

Death of Brit Scholar Recounted at Tribunal **Joseph Freeman** **August 2, 2012**

The night had blanketed Phnom Penh in December of 1978 when Rochoem Tun, head of administration at Ieng Sary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, arrived with a group of guards at a guesthouse on Monivong Boulevard where two foreign journalists and a professor were staying as part of a rarely granted tour of Democratic Kampuchea.

Tun, who was also responsible for booking and managing guests, soon discovered a grisly scene that defied explanation.

Khmer Rouge soldiers had inexplicably opened fire inside the guesthouse, killing British scholar Malcolm Caldwell, though the journalists, Richard Dudman and Elizabeth Becker, were not harmed.

To get in and find out what happened, Tun said he had to use force.

"Since there was no one to help, it was I who had to take action," explained the 65-year-old ethnic Jarai man to Ieng Sary's international defence attorney, Michael Karnavas. "The door was difficult to break down."

He busted in and looked around the first floor. Seeing nothing, he went upstairs and saw "the professor."

He was "lying dead, fallen off the bed, he was lying next to the bed," he described.

"And a soldier ... was also seen dead," he added. "And a shotgun was seen placed right under his chin."

Caldwell had spoken favourably of Pol Pot and his agrarian revolution, so his murder brought up more questions than answers. But there were always more questions than answers in Democratic Kampuchea.

Elizabeth Becker, who recounted the trip and incident in her book *When the War Was Over*, cautioned in a 2010 article published in the British newspaper the *Guardian* against trying to find a reasonable explanation for his death:

“Don’t apply rational thinking to the situation,” she said in the article.

“It was crazy. Crazy. Malcolm’s murder was no less rational than the tens of thousands of other murders.”

Though she did believe he was targeted for death, possibly to embarrass Ieng Sary, the belief was based on confessions that were likely tortured out of Khmer Rouge cadre in the last days of the Tuol Sleng prison.

On her short time spent with him, she described Caldwell as “a lovely man, very funny, very charming.”

After the shooting, Tun said he was called before Ieng Sary, who demanded he root out the responsible individuals.

“And he asked us to find out the black and white side of the story. And he also confirmed that we were responsible before the party. Before the organisation, we, the ministry, were fully accountable for all of this.”