



Nuon Chea:

It is useless to go and pray in monasteries because true practices of Buddhism are in your mind...

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Photos: David Hawk, 1979

Based on stories of survivors, interviews, hundreds of thousands of documents and remaining photos, it is clearly implicative that the Khmer Rouge destroyed treatise, the Buddhist code of conduct, Buddhist monasteries and temples, disrobed and killed Buddhist monks, and forced monks to marry women. These acts are deemed inhuman and therefore seriously violate the Buddhist code of conduct.

During the December 15, 2011 hearing on Case 002, the accused Nuon Chea, however, strongly condemned those who claimed that his Democratic Kampuchea regime had devastated Buddhism in Cambodia, stressing that these people did not clearly understand "key meanings of Buddhism." "The key meanings of Buddhism are virtue, meditation, and intelligence which remain attached to the heart and daily lives of the people," he added. In fact, "The key meanings of Buddhism" which he defined mean:

Virtue: refers to the fact that Nuon Chea and other senior Khmer Rouge leaders committed their "good" deeds and adopted moral conduct to exploit the common interest of vulnerable and poor people to gain support for their resistance movement.

Meditation: refers to the fact that Nuon Chea and other senior Khmer Rouge leaders were benevolent and calm in a way



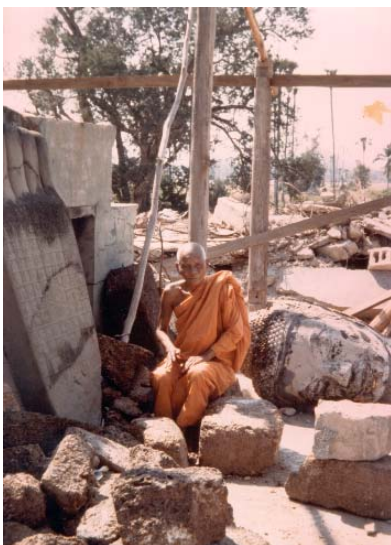
that they ignored massive forced labor, famine, lack of medication, and the death of innocent Cambodians.



Intelligence: refers to the fact that Nuon Chea and other senior Khmer Rouge leaders utilized their higher education from foreign countries to mislead the country, causing the death of approximately two million Cambodians.

“It is useless to go and pray in monasteries because true practices of Buddhism are in your mind. The Buddhist was born and enlightened in the forest,” he added, before the trial chamber. His view

was that the existence of Buddhist monasteries was not the true manifestation of “the key meanings of Buddhism”. He, however, maintained that the true lovers of Buddhism were those who never committed a sin, claiming that under his regime, Buddhism remained in the heart of every Cambodian in spite of the absence of worship with burned incense.



Actively sought to destroy religion in Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge leaders ordered the evacuation and demolition of Buddha statues and monasteries, and turned them into pig farms, prisons, execution centers, or warehouses. In addition, they defrocked monks and forced them to do hard labor, likening them to leeches sucking blood from people or pigs waiting for food given by people. Likewise, they ceased religious practices of Muslim and other religions, ordering the destruction of their mosques and churches.

As aforementioned, Nuon Chea and a handful of senior Khmer Rouge leaders carried out the idea of murdering monks, defrocking monks, and forcing monks to get married, as well as preventing ethnic minorities from their religious practices. According to Buddhism’s code of conduct, are not these acts a sin?

Monk Lay Sochea from Phnom Penh's Neakvorn Pagoda said that keeping Buddha’s teaching in mind is correct, but that is not enough; both mind and action must come together. “Monks represent Buddhism, and pagodas are used not just as a place of worship but also a place for residing, learning, and implementing Buddha’s teachings. Monks are Buddha’s disciples whose roles are to educate and disseminate Buddha’s code of conduct to people,” he responded to Nuon Chea’s claim.

The monk maintained that the practice and spiritual purification are a real implementation of Buddhism, and that this aspect of Nuon Chea's claim is correct. However, he noted that all their past actions are contrary to Buddha's teaching, and therefore are deemed as sins.

What Nuon Chea raised at the court is just a pretext to get away from the past mistakes that he committed during his regime from 1975 to 1979. His speech in front of the trial chamber and the public including the monks is a serious insult to Buddhism, which was restored following the fall of the Khmer Rouge and is strictly followed by Buddhist Cambodians. So far, Nuon Chea, along with his co-accused Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Thirith, have refused to accept their past guilt.

