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Old Interviews Put Trio on Spot **Bridget Di Certo** **February 15, 2012**

The three former Khmer Rouge leaders on trial at the United Nations-backed tribunal yesterday had media interview after media interview thrown back at them as the prosecution used their own words as evidence against them.

Ieng Sary, as former deputy prime minister in charge of foreign affairs, was determined to damn Pol Pot and other regime leaders after he split from them in the 1980s, and inadvertently betrayed his leadership position in the regime and complicity in the crimes he is charged with in interviews he gave at the time, prosecutors said yesterday.

“Frankly speaking, in 1974, I talked with Pol Pot that taking people out of Stung Treng and Kratie was easy because there were not many people,” Ieng Sary told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 1996 about the Khmer Rouge’s forced movement of the population out of urban centres.

“Out of Phnom Penh, not so easy. Everything must be arranged because there were millions of people,” he added.

The prosecution used previous media interviews to demonstrate Ieng Sary’s knowledge and complicity in the early pre-1975 cooperatives that served as a blueprint for the eventual brutal forced labour camps across the Kingdom, but also to highlight his pride and defence of the cooperatives, which have been characterised in the indictment against him as constituting crimes against humanity.

Critical to the subject matter of the first mini-trial in Case 002, the prosecution has brought forward documents they allege demonstrate that the three co-accused – Nuon Chea, Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan – all participated in planning the evacuation of Phnom Penh, and that this evacuation, to some degree, would be a permanent removal of people from their property.

Ieng Sary, who has previously unsuccessfully claimed he is unfit to stand trial, was excused from the courtroom mid-morning as he had a “pain in his foot”.

Interviews that former Khmer Rouge head of state Khieu Samphan had given to journalists prior to his arrest and detention in 1997 were also used by the prosecution in an attempt to contradict his previous claims that he was the “Minister of Defence of Nothing”.

Khieu Samphan had boasted to Swedish documentary filmmakers that he was “integral” in uniting then-Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge forces.

“[The documentary is] evidence he had contemporaneous knowledge of the situation on the battlefield and his endorsement of that brutality,” senior assistant co-prosecutor Tarik Abdulhak said in court.

“[Khieu Samphan] had knowledge of meetings prior to the evacuation of Phnom Penh. We also see that Khieu Samphan accepted the use of violence.”