

The New York Times

Kissinger in Cambodia
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November 20, 2012

Theary Seng was taking aim with precision and anger. The 41-year-old U.S.-trained lawyer and a regular on Cambodia's crowded protest circuit was about to throw a dart at a poster of former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Kissinger is one of 13 politicians and senior Khmer Rouge leaders in a dart game created by Poetic Justice, a nongovernmental organization run by Theary Seng that highlights deficiencies of the special U.N.-backed tribunal judging the Khmer Rouge's crimes. Each player gets five throws. A bull's-eye is worth seven points. The highest score wins.

Last Sunday afternoon, Theary Seng and three members of her staff were playing on Phnom Penh's riverfront opposite the storied Foreign Correspondents' Club. On this occasion — the fourth time the game has been staged in public — the point was to draw attention to the narrow scope of the Khmer Rouge tribunal ahead of President Barack Obama's visit for a summit meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Earlier this year, Duch, the warden of the Khmer Rouge's most secretive detention center, was sentenced to life for the torture and execution of almost 13,000 people. But only three of Pol Pot's closest colleagues are currently on trial for the deaths of up to two million people between 1975 and 1979. Another two cases are mired at the investigation stage, some say because of interference by the Cambodian government.

Theary Seng, who survived the Khmer Rouge as a young child but lost both her parents, says the tribunal's mandate should be expanded. She was a civil party to the proceedings but pulled out because of what she says are the tribunal's shortcomings.

One of those shortcomings is the failure to hold responsible those who ordered the carpet bombings of Cambodia in the early 1970s, even though, Theary Seng argues, the destruction they wrought helped bring the Khmer Rouge to power. In those years Washington entertained an uneasy, opportunistic alliance with Lon Nol, the general who seized power after ousting Prince Norodom Sihanouk in a 1970 coup and was in turn ousted by the Khmer Rouge in 1975.

The U.S. bombing campaign, Theary Seng said while setting up the targets for the dart game, "had the direct consequence of killing half a million people and the indirect consequence of creating the conditions that gave us the Khmer Rouge. Kissinger is legally and morally responsible." But with the scope of the special Khmer Rouge court

limited to crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979, no earlier action by the United States will be considered.

Today, the opposition leader Sam Rainsy and other critics argue that the United States' current relations with the government of Prime Minister Hun Sen also have the hallmarks of political expedience: Washington's "pivot" policy in Southeast Asia is pushing the White House closer to unsavory regimes with dubious human rights records.

This point wasn't lost on the crowds gathered around Theary Seng or on the 300-odd tourists who filled the restaurants nearby. And it certainly wasn't lost on the 20 police officers and 10 senior district officials in plain clothes who moved in as she began explaining the rules of the game through a microphone.

The security officers leapt for the foam-backed posters of Nixon, Pol Pot and Mao Zedong. Spoiling for a confrontation, they destroyed the targets while yelling at the crowd: "You are obstructing public order!" "We are security!" "We can do anything!"

Punches were traded. Theary Seng was pushed and shoved.

"Obviously, they're a bit sensitive with Obama coming to town. But what can you say: They're control freaks," she said. "It's an authoritarian regime that wants a picture-perfect image for the summit, and this does not accord with reality."

The ASEAN summit meeting that Hun Sen is hosting this week is the largest gathering of regional and world leaders ever assembled in Cambodia, and Obama's visit is the first by a sitting U.S. president. Obama's highly anticipated arrival has prompted a litany of complaints and a slew of protests.

Eight people living under the flight path near Phnom Penh's international airport were briefly detained Friday for painting "S O S" alongside pictures of Obama on the rooftops of their houses. They had been ordered to vacate their homes to create a security zone ahead of the president's arrival. Protests by underpaid garment workers and villagers evicted from their land occur almost daily.

When Hun Sen and his minders step back to look at how Cambodia handled its year as chair of ASEAN, one hopes they will also take a hard look at themselves. If Hun Sen is as serious as he seems to be about quelling dissent ahead of elections next year, his government would do better to examine why so many Cambodians are demonstrating rather than rough up a 40-something woman for playing a game of darts.