

**Anger Motivated Witness**  
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Why does someone join a revolutionary movement?

For Suong Sikoeun, a slim, elderly man who began testifying at the Khmer Rouge tribunal yesterday, it had to do with the way his mother dressed.

“I was born into a poor peasant family,” Sikoeun told the prosecution. “I thought of my mother, who didn’t even have proper clothing for going to the pagoda, and our living throughout the year, and we couldn’t even afford our living and eating, we had to borrow it from other people.

“That kind of anger is still burning in my heart, and it started from my childhood,” he added. “This hatred, this anger, made me think of trying to find a way in order to contribute to liberating my country.”

Sikoeun was describing a bygone era, a period of his childhood that dated back to the pre-independence days when Cambodia was still a French colony. Independence came in 1954, and three years later Sikoeun was in Paris studying civil aviation on a scholarship.

In France, he became further involved in the student resistance and the so-called Marxist-Leninist circle in which co-accused former regime head of state Khieu Samphan participated.

He studied communist doctrine while going to school, and his connections at the time later earned him positions with The National United Front of Kampuchea, the government-in-exile in the early 1970s that Norodom Sihanouk led out of Beijing.

The front came about in the aftermath of the coup d’etat by General Lon Nol in 1970, and “it was established to free ourselves from the Lon Nol yoke”.

He worked in security and information and took trips abroad with Case 002 co-accused Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan as part of foreign delegations. He remembers visiting far-flung countries. Egypt. Algeria. The former Yugoslavia. Romania.

“The visits were to inform our friendly countries about the Cambodian resistance movement,” he said.

After the Khmer Rouge seized power in 1975, he worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the command of Ieng Sary.

Earlier in the morning, the defence team for Khieu Samphan finished questioning witness Rochoem Tun, who was head of administration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Tun became testy at having to answer what he deemed repetitive questions: “I already made my response,” he said at one point. “And if you could not understand it, it’s your problem.”