

Proximity Offered Rare Vantage Point for Khmer Rouge Worker
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In his years of loyal service to Pol Pot's Communist Party of Kampuchea, Rochoem Tun never lacked for employment.

He held jobs as a farmer, letter carrier, security guard, caterer, and, after Phnom Penh fell, as an administrative employee in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

And though his work may seem banal, it kept Tun close to some of the most senior leaders in the Khmer Rouge. He elaborated on some of these relationships during his testimony yesterday in Case 002 at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia.

As a guard, he attended a morning meeting under a palm leaf-covered shed in early April, 1975, at office B5, known as Pol Pot's headquarters in Kampong Chhnang province. The discussion among top leaders centered on the liberation and evacuation of Phnom Penh, which was to happen in the same month.

"I noted that Nuon Chea was on his feet and raised this [idea] first. He said that it was necessary and needed approval," Tun testified. "Khieu Samphan also agreed with the plan and the whole meeting applauded and approved the idea."

On April 19, 1975, two days after the Khmer Rouge carried out those plans to seize and evacuate the capital, Tun entered the city as part of a unit with military commander Son Sen.

"People had left the city already, but still I saw a handful of people, but many of them were on the road out," he said. "And I also saw dead bodies along the road, there were many, many dead bodies along the road, and some of the corpses were decomposing.

His ghoulish reconnoitering of the city included stops at the airport, the Royal Palace, the Monivong Bridge, and the Olympic stadium. "We returned to our location, and Son Sen reported that our forces controlled the city, and that the leaders could arrive or enter the city," he said.

Soon, everyone starting showing up. Pol Pot, Khieu Samphan, Nuon Chea and Ieng Sary, who was coming from abroad and had to be picked up at the Pochentong airport. Most arrived by way of the Phnom Penh Railway Station, which Tun said served as a kind of temporary nerve center.

“I saw them working at the train station, and at the former Ministry of Commerce. They met and had meetings. They met a lot. They met days and nights,” he said.

Once Ieng Sary arrived, Tun was assigned to work at the fledgling Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he started as a caterer and booker of guests before rising to head of administration.

Court is out of session until Monday, when Tun is scheduled to take the stand again.