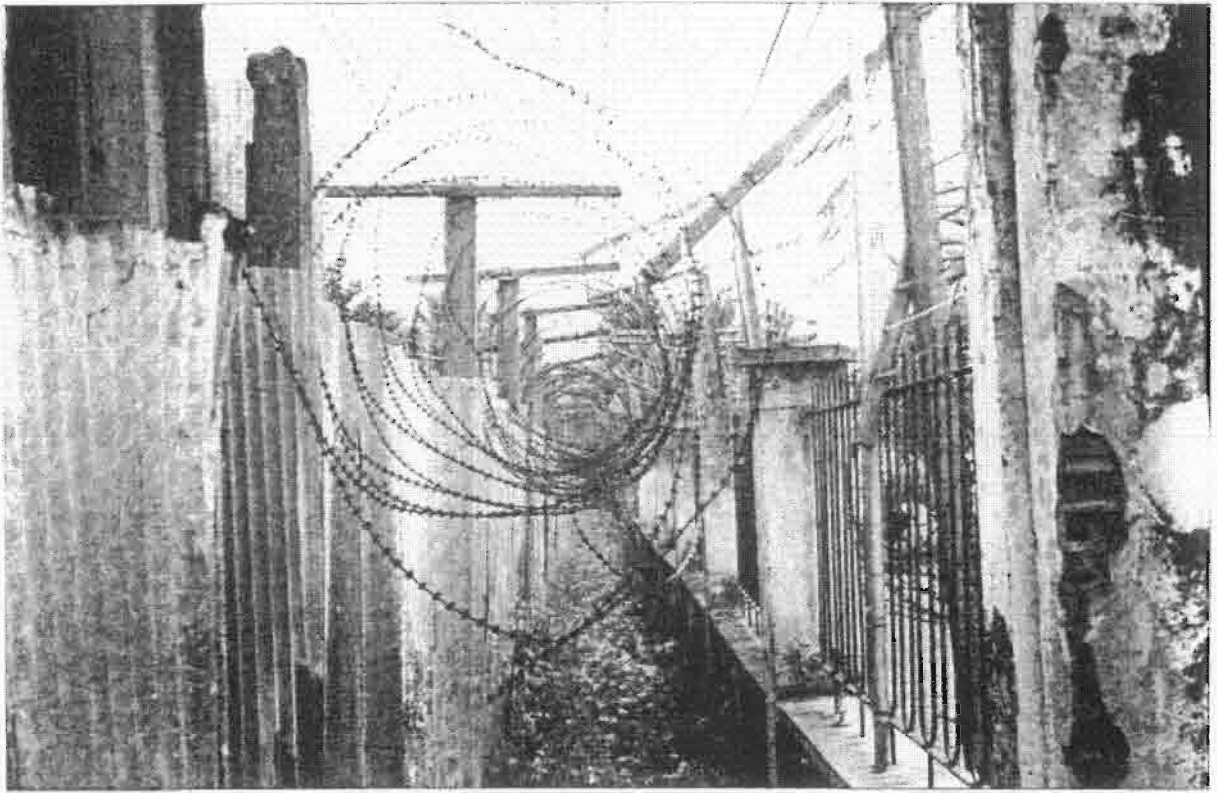
³⁶⁸ Author's interview with Chum Pan, op. cit.

³⁶⁹ DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Takeo province, 2000, op. cit.

³⁷⁰ It appears that comrade Phy was a Tram Kak district committee member responsible for security. He was always present at executions at the Tram Kak center. (Phy had a broken leg, so the people called him "Phy Bak" – *bak* means "broken" in Khmer.) He moved from Tram Kak district in 1977 and was given responsibility for security matters at Treang district.

5

THE REGION SECURITY CENTERS



Fence of S-21 [Toul Sleng] Prison, post-1979

There were at least three region security centers in the Southwest Zone (one each in Regions 25, 33, and 35). Region 35 also housed a reeducation camp. These centers were created to imprison Khmer Rouge cadres. No information could be located regarding a security center in Region 13 (Takeo province). It is possible that the district facilities there were adequate to detain the region's more serious offenders or that no army staff in Region 13 were accused of being involved in any plot against the CPK.

CENTER SITES

The regional facilities were of two types. The centers in Regions 25 and 35 sometimes served as execution facilities. Prisoners there were constantly shackled. The Region 33 security center, on the other hand, functioned more as a reeducation camp, where prisoners were put to hard labor rather than being shackled.

Region 25

This region's security center, called Center 15, had three locations in Kandal province:³⁷¹

From late 1973 (when the Khmer Rouge first took control of parts of Sa-ang district) until early 1974, the center was located at Rokakroam village, Khpop subdistrict, Sa-ang district.

From 1974 until 17 April 1975, it was located in Khbal Chroy village (also called Village 3) in Po Ban subdistrict, Koh Thom district. Although different districts in Kandal province housed the first and second locations, these centers were in adjacent villages.

After April 1975, the center was located in Koh Thmei village on Koh Thmei Island.³⁷² The island is in Khpop subdistrict, Sa-ang district.³⁷³

The Region 25 security center was relocated to Koh Thmei Island after its inhabitants were evacuated in April 1975. The island's temple was used to hold male prisoners and the Koh Thmei elementary school housed female prisoners. A house south of the wat became a prison for Khmer Rouge cadres. The interrogation site was located west of the temple, and the execution site and graveyard were to its east. When they were taken to be executed during the flood season, prisoners were placed in a boat that crossed a creek and moved onto high ground east of the temple where they were later buried.³⁷⁴

Likewise, the region security center chief and region secretary positions changed hands. From 1973 to 1975, the region chief was Moeng Teng and the secretary was Chey Suon.³⁷⁵ From 1975 until 1978, the chief was Mara and the secretary was Saom Chea.

Region 33

This security center was located in Cheung Phnom village of Veal subdistrict. The people preferred to call it "Kuk Chrey Au Phneou" (the Chrey Au Phneou prison). It was under the control of security chief Ben, his deputy chief Khon, and region secretary Chong.³⁷⁶ It was freer in nature than other region centers. In this "camp," prisoners performed heavy labor, but were generally not shackled.

The prisoners lived in six cooperatives, one each for the elderly, widows with children, widows without children, female youths, male youths, and children (fewer men than women were imprisoned at these sites). Prisoners seen as having committed theft or working at less than full output were arrested and sent to nearby Wat Champa for interrogation and torture.³⁷⁷ On execution day, prisoners at the Region 33 security center were put into trucks and taken to be killed at Preah Sdech and Prey Khlom villages.³⁷⁸

Region 35

Located in Kampot provincial city, this region's security center served as the Kampot provincial prison during the Sihanouk and Lon Nol eras. The Region 35 security center was led by region Security Chief Noy and Region 35 Secretary Sam Bit.³⁷⁹ The center held two detention cells and one interrogation room. After interrogation, prisoners were taken by truck for execution at a site north of Phnom Bokor.

The second site in this region housed a reeducation camp in Phnom La-ang, Dang Tung district, Kampot province. Some of the people who had been imprisoned at the Region 35 security center were later sent on to this camp.

THE PRISONERS

At the region level, prisoners tended to come from the regional Khmer Rouge army. Most of them were seen as committing more serious crimes, such as treason. The rest were mainly "internal enemies": former Lon Nol soldiers and policemen, and "trenders."³⁸⁰ In addition, a small number of prisoners at the Region 35 reeducation camp were the wives, relatives and children of those who had already been arrested or killed by the Khmer Rouge.

Prisoners were sent to the region security centers in one of two ways: 1) they were arrested by the army or regional cadres or 2) they were sent there from the district reeducation centers.³⁸¹ There were three main reasons for arrest: their leaders had been accused of being traitors, their names had appeared in confessions, or they had been accused of attempting or committing treason.

Region 25

In 1976, several incidents led to the widespread arrests of Khmer Rouge cadres who were sent to the Region 25 security center. Earlier, it had been used mainly to imprison soldiers and policemen from the Lon Nol regime.

In mid-1976, a Khmer Rouge cadre threw a hand grenade into the ground near the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh. After he was arrested and interrogated, he confessed that his superiors were Sao Phim, secretary of the East Zone, and Sous Neou, aka Chhouk, secretary of Region 24. As a result, Pol Pot and other central-level officials began to suspect Sao Phim and Chhouk of plotting a *coup d'état* against the CPK. Soon after, the two men were arrested and imprisoned at S-21. Their confessions led Party members to believe that senior leaders from Region 25 were not only supporters of the intended coup but also were planning their own coup.

As a result, in mid-1976 Chan Chakrei, chief of military Division 170, was arrested with Chey Suon (aka Sen), secretary of Region 25.³⁸² They were sent to S-21. Their confessions implicated several other Region 25 officials, including Sok But Chamroeun,³⁸³ security chief Huot Se, Leuk Dek district chief Riel Lenh,³⁸⁴ and Chhou Bun Leat,³⁸⁵ who were arrested and sent to S-21 during October on charges of creating a "workers party" (*pak polakoi*) to oppose the CPK.³⁸⁶

According to the notes of a 30 August 1976 meeting, Son Sen explained that a total of 200 combatants in Region 25 had been arrested. He claimed that those arrested had been involved with Chan Chakrei, who had led a rebellion against the Khmer Rouge on 25 August 1976. Six weeks later, on 11 October 1976, Son Sen recalled: "We clearly see the conflict now. The leaders have been basically smashed, but their hands and arms still remain."³⁸⁷

Other arrests followed for the rank and file of Region 25, who were imprisoned at the region's security center. The detention process was well-organized: soldiers were either told that *Angkar* had asked them to attend a meeting or work in the fields, after which they were arrested.

Suy Phal and Mao were among those whom Son Sen was seeking because he considered them to be the "hands and arms" of rebels or having joined in the Chan Chakrei rebellion. Through the confessions of several prisoners, the enemies of *Angkar* multiplied. In his confession, Suy Phal admitted to the crimes that led to his arrest, saying that he intended to go to Vietnam because

his contacts had been exposed and arrested one after another. Twenty-one of Suy Phal's contacts had been arrested before him, and Phal named 91 co-conspirators in his confession, 62 of which were planners and 29 supporters.³⁸⁸

Lach Mao was arrested with his chief Nuon Suon, aka Chey, and sent to the Region 25 security center:

When Ta Chey (Nuon Suon) was arrested, I was arrested by Met and taken away too. Met took me by motorcycle from the village to Sa-ang district west of Koh Thmei, where I was later called to a boat going to Koh Thmei. When I reached the island, Region 25 security center cadres tied my arms behind my back, blindfolded me, and took me directly to a cell on Koh Thmei. Upon arriving there, I saw three large prisons inside a temple and two schools. Inside the temple was a prison for serious offenders. The schools were for light offenders, females and children. When I first got there, I was in the temple. This temple was locked up tightly and dark; one could not see anything at all. Later, when I could see inside, I saw three long rows of leg shackles. There were 20 to 30 prisoners held in each shackle.³⁸⁹

Than and 24 other combatants from Division 170 were arrested on 18 January 1977 because they served under Chan Chakrei.³⁹⁰ However, Than stated that he later learned from Region 25 security center cadres that thousands of combatants from Chan Chakrei's 170th Division and the East Zone had been arrested.³⁹¹

Moeng Teng reported that aside from the imprisonment of soldiers and people serving inside the regional structure, a number of people were accused of being "trenders" or "inclined," and thus enemies involved with networks opposing *Ang Sam*.³⁹² He explained that when he was responsible for administering the Region 25 security center, he received a Party plan through the secretary of Region 25. The plan was to gather up former cadres and evacuees from the cities, send them to the security centers to have their case files written down, and then to smash them.³⁹³

Brothers Song and Chhok were policemen during the Lon Nol regime who were evacuated from Phnom Peah to their birthplace, Koh Thom district. A month after they reached their village, they and 25 others from the district were arrested for serving the Lon Nol regime and dropping bombs on Koh Thom during the war that ended in 1975. According to Song, subdistrict chief Sruoch called them to a meeting at the subdistrict headquarters. After the meeting was over, all were arrested and sent by boat number 08 to the Region 25 security

center.³⁹⁴ Song alleged that he learned many things at the center because after he was interrogated and held for one month, he became a light offender who worked at the center:

Prisoners in the Region 25 security center were divided into three cells, two for males and one for females. Serious offenders were held in a dark cell, medium offenders in a regular cell, and females and children who were the families of prisoners [were held in another]. There were more than fifty prisoners in each cell. In the female cell, prisoner Chray was pregnant and ready to give birth. She screamed for help, and the others in her cell helped her. One called out asking for water from the guards. "One of us is giving birth, I need a bucket of water." The guard handed over the water. Several hours later, the newborn child died.³⁹⁵

After he was accused of being a Lon Nol spy who had concealed himself in Prek Pha-ao village, Kampong Kong subdistrict, Thai was arrested and held at the Region 25 security center.³⁹⁶ A prisoner named Hour and 40 others were arrested simultaneously on 9 June 1976: all of them were accused of "having plans to betray *Angkar* and flee to Vietnam."³⁹⁷

The reason for Hak's arrest in 1976 was slightly different. Aside from being a former Lon Nol soldier, Hak had struck his own child. Hak related that his child, who had been sent to a center for children, kept running back home, causing the chief of the children's center to criticize Hak for his disobedient son. Hurt by the criticism, Hak beat his child with a whip.³⁹⁸

Region 35

Mat Ly was a soldier in Battalion 122, which had a coastal defense mission. In December 1975, he was arrested and sent to the Region 35 security center for planning to rebel and flee to Vietnam. He was held in isolation in a dark cell for six weeks, and interrogated and tortured three times. Later, he was assigned to make hoes and baskets, and plant crops. Ly learned much about the 800 prisoners held at the center. He explained that prisoners were brought there from every district in the region. They included Khmer Rouge cadres and soldiers, Lon Nol policemen and soldiers, ethnic Muslims, new people, and a small number of old people. The prisoners were held in a dark cell where they slept on a cement floor. Each of the 40 people held in the main prison had both legs shackled. They were forced to urinate and defecate in ammunition cans placed nearby.³⁹⁹

Loh and Tauch were sent to the Region 35 security center on the grounds of wanting to rebel against *Angkar* and flee to Vietnam. They stated that after arrest, imprisonment and interrogation, the prisoners were divided into two separate groups. Light offenders were held in cells which normal daylight reached, and were shackled. They were assigned work, especially agricultural work for the center. They were interrogated often, but generally were not sentenced to death. The serious offenders were held in a dark cell with both legs shackled, and were never permitted to leave, even to urinate or defecate. Often, after interrogation, these “enemies of *Angkar*” were sent on to S-21.⁴⁰⁰

FOOD SUPPLY

Food was provided twice daily in the region security centers, at midday and in the afternoon. Both meals consisted of thin rice gruel with morning glory or other water plants, banana stalks and palm flour.

Pan, a former Region 25 security center cadre, reported that two or three prisoners were tasked with cooking and ladling the food according to fixed rations: two or three ladles for each prisoner.⁴⁰¹ Voeun, a guard, reported that “There was not enough to eat; it was pitiful.”⁴⁰² Song stated that he and the other prisoners received only one ladle of thin rice gruel mixed with banana stalks and palm flour each day. He added that if prisoners grew thirsty at night, they could not get water.⁴⁰³ Lach Mao explained that the prisoners’ eating utensils included one metal dish per person, and in place of spoons they used mango leaves as scoops.⁴⁰⁴

The diet for prisoners, according to Hak, was “pig food.”⁴⁰⁵ The poor food caused the prisoners to become too weak to walk; they crawled or staggered instead. Song said, “The prisoners trembled, fainted and collapsed.”⁴⁰⁶ Mao complained that because he ate thin rice gruel mixed with palm flour and sometimes had only rice bran for years at a time, his health remains poor today.⁴⁰⁷

Serious offenders at the center ate only once a day and light offenders twice. Ly explained the difference in rations. The light offenders worked at the prison, but the serious offenders were said by the cadres to be “a worthless group.”⁴⁰⁸ This diet resulted in serious stomach problems for Deu Loh. He explained that his stomach “quit working” after he was released from the security center, and it took a long time before he could eat rice and soup as usual. Deu Loh complained about his failing health after the Democratic Kampuchea regime:

Now my health is still no good, because it was so difficult being in prison. They gave us just a little bowl of thin rice gruel per day. After release I still couldn't eat anything. If I did, it soon came back up because my stomach did not work. It took months before I could eat even a little bit.⁴⁰⁹

INTERROGATION AND TORTURE

Interrogation

The process for interrogating prisoners at the region security centers was continuous, much like the process at S-21 (the Party center). One similarity included holding the prisoner for two to six days to break his or her spirit before interrogation. For example, a common technique was to ask prisoners accusatory questions. An S-21 cadre notebook reads: "We must ask trap questions that we set up beforehand."⁴¹⁰

Withholding Food. The investigation committees at the region security centers withheld food from prisoners to weaken them further before they were questioned. After being detained without food at the Region 25 security center for three or four days, Rath Teng was taken out by the investigation committee for interrogation:

When I got to the interrogation room, the investigator gave me a cigarette, and spoke in a coaxing way to me, saying, 'Our friend, now you must answer to *Angkar* truthfully and *Angkar* will not do anything. *Angkar* loves to see you being truthful. Speak straightforwardly, don't hide anything from *Angkar*.'⁴¹¹

Loh recalled the events of the day he was interrogated because the investigator gave him a cigarette. He said that the cigarette made him "have strength, be bright and clear in myself." His brightness was restored because he had been lying in irons without food and water for two days in a dark cell.⁴¹²

Threats. Rath Sarin reported that when first being interrogated, the prisoner sat in a chair, answering normally because he or she was not under threat or torture, but this changed with subsequent interrogations. He explained the threats of the investigation committee:

When something is asked, that is what you must answer. If you oppose, you will certainly get clubbed or whipped [with an] electrical wire. When I arrived at the interrogation room, the investigator told me to sit in the chair and began asking questions. First question, every time, "Do you realize why *Angkar* brought you here?" I answered, "I don't know." Then he hit me and said "You think about it a little more, and I'll be right back." When he returned he began again, "So, have you thought of it yet, or not?" I answered, "I do not know." [Three days later, he was taken out again for interrogation.] This time he asked the same questions, and I still said I did not know; as before. He threatened me to confess. I said I did not know. Then he clubbed me again and took a plastic bag and put it over my head until I went unconscious. When I came to, I was back lying on the floor of the dark cell.⁴¹³

Intensity and Duration of Questioning. Because the prisoners at this level of the security system were important (both in the nature of their offense and their positions), their interrogations were intense and extensive. Interrogation and torture were carried out at least twice for each prisoner. Each time took several hours. (S-21 confessions show that some prisoners were interrogated five or six times for an extended period on each occasion.) Prisoners were interrogated multiple times because the security center cadres realized that the first and second confessions were "not yet clear and detailed and complete at all, and further interrogation would always be a step-by-step development toward progress."⁴¹⁴

Loh was interrogated at Region 35 three times for up to four hours per session. According to his confession, Chou Kan was interrogated four times by the investigation committee at Region 25, for two to four hours each time.⁴¹⁵ The goals of such intense and lengthy interrogations at the region security centers were no different from those at S-21: 1) force prisoners to confess to their offenses, 2) make them confess the reasons for their treason, and 3) have the prisoners name their rebel connections. Than was interrogated six times over five or six days. He claimed that "The intense and forceful interrogations were to push the prisoners into becoming true enemies of *Angkar* in their plans of treason and their contacts' involvement in those plans."⁴¹⁶ Sarin explained how blame was cast by the investigation committee at the Region 25 security center, which would ask questions like "When you were in Phnom Penh, what did you do? When you left, how many friends came with you? What actions did you take?"⁴¹⁷

Under questioning by the investigation committee, most prisoners confessed. Chou Kan confessed to Region 25 investigators Mong, Hak and Sreng that “I did in fact intend to run off to Vietnam, for sure.”⁴¹⁸ Hour was interrogated by two Region 25 investigators, Cheam and Hak, for two hours. He confessed to plans to commit treason and to having 40 contacts; Nop Try named 27.⁴¹⁹

Naming Contacts. Like their counterparts at S-21, prisoners in the regions often named “contacts” in their confessions in a bid to gain mercy. Chek Brahim was sent from the Region 25 security center to S-21 on 24 January 1976. Five days later, the Party marked him for execution. Brahim’s confession states that he was arrested because his name showed up as a contact in the confession of Kai Yusuf. “I have nothing more to hide from the revolutionary organization, because I understand clearly now that the revolutionary organization demands only loyalty from me. All my previous faults have been forgiven, so I await the decision of the revolutionary organization with constant hope.” Of the 11 “rebel contacts” named by Brahim, 10 died.⁴²⁰

Sarin understood that the investigation committee was intent on digging up his organizational contacts, so he named those who had been arrested with him. But he did not name other Lon Nol soldiers who he knew and who the investigation committee asked about. Sarin explained why: “I felt sorry for their wives and children at home who knew nothing at all. Better to die alone.”⁴²¹

Torture

A second similarity between the region and S-21 was the intensive use of interrogation and torture, which included both “cold” and “hot” methods. Cold interrogation meant the prisoners were coaxed or deceived into confessing by their interrogators; beatings were not used. Hot methods meant the prisoners were beaten and tortured to obtain their confessions. These latter methods were used to wring absolute and total confessions from “the Yuon enemies and the CIA.”⁴²² The section of a book covering hot and cold methods states: “Coaxing is the most important method; torture is second.”⁴²³

Santebal Discipline: Warnings Written on the Blackboard at S-21

1. Ask what is answered, don’t twist my questions.
2. Absolutely do not make this or that excuse, argue, or talk back.
3. Do not play stupid, pretend you don’t understand the matter, because you have

- dared to oppose the revolution.
4. Asked right now, answer right now; do not hesitate one minute.
 5. Deficiencies and small offenses, moral offenses, weak at this or that, don't speak of these things. Don't talk about revolution.
 6. Absolutely do not scream when whipped or shocked.
 7. Don't do a thing. Sit quietly and await my orders. If it is not ordered, don't do it. What I order, do it right now. No arguments.
 8. Don't use the pretext of Kampuchea Krom* to hide your treasonous face.
 9. For any of these rules you violate, you will be lashed or shocked; you won't be able to count them.
 10. Oppose one of these rules, and receive ten lashes or five shocks.

* A Kampuchea Krom is a Cambodian from the lowlands; the French ceded part of the lowlands to Vietnam when it colonized Cambodia.

Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia D24014.

The region security centers in the Southwest Zone used several means of torture to force confessions from prisoners. Their methods included electric shock, pulling out fingernails, clubbing, beating with whips and electrical wires, breaking the arms, legs, or ribs, strangling, and wrapping the head with a plastic bag to make the victim stop breathing.⁴²⁴

Song stated that “Some were electrically shocked until they went crazy and could not even dress themselves; some were beaten until their ribs were broken.”⁴²⁵ Mao and Rin recalled that the Khmer Rouge used electric shocks and plastic bags on prisoners who the investigation committee saw as important enemies, including Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres accused of treason, and those who had been Lon Nol regime officials.⁴²⁶

At times, the torture and other methods inflicted on already weakened prisoners caused their deaths within hours or a day. Moeng Teng, chief of the Region 25 security center, beat two prisoners named Khleng and Chantha to death while interrogating them. He explained:

I implemented the instructions of Ta Chey (Region 25 secretary) by arresting Khleng and taking him to the security center for interrogation, and he died at the center. Later I arrested Chantha, took him to security, beat and interrogated him on the matter of being a spy. Since he did not confess, Ta Chey pushed me to beat and question him more, and he too died.⁴²⁷

Moeng Teng also recalled a similar incident with another prisoner:

Ta Nat, Division 12 chief, sent one of his messengers to security. Brother Nat reports that he tried to kill him. But this combatant, according to what Kru Sok told me, attacked Brother Nat about his moral violations with a female named Sary who was in the army. Brother Nat pushed the interrogation of this soldier until he died.⁴²⁸

EXECUTIONS

Not very long after prisoners in Regions 25 and 35 confessed to *Angkar*; they were condemned to death: it is estimated that only perhaps one in ten region security office inmates survived their imprisonment. The zone and region committees made decisions on whether prisoners were to be executed. They then gave the execution lists to the security center chief. When the prisoners' names were called, they left their cells. The cadres then tied their hands and walked them to the execution site.

Ly, a Region 35 security center prisoner, described the process of taking prisoners to be killed. On execution day, the center cadres began making preparations at 4:00 p.m. They gathered up the prisoners (generally 20 to 30 at a time) according to the lists provided by the upper echelon, and then placed them in a separate cell. The prisoners were shackled in this cell until 6:00 p.m. and then loaded onto a truck and taken for execution.⁴²⁹

The procedures for executions differed somewhat in Region 25. There, cadres did not have to gather those to be executed into a separate cell, and the prisoners were not taken by truck to an execution site. Instead, they were taken to be executed only 200 meters from the security center. Region 25 prisoner Song also reported that:

When an execution night arrived, the security center cadres came out to call the prisoners from their cells. There were 20 prisoners in each row of shackles, so those prisoners who did not hear their names had to take off their foot shackles and sit to one side. Those whose names were called went outside with the cadres. The execution site was marked with a skull sign, and was 200 meters east of the security center. Executions took place once a week, beginning at 6:00 p.m. and continuing until dawn. The number varied: sometimes few, sometimes many. There was a time that 150 people from Leuk Dek district were killed during a single night. After the executions were over, some of those killed were buried and some

were pitched into the river.⁴³⁰

Pan, a former Region 25 cadre, described the executions of prisoners.

They happened regularly. When they took them off to be killed, the prisoners were tied and walked into the forest to the east and across a stream about 200 meters in all. When they arrived, they had the prisoners sit down, and they used hoes and iron axes to club the prisoners from the rear, then pushed them into the pit.⁴³¹

Than added that the executions were mostly done on a national holiday or celebration day. He added that the famous Cambodian singer Sin Sisamut, an adult female, and two children were executed on 18 May 1977, and were buried under a mango tree north of the security center.⁴³²

Today, the remains of Region 25 prisoners are housed at a memorial built east of the security center. Base people who returned to Koh Thmei Island in 1979 say that when they first reached the island, the foul smell and bloodstains from those recently killed filled the forests. Few skulls and bones remain, as many were eaten by animals, buried, or simply disappeared. Pan alleged that in addition to the forest east of the center, there are many small graves. Although he knew of the executions, Pan stated that as a guard, he never took part in the killing.⁴³³

Song stated that if a prisoner wanted to die, it was difficult, but if he wanted to live, it was even more difficult. Some prisoners decided to commit suicide because they could no longer stand a life that was no better than that of an animal's. He recalled: "I thought of nothing each day, it was so pitiful. I no longer wanted to live; I thought it would be better to die. Humans were no longer human. They beat us, they kicked us, they stomped us. Our clothes were only rags; we had no shame."⁴³⁴

Mat Ly decided that death was preferable to life at the Region 25 security center "Then I would have been happy to die; it was just too difficult. They beat me like an animal. I was lice ridden. I fell over in the wind."⁴³⁵ Sarin told of the method he chose embrace death. "I answered whatever they wanted me to answer. If they said I was at least a major, I said I was in fact a major. I agreed to whatever they accused me of."⁴³⁶

OPERATIONS

Prisoners were sent to the region security centers as the result of two factors. The first was their arrest at the order of the zone or region committees. Mat Ly, a former Region 35 prisoner, for example, believed that his arrest was clearly related to the Region 35 committee, saying that only the upper echelon knew that he had worked with the military coastal defense.⁴³⁷ The second was that prisoners had been sent to the region security center from the district reeducation centers. One record states, for instance, that “*Angkar* removed one person to the region, a lieutenant colonel.”⁴³⁸ In addition, Song explained that his arrest (and transport) had been prepared in advance, from the subdistrict to the district to the region.⁴³⁹

The majority of prisoners arrested on the order of the zone and region committees were soldiers and people who served in the region’s bureaucracy. These committees decided on cases after examining the chief’s and committees’ reports describing the offenses of those arrested. Some prisoners did not know why they were arrested until the investigation committee told them during interrogation.

Moeng Teng, chief of the Region 25 security center, knew why prisoners had been arrested, since he received orders from the Region 25 committee along with reports about those people he was to arrest. He explained: “I carried out the decisions of Brother Chea [Secretary of Region 25] and arrested that woman, brought her to security to make a case file, and proposed to Brother Chea that he decide to smash her.”⁴⁴⁰

The three-stage communication between upper and lower echelons was an integral part of the chain of executions. First, the prisoner was held for interrogation. Second, the confessions were sent to the zone committee to examine and decide. Finally, most prisoners were sentenced to death and executed at the region level; only a few were sent on to S-21 following Party Center orders (alternatively, the zone committee followed the Party’s announcement on the rights to smash the Party enemies dated 30 March 1976).⁴⁴¹

RELATIONSHIP TO THE PARTY CENTER

Region security center prisoners were sent to S-21 in a two-step process. First, the zone committee sent reports about prisoners to the Party Central Committee. Second, the Committee decided to order the S-21 Committee to take measures to transport the prisoners S-21 prison.⁴⁴²

On 26 October 1975, Hing Raya was arrested in Koh Thom district on the Cambodia-South Vietnam border. She was accused of being a spy and organizational contact of Chao Ying. After being interrogated for one month at the Region 25 security center, she was sent by car to S-21 on 25 November 1975.⁴⁴³ Another prisoner, Sisowat Butsara, called Chroeng, was imprisoned at the Region 25 security center on 3 February 1976. Chroeng was sent to S-21 on 4 March 1976 and was reported as removed by Duch to the Party Central Committee on 8 October 1976.⁴⁴⁴

Lon Nol lieutenant colonel Chek Brahim was arrested and sent from the Koh Thom subdistrict militia center to the Koh Thom district reeducation center, then on to the Region 25 security center and finally to S-21. Brahim's confession states that he reached S-21 on 24 April 1976.⁴⁴⁵ The pattern leading to the death of Him Man, a fishery cadre in Region 25, was no different. He was arrested and sent from one security center to another until he reached S-21. In the end, he was sentenced by the Party Central Committee and executed at Boeng Cheung Ek.⁴⁴⁶

End Notes

³⁷¹ The Region 25 headquarters was also moved. Its first location was in Thnaot Nhy (Khpap subdistrict, Sa-ang district) and its second in Village 9 (Po Ban subdistrict). "Confession of Tim Sen," op. cit.

³⁷² Him Huy confirmed that Center 15 was moved to Koh Thmei Island. He recalled that during 1977 he traveled from Phnom Penh with comrade Mon (a permanent member of the S-21 committee) to follow up on some team leaders from Center 24 (Prey Sar) who were being held at the Region 25 security center. The two men had orders from Duch (the head of S-21), to bring these prisoners back to Center 24. Upon arriving, Him Huy went to Center 15 at Village 3, not to Koh Thmei Island. Author's interview with Him Huy, former deputy chief of S-21, at Phnom Penh, 18 November 2001.

³⁷³ Ea, Meng-Try, "Three Days or Three Years?" op. cit.

³⁷⁴ Author's interviews with Chum Pan, op. cit.; and Chan Voeun, op. cit.

³⁷⁵ "Confession of Chey Suon, called Sen. Secretary of Region 25," op. cit.; and "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

³⁷⁶ Former prisoners and cadres called Khon "Khon Angkuot" (meaning "one armed") because he was crippled in one arm. The younger brother of Ta Mok, he was Prey Kabass district chief before 1975. Author's interview with Chum Pan, op. cit.

³⁷⁷ Author's interviews with Prum Nai, op. cit.; and Saroeun, former Chrey Au Phneou prisoner, at Kong Pisey district, Kampong Speu province, 16 May 2001. Pheng Pong, Rasy, "Kuk Chrey Au Phneou," *Reasmaei Kampuchea*, June 2001. See also *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 17, May 2001.

³⁷⁸ In mid-1978, hundreds of prisoners and cadres in Region 25 were arrested and sent to the Region 33 security center under the orders of Southwest Zone Secretary Ta Mok, who wanted to kill Region 25 cadres and replace them with Region 13 cadres. His plan was to arrest the Region 25 secretary and chief, and send them to S-21, kill the chief of Region 25 security, and arrest the other cadres and imprison them at the Region 33 center. The arrests began under the guise of transferring Region 25 cadres to take over Region 13, and moving those from 13 to replace those in 25. Document Center of Cambodia M122, S-214, D13848. Author's interview with Keo Savuth, messenger of Ta Mok, at Ang Ta Soam subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001.

³⁷⁹ Before 1975 Sam Bit was chief of Division 2 of Region 35. In 1977 he was promoted to secretary of Region 35 and later became secretary of the Southwest Zone.

³⁸⁰ "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

³⁸¹ "Report to Tram Kak District," op. cit.

³⁸² "Confession of Chey Suon," op. cit.

³⁸³ "Confession of Sok But Chamreoun," Documentation Center of Cambodia D01125.

³⁸⁴ “Confession of Riel Lenh,” Tuol Sleng R69.

³⁸⁵ “Confession of Chhou Bun Leat, Deputy Chief of Staff of Division 703,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D21901.

³⁸⁶ “Confession of Riel Leng,” op. cit. See also David Chandler, *Voices from S-21*, op. cit.

³⁸⁷ “Memorandum of a Meeting of Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Divisions and Independent Regiments,” Documentation Center of Cambodia L01407. “Instructions of Office 870, Point 2, on ‘Attacking the Enemy Politically, Eliminating Espionage, Allegiances, and Psychological Warfare,’” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00479.

³⁸⁸ “Confession of Suy Phal, called Phal, Battalion 70, Division 730,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D00801.

³⁸⁹ Author’s interview with Lach Mao, op. cit.

³⁹⁰ Teng learned that the secretary of Region 25 and Chan Chakrei had a plan to create conflicts between Region 25 and the latter’s East Zone army in order to create mass confusion. Teng confessed that “On the plan to create conflict with Kru Sok, both Chan Chakrei and Ta Chey had agreed in principle. Kru Sok told me to have the region’s army and security forces closely guard the roads and arrest any East Zone forces of Chan Chakrei present in the region without permission.” “Confession of Moeng Teng,” op. cit.

³⁹¹ Author’s interview with Bun Than, op. cit. Division 170 had 5,943 men, and was led by Chan Chakrei. After his arrest, the division was led by Ke Sok. Documentation Center of Cambodia L00065.

³⁹² “Confession of Moeng Teng,” op. cit.

³⁹³ Ibid.

³⁹⁴ Pan, former Region 25 security center cadre, also claimed to have seen boat 08 transporting prisoners in various districts to the Region 25 security center. Author’s interview with Chum Pan, op. cit.

³⁹⁵ Author’s interview with Song, op. cit.

³⁹⁶ See, for example, *Confessions of Moeng Teng and Tem Sen called Sit*, Tuol Sleng M122 and J00141.

³⁹⁷ “Report on Transport of Prisoners from District 14,” op. cit. See also “Confession of Sieng Hour, Region 25 Security Center Prisoner,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D01111; and “Confession of Suy Phal,” op. cit.

³⁹⁸ Author’s interview with Tan Hak, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thmei subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 20 June 2001.

³⁹⁹ Author’s interview with Mat Ly, former Region 35 security center prisoner, at Kampot district, Kampot province, 20 January 2001.

- ⁴⁰⁰ Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰¹ Author's interview with Chum Pan, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰² Author's interview with Chan Voeun, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰³ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁴ Author's interview with Lach Mao, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁵ Author's interview with Tan Hak, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁶ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁷ Author's interview with Lach Mao, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁸ Author's interview with Mat Ly, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰⁹ Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit.
- ⁴¹⁰ *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit.
- ⁴¹¹ Author's interview with Rath Teng, former Region 25 security center prisoner, Koh Thom subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001.
- ⁴¹² Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit.
- ⁴¹³ Author's interview with Rath Sarin, former Region 25 security center prisoner, Koh Thom B subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 2 May 2001.
- ⁴¹⁴ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21), op. cit.
- ⁴¹⁵ Author's interview with Deu Loh, op. cit. and "Confession of Chou Kan," *Sieng C442*.
- ⁴¹⁶ Author's interview with Bun Than, op. cit.
- ⁴¹⁷ Author's interview with Rath Sarin, op. cit.
- ⁴¹⁸ "Confession of Chou Kan," op. cit.
- ⁴¹⁹ "Confession of Sieng Hour," op. cit. "Report on Transport of Prisoners from District 14," op. cit.
- ⁴²⁰ Ysa, Osman, *Oukoubah*, op. cit.
- ⁴²¹ Author's interview with Rath Sarin, op. cit.
- ⁴²² *Notebook of an S-21 Cadre*, op. cit.

⁴²³ *Politics, Ideology, Organization* (Statistics Book, Santebal S-21). op. cit.

⁴²⁴ Author's interviews with Song, Tan Hak, and Deu Loh, op. cit.

⁴²⁵ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.

⁴²⁶ Author's interviews with Lach Mao and Rath Sarin, op. cit.

⁴²⁷ "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

⁴²⁸ Ibid.

⁴²⁹ Author's interview with Mat Ly, op. cit.

⁴³⁰ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.

⁴³¹ Author's interviews with Chum Pan, op. cit.

⁴³² Bun Than was certain that Sin Sisamut was executed at the Region 25 security center. He explained that "I know this clearly. First, because I hear a reeducation cadre say it, and that reeducation cadre personally killed Sin Sisamut. Second, he and friends among the people saw the personal history of Sin Sisamut after 1979 on Koh Thmei." Author's interview with Bun Than, op. cit.

⁴³³ Author's interview with Chum Pan, op. cit.

⁴³⁴ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.

⁴³⁵ Author's interview with Mat Ly, op. cit.

⁴³⁶ Author's interview with Rath Sarin, op. cit.

⁴³⁷ Author's interview with Mat Ly, op. cit.

⁴³⁸ "Report of November 1977," op. cit.

⁴³⁹ Author's interview with Song, op. cit.

⁴⁴⁰ "Confession of Moeng Teng," op. cit.

⁴⁴¹ "Note on the Decisions of the Central Committee on Miscellaneous Matters," op. cit.

⁴⁴² Author's interviews with Lach Mao and Chan Voemun, op. cit. See also "Confession of Sek Sat," op. cit.

⁴⁴³ Hing Raya's confessions contain several notes made by the Region 25 security center chief and Duch, chief of S-21. After she was sent to S-21, comrade Teng sent a report to Chea, the chief of Region 25: "copy to comrade 25 for your information." Duch made a note on a prisoner transfer sheet to the chief interrogator at S-21, comrade Chan. This document showed

that a woman from Region 25 arrived at S-21 on November 25th. “Confession of Hing Raya,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D01280.

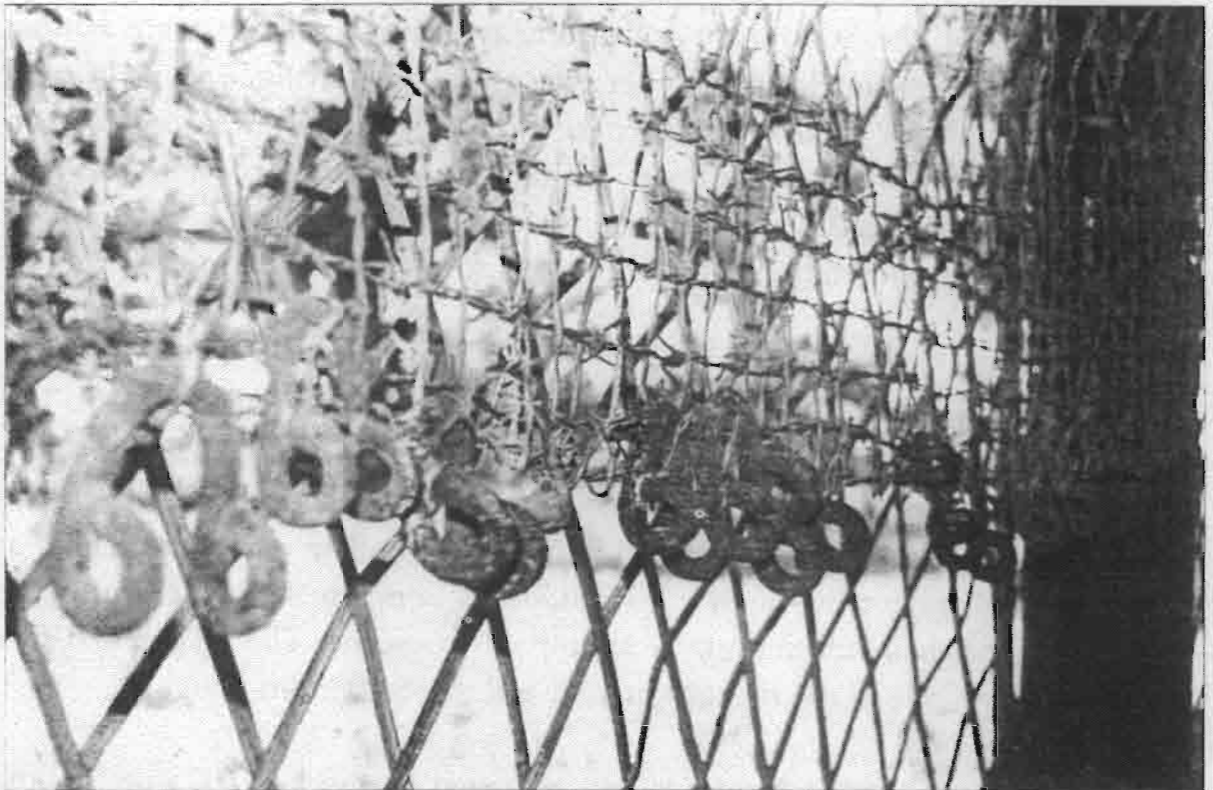
⁴⁴⁴ “Report on Sisowat Butsara called Chroeng,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D06344. This man was a member of Cambodia’s royal family. See “Royal Members Killed during the Khmer Rouge Regime,” *Searching for the Truth*, Issue 6, July 2000.

⁴⁴⁵ “Confession of Chek Brahim,” op. cit.

⁴⁴⁶ “Confession of Him Man,” Documentation Center of Cambodia D02673.

6

THE SOUTHWEST ZONE SECURITY CENTER



Shackles in Kraing Ta Chan Prison, Takeo province, 1982

Phnom Sanlong was hell on earth, a camp of tragedy, a mass grave for students and youths ...⁴⁷

No records or other documents have been found about the Southwest Zone security center, and many of the bodies of those executed there were thrown into the forest rather than burial pits. Thus, this chapter relies on information gleaned from interviews.

THE PRISON SITE

The Southwest Zone security center (Sanlong Mountain prison) was located at Sanlong mountain in Sanlong subdistrict of Takeo province and encompassed 4 square kilometers of land.⁴⁸ It was similar in area to the West and Northeast zone security centers.⁴⁹ This center began operations during early 1976 under the commands of Seng and Soeun.

THE PRISONERS

The majority of the Southwest Zone security center prisoners were Khmer Rouge military personnel who had been accused of betraying *Angkar*. In early 1976, the Southwest Zone army received an order from Ta Mok to gather up troops stationed along the Cambodia-Vietnam border in Takeo province, load them onto trucks, and send them to the zone security center. The family members of these military personnel traveled to the security center by foot or ox cart.

When they arrived, prisoners were divided into separate work groups. The women lived at Chi Chrap village west of the mountain, and the men at Lok, Sras Trakuon, and Kraom villages to the north, west, and south of the mountain, respectively. One detention building was built in a mango orchard at Chi Chrap village for prisoners who had stolen communally-owned property, worked at less than full output, or attempted to escape. The center had two execution sites, one in the mango orchard and one at Phnom Tauch.

Mon, a base person at Phnom Sanlong, reported that in late 1975 the people who lived in the surrounding villages were evacuated to distant places.⁴⁵⁰ The Khmer Rouge transported trucks full of people there and scattered them around the mountain in small groups. This prison remained active until 1979.

OFFENSES

In early 1976, Sien was arrested and sent to Phnom Sanlong for reforging. His offense was that he was the younger brother of Sun, a former Lon Nol soldier. After 1975, he was evacuated to work for the Khmer Rouge army in Angkor Borei district. In 1976, he and 300 other young soldiers were arrested and sent from Angkor Borei to Phnom Sanlong. Upon hearing that he was being sent to the zone security center, Sien felt light at heart, as he thought that he was returning to live and work in the fields of his home village. But his reality was different, "Immensely difficult and pitiful. We ate and worked like animals. Although I want to forget, I cannot. My head bears two knife scars, my arms still bear the rope marks, and my body still hurts and bothers me."⁴⁵¹

Chhoeun was arrested because she was the younger sister of Nhin, a first lieutenant during the Lon Nol regime. She recalled: "Prisoners held at Phnom Sanlong were in the most difficult straits, in labor, in eating, and in being persecuted. Today my health still punishes me and my memory is not so good

since my emotions were broken.” After Chhoeun was tied up, unit chief Nem threatened to shoot her, accusing her of inciting prisoners to escape. She denied Nem’s accusations: “How would I ever dare to encourage anyone to escape, if I were to, my God!”⁴⁵²

LABOR AND FOOD SUPPLIES

The prisoners’ tasks at Phnom Sanlong changed as they moved from place to place according to their organization and the seasons. Their tasks included digging ponds and canals, carrying water, raising dikes, planting crops, and digging up and breaking rocks. Prisoners began work at dawn and continued until midnight. Pronh’s duties at Phnom Sanlong changed as he moved from one farm site to another. Initially he dug canals and built dikes east of the mountain. Later he carried water from Russei Srok to Phnom Sanlong, and was then transferred to dig up rocks.⁴⁵³ Tuon, before he too was transferred to digging and breaking rocks with Pronh, was a basket maker.⁴⁵⁴

Prisoners ate only thin rice gruel mixed with water plants, banana stalks, and morning glory, once at noon and once in the evening. Chhoeun, while in the female youth unit, transplanted rice and raised crops. Her work began at dawn and went into the night, but her food rations “were only two meals of thin rice gruel per day.”⁴⁵⁵ Pronh explained that:

The fatigue caused the prisoners, male and female, to lose all sense of embarrassment. When anyone saw any fruit or any animal that was edible, they scrambled for it; even if it was only a sour tamarind leaf or a field mouse, they fought for it.⁴⁵⁶

Some prisoners even died for food. In Pronh’s unit, a youth stopped working and rested while other members of his group chased a mouse in a rice field. Soeun, the deputy chief of the security center, took out his pistol and shot the youth, killing him.

INTERROGATION AND TORTURE

Prisoners were strictly forbidden to move or converse with other prisoners; these were considered to be acts of opposition to *Angkar*, and were seen to signify their intent to escape or rebel. The punishment for such offenses was imprisonment, torture, and execution.

In 1976, Sien was sent to prison by a youth chief named Pung and interrogated for seven days. He was accused of encouraging prisoners to escape. While interrogating Sien, Pung used a cattle tie to bind Sien so tightly that he bled. Pung used a knife to hack twice at Sien's head, and the scars remain today. Sien felt that he survived only because the Khmer Rouge regime was overthrown in 1979.⁴⁵⁷

EXECUTIONS AND KILLINGS

Prisoners who committed offenses such as stealing or who were caught trying to escape were killed, sometimes in front of others. Sien and Pronh remembered that during 1977 there were two killings at meetings. One man had been arrested for stealing sugar from the dining hall and a woman had been arrested after she had fled from the security center. Both were killed in the same manner: their stomachs were slashed and their livers removed. Then they were thrown into a grave pit.⁴⁵⁸

Pronh recalled a youth named Yeak who escaped and climbed to the top of a palm tree to hide. The cadres tracked him down and tried to recapture him by coaxing him down from the tree. But he refused to come down. In the end, Yeak decided to jump from the treetop to commit suicide. Pronh explained that "Yeak knew that even if he climbed down he would not live, so that is why he did that."⁴⁵⁹ At about 9:00 a.m. one day during 1976 while plowing a rice field north of Phnom Sanlong, a woman was seen pedaling an irrigation waterwheel. She suddenly fell to the ground and did not move. A reeducation member standing guard walked to the woman and used his bayonet to stab her to death.⁴⁶⁰

Chhoeun claimed that many prisoners were killed at Phnom Sanlong: "At night prisoners were constantly being pushed into trucks and taken away. The number of prisoners kept decreasing from month to month."⁴⁶¹ Sien stated that most of the prisoners who died there were members of the Khmer Rouge army, Lon Nol regime soldiers and policemen. He described a trick that Seng and Soeun, the chiefs of the security center, used to kill them. In 1976 they announced that the most literate prisoners were being sought out to help in the center. Many prisoners signed up and described their educational backgrounds, hoping to be transferred from digging or breaking rocks under the sun and into center duty. In the end, all those prisoners were carried off in trucks to Phnom Tauch where they were killed.⁴⁶²

TA MOK

Pronh claimed he heard reeducation cadres talking about a meeting between Soeun and Ta Mok that concerned the prisoners at the zone security center: "Ta Mok's plan was to add another 15,000 prisoners at Phnom Sanlong to reach the full capacity he had set."⁴⁶³

Prisoners as well as other people who went in and out of the zone security center saw Ta Mok, his messenger and his driver visiting the zone security center regularly. Pronh described how Ta Mok went back and forth to Phnom Sanlong in 1976 and 1977. Mon, a base person, entered the zone security center area to collect fodder and sugarcane when he saw Ta Mok and his driver. "Ta Mok rode in a jeep with two young messengers, one a messenger and one a driver."⁴⁶⁴ Savuth, one of Mok's messengers, became Ta Mok's driver at the age of 15. Savuth took Ta Mok to Phnom Sanlong and saw prisoners breaking rocks there. But Savuth said he did not know what Ta Mok was doing at Phnom Sanlong.⁴⁶⁵

End Notes

⁴⁴⁷ "Torture at the Phnom Sanlong Prison," op. cit.

⁴⁴⁸ The Global Positioning System reading for the Phnom Sanlong site is GPS Lat N 10° 48' 11" Long E 104° 45' 58".

⁴⁴⁹ "Confession of Sek Sat," op. cit. DC-Cam Mass Grave Mapping Team, Kampong Speu province, 1995. Ea, Meng-Try, "Phnom Sanlong, Ta Mok's Southwest Zone Security Center," *Reasmei Kampuchea*, October 2001. Sim, Sorya, interview with a former prisoner in the Northeast zone security center, "The Phnom Kraol security center," 1999.

⁴⁵⁰ Author's interview with Mon, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

⁴⁵¹ Author's interview with Sien, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, op. cit.

⁴⁵² Author's interview with Chhoeun, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

⁴⁵³ Author's interview with Pronh, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

⁴⁵⁴ Author's interview with Tuon, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

⁴⁵⁵ Author's interview with Chhoeun, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁶ Author's interview with Pronh, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁷ Author's interview with Sien, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁸ Author's interviews with Sien and Pronh, op. cit.

⁴⁵⁹ Author's interview with Pronh, op. cit.

⁴⁶⁰ Author's interview with Sien, op. cit.

⁴⁶¹ Author's interview with Chhoeun, op. cit.

⁴⁶² Author's interview with Sien, op. cit.

⁴⁶³ Author's interview with Pronh, op. cit.

⁴⁶⁴ Author's interview with Mon, op. cit.

⁴⁶⁵ Author's interview with Keo Savuth, op. cit.

CONCLUSIONS

The Khmer Rouge leaders' suspicions that their enemies were many and everywhere led them to create security centers scattered throughout the country. These centers existed to arrest, imprison, interrogate and execute their enemies.

The Democratic Kampuchea constitution, Party regulations, and CPK Central Committee delegated authority to all organizations throughout the country to set up security centers and carry out executions. Under the administration of Southwest Zone Secretary Ta Mok and his associates, security centers were scattered throughout the zone.

The subdistrict militia centers were set up to make the initial arrests, write documentary reports, and temporarily imprison people before they were sent to the district reeducation centers. These centers were sites for hard labor with little food for prisoners, who were generally arrested for such minor offenses as stealing communally-owned crops and vegetables.

Most of the people held at the subdistrict militia centers were base (old) people with no histories of involvement in political or class "trends." One of two fates awaited prisoners in these centers: release (for the majority) or execution (for the unlucky few). Prisoners were released and allowed to return to their units and cooperatives only when they had passed through "reforging" and were seen as having reformed themselves.

For the most part, the new people who committed the same minor offenses as the base people were sent directly to the district reeducation center. These centers were created with the intent of serving security interests by acting as prisons and interrogation and execution sites.⁴⁶⁶ Most of the prisoners at the district centers were accused by Khmer Rouge cadres of being the enemies of *Angkar* or being involved in political and class tendencies or trends, in addition to those who had stolen collectively-owned property. Finally, after reeducation, the majority of the district prisoners lost their lives. A number of them were also sent to the upper level, including the region security center and S-21.

Region security centers were established with the intent to hold former Khmer Rouge soldiers accused of betraying the Party. Most of the lower-level cadres were sent to region security centers, whereas their chiefs were sent on to S-21.⁴⁶⁷

The Southwest Zone security center had a mode of operation that differed

from the zone's other security centers. The zone center was generally used for reforming by means of heavy labor under a regime of insufficient food rations, and only sometimes for interrogation and execution. Most of the prisoners held at the zone level were Khmer Rouge cadres, their wives, children and other relatives. Thousands of such prisoners were held at the zone center; they were forced to work at such jobs as digging canals and farming. But compared to the district reeducation and region security centers, execution rates at the zone level were lower. There were three main reasons for this phenomenon: 1) region security center prisoners accused of being "enemies" were sent on to the central level (S-21) and not the zone security center, 2) prisoners at the zone security center were mostly former cadres and base people, and 3) the zone needed the labor prisoners could supply.

All levels of security centers interfaced with one another very closely in the process of arresting, imprisoning, and executing enemies, and in reporting and moving prisoners from security centers for light offenders to those for serious offenders. Hundreds of prisoners were transferred from the Southwest Zone to S-21 and Ta Mok must have been aware of their movement within the zone that he controlled.⁴⁶⁸ Less than a dozen of the 14,000 S-21 prisoners survived.

The case of prisoner Chek Brahim is an example that illustrates the connections in the security system. A lieutenant colonel in the Lon Nol regime, he passed through many stages over many months before he became a prisoner at S-21. Brahim was initially told to go with the chief of his village to make preparations for returning to work in a military capacity.⁴⁶⁹ But contrary to what the chief of Cham Leu village told him, Brahim was sent to the reeducation center at Kampong Kong (his confession states that "... *Angkar* required me to go to the Kampong Kong center..."; this admission was confirmed by a number of witnesses).⁴⁷⁰ After he had been held there for three months, Brahim's father was arrested and he too was sent to Kampong Kong.

After father and son were reunited, they were both sent to the Koh Thom district reeducation center on Koh Po Tonle Island. A former cadre at this center related:

I saw Brahim enter the reeducation center along with three other prisoners. They all had their arms tied behind their backs. One other time, I saw him being walked to interrogation. The cadre asked his name, and he responded "Brahim." They asked him how much his salary had been. He answered 130,000 riels per month. Then I heard the reeducation cadre tell Brahim that he should answer correctly and things would be

easy and *Angkar* would let him return to his former place to work.⁴¹

After three days of interrogation, Brahim's arms were tied behind his back and he was walked to the boat going to the Region 25 security center on Koh Thmei Island. As in the subdistrict and district centers, prisoners like Brahim who had high-level positions in the Lon Nol regime were sent higher up the prison chain at the decision of the region security center chief. Brahim arrived at S-21 on 24 January 1976. He was sentenced to be smashed by the Party Central Committee on 26 May 1976. Brahim left behind 200 pages of confessions.

The case of Saom Chea, secretary of Region 25, illustrates the connection between the Party Central Committee and zone *Angkar*. Saom Chea was arrested on 15 March 1978. His interrogation ended 15 days later, and Duch received his confessions the next day. Duch summarized the confessions and sent them to Deputy Party Secretary Nuon Chea, writing: "Respected Elder Brother. These documents are clear only as far as his history in the CIA (including his joining and his assignment under one person to another all the way through to Chey). Respectfully, Duch."⁴² Saom Chea's confessions listed the names of many people whom he claimed to be his "traitorous connections," including Nai Saran, called Ya, Hou Nim, and Chhouk, who had already been arrested by *Angkar* at the time Soam Chea wrote his confessions.⁴³

But many of the others he named were still free and living in the Southwest Zone's Region 25. Ta Mok was assigned to hunt down and arrest this group. He accepted with a note written on a document stating that: "Comrade Mok has read and returned [this document] on 18 April 1978." Members of Saom Chea's group were later tracked down, arrested, and sent to S-21; among them were Tim Sen and Riel Linh.⁴⁴

Savuth was a messenger and driver for Ta Mok who drove Ta Mok to Phnom Penh many times during 1976 and 1977. "When I took him to Phnom Penh, I did not know who he met or what duty he was carrying out," Savuth explained. One day in late 1976 after returning from Phnom Penh, Ta Mok called a member of the Southwest Zone committee named Achar Kang to his house. After the two men talked for a moment, Ta Mok ordered his soldiers to arrest Achar Kang, place him in shackles, and put him in a car.⁴⁵

Achar Kang's S-21 confession states that he had been arrested and sent to S-21 for interrogation on 2 October 1976. He confessed to the offenses that led to his arrest, saying that he was a traitor to *Angkar* and had been in contact with Chan Chakrei and Region 25 Secretary Chey Suon. Achar Kang stated that he

attended two meetings with Chey Suon and Chan Chakrei, one in 1974 and one in 1976. *Angkar* arrested him at his house on 13 April 1976 during a meeting on the assignment of missions and duties. On his confession, Duch, director of an S-21 noted, "1) Entire report sent to sent to Elder Brother 62 for his information. 2) Cut out the last section, one sentence, for *Angkar*. Reported on 2 September 1976."⁴⁷⁶

After Achar Kang's arrest, Son Sen ordered Mut, chief of Division 164, to hunt down and arrest his wife. On 16 October 1976, after a search had been conducted, Mut reported to Son Sen:

The wife of Achar Kang got treatment at the Division 164 hospital for four or five days in late August 1976. A person named Chheng came to get her. A person named Ban says that during treatment [Achar Kang's wife] was brought in for examination by Krin. She said her child was ill and she was not all that well, so she took the opportunity while visiting old friends at the port to get a check-up and treatment. So, recently, she has not been seen. 19 October. (comrade) Mut.⁴⁷⁷

One day after receiving this report, Mut and Son Sen reported again to Nuon Chea: "To Elder Brother Nuon: 1) Now the wife of Achar Kang is out of the military hospital. 2) Propose to search for Chheng and Ban who are involved in this matter. 20 October 20 (1976) Khieu."⁴⁷⁸

Other prisoners' confessions were also sent to Ta Mok for further action. For example, a note on Kuong Kien's confession states: "Tan Meng was already smashed by Ta 15 [Ta Mok] in 1974. Extracted for Ta Mok in May 1977."⁴⁷⁹ Similarly, on Thou Hai's confession Duch wrote: "To comrade Mok, related to Regions 25 and 33, Southwest."⁴⁸⁰

Although Ta Mok admitted to attending meetings of the Standing Committee, he has claimed to be "not clear about" S-21, shifting all responsibility to Pol Pot and Duch. However, Duch has denied Mok's claims of ignorance. According to him, Standing Committee member Penh Thuok was arrested by Ta Mok and sent to S-21. Ieng Sary and Nuon Chea also dismiss Ta Mok's rejection of involvement in killing people. Ieng Sary asserted that "although it was Pol Pot, Nuon Chea [and] Son Sen" who made decisions about mass murder, they depended on Ta Mok as a zone secretary to carry out their decisions. Nuon Chea has remarked that Ta Mok killed many people in the Southwest Zone.⁴⁸¹

The obedience to authority that characterized the chain of terror in the Southwest Zone, and indeed, the entire apparatus of Democratic Kampuchea,

e is aptly illustrated by the Cambodian fable “The Man and the Tiger.” In it, a
g man saved a tiger from dying after he was bitten by a cobra. When the tiger
f woke up, it was angry with the man and wanted to devour him. The man tried
s to argue. When they were arguing, a cow and a buffalo arrived. The man asked
i them to judge the case. “He was bitten by the cobra and died. I helped him, but
he wanted to kill me,” said the man. The cow and the buffalo understood and
wanted to help the man. However, they reasoned, “We will be killed if we upset
t brother tiger.” Then they said to the man, “You are wrong and you deserve to
i be eaten.”⁴⁸²

End Notes

⁴⁶⁶ Author's interview with Lach Mao, op. cit.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ See, for example, Documentation Center of Cambodia D01456.

⁴⁶⁹ Ysa, Osman, interviews with Math Naury, at Phnom Penh, 21 April 2000; Mat Tuloas, op. cit.; and Sou Ahmad at Khan Reussei Keo, Phnom Penh, 12 March 2000.

⁴⁷⁰ "Confession of Chek Brahim," op. cit. Ysa, Osman, interviews with Him Leh, op. cit.; and Math Naury, op. cit.

⁴⁷¹ Ysa, Osman's interview with El Him, former Koh Thom district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 10 November 1999.

⁴⁷² "Confession of Saom Chea," op. cit.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ "Confession of Tim Sen," op. cit.; and "Confession of Riel Lenh," op. cit.

⁴⁷⁵ Author's interview with Keo Savuth, op. cit.

⁴⁷⁶ "Confession of Achar Kang, Deputy Chief of the Southwest Zone," Documentation Center of Cambodia D13449.

⁴⁷⁷ "To Brother Nuon," Tuol Sleng NR 76 (uncatalogued document).

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ "Confession of Kuong Kien, op. cit.

⁴⁸⁰ "Confession of Thou Hai," op. cit.

⁴⁸¹ Heder, Stephen with Brian D. Tittmore, *Seven Candidates for Prosecution*, op. cit.

⁴⁸² *Collection of Khmer Tales* (Phnom Penh: Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, 2003).

APPENDIX A

CONFESSION OF NEANG NY

After having been evacuated from Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, the young woman (Neang Ny)⁴⁸³ who wrote the letter below was sent to the Sa-ang district security center in Kandal province. Her confession, which contains this letter, was written in ballpoint pen. It appears that a leading cadre at the security center read the letter and underlined what he considered to be important parts.

1 November 1975

From me to the uncle who controls this place.

When will I get back my freedom?

May I write to describe my occupation on Koh Khel Island, or not?

When I write out my detailed life history according to the questions written on the paper that Uncle gave me, can I return home or not? I have no such hope at all because I have ceased trusting *Angkar*. When I left Koh Khel, I never imagined that I would be brought to this place. It began at dusk when two people rode up on bicycles to call me from the base, saying that the owner of the house had called me to a meeting. I rode my bike along behind them. Arriving at the district center, or subdistrict or district committee, they said that *Angkar* had agreed to accept me in a female organization. Then they had me go to the female organization along with an aunt and a motorcycle driver. I had just reached the Prek Ambel center when a female comrade told me to go with her. I went into her room and she searched me, saying "I'm sorry." Then suddenly two others entered and asked my place of birth and told me there were two relatives from Battambang who wanted to meet me, and to go now, go to a place near Ta Khmao. I agreed without worry since I had cousins on my father's side who were with the Khmer Rouge. Upon arriving there, I was faced instead with this situation!

When I asked if I was a prisoner, Uncle said no. How could it be "no" when I am in shackles and held in a locked room? When I need to go to the bathroom, I have to wait thirty minutes to an hour. What if [I were] a child who could not wait? ... and no water in the bathroom, no electricity either. I do not want luxury. Uncle, give me a hoe to dig a hole and defecate on the ground and let me carry my own water. That would be better than a fully equipped bathroom. I have known bathrooms more

luxurious than this by far. I do not want the food and water that they bring so carelessly; I would rather do without and go hungry as I did when I was evacuated six or seven months ago, because there is no freedom.

I do not understand, do not know myself, the prisoner. Where does my blame lie? I understand that the revolutionary organization is not an organization with a face.

I request that Uncle take me out and shoot me, or tie my body to a large stone and cast me into the river, because I do not want a life like this. It is a first life, a life so very ashamed of its nature, of myself. I prefer to die, without regret, even if I have not yet known life with a husband.

This is no different from the life of a philosopher named Socrates four or five centuries before the birth of Jesus. He died because he drank poison in the court of Athens after being accused of inciting a student rebellion in that city. As he drew his last breath, he was not afraid, and he asked for more poison, that they not deprive him. He yelled, "The law of the court of Athens. The people are good and just, it is only the court that is evil and unjust."

This is probably no different from my own life, orphaned, isolated, destitute, living in another's home village, the family all broken, very difficult physically and mentally. Why let me live, if I have no purpose for the revolution? To the contrary, I only [seem to] worry the revolution, disturb it, and I am such a great loss to the revolution.

Angkar, kill me now! Don't kill me at little at a time, causing my tears to flow incessantly, in pain and sickness every day like this. Right or wrong, *Angkar*, carry out my request.⁴⁸⁴

End Notes

⁴⁸³ The author chose the name Neang Ny for this victim because the signature and name on her confession were illegible.

⁴⁸⁴ "From me to the uncle who controls this place," op. cit.

APPENDIX B

CURRENT PROVINCES AND THEIR DIVISIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST ZONE

This appendix is intended to help the reader identify the subdistricts, districts and provinces cited in this monograph's chapters (the list of subdistricts is not inclusive; it contains only those identified in the text). It will also help the reader to compare the geographic divisions of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge with today's boundaries.

Province (Current Headquarters)	Districts	Subdistricts	
Kampong Speu (Kampong Speu)	Kong Pisey	Ang Popel Baset Veal	
	Samrong Tong		
Kampot (Kampot)	Angkor Chey		
	Banteay Meas		
	Chhouk		
	Kampong Trach		
	Kampot	Chre Thom	
	Prey Nup		
Kandal (Ta Khmao)	Kandal Stung	Kandal Stung Trea	
	Kean Svay	Prek Bra	
	Koh Thom	Kampong Kong Koh Thom Po Ban	
	Leuk Dek	Prek Dach	
	Sa-ang		Khpop Sa-ang Sa-ang Phnom Ta Lon

Province (Current Headquarters)	Districts	Subdistricts
Takeo (Takeo)	Angkor Borey	
	Bati	Sauphy
	Borey Chularsar	
	Kiri Vong	Kouk Prich
	Koh Andet	Thlea Prachum
	Prey Kabass	Kampeng
	Samrong	Samrong
	Tram Kak	Ang Ta Saom Bot Rokar Cheang Tong Khpop Kus Leay Bau Nheng Nhong Popel Sre Ronong Trabek Trapang Thom Cheung Trapang Thom Tbaung Udomsoriya
	Treang	Lumchong Sanlong

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Hoeun, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001.

Huon, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001.

Huoy, former Treang district reeducation center cadre, at Roneam subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 December 2000.

Kan, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center and Bati district reeducation center prisoner, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 29 March 2001.

Keo Mao, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001 and 10 March 2001.

Keo Savuth, messenger of Ta Mok, at Ang Ta Saom subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001.

Khieu Ches, called Peou, former S-21 cadre, at Baribo district, Kampong Chhnang province, 17 December 1999.

Khut, former base person of Tram Kak district, at Ang Ta Saom subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 5 December 2000.

Kim Chan, former base person of Pou village, at Sithbo subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 22 October 2003.

Kun, former Bati district reeducation center prisoner, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 28 March 2001.

Lach Mao, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Po Ban subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001.

Leng Meay, An's elder sister, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 June 2001.

Leng Tong, An's elder brother, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 June 2001.

Lim Teng, former Popel subdistrict cadre, at Popel subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2001.

Mak Tauch, brother of a prisoner at Po Angkrong prison (a subdistrict militia center), at Po Angkrong subdistrict, Baset district, Kampong Speu province, 6 May 2001.

Mao, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001.

Mat Ly, former Region 35 security center prisoner and current chief of the information center of the police department of Kampot province, at Kampot district, Kampot province, 20 January 2001.

Mon, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Nang, former Thlea Prachum subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Thlea Prachum subdistrict, Koh Andet district, Takeo province, 30 December 2000.

Neang Dam, former cadre and prisoner at the Tram Kak district reeducation center, at Udomsoriya subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2001.

Nhien, former Sauphy subdistrict militia center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 27 March 2001.

Nho, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001.

Nom, Sok, and Ra, base people of Kraing Ta Chan village, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 6 December 2001.

Oeun, father of a man who disappeared at the Lumchong subdistrict militia center, at Lumchong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 15 May 2001.

(with Vannak Huy) Phe Phai Pheap, called Hor, former deputy of the 704th Special Forces Battalion, 703rd Division, at Kraing Yaur subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 16 October 2001.

Phon, former Bati district reeducation center cadre, at Sauphy subdistrict, Bati district, Takeo province, 28 March 2001.

Phum, former Kandal Stung prisoner, at Kandal Stung district, Kandal province, 6 May 2001.

Pronh, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Prum Nai, former crop and fodder transporter of Wat Champa, at Ang Popel subdistrict, Kong Pisey district, Kampong Speu province, 10 September 2001.

Rath Sarin, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thom B subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 2 May 2001.

Rath Teng, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thom subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001.

Sakhan, former Lumchong subdistrict militia center cadre, at Lumchong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 6 May 2001.

Samnang, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Cheang Tang subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 7 July 2001.

San Soeum, former Rumlech subdistrict militia chief, at Rumlech subdistrict, Bakan district, Pursat province, 31 January 2002.

Sang Sim, former Tram Kak district reeducation center cadre, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 1 October 2001.

Sarat, former Samrong subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Samrong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 13 December 2000.

Saroeun, former Chrey Au Phneou prisoner, Kong Pisey district, Kampong Speu province, 16 May 2001.

Saut Saing, former Tram Kak district reeducation center cadre, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 1 October 2001.

Seng, former base person of Kampot district, at Kampot district, Kampot province, 8 July 2001.

Seng, former Bot Rokar subdistrict militia center prisoner, at Bot Rokar subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 4 July 2000.

Seng Ly, former base person of Po Chraneang village, at Po Angkrong subdistrict, Baset district, Kampong Speu province, 6 May 2001.

Sien, former base person of Samrong district, at Samrong district, Takeo province, 5 December 2001.

Sien, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Soeun, former base person of Kraing Ta Chan village, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 6 December 2001.

Sok Chantha, called Duch, former Tram Kak district reeducation center typist cadre, at Udomsoriya subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 9 December 2000 and 1 October 2001.

Song, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thom B (Khor) subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 15 January 2001.

Sou Phally, daughter of Sou Choal, called Reach, at Leay Bo subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Soy Sen, former Tram Kak district reeducation center prisoner, at Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 3 March 2001 and 29 March 2001.

Tan Hak, former Region 25 security center prisoner, at Koh Thmei subdistrict, Sa-ang district, Kandal province, 20 June 2001.

Tea Hong, the author's mother, at Phnom Penh, 2001.

Teng, former Leuk Dek district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Dach subdistrict, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province, 4 July 2001.

Tep Sary, younger sister of Tep Theng, at Laey Bo subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Thuon, former Treang district reeducation center cadre, at Roneam subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 December 2000.

Toy (an alias assigned by the author because this source would not agree to the publication of his name), former Kampeng subdistrict militia chief, at Prey Kabass district, Takeo province, 8 May 2001.

Tum Sat, called Sat, former S-21 cadre, at Baribo district, Kampong Chhnang province, 17 December 1999.

Tuon, former Southwest Zone security center prisoner, at Sanlong subdistrict, Treang district, Takeo province, 10 September 2001.

Ung Nak, at Koh Sla, Ta Ken subdistrict, Chhuok district, Kampot province, 5 May 2004.

(with Osman Ysa and Sorya Sim) Vann Nath, called Heng Nath, former S-21 prisoner, at Phnom Penh, 1999.

Yan, former Samrong district reeducation center cadre, at Samrong subdistrict, Samrong district, Takeo province, 13 December 2000.

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Heder, Steve, interview with Ieng Sary, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Democratic Kampuchea, 17 December 1996.

Huy, Vannak, interview with Sar Theng, former telegraph operator in the 66th Regiment of the General Staff, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 21 April 2001.

Pheng, Pong Rasy, interview with Ly, former Samrong district reeducation center prisoner, and Moeun, former Kean Svay district reeducation prisoner, at Kean Svay district, Kandal province, March 2001.

San, Kalyan, interview with My, Ta Mok's younger sister, at Tram Kak district, Takeo province, 26 July 2000.

Sim, Sorya, interview with a former prisoner in the Northeast zone security center, the Phnom Kraol security center, 1999.

Sim, Sorya, interview with Koy Nim, at Phnom Penh, 3 December 2001.

Tieng, Sopheak Vichea, interview with Kim Sau, at Rumlech subdistrict, Bakan district, Pursat province, 21 April 2001.

Ysa, Osman, interview with El Him, former Koh Thom district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 10 November 1999.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Him Leh, former Koh Thom district reeducation center prisoner, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal province, 9 November 2000.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Mat Touloas, former Koh Thom district reeducation prisoner, at Prek Thmei subdistrict, Koh Thom district, Kandal Province, 21 March 2000.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Math Naury, at Phnom Penh, 21 April 2000.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Min, a former prisoner at Krauch Chhmar district reeducation center, Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, 21 February 2001.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Sok Chea, former cadre at Krauch Chhmar district reeducation center, at Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, 21 February 2001.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Sou Ahmad at Khan Reusseï Keo, Phnom Penh, 12 March 2000.

Ysa, Osman, interview with Ysa Thea, former Krauch Chhmar district reeducation center prisoner, at Krauch Chhmar district, Kampong Cham province, 21 February 2001.