

No Need For Bribery Under Khmer Rouge

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When Rochoem Tun, a former administrator at the Khmer Rouge's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saw two people marching out of Phnom Penh in 1975, pouring sweat under the weight of two heavy sacks, he inquired after their contents.

The evacuees were too frightened to tell him, he said, but when he inspected the sacks himself, he told them not to waste their time.

In Democratic Kampuchea, he had told them, there would be no need for the bags stuffed with money.

"In the liberated zones, there were no banknotes," said Tun, recounting his conversation with the pair as they, along with thousands of others, streamed out of Phnom Penh after its fall. They could not contain their tears. I tried to console them; I told them that was the evolution of the situation."

Yesterday, Rochoem Tun continued his testimony which began last Wednesday, adding to the details he had already provided of the evacuation of Phnom Penh, as well as illuminating former minister Ieng Sary's control over the regime's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where Tun had been a senior administrator.

When asked how people at the ministry were selected to be sent to remote sites for "tempering", a regime-approved euphemism for forced labour, Tun said that the decision always ultimately rested with Ieng Sary.

"People who committed some minor mistakes, for example, that did not work actively, or failed to perform the tasks given to them" were candidates for tempering, said Tun. "People who were in charge of the section who spotted the wrongdoings of their subordinates would send people out to be tempered. However, whatever decision was made, final approval had to be from Om Ieng Sary."

Tun said confessions extracted at the S-21 detention centre that implicated ministry employees were often sent for review to Ieng Sary, who would detain them at the ministry until representatives of Political Office 870 arrived to arrest them, after which point, he “did not know about their fate”.

Tun also described Sary’s call to gather all Cambodian intellectuals, both at home and abroad, to serve at the ministry, as well as his stewardship of Boeung Trabek, where many of those intellectuals were detained and re-educated upon their return home.

“There were people from the ministry, people who came along with their spouses and children,” said Tun, describing the scene at Boeung Trabek. “Too many people there.”