



Civil Party Em Oeun (sixth from the left) attends a hearing at the ECCC hearing with the Living Document Project of the Documentation Center of Cambodia on January 31, 2011. (Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia)

Civil Party Details Political Education in Phnom Penh

By Mary Kozlovski

On Monday, August 27, 2012, trial proceedings in Case 002 involving the accused Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan, resumed at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

The prosecution concluded questioning civil party Em Oeun, and the Nuon Chea defense began their examination. Proceedings were adjourned at midday in order for parties to attend a scheduled trial management meeting. Ieng Sary waived his direct presence in the courtroom for the day and followed proceedings from a holding cell. Khieu Samphan and Nuon Chea were present in the courtroom for the morning session.

Prosecution Proceeds with Questioning of Civil Party Em Oeun

National Senior Assistant Co-Prosecutor Dararasmey Chan launched the prosecution's questioning of civil party Em Oeun by asking about how and when he joined the revolution prior to April 1975. Mr. Oeun said he joined when he was "very young" and confirmed a comment in his victim information form that this occurred in 1969. Mr. Chan asked Mr. Oeun what he recalled about the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The civil party said the CPK began with the selection of people who loved the revolution or the "red doctrine," and those who performed their tasks well would be converted into "progressive" people in the movement. Mr. Oeun said he had joined the youth league at the time.

When asked about the purpose of establishing the movement based on “communist ideology,” Mr. Oeun said he did not know what communism was but explained how community support for the movement was established in every household at the base, with each providing rice grain as a contribution. Mr. Oeun testified that his father had asked him to ferry letters to help the group and no one compelled him to join the revolution.

Mr. Chan queried Mr. Oeun about his contact with CPK leaders. Mr. Oeun said he did not know “who was who” at the time when people worked “underground,” but he met some senior people through his work – with which his father asked him to help – including So Phim and others he could not identify. Mr. Oeun said that when he was a messenger he met So Phim at his home and office; So Phim encouraged him to join the revolution to “free our class,” which Mr. Oeun did not comprehend. Mr. Oeun said he believed then that So Phim was “attached to a section” such as Section 10 or 20.

When questioned about his memberships, Mr. Oeun testified that he may have become a member of the CPK youth league in 1973 and voluntarily became a CPK member after 1975, feeling that he was converted because the party needed him.

Turning to CPK policies on religion between 1969 and April 17, 1975, Mr. Oeun answered in response to Mr. Chan’s inquiries that in 1972 there was “no harsh treatment” of religion, which changed after 1975. He said he saw no document concerning religion in 1972, but leaders would say at sessions that “pagodas’ affairs” should not be treated as “core tasks” and if they had to dress monks in robes it would unwisely expend money and resources. Mr. Oeun said they were told occasionally that it was “a waste” to ordain a person into the monkhood and that after 1972, the CPK opposed religion because “they never valued the importance of religion” in society.

Upon a comment from International Co-Lawyer for Khieu Samphan Anta Guissé about complications with French translation, Trial Chamber President Nil Nonn reminded parties to pause when speaking. He also reminded the prosecution that “religious persecution” was not included in the first trial segment of Case 002.

Prosecution Delves into Civil Party’s Medical Training in Phnom Penh

Mr. Oeun confirmed to the prosecution that he initially went to Phnom Penh for a year of medical training after April 1975 but stayed for only nine months. In response to questions about his work at Sector 20, the civil party said he was a youth and a general physician but could not recall precisely how long he worked there. Mr. Oeun estimated up to 1,000 people – perhaps slightly less – attended training at the Russian hospital¹ in Phnom Penh. Physicians, directors, deputy directors, and people involved in technical sections at sector and zone hospitals nationwide were invited to the training at the “party’s hospital,” Mr. Oeun said. He estimated trainees were aged 20 years and above and included those from the youth league and were normally the children of cadres, though he observed no “class segregation” in the recruitment process.

¹ The names “Russian hospital,” “Khmer-Soviet Friendship Hospital or Cambodia-Soviet Friendship Hospital,” and “17 April Hospital” refer to the same facility in Phnom Penh.

Mr. Chan next inquired about the organizational structure of the 17 April Hospital, to which the civil party responded that he did not understand the structure but noted there were different sections divided principally on the basis of specialization, such as surgery, malaria, and dentistry.² Mr. Oeun said there was an administrative building for party members and cadres and another building where people were trained. The civil party testified that Leng Sey was hospital director and people reported to Chuon Choeun, and there were directors of each section; he had learned while at the base that the hospital was under the supervision of the ministries of Social Affairs and Health. Mr. Chan pressed Mr. Oeun on the structure and leadership of the ministries. Mr. Oeun said he did not know then the ministers and vice ministers – including the Minister of Social Affairs³ – but the Ministry of Social Affairs was the “big boss” and Chuon Choeun was in charge of health.

When asked if any leaders spoke at the hospital during his training, Mr. Oeun referred only to the political training he attended at Borei Keila. The prosecutor asked if Mr. Oeun attended a meeting organized by the hospital or Ministry of Social Affairs, to which the civil party said he never attended any such meeting because he was busy studying and being president of the student group. Mr. Oeun said leaders told them to mind their own business and be responsible for their activities, and if they were part of the “political teams” they had to understand the “political lines.” He said he had to be vigilant because he needed also to answer to the party.

In response to a question from Mr. Chan about who designed the curriculum at the hospital, Mr. Oeun said political training was given to party and youth league members to help them understand their roles in the party and as communist followers. Mr. Oeun said they had to keep up with the “political trend” of the country, follow the “great leap forward,” and bear responsibility as party members and doctors. “They said we had to cling to the party lines: whatever the party said, whatever the party decided, we had to comply with their decision. We must not protest,” Mr. Oeun testified.

Mr. Chan asked if information was disseminated about arrests at the hospital. Mr. Oeun said they were told to not exceed their own responsibilities and that he witnessed and heard about arrests through secret discussions but “did not dare” question the reasons behind them. In response to Mr. Chan’s questioning, Mr. Oeun said he heard about traitors and enemies of the CPK at the political training session in Borei Keila, but he did not know who ordered arrests of people at the hospital, again mentioning that he witnessed the arrest of Leng Sey, the wife of Tiv Ol. Mr. Oeun then testified that doctors and trainees were arrested in the hospital and put in trucks outside the premises; he did not know where they went. When Mr. Chan asked whether he saw Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Nuon Chea, or Khieu Samphan, Mr. Oeun said he had only seen them at political training



² Other hospital sections mentioned were not clear in the English translation.

³ The accused Ieng Thirith was former Khmer Rouge Minister for Social Action.

at Borei Keila, not in the hospital. Mr. Oeun also admitted that he did not actually see people taken away on the trucks.

Mr. Chan asked if Mr. Oeun had to abide by certain party policies or instructions when practicing medicine, to which the civil party replied that he did not receive any training on torture at the hospital because they were taught to be neutral and generous. When asked if the lower levels of the CPK could resist orders or suggest ideas regarding upper level decisions, Mr. Oeun said the party said one thing and did another. Within the Ministry of Health, doctors were told to be generous to patients and also adhere to the party's orders or be considered traitors, Mr. Oeun testified. Pressed on whether medical staff could exercise professional judgment or had to abide by the party's decision, Mr. Oeun said the party paid more attention to discipline than to "human beings or their lives."

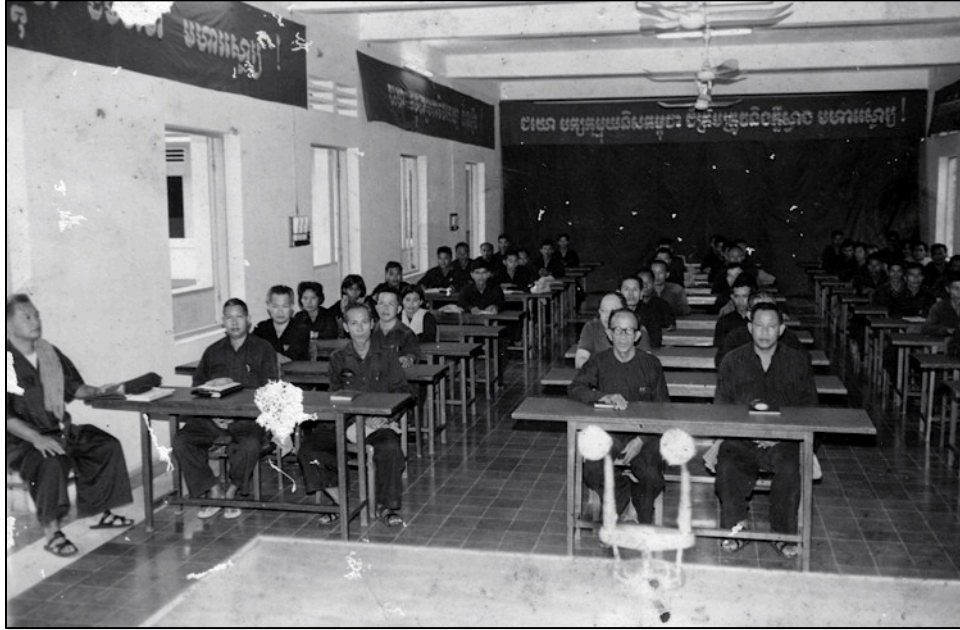
Asked whether the people he worked with before 1975 trained him after 1975, Mr. Oeun said trainers were affiliated with cadres and people could attend training if the party needed them – "if they wanted someone to become a doctor, then they just assigned someone to study medical skills" – but they needed to have a relative in the CPK or to be connected. In response to Mr. Chan, Mr. Oeun said he did not know to what extent trainers had university degrees in medicine.

Mr. Chan queried Mr. Oeun about writing his biography while he was at the hospital. Mr. Oeun said some people were instructed to write their biographies, but he did not know the reason for it. He recounted his previous comments that the Sector 20 secretary changed his name – he went by "Iep Lon" – and told him not to use Mr. Oeun's original name. "Em Oeun was not the name I was supposed to use back then. My name was changed to hide my identity," Mr. Oeun said. He recalled that he was required to write his biography once while studying at the hospital.

With his final question, Mr. Chan asked Mr. Oeun how hospital trainees were treated and what they discussed. Mr. Oeun replied that people normally did not speak truthfully because they were intimidated, afraid to make mistakes, and only supposed to do what the party told them. "People would be sent to their each respective zones after the training sessions, so people would never say anything about their own zone," he testified.

Examination Turns to Political Training at Borei Keila

International Senior Assistant Co-Prosecutor Vincent de Wilde returned to the political training session Mr. Oeun attended at Borei Keila. When Mr. de Wilde sought clarification on how many political education sessions Mr. Oeun attended, the civil party said that several sessions were held, but he attended only one of them and did not know the other participants. When asked by Mr. de Wilde how he knew names of CPK leaders at the session – citing Mr. Oeun's August 23 testimony that Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Yun Yat and Hu Nim as speakers – Mr. Oeun said the committee for political study sessions introduced them. In response to Mr. de Wilde's questions, Mr. Oeun said he knew then that Pol Pot was party secretary, and Nuon Chea was chairman of the People's Representative Assembly, the latter told to him by his zone secretary who also informed him that Khieu Samphan was president of the state presidium. Mr. Oeun confirmed he had seen Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, and the other leaders for the first time in Borei Keila at the start of the study session, at which Pol Pot gave opening remarks. He also confirmed that they remained on stage during Pol Pot's speech.



Khmer Rouge cadres attend a lecture. Seated at the tables, from left to right, are (front row) Vorn Vet, Ta Mok, unknown, Ke Pok, (second row) Khieu Samphan, unknown, Ieng Sary, and Son Sen. Nuon Chea sits on the steps to the left of the front table. (Source: Documentation Center of Cambodia)

Mr. de Wilde asked if participants could pose questions or were asked questions by leaders. Mr. Oeun replied that none of the participants said anything and were mainly listeners during the political study session. “No other individuals would be allowed to say anything other than this group of senior individuals,” Mr. Oeun testified.

When Mr. de Wilde attempted to read a passage from Mr. Oeun’s civil party application that discussed Pol Pot’s speech, International Co-Lawyer for Nuon Chea Jasper Pauw interjected. Mr. Pauw suggested that the prosecution adhere to its usual practice of first asking the witness what he recalls and then using his past statements to refresh his memory if necessary. Mr. de Wilde argued that he was attempting to ask Mr. Oeun supplementary questions connected with his civil party application. The prosecution was permitted to proceed by President Nonn, and Mr. de Wilde read the passage as follows:

On the first day of the study, Mr. Pol Pot presented the politics of revolution during which he talked about the great leap forward policy. In his words, Pol Pot said that in order to achieve this great leap forward, we needed to know who our enemies were and friends were, regardless of family relationship; in order to apply this great leap forward policy of the Angkar, We needed to smash them.

Mr. de Wilde then read from a draft transcript of Mr. Oeun’s August 23 testimony, quoting him as saying that training taught them to influence people’s mentality so they could adopt the “great leap forward” policy, which the civil party had described as “moving from democracy to communism without going through socialism.” Mr. de Wilde asked if attendees were told how to distinguish between a person making the so-called “great leap forward” and those who were not doing so. Mr. Oeun said the party believed that those who obstructed or opposed them were enemies or traitors. “The party had to smash the enemies based on each individuals’

performance. For example, if I attended a study session and I did not perform very well, then I would be regarded as enemy already,” he explained.

When asked what Pol Pot meant by knowing enemies or friends “regardless of family relationship,” Mr. Oeun said if his parents betrayed the party, he had to follow policy and treat his father as a traitor:

If I were to be asked to kill my father who betrayed the party, and whether I dare kill him, the party will test my courage and I had to abide the policy of the party. So the party did not care or pay attention to the relationship, the family relation or human being relation, they only care about the implementation of the policy effectively.

Mr. de Wilde inquired as to who could determine enemies and friends. Mr. Oeun said that party members were “powerless” and only listened to and complied with circulars issued by “870.” He did not know who issued the circular and did not receive it, but the circular influenced him and had to be applied strictly at different levels, such as ministries, villages or cooperatives, he said. In response to a query from Mr. de Wilde, Mr. Oeun further testified that leaders of a cooperative had the power to arrest and kill people at the time.

Mr. de Wilde moved back to Pol Pot’s speech at Borei Keila, asking Mr. Oeun if the party leader drew a distinction between internal and external enemies. Mr. Oeun said Pol Pot and others said that they could readily see external enemies but internal enemies – “enemies burrowing from within” – were invisible and consequently “very dangerous” to the party. Mr. Oeun said there was mistrust at the time, and people had to be cautious because anyone who had any “contradiction” within their cooperative or community may have been “eliminated.”

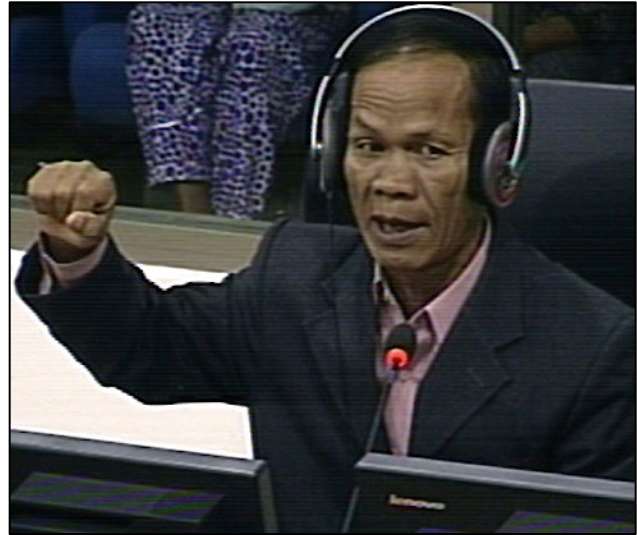
As Mr. de Wilde sought clarification on the terms “smashing” and “eliminating” enemies, National Co-Lawyer for Nuon Chea Son Arun objected that the question was leading and the prosecution was asking the witness to speculate. Mr. de Wilde said he was attempting to learn what Mr. Oeun believed to be the meaning of such phrases at the time. President Nonn said the objection was overruled but advised Mr. Oeun not to speculate. Mr. Oeun said that to “smash” meant to “execute someone.”

Mr. de Wilde returned to the civil party’s August 23 testimony, asking Mr. Oeun if Nuon Chea repeated words and phrases uttered by Pol Pot, such as “great leap forward” and enemies to be “eliminated.” Mr. Oeun again noted that each speaker would pick up briefly from the previous speaker before commencing with his or her own speech. Mr. de Wilde asked if Mr. Oeun noted anything in Nuon Chea’s speech that suggested he disagreed with Pol Pot, prompting Mr. Pauw to object that it was a leading question.

After Mr. de Wilde rephrased the question, Mr. Oeun responded that he did not say Nuon Chea disagreed with Pol Pot but that Nuon Chea picked up a few words from Pol Pot’s speech before making his own. Mr. de Wilde again quoted from the August 23 draft transcript of Mr. Oeun’s testimony that Nuon Chea said in his speech that people who infiltrated the ranks had to be “unearthed.” The prosecutor asked if Nuon Chea named cadres or party members who had been labeled as “traitors” or “infiltrated enemies.” Mr. Pauw again objected, arguing that the question

was repetitive. Mr. de Wilde countered that a question about specific names had not been posed previously. President Nonn overruled the objection.

In response, Mr. Oeun said Nuon Chea indicated during the meeting that people should not follow Koy Thuon's example because he betrayed the party, and Nuon Chea also referred to Keo Meas, alias Char. "We were told not to follow the footsteps of these individuals otherwise we also would end up being executed as these people," Mr. Oeun testified. When asked if Nuon Chea showed any documents respecting these



individuals, Mr. Oeun said Nuon Chea showed several names in documents, but he could not at first recall the other names and documents were not distributed. Mr. Oeun did recall, however, that Chan Chakrey – an army commander – was mentioned along with Koy Thuon.

Mr. de Wilde inquired if Nuon Chea described the reasons intellectuals studying abroad were being blamed. Mr. Oeun said Nuon Chea talked about people educated abroad receiving "foreign doctrine" and potentially posing a risk to the revolution. The prosecutor continued to comb through the contents of Nuon Chea's speech, asking if he spoke about members of "the enemy network" or used the word "network." Mr. Oeun said Nuon Chea was not the only person who mentioned the "enemy network" during the session but those at lower levels, such as commune chiefs, also used the term "network." Mr. de Wilde asked if Nuon Chea or other CPK leaders used the term "spy networks" when discussing Koy Thuon and others. Mr. Oeun confirmed that Nuon Chea talked about "spy networks," with accusations made about people affiliated with American "CIA" agents and Russian "KGB" agents and references to "aggressive Yuon agents."⁴ Mr. Oeun agreed that he was fearful upon hearing this and believed others were too.

Turning to Khieu Samphan's speech, Mr. de Wilde asked if the speech suggested he might not have been in agreement with Pol Pot and Nuon Chea. Mr. Oeun said Khieu Samphan used the same expressions made by previous speakers before starting his own speech, in which he indicated that attendees had to uncover traitors and enemies by working more and eating and resting less. After reading a passage from Mr. Oeun's civil party application about Khieu Samphan,⁵ the prosecutor inquired as to what Angkar's political strategies were and if Khieu Samphan expounded on them.

⁴ The term "Yuon" was used to refer to Vietnamese.

⁵ Mr. de Wilde read the passage as follows: "On the fourth or fifth day, I saw Khieu Samphan speaking. He reminded us of what Pol Pot and Nuon Chea said. After that Khieu Samphan talked about Angkar's strategic policies. Khieu Samphan encouraged us to look back at the victory of the party and the victory achieved by Angkar and to do our best to follow Angkar's directions. If the party wanted us to do anything, we would need to accomplish it at all costs."

Mr. Oeun said Khieu Samphan told trainees that people perceived as party members had to be vigilant and cautious because the term “infiltrated enemies” had to be identified and members needed to know their duties. Mr. Oeun confirmed that cadres had to follow Angkar, which Mr. Oeun said was comprised of several people with Pol Pot in the position of highest authority. In response to Mr. de Wilde’s inquiries, Mr. Oeun said he learned the phrase “standing committee” at the base and the study session, but he only ever received instructions from his superior.

Mr. de Wilde again referred to comments made by Mr. Oeun that Khieu Samphan told cadres to pay attention to “new people” – whom he viewed as having “feudalist ideologies and trends” – and that hard labor must be assigned to new and base people in order to uncover internal enemies. He also quoted Mr. Oeun as saying that Khieu Samphan told trainees if they did not fulfill assignments they would be “considered enemies and eliminated.” As Mr. de Wilde asked the civil party what he knew of “feudalism” and the “feudal class,” National Co-Lawyer for Khieu Samphan Kong Sam Onn objected that the prosecution was assuming what Mr. Oeun wrote in the document to be the words of Khieu Samphan. Mr. de Wilde confirmed he was reading Mr. Oeun’s views on what he heard in a class given by Khieu Samphan and said he believed the question was clear and the objection pointless. President Nonn instructed Mr. Oeun to respond.

Mr. Oeun said he heard the word “feudalism” but did not know what it meant. Mr. de Wilde asked what Khieu Samphan meant when he said cadres had to pay attention to “new people.” Mr. Oeun said that Khieu Samphan commented in his training session that everyone was under surveillance, with “undercovers” observing people’s behavior, particularly that of the “new people” or “17 April people.”

When Mr. de Wilde inquired how assigning “new people” to hard labor would uncover enemies, Mr. Oeun said Khieu Samphan told attendees they had to give people a lot of work and little food to eat in order to expose internal enemies, which “terrified” him and his colleagues. Mr. de Wilde asked if Khieu Samphan or Nuon Chea spoke of other topics. Mr Oeun said they did, but he could not recall them.

For the prosecution’s final question of Mr. Oeun, Mr. de Wilde asked if DK leaders used slogans – such as “to keep you is no gain, to lose you is no loss,” which was quoted by Mr. Oeun in his testimony last week – during the sessions at Borei Keila. Mr Oeun said he remembered that particular slogan but not others that were used.

Nuon Chea Defense Begins Questioning of Em Oeun

After President Nonn said Trial Chamber judges had no questions, Mr. Pauw began the Nuon Chea defense team’s examination by asking how he first discovered the ECCC and its proceedings. Mr. Oeun said that a relative asked him to help find the office of the Documentation



Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam)⁶ and when they arrived, DC-Cam staff talked to him about the victim information form. Mr. Oeun said he learned of the tribunal because he went to DC-Cam, and he also met Sar Sarin – a farmer.⁷ In response to Mr. Pauw’s questions, Mr. Oeun confirmed that he first received the victim information form from DC-Cam and submitted it on January 25, 2010. Mr. Oeun said he asked a DC-Cam staff member for assistance in filling in a second application form, but wrote the first form himself.

Mr. de Wilde suggested at this point that both forms be presented to Mr. Oeun so that he may be clear which document is being referred to. Mr. Pauw responded that both statements would be presented but for the moment his questions were general in nature.

In response to a series of questions from Mr. Pauw about Mr. Sarin, Mr. Oeun testified that Mr. Sarin was not present when he wrote his first application, and that during the DK period, Mr. Sarin was a driver with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Mr. Oeun said Sar Sarin used to work with his brothers and is now a plantation farmer in Mondulkiri province and that Sar Sarin told him that if he still had painful memories of the past he should go to DC-Cam.

When asked by Mr. Pauw if he discussed his memories of the DK era with Sar Sarin, Mr. Oeun said he talked to him about filing the complaint because Sar Sarin used to work at the MFA. Mr. Oeun further testified that Sar Sarin told him he attended a political training session but not the same session Mr. Oeun attended.

President Nonn adjourned the day’s proceedings at midday, in order for a scheduled trial management meeting to take place. Proceedings are set to continue Tuesday, August 28, 2012, at 9 a.m. with further questioning of Em Oeun by defense teams.

⁶ DC-Cam is a sponsor of the *Cambodia Tribunal Monitor*, and its director, Youk Chhang, serves as co-managing editor.

⁷ Mr. Oeun further described Mr. Sarin as a driver who “takes foreign tourists touring in Cambodia.” The English translation was unclear as to whether this is a current or former occupation of Mr. Sarin.