

**'Enemies of the People' Wins Sundance's World Cinema Special
Jury Prize for Documentary
Poch Reasey
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'Enemies of the People' is a new documentary film being shown for the first time in North America at the Sundance Film Festival 2010 in Salt Lake City, Utah (from January 21 to 31).

In the documentary 'Enemies of the People', former Khmer Rouge leader, Nuon Chea, known as Brother Number Two, for the first time gives details how he and Pol Pot decided to kill party members they considered to be 'Enemies of the People'.

Thet Sambath, the journalist who produced the 93-minute film, says he met with Nuon Chea on the weekends for five years before Mr. Nuon agreed to give testimony.

"One day he told me the truth." Said Sambath. "He said that he had observed me for many years and had realized that I am honest and not biased toward any side. So he said from now on he could tell me all the decisions he and Pol Pol had made."

Sambath says he spent 10 years making the documentary to find out more about the deaths of nearly 2 million people in Cambodia, people that included his parents and siblings.

Rob Lemkin co-produced the documentary. He says viewers will decide if they Nuon Chea is telling the truth.

"Whether you believe him or not," says Lemkin, "it's very important that he should be allowed to give his version of events so that future generations can make a decision about what they think about these events."

Like millions of Khmer Rouge victims, Sambath says he has suffered emotional trauma for years. However he says he feels much better once he understand the Khmer Rouge's policy.

"It's precisely these sufferings that had pushed me to find the truth behind all the killings during the Khmer Rouge's regime." Says Sambath. "Now that I know what had happened behind the scene, I feel liberated. I don't have any remorse anymore."

John Cooper is the Director of the yearly Sundance Film Festival for independent filmmakers, held this year in Park City, Utah. On the festival's opening day, Mr. Cooper praised Sambath's courage in making the documentary.

"This film is both frightening and mesmerizing at the same time." Says Cooper. "It's such a fresh approach. It couldn't have been told until now because nobody was willing to go there yet. And this film has waited out. I think every weekend he went and shot until finally these people broke down and started talking to him. It's an incredible story and story changes lives."

Robert Redford is the founder of the Sundance Film Festival. He told VOA Khmer he has not seen "Enemies of the People" but praises the filmmakers' effort.

"What I like about it is that that goes further and deeper in by a journalist to explore what was behind the Killing Fields." Says Redford. "We heard about the Killing Fields in that film. But to cover the untold story, that's what always interest me. What's beneath the story? You think you know? And I think this is another example of that that goes deeper into the situation and therefore break new ground, therefore there's new information."

During the decade he spent meeting with Nuon Chea, Sambath also found the people who actually carried out the executions. He had to spend years meeting and talking to them before he could convince them to speak.

Sam Ratha is a Cambodian-American living in Salt Lake City, Utah. He's among the first Cambodians to see the documentary. He says he is glad to hear Nuon Chea speak.

"He told the truth so that the younger generation know what he has done in the past." Says Ratha. "Those who are committing this crime should know that one day they will have remorse. While in power you can do anything you want, but don't forget that in the future you will end up like Nuon Chea."

Park City's cold, winter weather did not stop a woman from Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and a young man from Canada from coming to Sundance.

"I had seen the 'Killing Fields' but I didn't know what the film was going to be about. It's very interesting how he went in to interview the people and who the people were. I guess I understand now when the Cambodian people say they want to forgive and to make peace with the people who did the killings."

"It's extremely powerful. I was in Cambodia 2 years ago for 3 weeks. I saw the killing fields. That really struck me deep."

“Enemies of the People” is among 12 documentaries selected from over seven hundred submissions from around the world at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival in Utah.