

Dany: I would like to introduce myself once again. My name is Dany. Two colleagues of mine named Vannak and Sovann are also conducting interviews here. The three of us work for the Documentation Center of Cambodia, which is located in Phnom Penh. We have come to Anlong Veng in order to interview people who lived through the war years to find out about their life during and after the war, as they resettled in the villages and resumed their normal daily lives. The purpose of this interview is to document and publish an Anlong Veng tourist guidebook. I would like to ask about your background and experience living in this area. Is it all right for me to interview you about this?

Sokh: Yes. I agree.

Dany: First, I would like to ask your full name?

Sokh: My name is Uk Sokh.

Dany: How old are you?

Sokh: 58 years old.

Dany: Where were you born?

Sokh: I was born in Takeo (Province), Cheang Tang Commune, Kbal Ou Village.

Dany: Kbal Ou?

Sokh: Cheang Tang Commune.

Dany: Which district?

Sokh: Tram Kak District.

Dany: Takeo Province?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: What is your husband's name?

Sokh: His name is Meas Moeun.

Dany: How old is he?

Sokh: 78 years old.

Dany: Where was he born?

Sokh: He comes from Kampong Chhnang (Province), Andaung Russei Village, Kampong Chhnang Commune, Rolea Pa'ea District.

Dany: Andaung Russei, Kampong Chhnang Commune?

Sokh: Yes. Rolea Pa'ea District.

Dany: Kampong Chhnang Province?

Sokh: Yes

Dany: How many children do you have?

Sokh: I have seven children.

Dany: How many sons and how many daughters?
Sokh: Two daughters and five sons.
Dany: Are they now grown up?
Sokh: Four of them are already married. The other three are still single.
Dany: How do you support yourself?
Sokh: I work on my farm.
Dany: Do you do other work besides farming?
Sokh: No. I don't. I only work on my farm.
Dany: What is your father's name?
Sokh: His name is Uk Hun.
Dany: Is he still alive?
Sokh: No. My parents have both passed away.
Dany: And what is your mother's name?
Sokh: Her name is Eng Vet.
Dany: Eng Vet?
Sokh: Yes. She is also deceased.
Dany: How many siblings do you have?
Sokh: I have nine siblings. However, three of them have died, and only six are still alive.
Dany: There were nine altogether?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: How many sisters and brothers?
Sokh: There are nine in total. Seven sisters and two brothers.
Dany: Seven are female and two are male?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: Only six of you are still living?
Sokh: Yes. There are six left, including myself.
Dany: Three have died?
Sokh: Three have died due to illness. One died from illness in 1976.
Dany: 1976?
Sokh: Yes. He was a soldier.
Dany: He was a soldier and died of illness?
Sokh: His head was injured when he was hit by bomb debris and he didn't receive treatment in time to recover. Then he passed away. The other two died of illness when they were young.
Dany: Which child are you in your family?
Sokh: I am the youngest.
Dany: You are the youngest?
Sokh: Yes, I am.
Dany: What grade did you complete?
Sokh: I finished grade 10, in the previous regime grading.
Dany: Grade 10 during previous regime grading?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: At which school did you study?
Sokh: I studied at Wat Nin Char School.
Dany: Nin Char Pagoda?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: How many years had you completed through grade 10?

Sokh: Two years.

Dany: Only two years?

Sokh: Yes. I first studied in grade 12, but I did not need to take grade 11, since I was the first in my class, so I moved on to grade 10, without taking grade 11. Therefore, I completed only two years.

Dany: You studied only two years, correct?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Why did you study only two years?

Sokh: My parents were too old to earn a living, and that's why I decided to quit.

Dany: Your parents were very old?

Sokh: Yes, they were. During farming season, there was no one to help them (work on their farm). Moreover, the age for starting school was not the same as it is for children nowadays. When I was a child, we had to do this [by reaching our left/right hand to touch our right/left ear over our head. If our hand could not reach our ear, we would not be allowed to go to school]. So we were almost ten years old before we were allowed to go to school. As a result, there was no one to help (our parents with the farm work).

Dany: You studied only two years. There was no one to help your parents, so you quit school to help them with their work, is that right?

Sokh: Yes. My parents were old. We also asked others to help us.

Dany: You studied only two years. Can you read or write?

Sokh: It [the education] was adequate for me. I can read.

Dany: You can read?

Sokh: Yes. I can.

Dany: When you were young, what was your purpose for going to school? How far did you wish to pursue your education?

Sokh: I wanted to go further. However, because our living conditions were not good, I wasn't able to continue.

Dany: Did you ever think about what you wanted to do?

Sokh: I used to think [about it]. However, due to the living conditions of my family, I could not dwell on it.

Dany: What did you want to do?

Sokh: I wanted to further my education, but my mother asked me to quit, so I did.

Dany: Did you feel that education was important?

Sokh: It is important. But [the decision to quit] was also related to our living conditions. Though I wanted to continue studying, I had nothing to sell to further my education. The parents of one of my nephews sold almost all of their property to support his education; ultimately, he could not finish school. Another [relative] sold their farmland to support their children's education. Unfortunately, there was a coup d'état, and then we all had to quit school.

Dany: How about your children? Have they been to school?

Sokh: My children?

Dany: Yes.

Sokh: My children did not go to school very often. They were born during the war, and we lived along the Thai border. We had to escape from place to place; that's why my children were not able to go to school.

Dany: What year was it when you were in grade 10?

Sokh: I don't know the year. I just know that I was about 12 or 13 years old.

Dany: Did you quit school when the coup d'état occurred?

Sokh: No. It was before the coup d'état.

Dany: How many years before the coup d'état?

Sokh: I don't recall the year. It was about two or three years [before the coup d'état], because I was already in my teens when I was in school. I was older when I entered school compared to the age of my children when they started school. During that time, only older children could go to school. But nowadays, six-year-old children old can register for school.

Dany: Six-year-olds can register for school?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: How about before?

Sokh: We had to be old enough to reach our hand (over our head) and touch our ear. If we could reach our ear (with the opposite hand), we were allowed to go to school.

Dany: Reaching one's hand over one's head to touch their ear?

Sokh: Yes. That's right. If the small children could not reach their ear, they would not be allowed to go to school. When they were old enough to go school, most of them were fast learners, unlike today's children.

Dany: So because they were older, they learned faster?

Sokh: Yes. Moreover, in those days, the teachers were very strict, unlike today's teachers.

Dany: Could you tell us more about teachers in the previous regime versus today's teachers?

Sokh: In the previous regime, all the students became very silent when the teacher entered the class. They explained every lesson they taught in the class. It was different from today's classrooms, where the students are very noisy even after the teacher enters the room. Today, teachers give students homework without proper explanation. This is what I have heard from the students, since I have never been to school.

Dany: You just heard [these things] from the students, didn't you?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Who told you?

Sokh: My children, for instance. My child told me that his/her teacher did not explain the material. Without any explanation, they assigned class work to the students and then just walked out. [Before returning home], the teacher would assign more homework, and then they would collect it the next day for marking. Because there was no proper explanation, the students would ask their brother/sister or parents for help. During my school days, we did [our own] class work. When we finished, we submitted it to our teachers for marking. We did our school work by ourselves, unlike today's students who ask others for help.

Dany: Today's students do not [do school work by themselves]?

Sokh: No. They don't. When they cannot finish their assigned schoolwork, they ask their brother/sister or parents for help. So they learn nothing.

Dany: After quitting school, what work did you do to help your parents?

Sokh: I helped them do the farming during the farming season.

Dany: Doing farming?

Sokh: Yes. During the farming season, I helped them with their farm. During the dry season, I would collect firewood and store it for the rainy season.

Dany: Were you about 12 years old at that time?

Sokh: I quit school when I was about 13 years old.

Dany: Could you work on the farm when you were 13 years old?

Sokh: I could. Children about that age were very skilled in transplanting [rice seedlings], but today that is not true.

Dany: Today's children could not [transplant rice seedlings], could they?

Sokh: No. They couldn't.

Dany: But when you were 12 or 13 [years old], you were able to [transplant rice seedlings]?

Sokh: We became very skilled in transplanting rice seedlings.

Dany: Became very skilled?

Sokh: Yes. During the dry season, while my father was collecting palm juice, I would collect firewood for him in order to make palm sugar.

Dany: When did you stop helping your parents and leave your home [for the revolution]?

Sokh: I left home in 1972.

Dany: 1972?

Sokh: Yes. It was 1972, when the flame of war was ignited. They mobilized young teenagers to join the struggle in order to fight with those who were disloyal to King Sihanouk. The struggle was for King Sihanouk.

Dany: You left home in 1972?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Were you forced or did you volunteer to join the struggle?

Sokh: I volunteered [to join the struggle].

Dany: You volunteered?

Sokh: At first, I was assigned to carry food for soldiers at Takeo Province.

Dany: Takeo Province?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: You served the soldiers based in Takeo Province?

Sokh: Yes. At the battlefields in Takeo [Province].

Dany: Takeo battlefield?

Sokh: Yes. I was injured by a B-52 bomb. I asked if I could work at the hospital where I had been taken for treatment. I worked at that hospital until 1975 or 1976.

Dany: You began volunteering to carry food [for soldiers] in 1972?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Which soldiers?

Sokh: For soldiers in Division 2.

Dany: Division 2?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Were they KR soldiers?

Sokh: Yes. They were KR soldiers.

Dany: With whom did they fight?

Sokh: They fought with Lon Nol's [soldiers].

Dany: Did they fight with Lon Nol's [soldiers] at Takeo?

Sokh: Yes. At Takeo [Province].

Dany: Where was KR Division 2?

Sokh: They were based in a liberated zone. I carried food [to the soldiers] from the liberated zone to the war zone at Ou Chambakk railroad, next to Takeo Province. Do you know the place?

Dany: Was it along the road from Ang Tasaom to Takeo?

Sokh: Yes. The place along the railroad was called Ou Chambakk; it was very close to Takeo.

Dany: From where did you carry the food?

Sokh: We carried the food across villages. We collected food from a house in Ksea Village, where I was staying. I delivered food to the soldiers on the frontline beginning at 6 o'clock in the evening. I had to deliver food early again at 4 o'clock in the morning for their lunch.

Dany: Were there a lot of people who volunteered with you?

Sokh: There were a lot of people. All the girls in my village joined along with me.

Dany: How many people [were there who volunteered] in your village?

Sokh: There were 10 people from my village. From other villages, there were about 20-30 people. The other people worked in the office, looking after the injured. However, I was assigned to carry food.

Dany: Were they about your age or were they older or younger than you?

Sokh: I was about 15 or 16 years old.

Dany: Were they about your age?

Sokh: Yes. We were about the same age.

Dany: About 15 or 16 years old?

Sokh: Yes. They were about 15 or 16 years old.

Dany: Were they all female?

Sokh: They were all female.

Dany: Were there about 4 to 10 people from each village?

Sokh: There were 10 people from each village.

Dany: Did they recruit 10 people from every village?

Sokh: Yes. After having been assigned to carry food, we would then be recruited to serve as soldiers at the battlefield. While we carried out our task of delivering food, we would learn how to avoid bombing or shooting. So after we returned later, we could serve as soldiers.

Dany: Were there a lot of people carrying food for soldiers?

Sokh: We were divided into groups of five or ten people, and then each group was assigned to a different area.

Dany: You moved from place to place; were they all frontlines?

Sokh: Yes. There were a lot of frontlines. We were assigned to work on those frontlines.

Dany: How long had you carried food for the soldiers before you were injured?

Sokh: I had carried food for the soldiers for only half a month [15 days] when I was injured. There were two enemy helicopters in the sky; one dropped bombs over the road, and the other dropped bombs over the village. My house was damaged. Fortunately, I hid in a haystack nearby. However, my hand was injured by debris from the bomb.

Dany: Your hand [was injured]?

Sokh: Yes. My hand.

Dany: Did they drop the bomb from the sky?

Sokh: Yes. They did.

Dany: What happened next, after you were injured?

Sokh: I was injured.

Dany: Was your hand broken?

Sokh: Yes. It was broken. There was little left.

Dany: Your hand bone was broken?

Sokh: Yes. The bomb debris broke my arm. I could not move my arm for almost two months. The doctor wanted to amputate my arm, but he wasn't able to.

Dany: Otherwise you would have lost your arm?!

Sokh: Yes. Otherwise I would have lost my arm. After two or three consultations, the doctor said that I did not need to have my arm amputated, since the blood vessel was not severely damaged. Instead they put my arm in a splint. One of my cousins, who worked with me, injured her instep and had [part of] her foot amputated. Her blood vessel was severed and if they had not amputated her foot, the flesh would have rotted. So they cut off her heel. In my case, they consulted many times about what should be done. Some [medical personnel] suggested having my arm amputated. However, since they lacked the means to do so, my arm was saved.

Dany: Was your cousin injured the same time as you?

Sokh: Yes. We were together and were both injured at the same time.

Dany: Where is she now?

Sokh: She lives at her house.

Dany: Where?

Sokh: She lives in Takeo [Province].

Dany: What village?

Sokh: Kbal Ou Village.

Dany: Kbal Ou Village?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Does she live there today?

Sokh: She [still] lives there. She works on the medical staff, serving people in the village or in the commune.

Dany: Was her heel amputated?

Sokh: Her heel was amputated.

Dany: Can she walk?

Sokh: She can.

Dany: Pardon me.

Sokh: Yes. She can walk, but not straight.

Dany: To which hospital were people sent when they were injured?

Sokh: The public hospital. There was a zone hospital.

Dany: Where was the zone hospital?

Sokh: It was located in Lum Tang Village, west of my house.

Dany: In which commune?

Sokh: Trapaing Thom Commune.

Dany: Was it in the forest?

Sokh: It was in the forest.

Dany: Was it a zone hospital?

Sokh: It was a KR zone hospital.

Dany: Which zone?

Sokh: I did not know which zone. I just knew that it was a zone hospital.

Dany: There were a lot of zones, for instance, the Eastern Zone and Northern Zone. Which zone was it?

Sokh: Maybe it was in the Southwest Zone.

Dany: Was it a Southwest Zone hospital?

Sokh: It could have been.

Dany: Was the hospital staffed by professional doctors?

Sokh: The surgeon was very qualified.

Dany: How many days did you spend at the hospital before you recovered?

Sokh: I stayed for almost three months. During the first month, I could not eat. The doctor fed me. All my needs were taken care of by the medical staff, even going to the toilet. The medical staff looked after me completely. After one month, I was able to move one of my hands, but not the other.

Dany: After three months, could you use your hands?

Sokh: After three months, I could move my hands, but I could not raise [the injured one] up. However, I could dress myself. When I was fully recovered, I asked if I could work at the hospital. I helped give injections to patients. I still could not raise my hand up high.

Dany: Does it [still] hurt nowadays?

Sokh: No. It does not.

Dany: Can you raise your hand up high?

Sokh: I cannot.

Dany: But it doesn't hurt, does it?

Sokh: It doesn't. But when it was healing, the pus oozed out. The doctor performed another surgery, because the debris was still inside. After the debris was removed, I was able to recover fully.

Dany: After staying there [at the hospital] for three months, you asked the medical unit if you could work there, didn't you?

Sokh: Yes. I asked to work in the medical unit.

Dany: Were you at the zone medical unit?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Were there a lot of people on the medical staff?

Sokh: There were about 100 medical staff looking after the patients.

Dany: Among the 100 medical staff, how many were certified doctors?

Sokh: In the hospital, there was only one technical doctor who was the head of the hospital. If a lot of patients arrived at the same time, [another] certified doctor would be called.

Dany: Where did he come from?

Sokh: He stayed nearby, but not in the hospital. There were different categories of medical staff, for instance, nurse or surgeon. However, they were not fully qualified, and they treated only those whose illness was not serious. If there was a serious case, for instance, intestinal surgery, they would call for help from the certified doctor.

Dany: What was the name of the certified doctor who was the head of the hospital?

Sokh: I cannot recall his name, since it was thirty years ago. However, they are all dead.

Dany: What was his name?

Sokh: His name is [Ta] Chaem.

Dany: [Ta] Chaem?

Sokh: Yes. He was educated, that's why he was killed. He went to Hanoi during the Issarak movement.. Later they [the KR] discovered that those who went to Hanoi were Vietnamese.

Dany: Were they called Khmer Hanoi or Khmer from the Northern Zone?

Sokh: Yes. At that time the Vietnamese came to our country to recruit Khmer to study in Hanoi to become a surgeon. After that, they [the KR] arrested them. This occurred in 1975 or 1976. As far as I know, they were killed.

Dany: Did you work at the hospital until 1975?

Sokh: Yes. I still worked [at the hospital] in 1975. In 1976, when I got married, I stopped [working at the hospital] to work on the farm at the cooperative. But I was not assigned to do farming; I was assigned to work in the children's unit.

Dany: I understand that you stayed at the hospital for three months and then asked permission to work there; did you learn any medical skills there [at the hospital]?

Sokh: No. During that time [the KR regime], medical staff did not receive higher education or training. When we were first assigned to work as medical staff, our task was to clean wounds. In my case, because I learned the medical skills quickly, I just observed the other medical staff injecting patients and I was able to do it. However, the other medical staff needed to learn how to inject patients. They practiced with a pillow or a banana trunk. I did not go through that process.

Dany: Did you inject and clean wounds?

Sokh: Yes. I helped to clean wounds and test patients' blood. I was able to do those tasks.

Dany: Does that mean you could cure other patients if their cases were not serious?

Sokh: Yes. I could. For instance, when a patient came, I tested their blood and reported to my supervisor whether their blood was low or high or if the patient had lost blood before surgery was performed.

Dany: How about cases in which patients had fevers? Could you cure them?

Sokh: Yes. I could.

Dany: What kinds of illnesses can you cure?

Sokh: In those days, illnesses were not as serious as they are today. Before, we used only a few kinds of medicines to cure people. I learned by observing. After the patients were examined by the doctor or specialist, the doctor or specialist would issue a prescription. I read the prescriptions and remembered them. I learned by heart what kinds of medicine were used to treat different illnesses. If the patients did not recover from their illness by taking medicine, we would cure their illness with Khmer traditional medicine. In one case, a patient was hemorrhaging blood from his mouth and anus. The medicine was not effective, so I treated him with traditional medicine made from hay root, young corn, and base of pineapple. After taking my medicine, he stopped bleeding. That's why he liked me, not as one would a husband or wife, but like a brother or sister. He had a serious condition which could not be cured with medicine or injection, but I did my best to cure him. Before he started bleeding severely from his mouth and anus, his eyes and skin had turned yellow.

Dany: Did you make the Khmer traditional medicine?

Sokh: Yes. I made the Khmer traditional medicine from hay and young corn.

Dany: How did you know about those kinds of [Khmer] medicines?

Sokh: I wasn't taught about it. I just observed from [daily life]. For instance, I observed that if one had difficulty urinating, one could take a Khmer traditional medicine made from hay root. After drinking this medicine, the patient could urinate properly. I saw this happen to one particular individual.

Dany: What was his name?

Sokh: His name was Son.

Dany: Where did he come from?

Sokh: I did not know where he came from. It happened while I served as a [KR] soldier. He has since passed away from injuries.

Dany: Did you work on the medical staff until 1975?

Sokh: In 1975, I still worked on the medical staff. I didn't leave until 1976.

Dany: Were you working at the same hospital where you worked from 1972 to 1975?

Sokh: Yes. I worked at the zone hospital, but I moved around with the soldiers. For instance, if the soldiers went to fight at Koh Kong, I went along with them to Koh Kong, Trapaing Rong.

Dany: To Trapaing Rong?

Sokh: Yes. When soldiers were injured during the fighting at Koh Kong, we transported them by motorboat. After that, I went to National Road 4, to Amlaing. There was fighting near Odong, Kampong Luong, and we set up a [mobile] hospital there.

Dany: Did you meet [Ta] Chuon Chouen working at Amlaing?

Sokh: At that time, I did not know where [Ta] Chuon Chouen was located, because he was a member of the higher echelon and we did not meet with him. Though the hospital I worked in was large, it was still under his command.

Dany: Where was the hospital after 1975?

Sokh: It was located at Kampong Saom.

Dany: Kampong Saom?

Sokh: Yes. At Kampong Saom.

Dany: Kampong Saom was part of the Southwest Zone?

Sokh: No, it wasn't the Southwest Zone. The Southwest Zone included Kampot, Takeo, and Kampong Speu.

Dany: In 1975, did you relocate to work in Kampong Saom?

Sokh: Yes, in Kampong Saom.

Dany: What did you do in Kampong Saom?

Sokh: In Kampong Saom, I was a medic, treating wounded patients.

Dany: You treated the wounded patients?

Sokh: Yes. I also treated patients who suffered from fever. I actually specialized in treating patients who suffered from fever. My house was on the way to O Treh. Have you ever been to Kampong Saom? There's a place with two lions which leads to a hotel [showing direction] at the beach at O Treh. There was a row of stone houses along that beach.

Dany: Did you continue to take care of the soldiers?

Sokh: Yes, I did.

Dany: From which division were the soldiers?

Sokh: Division 3, Ta Mut's Division.

Dany: Ta Mut's Division?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Did you mean Division 164?

Sokh: Oh yes, that's Division 164.

Dany: Until when did you work there?

Sokh: I worked there until 1975 or 1976.

Dany: Until 1976?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Why did you leave in 1976?

Sokh: I left the division because there weren't many soldiers being admitted into the hospital. Then I was reassigned to the base village, specifically at Kang Keng airport area. I was assigned to look after the soldiers' daughters, who were all assembled in one place. Later I worked at the children's hospital.

Dany: You were relocated to the children's hospital at Kang Keng?

Sokh: Yes, the children's hospital at Kang Keng.

Dany: Was it a hospital for children of soldiers?

Sokh: Yes, that's right, children of soldiers. Many soldiers' wives had been relocated to different villages, including Smach Den Village and Pra Poeung Village. There were about four villages close to Chamkar Daung, but I can't locate the place now. I have forgotten because it was thirty years ago. One of the villages was located close to Chamkar Daung and another was named Smach Den Village. There were about four villages there.

Dany: Did you only look after children?

Sokh: Yes, only children.

Dany: Were there many children?

Sokh: Hundreds of children. I took care of children who made fertilizer.

Dany: The children made fertilizer?

Sokh: Yes. They chopped a certain kind of plant [*tontrean khet*] to make the fertilizer. Small children worked nearby, chopping the plants, while the older ones went into the woods to search for the plant.

Dany: Were you still a medic or did you just look after the children?

Sokh: I was still a medic. If there weren't any sick children, we oversaw the work of the children. If the children became sick, we treated them.

Dany: What was the name of this medical unit?

Sokh: In general, it was place for children. We didn't name the place specifically as a hospital.

Dany: How many people worked with you?

Sokh: I was the only medic. However, there were four or five other women who led the children to work.

Dany: There were over a hundred children there, all of them soldiers' children?

Sokh: Yes, all soldiers' children.

Dany: Were they all children of soldiers in Division 164?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Do you recall any of the children?

Sokh: No, I cannot recall.

Dany: How about Ta Mut. Did he have children there?

Sokh: Ta Mut? He didn't take his children along to Kampong Saom.

Dany: No?

Sokh: No, he did not take them. At that time Ta Mut had a son named Pheap.

Dany: Pheap?

Sokh: Yes. He was the son of his previous wife and Ta Mok. However, his wife was mentally ill, became seriously ill, and died. Before she passed away, she was sent by a Chinese doctor to a hospital in Phnom Penh. She was gravely ill, however, and died on the way to the hospital. She left behind her son, Pheap. Later, he remarried and I don't know how many children he later had.

Dany: Do you know when he remarried?

Sokh: It was possibly in 1976 or 1977.

Dany: Where did she [his second wife] work?

Sokh: She was from here (sound unclear). Then he [Ta Mut] married her and they lived in Kampong Saom.

Dany: Did Ta Mok say anything?

Sokh: He didn't say anything since his son was already dead.

Dany: What was his [Ta Mut's] wife's name?

Sokh: I don't know her name.

Dany: You were not very close to her?

Sokh: No, not close.

Dany: When you were working in the children's unit, what else did you do besides oversee the children who made fertilizer?

Sokh: I didn't do anything else.

Dany: How many people were in that unit? Were there six to seven women?

Sokh: There were about six or seven women taking care of the children.

Dany: Were you in charge of the group?

Sokh: No, I was not. Another person was in charge of the unit.

Dany: Who was that?

Sokh: Her name was Khsat. She managed the children's unit. I was a medic who took care of the children.

Dany: Did the children stay there?

Sokh: About 70 stayed until the Vietnamese soldiers came in 1979.

Dany: When the Vietnamese invaded?

Sokh: In 1979, we had to scatter to different places. Some children came with me. Some met their parents. Some traveled along with other people. So we were all dispersed in different directions.

Dany: Did you stay there until 1979?

Sokh: Yes, I stayed there until 1979. While I was escaping, there were both air strikes and armed tanks entering Kampong Saom. I stayed far away from the main road...very far away. Then I ran across the jungle to an oil-producing factory.

Dany: Did you find your life difficult or easy during the three-year regime from 1975 to 1979?

Sokh: My living conditions were not difficult. My diet was good because we had enough to eat. There were times when we had porridge, but we always had enough. We had steamed rice for lunch and rice porridge for dinner. Sometimes we even had crab soup.

Dany: How about working conditions?

Sokh: The work was OK. During the rice growing season, we assigned teenage girls, not the small ones, to transplant rice seedlings.

Dany: Did you have to transplant the rice seedlings?

Sokh: No, I didn't. I stayed in the unit.

Dany: Did Ta Mut visit the children?

Sokh: Once in a while he came to visit and afterward, he would promote some children. The living conditions at that location were comfortable. Each child received ten kilograms of rice every month. So 100 children received about one ton of rice [each month]. We never ran out of rice. We had three meals a day. However, we didn't cook rice for breakfast. Instead, we steamed potatoes for the children.

Dany: Steamed potatoes?

Sokh: Yes. They had steamed potatoes with sugar cane. After eating [breakfast], they went to work. In some cooperatives, they were served rice porridge.

Dany: Did you live nearby other cooperatives?

Sokh: Yes, somewhat close, but we had separate food rations.

Dany: Where was the cooperative? Was it close?

Sokh: Yes, rather close. In my area, there were about four villages. Actually there were five, including the children's unit.

Dany: But the living conditions were different?

Sokh: Yes they were different.

Dany: How different were they?

Sokh: [Our unit] was different from the other places. For example, the cooperatives were comprised of both April 17 people (those who were evacuated from Kampong Saom), and base people such as soldiers' wives. In some cooperatives, there were traitors who treated people badly. They served only rice porridge to the people. Those leaders who were good gave steamed rice to people.

Dany: You mentioned that there were both good leaders and bad leaders. I want to clarify... did they not give enough food to people?

Sokh: No, they didn't. Only rice porridge was given.

Dany: Why?

Sokh: I have no idea. I observed that the rice supply was depleted. I don't know where the rice was taken. I held a low rank and had no authority to investigate.

Dany: Do you know what a string of traitors is?

Sokh: I am not sure what it is. I have only witnessed the arrest of people who were accused of being connected to the string of traitors. Also, those who were part of the string of traitors did not provide enough food for people to eat.

Dany: Do you know where the traitors were taken?

Sokh: I don't know where they were taken. They must have been executed.

Dany: Have you ever seen people being killed or tortured?

Sokh: No, I have never seen that.

Dany: How do you know that they were executed?

Sokh: During that time, anyone who was arrested would be executed.

Dany: But you never witnessed [the executions]?

Sokh: No, never. I did see a woman who was arrested, but I remained in my place.

Dany: At the children's unit?

Sokh: Yes, that's right, at the children's unit. The woman was sent for re-education. One night she said that she wanted to eat... eat all of something.

Dany: What did she want to eat?

Sokh: I don't know what she wanted to eat. After I heard her say that, I reported it to a commander. Then the soldiers arrived to guard the woman. The next morning, I was asked to bring her out and then she was taken away and never returned. The following morning, another woman was arrested. Her husband was the lead person at a brick kiln located near the airport. She was accused of being associated with the CIA as an intelligence agent. They took her away, but I had no idea where she was taken.

Dany: Who was the woman to whom you reported? Was she the chief of your location?

Sokh: No, she was in charge of the children and led the children to work.

Dany: What did she say?
Sokh: She said something in a threatening way. Her personality was half woman and half man. We did not trust her.
Dany: What was her name?
Sokh: Her name is Vin.
Dany: Where did she come from?
Sokh: She was from Region 37, near Kampong Saom.
Dany: Was Sre Ambil in Region 37?
Sokh: Yes, it was.
Dany: Was she a resident of that area?
Sokh: Yes, she was. She lived close to Prey Nup.
Dany: Who was the commander to whom you reported [the details about the woman]?
Sokh: I have forgotten his name. It was a long time ago.
Dany: Not Ta Mut?
Sokh: No, he was working in the military. I just informed them in case something bad might happen. When they arrested [her], they found that she really was involved with the string of traitors.
Dany: After her, who else did they arrest?
Sokh: Another woman.
Dany: Who was she?
Sokh: Her name was Pheap.
Dany: Pheap.
Sokh: Yes, that's right. She was the one whose husband worked at the brick kiln..
Dany: What was her husband's name?
Sokh: Oh, I don't know his name.
Dany: Was he in the same division as Ta Mut?
Sokh: [He was] in the same division, but he worked at the kiln, which was located on the left side of the road to Ream beach.
Dany: Do you know where they took her?
Sokh: I have no idea, but I guess they only took her to one place.
Dany: She never returned?
Sokh: No, never. She never returned. She's gone.
Dany: Do you know whether they were detained somewhere?
Sokh: No. I just saw them being taken away. I didn't know the destination.
Dany: In what year?
Sokh: About 1976.
Dany: 1976?
Sokh: Yes. 1976.
Dany: After the arrest, did they praise you or encourage you?
Sokh: They always wanted us to be aware of disloyal people. They just told me to continue to be observant and search for traitors or others who were not well-behaved.
Dany: After they arrested her, did they place someone else in her position?
Sokh: No, because her job didn't require much work. She just led the children in their work. So, it was fine.
Dany: During that time, were you ever able to visit home?
Sokh: Yes. For example, if my parents were sick, I could ask for permission to visit them.
Dany: So then you were informed whenever your parents were sick?

Sokh: Yes, I knew it, because people were traveling back and forth and they could write a letter to me.

Dany: So, you knew via a letter?

Sokh: Yes. Someone gave a letter to us and we read that letter. Then we asked permission from the chief to go and we were granted permission.

Dany: When you wanted to visit home, from whom did you ask permission?

Sokh: I asked my chief, Khsat. She was female.

Dany: Khsat?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Where was she from?

Sokh: She was from Takeo at 108. Oh, 808. Oh, 108. I don't know. It was near the Vietnamese border.

Dany: Somewhere near Koh Andet?

Sokh: Yes. Somewhere near there. She was from [District] 808 or 108.

Dany: District 108?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: [District] 108, Koh Andet?

Sokh: Yes, but I am not sure.

Dany: Because 109 was at Kirivong.

Sokh: Where are you from? You seem very familiar with that area. Did you used to work there?

Dany: Yes. I have gone on a field trip there.

Sokh: Yes. So, it might be somewhere near there.

Dany: What about your district?

Sokh: It was 105.

Dany: 105. Where was District 106?

Sokh: It was to the south of Ang Tasaom.

Dany: Which district is it?

Sokh: District 106 might be Korng Pisey District. I am not sure. But during the Khmer Rouge regime, they were called 106 and 105.

Dany: 105 was at Tram Kak?

Sokh: Yes. Tram Kak. And 106 ...

Dany: Where?

Sokh: 106 was across the national road.

Dany: At Angkor Chey?

Sokh: Across National Road 3 to Kampot and to the south of the road.

Dany: Korng Pisey?

Sokh: I don't know the previous name. Korng Pisey or Treang. I only knew that when I was there, they were called 106, 107, 108, 109.

Dany: Where was 107?

Sokh: 107 was somewhere to the west of Takeo. I don't know exactly where since I've never been there. I lived at Takeo, but I never explored the area.

Dany: How often were you able to visit home during those three years?

Sokh: Hmm ... once a year.

Dany: You mentioned that you had gotten married. When did you get married?

Sokh: In 1979, just a few months before we had to escape from the Vietnamese.

Dany: Then, it [your marriage] occurred in 1978 because the Vietnamese invaded [Cambodia] in January [of 1979].

Sokh: Yes. 1978. On 1 January 1979 we had to escape from the Vietnamese.

Dany: Were you married to him [your current husband]?

Sokh: No.

Dany: Your previous husband?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: What did he do?

Sokh: His leg had been amputated, and he was in the handicapped unit. He didn't work.

Dany: You were married to a handicapped [man]?

Sokh: Yes. He guarded Chamkar Daung.

Dany: He guarded Chamkar Daung?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: What was his name?

Sokh: Ut.

Dany: You got married in 1978?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: After your marriage, what happened to you?

Sokh: We were married for about ... I forget. Then, we got separated from each other in the chaos of the escape from the Vietnamese. Since then, I have never received any information from him.

Dany: You both fled and got separated from each other in 1979?

Sokh: We got separated but later we met up with each other. We fled to Kampong Speu, to Kanduo, Trapeang Chornng. Upon our arrival there, we met with the economic division, where they said that women had to go to Thmei Village, [so I] had to return to the jungle along the road to Kanduo and back toward the west to live in a rice warehouse. As for my husband, he was in charge of taking care of the children at Chamkar Daung. He brought hundreds of children with him when he fled during that time. Ta [Ta Mok] asked him to live somewhere further away. Therefore, they didn't allow me to accompany him. I went with the division of women who had come with me. We [my husband and I] have been separated from each other since then. I have never received any information from him.

Dany: Did you have any children at that time?

Sokh: I was pregnant by that time.

Dany: So, when you arrived in Trapeang Chornng, where did the economic division send you?

Sokh: To the rice warehouse at Thmei Village.

Dany: Who was in charge of the economic division?

Sokh: I forget. It was too long ago. I forget.

Dany: And your husband?

Sokh: He was with the children.

Dany: Who asked him to go?

Sokh: It was [Ta] Mut.

Dany: [Ta] Mut?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Where was he asked to go?

Sokh: He was asked to go to Battambang or somewhere [near there]. But I don't know where they actually went, because the Youn [Vietnamese] were always attacking [and stopping] us.

Dany: Where did your husband come from?

Sokh: He was from Trapeang Thom Commune of the same District, District 105.

Dany: He lived in the same district?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: You both had known each other before?

Sokh: No, because he lived far away from my house. I lived near Trapeang Andaek. You know?

Dany: Yes, I know.

Sokh: His home village was located to the east of Trapeang Andaek.

Dany: So, you have lost contact with him since then?

Sokh: [We have] lost contact. When I met with my relatives or others who had lived with him, they told me that he had returned to search for me. But how could we find each other, since one of us was fleeing and the other was searching. So we were separated from each other forever.

Dany: Did you ever receive any information about him?

Sokh: No. But he might have died since he had nothing [to eat]. I heard that he only had fruit from the monkey podwood tree (known as *beng* in Khmer) to eat. There was no rice at all in the jungle. And he was handicapped, so he wasn't able to carry anything. He also had problems with his lungs. He never carried anything, even when he lived with me. The children had to carry and cook the rice which we ate together. Later when he was separated from the children, no one would carry anything or cook for him. So, he might not have had any food to eat. I heard from others who met him that people offered for him to stay with them, but he refused because he wanted to find me. He would never have been able to find me because I was fleeing, heading for the mountains along A-rek road, which took about a month. The elders have a saying, "climbing up 100 mountains and down 100 mountains" before reaching Thailand.

Dany: Up 100 mountains down 100 mountains?

Sokh: Yes, just like our journey from A-rek to Thailand, we had to climb up 100 mountains and descend down 100 mountains. We had to climb up and down. Climb up 100 mountains and down another 100 mountains.

Dany: Oh, there were about 100 mountains and you had to climb up and down 100 mountains?

Sokh: Yes. We climbed up and down, up and down, and there was a mountain which was quite tall. I don't know the name of the mountain. We had been climbing for almost a day and we could only reach halfway up the mountain. After climbing another full day, we reached the top of the mountain. Upon reaching the top, we descended the other side where we could see the lowlands. The other side of the mountain was not steep. After reaching the lowlands, we still continued walking and had to climb other mountains, but those mountains were not high at all. There we could climb two mountains a day. Then we arrived in Thailand. The journey took us exactly a month. It was so difficult.

Dany: Were there many women who made the trip along with you?

Sokh: Women went their separate ways. Some knew people along the way and left [the group] to go [to different places]. Everyone was finding their own way to survive.

Dany: So, how many women were together with you when you reached Thailand?

Sokh: When we arrived in Thailand, there were only three of us.

Dany: Only three? How many women came with you initially?

Sokh: About ten. When we started out, the group included old and young women. Then, along the way, some became sick and wanted to rest; but those of us who could walk still continued forward [without waiting]. At first, we ate together. Later, we used only one pot and ate whatever was available. It was a miserable time. Husbands abandoned their wives and vice versa.

Dany: Was that because it was so difficult?

Sokh: Yes. We had nothing to eat. If a husband was sick and his wife could still walk, the wife abandoned the husband and continued walking. If his wife was sick and was sleeping on a mat, the husband continued walking. People kept shouting, "The Vietnamese are coming!" So we continued walking, because [we could hear] gunfire behind us. A husband or wife might be left behind by the side of a tree. Even small children were abandoned under trees by their mothers. An infant only one or two days old was deserted, crying loudly from a hammock. We suffered miserably before reaching Thailand, when the Red Cross rescued us; then we were saved.

Dany: What about during the three years [of the regime], were there many people who were accused of being CIA agents or enemies who starved people?

Sokh: While I lived at Kampong Saom, there were not many cases like that because most of the women were wives of soldiers. As for the rest of the 17 April people, [Ta] Mut said that Vietnam would accept anyone who wanted to go there. Some people who were not Vietnamese at all claimed to be Vietnamese because they wanted to escape from the regime. China would not accept people since they had no place to accommodate [them]. The Yuon [Vietnamese] government was repatriating their own people back to Vietnam, and those people were all transported away. Only the wives of the soldiers were left. [I] don't know where they [those who left] were sent.

Dany: Were there many people handed over to the Yuon government as [Ta] Mut stated?

Sokh: They were transported by three or four or five trucks.

Dany: What kinds of people?

Sokh: Khmer people. The 17 April people.

Dany: 17 April people also worked in the division?

Sokh: Yes. At Kampong Saom, [Ta] Mut kept people who knew a skill, like construction, in order for them to teach us. After that, he allowed anyone to go to Vietnam if they wanted to. But I don't know to where those people were transported.

Dany: Then it was [Ta] Mut who declared this [policy] by himself?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: In which year?

Sokh: It was 1976 or 1977.

Dany: 1976, 1977?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: There were three or four trucks?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Transported to where?

Sokh: They were transported back along Kampot Road, but I am not sure where they were headed. I don't know.

Dany: Were there also security centers to detain those who were not considered good members of society?

Sokh: In my area, there was no place for detaining [people]. People would just be taken away, but I don't know where they were sent?

Dany: Did [Ta] Mut usually hold meetings?

Sokh: Yes, he did.

Dany: What happened to you after you arrived in Thailand?

Sokh: When we arrived in Thailand, we were suffering from starvation. The warehouses were filled with rice, but they had to be economical [with it] in case of [more] difficult times [ahead]. They provided us with a cup of rice per week. So we just cooked gruel mixed with that rice and that's what we ate. After we lived along the border for about, hmm ..., from 1 January 1979 to October [of that year], the Red Cross arrived and took us to Srah Keo.

Dany: By that time you were four or five months pregnant?

Sokh: I had already delivered my baby by the time we arrived in Thailand.

Dany: Where did you deliver the baby?

Sokh: A place we called Trang.

Dany: You delivered [the baby] in Thai territory?

Sokh: At the Thai border.

Dany: How difficult was it [traveling] along the way while you were pregnant?

Sokh: At that time, I still had energy. Thus, it was not too difficult. Even though I had nothing to eat, as long as I still had energy to walk, I was fine.

Dany: Climbing the mountains?

Sokh: Yes. It was possible to climb the mountains because I was strong at that time. If I were in my current condition, I would have died.

Dany: Then you delivered the baby at the border?

Sokh: Yes. At the border.

Dany: At Trang?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: At Trang.

Sokh: It was in July.

Dany: Was this the eldest child?

Sokh: Yes. But the child died immediately after birth from a lack of nutrition. I was [about] seven months pregnant when I delivered him; it was really a miscarriage.

Dany: He died immediately after birth?

Sokh: Just two hours after giving birth, the baby died. When the baby arrived, he just cried like a frog. The baby was less than seven months into the pregnancy and thus he was not properly formed. His feet and hands were very short. Too young. If the baby had been at least seven months, then he might have survived.

Dany: This happened because you were so exhausted and had nothing to eat?

Sokh: Yes. Nothing to eat.

Dany: So, after giving birth, you ...?

Sokh: I had not yet entered the camp when I delivered the baby. I was sick for months. I delivered the baby in July and it wasn't until October that I entered the camp. I walked; I slept; I fainted since there was no one taking care of me. As I walked, I

would stop and sleep whenever I felt hunger. As I regained my energy, I kept walking. The journey to the Thai border was extremely difficult.

Dany: What happened after you arrived in the camp?

Sokh: As I entered the camp, I was given food to eat. I gained a lot of weight. But my hair fell out; I had no hair.

Dany: Why?

Sokh: I don't know. Maybe because I was severely sick. The French didn't allow us to eat anything. At first, they gave us only mackerel [a type of salt-water fish called kamong in Khmer] and lard. Because we were starving, everything tasted delicious. Rice with lard or rice with fish sauce was really delicious. But if we wanted to eat more food, we just walked to the hospital during mealtime and sat on a bed without a patient. Then they would give us food to eat. There was a lot of food at the hospital, but where people were living in the camp, they gave us only enough food to make us cough and then they gave us milk mixed with bean oil. Then everyone had such severe diarrhea that men and women were no longer modest about defecating in front of each other. It was true that by eating, we could get rid of the toxins inside our body. After about a month, we no longer had diarrhea and we began gaining weight. They gave us meat and, once in a while, mackerel. Hundreds of people died each day in Srah Keo Camp.

Dany: People were dying there as well?

Sokh: Those suffering from extreme hunger always received IV's and food. The French and other international workers cried because too many people were dying. One machine was not enough to dig the holes needed to bury the bodies each day..

Dany: Were there any funeral ceremonies?

Sokh: No. People died, the holes were dug, and carts would transport the bodies to be thrown into the pits.

Dany: What happened next? How long did you live in the camp?

Sokh: I lived there for a few months. During that time, some people were resettled overseas. However, Ta Mok sent his forces to take us back. The person in charge of the camp was a Khmer who had connections with Thailand. I left in August and I was the first to leave [the camp]. It was difficult to leave that place because there were fences with rope. It was hard for each one [of us] to leave. But the soldiers said, "Come! Come to Samlo Cha-nganh," referring to Samlo Cha-nganh at Chamkar Chek along the Thai border, at Malai.

Dany: Why did you leave the camp? Why didn't you stay there?

Sokh: I was afraid of going abroad.

Dany: You didn't want to go abroad?

Sokh: I didn't want to go.

Dany: Why?

Sokh: I would have been separated from my mother and father. If I were so far away, I would never see my parents. At that time, I couldn't think of a solution [to my situation]. After I left, they transported them [the refugees] abroad. Thousands of people left [the camp].

Dany: If you had stayed in the camp, you would have been sent abroad?

Sokh: Yes, but those [people] sent abroad had to pass a test.

Dany: What type of test?

Sokh: I don't know. But in my village, not everyone passed the test. Yan passed the test, but Sokh did not. Then after they left, the remaining people were sent to Say Bi Camp. At that time, all the camps were closed and those people were transported back to their homes in Cambodia. They didn't pass the test.

Dany: Sokh?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: So, you sneaked away from Srah Keo Camp?

Sokh: No, I didn't sneak out. They allowed us to leave, but not very openly. There were trucks to transport us.

Dany: Who provided the trucks?

Sokh: The Red Cross had cars and buses.

Dany: Where did they take you?

Sokh: To a place we called Samlo Cha-nganh at Malai.

Dany: Which entrance?

Sokh: In Thai, we called it Kilo 12 or 13. They dropped us there.

Dany: What did you do there?

Sokh: I didn't do anything but run a small business collecting thatch, sewing it, and selling the items to Thai people. When they asked us to help transport rice to the frontline soldiers, I just went with them. When I came back, I continued working in my business.

Dany: What year was that?

Sokh: I don't remember.

Dany: Early October 1979?

Sokh: Maybe 1980. [I] left the camp in 1980.

Dany: How many months did you spend in Srah Keo?

Sokh: I don't remember when I entered [the camp], but I left in October. I was probably there for six months.

Dany: October of what year?

Sokh: 1980.

Dany: October 1980?

Sokh: Yes, because when I entered, it was probably October of 1979. [That's when I] entered the camp.

Dany: And in October 1980, you left the camp?

Sokh: Yes. I left.

Dany: Where did you go?

Sokh: I left for Chamkar Chek. Chamkar Chek was near the Thai border, across the creek.

Dany: Across the creek and near Malai?

Sokh: Oh, Malai was far away.

Dany: The place before that, what do we call it in Khmer?

Sokh: Khmer people called it Chamkar Chek and the Thai call it what ... I don't remember.

Dany: Were there many people living there?

Sokh: There were a lot. People were living along the area all the way to Chamkar Daung, to Kilo 12-13, Chakrei and all along the border. Now they call it Vadin, Hmm ... during my time there they called O-Lahong.

Dany: You were living in Thai territory?

Sokh: In Khmer territory, but along the creek. Over there was Thailand and on this side was Khmer territory.

Dany: You sewed thatch and sold it to Thai's?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: Were you living alone or did you have a family as well?
Sokh: I was living alone.
Dany: Until when did you live alone?
Sokh: Until 1982, when I met my current husband.
Dany: In 1982, where did you meet him?
Sokh: At 1003, Chup Run.
Dany: 1003? At this place?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: Huh! Why did you come this way?
Sokh: I arrived in 1980 when Ta Mok brought us here from the Northwest Zone.
Dany: Ta Mok relocated [you] from there?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: Why did he bring you [here]? What did he say?
Sokh: He didn't say anything. He came to bring [Yeay] Rann, my relative who lived in the same village. He brought [Yeay] Rann's family, including her mother, to live here. And I was [Yeay] Rann's relative.
Dany: Oh, [Yeay] Rann, the village chief?
Sokh: Yes. He brought her here. Her mother and her father supported the struggle with him and lived in a nearby village. When [Yeay] Khem's husband died, he took care of [Yeay] Khem. So, he collected [Yeay] Khem's relatives to live with him here. [Yeay] Rann's sister was my sister-in-law. So, he took me with him.
Dany: So then Ta Mok brought [Yeay] Rann here?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: Because Ta Mok used to struggle [work] with ...
Sokh: Her father used to struggle [work] with him.
Dany: [Yeay] Rann's mother and father?
Sokh: Yes.
Dany: What was the name of [Yeay] Rann's father?
Sokh: Nim.
Dany: And his wife?
Sokh: The mother's name was Khem.
Dany: Who used to struggle [work] with Ta Mok?
Sokh: [Ta] Nim, the husband.
Dany: What did he do during that time?
Sokh: He just led propaganda sessions urging people to stand up and struggle. But he died in 1969; he was buried alive.
Dany: Who buried him?
Sokh: His family. He had to live in the jungle during that time, and he became sick. He had already recovered, and he wanted to eat potato-coconut soup; after eating it, his illness recurred and worsened. His jaw became stiff and there was no medicine. Then a soldier named Hin Nim, either a provincial or district chief, came and arrested him. They threatened him. But [Yeay] remained very strong and firm.
Dany: Who was [Yeay]?
Sokh: [Yeay] Khem, his wife. [Ta] Nim was small and because he was sick, he appeared emaciated. At night time, she unrolled the sleeping mat for the children, but her

husband [Ta] Nim had become unconscious by then. The next morning, she rolled him in the mat. When the soldiers arrived, they said "Here! The old man is upstairs." She responded, "Please! Please go have a look. If you find him, you can do whatever you want." Of course, they looked but saw nothing, since there was only the mat and some rags with cockroaches on them. They had stuffed a cloth in his mouth in case he might groan. By doing so, he could not make any sound. They discussed the fact that if they kept him [in the house], they would [probably] all be killed. Even if they wouldn't be killed, they would be arrested and put in jail and they would not have enough money to pay a bribe. So, they decided to bury him...to bury him alive. If they had medicine or IV's as we do now, then he might have survived. At that time, people were not well-educated.

Dany: They discussed the idea of burying him?

Sokh: Yes, they decided to bury him. If [the soldiers] discovered him [in the house], the entire family would have been killed.

Dany: In what year [did this happen]?

Sokh: 1968 or 1969. 1969.

Dany: So, it was the wife and children who decided to bury him?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Where was he buried?

Sokh: Nearby the house. They dug a pit and buried him. The morning after the burial, people came and threatened them. But they had dug the pit very deep, about two meters, just like digging a well. It took three or four nights to dig the pit. After the burial, she [Yeay Khem] grew garlic [on the land] and watered it. It was nearby a pond. They all knew that "the body was buried there." "Sir! If you don't believe us, dig up the body and see for yourself. You can do whatever you want." They didn't dare to dig up the body. So, it worked out OK. At that time, life was extremely savage. They would be there every morning.

Dany: What did [Yeay] Khem do?

Sokh: [Yeay] Khem didn't do anything. She did farming and took care of grandchildren. She did nothing.

Dany: During the three years, did she work?

Sokh: She didn't. She was old and thus she was not asked to do anything. But her daughter, [Yeay] Rann, was the district chief.

Dany: Which district chief?

Sokh: District Chief of 105.

Dany: Tram Kak District Chief?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: She held the same [position] as [Yeay] Chaem?

Sokh: [Yeay] Chaem was Region Chief.

Dany: Which region?

Sokh: Takeo Region. We called it Region 13.

Dany: [Yeay] Rann was chief of District 105?

Sokh: Oh! [Yeay] Rann was later transferred to work as chief of District 106.

Dany: Where was District 106?

Sokh: To the south of Tram Kak, on this side of the national road.

Dany: Kampong Speu?

Sokh: No. [If you were traveling] from Ang Tasaom, it would be on this side of the national road.

Dany: This side of the national road?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Somewhere near Angkor Chey, Tany, Touk Meas?

Sokh: Yes. In that direction. [District] 106. We were leaving. No one was at home. I was at the hospital.

Dany: So, Ta Mok took [you] from Malai, or the place you just mentioned as Chamkar Chek, because he was escorting [Yeay] Rann's family members?

Sokh: Yes. [Yeay] Rann.

Dany: Because he knew [Yeay] Rann?

Sokh: Her husband had died. He oversaw the work and we were fleeing from place to place. So, he gathered us together and kept us at his place, which was practical. We fled in his truck. If we couldn't catch up with the truck, then we just fled on foot. If we encountered abandoned places, we had to keep walking. We never lacked food supplies. Living here was easy because there were warehouses. Even though he had a high-ranking position, this man [Ta] would not ask others to do anything he himself would not do personally.

Dany: He personally came?

Sokh: Yes. He would come in his car at once. We just told him whatever we needed. He said, "I won't give you anything to eat because you were all lazy." But soon after he drove away, there arrived a truck bringing [food] for us. When he saw our vegetables and crops, he would feel very happy. Though we were on the run, if we had crops, he would be very happy. At Chup Run, his banana plantation, everyone was able to take bananas and eat them. He said this was real farming and he offered us food. We could not even finish one banana; it was so big. The land was fertile. The bananas were as wide as our forearm and very long.

Dany: In 1982, how many people did he transport from there?

Sokh: Not too many people.

Dany: Where was [Yeay] Chaem?

Sokh: [Yeay] Chaem was here. She escaped to [District] 808, Chrak Sratung; she was there already. She was in the Northwest [Zone]; when she fled, she was living there. When [the rest of us] fled, we were living at Malai. Then Ta [meaning grandpa in Khmer] brought us here or we would never have come here. He took only three or four households...only the relatives.

Dany: What was your relationship with [Yeay] Rann?

Sokh: I was a sister-in-law of [Yeay] Ok, who was [Yeay] Rann's sister. My brother was married to [Yeay] Ok. So he was [Yeay] Rann's brother-in-law. We were from the same village. If we were elders, we would have been [close] relatives; but the children had a distant relationship.

Dany: So, he first took you to Chup Run?

Sokh: Yes. It was called Village 50. It was three or four kilometers from Chup Run.

Dany: At 1003?

Sokh: Yes. They called it 1003.

Dany: When you arrived here in 1982, had you met your current husband yet?

Sokh: Those who worked with him and with my brother, [Yeay] Ok's husband, knew that my brother was Hoeun. They planned for my current husband to come and see me, to arrange for us to meet.

Dany: What did your current husband do?

Sokh: He was a member of the medical staff.

Dany: Where did he work?

Sokh: At Chup Run. The hospital was at Chup Run.

Dany: Where was he from?

Sokh: From Kampong Chhnang.

Dany: He was from Kampong Chhnang?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: What about during the three years [of the regime]? Where did he live?

Sokh: He was serving on the medical staff at division.

Dany: Which division?

Sokh: Ta's [ta means grandpa in Khmer] division... I forget the name. That man is dead ... from Division One...the one who was a relative of Ta Mok. Oh, Ta Soeung. Ta Soeung's Division.

Dany: Ta Soeung was a relative of Ta Mok?

Sokh: Yes. [He was a] relative of Ta Mok.

Dany: And he [your current husband] was a member of the medical staff here?

Sokh: Yes. He was part of the medical staff of the division.

Dany: Because he was older than you?

Sokh: Yes. At that time, I didn't want to get married, and I thought that if I married a young man, he would always die [before me]. I didn't want to have many husbands. So, I accepted the marriage. He was not too old... just a little bit older than me. He is old now, but he is in a healthy condition. His brothers who lived at his home village have died, but he has had a long life.

Dany: You mentioned that you are 58 and he is 78. I think he must be really old.

Sokh: Of course, he is old. But he still looks fine.

Dany: Yes.

Sokh: Oh, there he comes.

Dany: So, you were married in 1982?

Sokh: Yes. 1982. He is old. He is now a layman [at the pagoda], A Char Youki.

Dany: So, you married him in 1982?

Sokh: Yes. 1982.

Dany: What did you do after you got married?

Sokh: He still worked at the hospital and I was at the worksite with [Yeay] Rann.

Dany: At the worksite, was it [Yeay] Rann who was in charge?

Sokh: No, it was someone else. At that time, [Yeay] Rann was in charge of women who joined the session at [Ta] Pot's place, at Pailin. She then came to join the session with Ta Mok for a month or half a month. She did nothing. It was other people who were in control. But if there were any tasks to be done, she was the one who assigned the tasks to the villagers. She did not control anything.

Dany: She didn't control anything?

Sokh: Right. She already held the highest position.

Dany: Was she the same [in rank] as [Yeay] Chaem?

Sokh: Yes. [Yeay] Chaem and her.

Dany: What did you do in the village?

Sokh: I did nothing. I just stayed at home and prepared to flee. At that time, I dared not sleep at night. We always heard all kinds of sounds. He was at Chup Run. He was ahead of me and I was behind. When I was running, we were on the same road. After I delivered my baby, I lived with him.

Dany: At the hospital?

Sokh: Yes. At the hospital. But the Yuon [Vietnamese] always attacked us. He then asked me to return, but it was difficult to carry a baby while climbing the mountains.

Dany: He was a chief of the hospital?

Sokh: Chief of the hospital.

Dany: So, when you delivered the baby, you delivered at the hospital?

Sokh: No, I delivered the baby at home in Village 50. He came to take care of me for a week. A week later, he went back to work at his hospital.

Dany: He was very professional with the medical knowledge?

Sokh: I don't know. He was in the technical section.

Dany: He was the chief?

Sokh: The chief.

Dany: Was he a doctor?

Sokh: During that time, he also joined others in the operating section. He did not work alone. He was part of an operating team during the war. Now, he can cure general illnesses, such as fever. If people were wounded, he would assist along with other medical staff. He was very professional with his child.

Dany: Which child?

Sokh: His previous child, who was a little one. He was young. Some organizations asked why, for example, he didn't work as a state doctor and instead worked privately. People came and inquired about his knowledge of how to conduct operations. He later said that when he conducted an operation, he didn't learn from anyone. And it was true that he didn't learn. Whenever people were wounded, he ... he was just very good at that. During operations, he was there only to help pass medical instruments to the medic. After a long time, he learned from his experience and so he knew how to operate. People asked him where he learned all of his knowledge. He said, "I didn't learn it anywhere. I learned from practice." People asked, "What about the issue of hygiene during the operation?" since there needs to be a proper bed, and operating conditions. He then said, "No. If it was necessary to conduct the operation on the grass, it would be on the grass. If there was a bed, it would be on the bed." This is how it was during the war. We couldn't arrange proper conditions at the battlefield. He was a medic. So, the organization had no response; they lost. Their weak point was that they were talking about hygiene in the operating location. But he was talking about the practical issues, not about hygiene. He could conduct an operation anywhere. They asked whether people died as a result of their operation. He said if the problem was with the internal organs, then some could be saved and some could not. But if the operation involved only the arms or legs, everything would be fine and there was no likelihood of death. I believe that operations involving internal organs would be dangerous in some cases. When they asked whether people ever died from his treatment, he said, "no." He said only those who went to the state hospital had no hope. But when they came to him, they had a chance to recover. He could cure people so they would survive and not die.

Then those people no longer asked any more questions. Similarly, the Ministry of Health challenged us because we didn't want to work for the government. We were a private service.

Dany: How many children did he have previously?

Sokh: There are five surviving children. He had a lot of children, 10 to 12. But most of them died and only five remain.

Dany: How many children did you have with him?

Sokh: I have six children with him.

Dany: So, after you and he were married, how did the family obtain food?

Sokh: Ta Mok gave us [food]. During that time, there were no concerns about food. Every month, bags of rice were delivered to us. It was more than enough. But we did not have fresh meat, only canned fish and noodles. For dessert, we had what we called Num Chhlorp. It was from China.

Dany: What kind of cake?

Sokh: They called it Num Chhlorp. The cake was like Num Sandek Dei. There were pork and beans on the top of it. The cake was about this size. The soldiers on the frontlines would be given a can of this type of cake so that they could eat during the journey without needing rice. That cake was delicious. It was from China.

Dany: From China?

Sokh: Yes. It was called Num Chhlorp. They gave us [the cakes]. There was a lot to eat during Ta Mok's time. I am not boasting.

Dany: How long did you live there?

Sokh: I lived there for quite awhile. I lived at [Village] 50 for more than a year. Then when the Vietnamese attacked, we left there and lived along the border at O-Trav.

Dany: Before you reached O-Trav, you met [Yeay] Chaem here?

Sokh: We met with [Yeay] Chaem when we arrived in O Trav. After we stayed in O-Trav for awhile, they sent us to 808. We lived there for sometime until the Yuon planned to attack us. At that time, the Red Cross wanted to take care of us. They brought us to O-Trav Camp, so I then returned to O-Trav. After I was at O-Trav for about a year, maybe not quite a year, they said they would transport people back to Cambodia. I was then afraid and thus I went to Anlong Veng. I was the first to come here.

Dany: The first?

Sokh: The first. Since 1998-1999.

Dany: 1998-1999 or 1988-1989?

Sokh: Ninety... oh no, eighty-nine.

Dany: 1989?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Where did you stay?

Sokh: At the office of the Red Cross. Here. My house was nearby.

Dany: When you arrived here, were there roads already?

Sokh: Ta Mok dug the road and it was passable.

Dany: Was the road already dug when he came?

Sokh: He dug it even before that time, and cars could pass through. But when he brought us here, we preferred walking. We could sit in the car, but we dared not do so because it was too high. We walked on the ground until we reached Yeay Mao and then continued by car. He constructed the road.

Dany: In what year did he build the road?

Sokh: I don't know. But I was there in 1989 and I saw the road being built. The tractor was digging.

Dany: When you arrived there, they were digging?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: How far had the construction reached?

Sokh: They had already reached the mountain, but it was not yet flattened.

Dany: Were there any roads past the mountain?

Sokh: They were clearing the road, but hadn't yet covered it with stones.

Dany: Where was that?

Sokh: They cleared the road as far as Andorng. [Ta] was working very intensely before he brought the villagers here.

Dany: How many households arrived with you at that time?

Sokh: [Yeay] Chaem came with her entire unit. [Yeay] Rann only came with her family, which was about ten households. Personally, I didn't want to go to the district. We had been running from here to there and I was afraid. So, I came here. Those who didn't come here left in cars. At that time, they gave us \$50. I didn't dare to go.

Dany: Didn't go and you came...?

Sokh: I came here, to Anlong Veng.

Dany: You lived in [Yeay] Rann's village?

Sokh: Yes. I lived in the village.

Dany: At that time, she only came along with her family?

Sokh: Yes. Her family plus my family; two households of others' families; and her mother-in-law's family.

Dany: Initially, what was this village called?

Sokh: Yeay Rann Village. Yeay Chaem Village. They called it Chaem Village, but it hadn't been named yet.

Dany: Did all the people in [Yeay] Chaem's unit go together?

Sokh: At first, [Yeay] Chaem's house was along the national road. However, it was sold to other people.

Dany: Near Ou Chik?

Sokh: Yes. It was on the way up [the mountain].

Dany: Was it in front of the hospital?

Sokh: [Her] house was on the way to Ta Mok's house, and her children's houses were also next to hers. But they were all occupied by others.

Dany: Where was your previous house?

Sokh: My previous house was where the French are living, the house over there.

Dany: Next to the Red Cross [office]?

Sokh: Yes.

Dany: Next to [Yeay] Rann's house?

Sokh: [Yeay] Rann's house was on this side, and my house was on the other side, the one with the well. It is now rebuilt with cement, and very tall.

Dany: Tell me more about how you came here? What was your life like when you first came here?

Sokh: I did not face much difficulty moving here. Illness was the only problem at first.

Dany: Why was that?

Sokh: There were many mosquitoes, and I became sick from all the bites. The food supply was not a problem.

Dany: From where did you get the food?

Sokh: We had a lot of fish here and we also received other supplies such as instant noodles and canned fish from others. We never lacked food. When the sky became dark, we could not sit outside.

Dany: A lot of mosquitoes?

Sokh: Yes. A lot of them. We almost cried when they bit us. Our skin became irritated.

Dany: What was it like when you first came? Was there a lot of forest?

Sokh: There was forest everywhere.

Dany: How about Anlong? Was it covered by forest?

Sokh: In the old village, there was not. But, starting at the stream, there was forest. The place where I lived was also surrounded by forest.

Dany: Was there any deforestation?

Sokh: There were still not very many people coming from [the mountain]. [Deforestation started] only when people came from the mountain. However, I have no idea how people could have lived in such a forest in earlier times.

Dany: How did people build their houses in the forest?

Sokh: We cut wood to build our house. However, because we were afraid of land mines, we only ventured far into the forest when we observed that the area had no land mines. Ever since I came, there have been a lot of horseflies biting the cows and buffalo.

Dany: Were they called horseflies?

Sokh: Horseflies bite cows. It's about the size of a thumb, and looks like a bee with oversized wings. The cow bleeds after getting bitten.

Dany: How did you build your house previously? Did you build a big house?

Sokh: No...average. It was small, made from round wood. When I saved enough money from my business, I built another house. There were six or seven of them about the same size with a thatched roof.

Dany: The house was about this size, but with a thatched roof?

Sokh: The wood was cheap, only five baht (Thai currency) per meter. We paid with Thai baht. My house was built during the UNTAC period, but it was burned down during the fighting.

Dany: It was burned during the fighting?

Sokh: The KR burned the house, for fear that Vietnamese troops would use the house as shelter. So the KR decided to burn the house. Consequently, [the Vietnamese troops] had no place to stay during the rain, since all the houses had been burned down.

Dany: Were all the houses burned by the KR?

Sokh: Yes. [Ta] ordered the burning. When we returned, we were allowed to cut wood. [Ta] was Ta Mok. He had not been [arrested], but after the second escape, Ta Mok was arrested.

Dany: So how long did you stay here before they attacked and you escaped to the mountain?

Sokh: 1993! UNTAC left in 1993. Fighting erupted in 1993 or 1994. It could have been in 1994, because UNTAC had already left.

Dany: How long did you stay here?

Sokh: As far as I recall, from 1989 to 1993. It was three or four years.

Dany: You came here and grew crops?

Sokh: The year I escaped, I grew rice. The rice yield I got from farming on my previous land was 20 *tao* [one *tao* = two pecks]. [We] could not eat all of it.

Dany: You could not eat [all of it]?

Sokh: Right!

Dany: Was unmilled rice also burned?

Sokh: Unmilled rice! Ta had it packed and transported to the mountain by truck. Some was not packed because there was such a large amount. We scooped and packed four or five sacks of unmilled rice, and the rest was burned.

Dany: The rest was burned?

Sokh: Yes! Even though the unmilled rice was burned, we had no shortage of unmilled rice because he allowed us to eat all of it. He allowed us to eat all of it.

Dany: The other houses were all burned?

Sokh: All of the houses were burned, except a house with a zinc roof which had no walls. It could not be destroyed by fire. It was Me Bon's house which remained. It had a roof, but no floor, only pillars. That was the only house which wasn't destroyed by the fire. There was nothing to burn, because it had no floorboards or joists. It had been partially built and had only the roof.

Dany: After the houses were burned, you escaped to the mountain? Where did you go then?

Sokh: [We went] to Kbal Ton Song and built huts. We could not build houses because there were too many artillery shells. They [filled the sky] like lightning. They fired their artillery at the foot of the mountain. In spite of that, they still lost the fighting. Lots of people died at the foot of the mountain, where [Ta] Mok's timber was

stored. Our troops were hiding near those piles of timber. They came from this side. They died. Five or six tanks were destroyed. And they retreated. It was really scary because the tanks were on fire.

Dany: Which soldiers?

Sokh: Soldiers from the interior fought against the Khmer Rouge.

Dany: Which side?

Sokh: Lon Nol's soldiers, Hun Sen's soldiers! They didn't call them Hun Sen's soldiers; they called them Yuon. However, there were also Khmer soldiers.

Dany: All Khmer?

Sokh: Khmer! The dead were Khmer, not Yuon.

Dany: Did lots of people die?

Sokh: A lot! Everyone had cloth possessed with magic power. I returned after the enemy was defeated on that day. The following morning, Ta ordered us to return home. There were swollen bodies along the canal and the road. Five tanks had been destroyed.

Dany: After your return, where did you live?

Sokh: After our return, Ta told us to live at the foot of the mountain. [We] did not return here. After living there for one year, he told us to relocate and live here.

Dany: At the foot of the mountain! Where?

Sokh: At Srah Chhouk!

Dany: Did everyone live there?

Sokh: He assigned some people to live together, while others lived separately. My group lived in Srah Chhouk. Some lived closer to this village. [Yeay] Chem's group lived in a village at my previous place, my first house. He told me to live at the foot of the mountain. Some lived in O Rang Nge Village. [We] did not live together in one place. Some lived in different military units in Anlong Veng.

Dany: When you escaped home to the mountain, how long was it before you returned?

Sokh: [I] do not know. It was not long, just one month, because as soon as the [fighting] ceased, he told us to return. As soon as we returned, Thai came and took the timber.

Dany: As soon as you returned from the mountain, you lived in Srah Chhouk. He created a sawmill factory?

Sokh: The factory had been burned.

Dany: Already burned?

Sokh: The factory had been burned.

Dany: The factory was burned?

Sokh: No! He created the factory later. After the factory was created, I asked for some timber to build my house. The factory was created.

Dany: Then what happened?

Sokh: It was burned down during our second escape. The second time, [we] escaped to Hou Nory. He burned it down.

Dany: So after you returned from the mountain the second time, you lived in Srah Chhouk?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: Where was your house?

Sokh: There is a road which leads away from Srah Chouk School. Go that way! After the second escape, [I] returned and lived here.

Dany: When you went to Srah Chhuok, did you have a house? Did you have land in Srah Chhouk?

Sokh: There was no land at that time. He gave us land and we lived there. We could choose land to grow crops and rice. When we came here, other people had taken away our land.

Dany: At that time, did you build a house in Srah Chhouk?

Sokh: We built a small house. It was a thatched-roof house.

Dany: Did you request some timber from the factory?

Sokh: Yes, [I] asked for some timber from the factory.

Dany: Did he give some to you at that time?

Sokh: He did.

Dany: Did you work in the factory?

Sokh: No, there were workers there.

Dany: What about your husband? What did he do?

Sokh: My husband did not do anything at that time. They had him make bamboo spikes for half a month at Preah Vihear.

Dany: He stopped serving as medical staff?

Sokh: He no longer served as a medical staff. The medical staff had been scattered.

Dany: In what year was the medical staff scattered?

Sokh: During the fighting! They were not actually scattered. They placed some here and some there. I had small children. He was reluctant to return and serve as medical staff, working under the supervision of [Yeay] Rann. At that time, the medical staff worked in a concrete house, located in Anlong Veng. And I came here.

Dany: He quit? When he did he quit?

Sokh: He quit!

Dany: Giving birth?

Sokh: This child was born, and he quit. They moved from one place to another. It was difficult for me, and I needed help. So he quit.

Dany: In the 1980's?

Sokh: In 1983! My child was born in 1983. He asked them if he could quit.

Dany: Later on, they had him make bamboo spikes?

Sokh: Yes, that is right. If not, he stayed home.

Dany: After your return to live in the house, did you farm for your personal needs?

Sokh: We grew rice and crops individually! However, if he had milled rice, he would share it with us. Just like when gifts were given, he shared them with us. When he went to Hou Nory, he never returned.

Dany: Speaking of the first return, when you first came here, did he give people any gifts?

Sokh: He did!

Dany: You did your own farming, but he still gave you gifts?

Sokh: He gave us food to eat, canned fish and milled rice. He wanted us to help him in some way. For instance, milk to breastfeed the baby. He gave us things gradually. We also tried to feed ourselves. He stated that what he gave us was not enough. We used only half a bucket of rice seed, but we received a large amount of rice output. The land was rich for farming.

Dany: Fertile soil?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: So you stayed for four or five years! In 1993 or 1994, you burned the house and escaped?

Sokh: [I] escaped to the mountain for a while.

Dany: You stayed there for a short while and then returned?

Sokh: Returned!

Dany: Returned and settled down in Srah Chhouk?

Sokh: Lived in Srah Chhouk for one year, and then came here.

Dany: You escaped from Srah Chhouk?

Sokh: There was no escape from Srah Chhouk! After living in Srah Chhouk for one year, [I] escaped to Hou Nory.

Dany: After staying in Srah Chhouk for one year, why did you escape?

Sokh: There was no escape. After living in Srah Chhouk for one year, he told us to come back and live in this place. He divided the land for us. And we returned to this place. After living here for one year, he escaped to the mountain again.

Dany: After returning from Srah Chhouk, [you] did not return to your old land?

Sokh: No!

Dany: Why not your old land?

Sokh: [Yeay] Chem's group lived in my old village. This was why I came here.

Dany: Here?

Sokh: Yes, here.

Dany: At that time, you did not go there. [Yeay] Chem was there. And you came here?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: Why did you come here? You used to live there?

Sokh: Why?

Dany: When you first came here, how did you create the village?

Sokh: It was not hard to create a village. We had a truck. For instance, we had a truck and timber. We built houses. He did not allow [Yeay] Chem's group to live here. He had them live in O Ang Nge.

Dany: Whom did he assign to live here?

Sokh: This place was abandoned. It was only when we escaped to Hou Nory. When we returned, soldiers had already taken the land.

Dany: When they returned, where did he assign [Yeay] Rann to live?

Sokh: [Yeay] Rann lived at the end, over there. Her land was located at the end of the road. From this road, [go to the] mango tree, and turn toward this side, and her house is there.

Dany: How long was it before [you] escaped to Hou Nory?

Sokh: One year!

Dany: Why did you escape to Hou Nory one more time?

Sokh: More fighting erupted.

Dany: More fighting?

Sokh: Inside! No, not inside! Wait! There was a traitorous group, and they defected to the other side.

Dany: On which side were the traitors?

Sokh: [Ta] Mok's! Ta Mok's chiefs! They called them defectors. They were not called traitors. They defected to the other side. They collected their forces and defected.

Dany: Who were the chiefs?

Sokh: I do not know.

Dany: What did you do when they attacked?
Sokh: We ran away!
Dany: Did [you] burn your house again?
Sokh: No, not this time. Instead of burning the houses, they destroyed them. People who stayed here did not run away, they defected. When soldiers came, they enlisted in the army. They destroyed the houses and took the timber.
Dany: You ran to Hou Nory? Why Hou Nory?
Sokh: Because Ta went there.
Dany: Was Hou Nory a camp?
Sokh: A camp!
Dany: At that time, they still provided aid to Hou Nory?
Sokh: The Red Cross provided aid to Hou Nory. [I] do not know the name of the camp to which aid was brought. They were making a wall around the camp, but [Ta] Mok did not allow them to do so. He said if they confined his people there, he would take them back to Khmer territory. So they brought us to the camp called Hou Nory, which was located further away and deeper [in the forest]. This one was nearby. So they did not construct a wall.
Dany: How long did you stay there?
Sokh: For one year at Hor Nory.
Dany: What happened after one year?
Sokh: After one year, we returned, and they began integration. During the integration, they had [us] get involved at Anlong Veng.
Dany: What does get involved mean?
Sokh: Get involved! Get involved as soldiers.
Dany: Not get involved with the election?
Sokh: No, get involved as a soldier. They provided a salary. My husband received 100,000 riel. My son received 100,000 riel. They had demobilized the army and then got people involved again. After the demobilization, they offered 100,000 riel.
Dany: What about [Ta] Mok? After returning?
Sokh: [Ta] Mok did not integrate with the others. He lived in the upper region. It was reported that he was betrayed by [Ta] Ngorn, his right-hand man.
Dany: Ta Ngorn was [Ta] Mok's right-hand man?
Sokh: Yes!
Dany: In what way was he betrayed? What was Ta Ngorn's character?
Sokh: Ta Ngorn's wife was a relative of Samdech. During the UNTAC period, his wife visited her home village. When Hun Sen came, he made an announcement.
Dany: What did he say?
Sokh: He said if sugar palm is packed in a banana leaf, it's not easy to find. He meant that it would be difficult for an outsider to investigate or spy on the situation at Anlong Veng. Therefore, the sugar palm cake should be packed in sugar palm leaves. By saying that the sugar palm cake should be packed in sugar palm leaves, he meant that among the Khmer Rouge, he wanted insiders to rebel against the Khmer Rouge. He spoke very precisely about it, and he had [Ta] Ngorn do it. At that time, we knew very little about this. There were no walkie-talkies or cell phones like these days. [I] do not know what they called it, but they built a tall antenna.
Dany: Walkie-talkie?

Sokh: A walkie-talkie which used a tall antenna. They would say, "Now there is an incoming call, number 09." They could use it only at 12:00. I called Ta Ngorn at 12:00 midnight.

Dany: Was [Ta] Ngorn a high-ranking person?

Sokh: You could say that [Ta] Ngorn was a high-ranking person, but he was Ta Mok's right-hand man. Everything was supervised by [Ta] Ngorn, but [Ta] Mok gave the orders.

Dany: Who were Ta Mok's right-hand men?

Sokh: As far as I know, [Ta] Ngorn, and another Ta in charge of economics and logistics. He now works at the communal level in Sector 4.

Dany: You didn't know his name?

Sokh: No! However, only [Ta] Ngorn was a traitor.

Dany: What does [Ta] Ngorn do these days?

Sokh: [Ta] Ngorn has been jailed. The story was that [Ta] Ngorn convinced [Ta] Mok that he had been duped by the young people. It seemed as if he just left. Reportedly, he was jailed.

Dany: Why did they put him in prison?

Sokh: Because [Ta] Ngorn was connected to a story about a helicopter. I am not certain of this information. A helicopter landed at Samrong, and then they said that he has been imprisoned. [Ta] Tev was also involved with this incident. [Ta] Tev died in Thailand. [I] do not know what happened. Some said it was an accident in which his car overturned. Some said his car overturned and he died in water. His neck was broken.

Dany: After your return, when they had you get involved, you came to live in the same place?

Sokh: The same place.

Dany: Your land had not been taken?

Sokh: This land belonged to Yorn. We were threatened upon living here. However, he allowed me to live here and he lived there.

Dany: Where?

Sokh: On the other side of the road.

Dany: The former road is here and over there?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: What about now?

Sokh: Yorn did the farming for two years.

Dany: Where did Yorn come from?

Sokh: Yorn was a soldier. At that time, he worked with the top leaders. When those leaders betrayed [Ta] Mok, [Ta] Mok arrested them and sent them to my village. When the leaders were taken away, he [Yorn] did not leave. He continued to live here.

Dany: Did he escape to the mountain and Hou Nory?

Sokh: He did not go to Hou Nory. He went to the interior area, because his leaders were there. They had defected to the interior. When he returned, he came and took my land. However, he then gave me this land. Over there, he had other people do the farming for two years. I asked the village chief, [Yeay] Rann, to solve this problem. However, she dared not because she was afraid that he would mistreat her. He was a savage man. I told her that if she would not solve this problem, I would. I said that whatever happens, if I live or die, I will accept the consequences. If I do not die, help

me solve this problem. She asked me not to do that. She asked me to draw up a land certificate. I said there was no need for a land certificate. I dared to do the farming [on the land]. My children grew rice, and then he [Yorn] came and provoked a dispute with me. He called the police and said he would buy the land. [I] did not say that the land would be sold for 1,000,000 riel. I told the police about the story. The police said there was no need to discuss it before the integration, wait until afterward. I said if I waited until after the integration to resolve it, I would have no rights over the land. I would discuss it before the integration, because it was my land. They did not want me to talk about it before the integration, and consequently I would then have no rights. The land was still mine, because of integration. They threatened me to withhold information about what happened before, and to discuss it during the integration. After debating this issue for a while, I said that there was no need to discuss it further. It was a pointless discussion. We discussed this with the village chief. He [Yorn] said that I took his land. He could not say anything more. Wait and talk with her! Maybe she can help us resolve this problem. He had no idea whether the village chief could help solve this problem. I said, oh! He is about to lose if we meet with the village chief, [Yeay] Rann again. He asked [the village chief] why she gave his land to [Yeay Sokh]? She said the land is in front of Sokh's house. It is Sokh's land, not yours. If you had told me that was your land, I would have been aware of it. But you did not tell me. I did not know. I believe it belongs to Sokh. He lost [the argument] fairly. They were farming on that land every day.

Dany: How big is it?

Sokh: From this post to that small hill. They took all of it.

Dany: How many meters?

Sokh: They took a hundred meters. A hundred meters up to this road!

Dany: Now it belongs to you?

Sokh: I got it all back.

Dany: They took it, but couldn't keep it?

Sokh: We complained. If we dared not complain, we would not have gotten it back. I was willing to die to fight for the land. Because we were strong, they dared not take it.

Dany: What about Yorn? Where did Yorn go?

Sokh: Yorn served as a soldier in Anlong Veng.

Dany: After your return, you took the land. How did you begin your new life after the integration?

Sokh: There was a shortage of food supplies. At that time, we built the road. And in return, they gave us milled rice. I carried ten sacks of milled rice. Then we tried to make a living in any way we could. We bought milled rice. We made wooden charcoal. We hoed the land and grew crops for two years. Our living conditions improved, because we earned some money. I have this small tractor, because it is cheap and costs only 4,000,000 riel. We use the small tractor to plough the fields, and our living conditions have improved.

Dany: How many fields [do you] plough to grow rice and crops?

Sokh: My land is about three or four hectares. Here and behind there.

Dany: Near here?

Sokh: Near my house, not far away.

Dany: Are you growing cassavas or rice?

Sokh: Rice.

Dany: Any cassava fields?

Sokh: No cassavas! The land behind here is one hectare. My children grow four *rai* (four *rai* equals .64 hectares) of cassavas. I gave some land to my children.

Dany: All paddy fields?

Sokh: Paddy fields.

Dany: Do you yield enough rice to support yourself?

Sokh: It was enough last year. This year, the rice yield has been insufficient. Last year, I yielded six tons of unmilled rice. But this year, there are only three tons. [We] lost half of the output.

Dany: Why?

Sokh: Rain was scarce. But when it rains, it rains a lot. The grass grows vigorously.

Dany: Lots of grass?

Sokh: Yes! The grass grows too much, and prevents us from doing the farming.

Dany: I want to return to a previous discussion about when you were in Srah Chhouk. Besides building a factory, what else did Tak Mok build in Anlong Veng?

Sokh: He built a sawmill factory and shared the timber with people, so that they could build their houses.

Dany: What else did he build?

Sokh: He built a hospital. This hospital!

Dany: What else?

Sokh: He built roads and bridges.

Dany: A sawmill factory?

Sokh: A school, concrete houses. He built all of these.

Dany: Just those things?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: What else did he build?

Sokh: We did not stay in Anlong Veng very long because the war erupted once or twice [during that time] He was only able to build those things.

Dany: How long were you with [Ta] Mok?

Sokh: I had been with him from 1982 until he died. He was brought to Phnom Penh.

Dany: Did you know him?

Sokh: Our houses and home villages were near to each other.

Dany: Your home villages are near each other?

Sokh: Yes! He lived in Trapaing Khom.

Dany: What was [Ta] Mok like? I never knew or saw [Ta] Mok. Can you tell me about [Ta] Mok's story and his personality?

Sokh: I do not know what kind of person he was. His leadership skills are obvious. He was a meticulous leader. He loved people. He dared not let us see Ta Pot. [Ta] Mok would work in the most dangerous places. He lost his leg when he ordered people to use tractors to clear the road. He went to supervise this task in person, because he wanted to ensure that the workers did the job according to his intent. When a tractor rolled over a [land]mine, he lost his leg from the explosion. His leg was not cut by the explosion, but it was broken. Then they amputated it, because he always went to the battlefields. Wherever fighting was taking place, he went there at once.

Dany: When did he lose his leg?

Sokh: He lost his leg in late 1983. I was pregnant with my child when he lost his leg.

Dany: What was his character? His personality?

Sokh: In terms of character, he could be described as mean. If he came into our village or house and did not find food supplies, he scolded us. He said, "You are Her Excellency, staying at home! Why don't you have lemongrass, mint, and onion for cooking?" [On the other hand], If he came and saw us growing crops, he was happy and would say, "That is a real farmer." I can confirm that he was mean. He scolded us. But he gave us food to eat. He gave us what we asked for.

Dany: You have been with him since 1982?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: Did you ever meet in your home village?

Sokh: Never met him in his home village. [I] never knew him.

Dany: When did you get to know him?

Sokh: When the war erupted. I only knew his name when the war erupted. He visited my house with [Yeay] Rann. I knew him since 1982.

Dany: During the war, prior to 1970, did he ever visit your house?

Sokh: He did. He was young and had not yet lost his leg. He commanded his troops. I laughed, because he did not dress in a proper military uniform. The soldiers made their shoes from [rubber] tires. He asked them why they were not afraid [of him] and why they made shoes from tires. The soldiers did not know him. We had to cut the tires and make shoes, because there were no shoes [for the soldiers] to wear. They were barefoot! He wanted to beat them. Their commanding officer knew [Ta] Mok. He told the soldiers to shut up. They did not know him. He had white hair and dressed in civilian clothes, like an ordinary person. He went to all the battlefields.

Dany: If your children who were born after the regime asked you about [Ta] Mok, what would you tell them?

Sokh: My children?

Dany: If you they asked you?

Sokh: I would tell them the same story about him which I tell to other people.

Dany: What is that?

Sokh: He has two personas. He is gentle, but can become mean. He was mean, but he gave us food to eat. He was mean, but he put us to work. I tell my children that he was [only] mean if we did not do any work. Then he scolded us. But if we asked him for anything, he would give it to us. Other people did not give us anything to eat.

Dany: Do you know Son Sen?

Sokh: No, I never knew him. I only heard his name.

Dany: Ta Pol Pot?

Sokh: Ta Pol Pot! I heard his name, but never knew him.

Dany: Ta Khieu Samphan?

Sokh: No.

Dany: Nuon Chea?

Sokh: [I] never knew him. I only knew [Ta] Chuon Choeun, when he organized a coup against [Ta] Mok. What happened with Ta Pol Pot was that he arrested and imprisoned [Ta] Mok. After [Ta] Mok got out of prison... no, he did not get out! They did not imprison him, but they did not give [Ta] Mok any rights. He was under house arrest and could not go anywhere. After he got out [of prison]! At that time, I did not know that they had killed Uncle Son Sen. [Ta] Mok told [Ta] Son Sen, "Brother,

come down from there; the situation is not good.” He [Son Sen] said that everything was OK. They mistreated [Ta] Son Sen the night after [Ta] Mok left.

Dany: From whom did you hear this information?

Sokh: I was told that he was killed on the mountain.

Dany: [Ta] Mok said, “Brother come down! The situation is tense.” Who said that?

Sokh: [Ta] Mok’s messengers.

Dany: Who?

Sokh: [I] do not know them.

Dany: Their names?

Sokh: I do not know. I only heard this information from other people. People who worked with [Ta] Mok informed Ta Son to come down here, because the situation was not good. But he said it was fine. [Ta] Pot did not order his people to kill him, only to arrest him. [Ta] Saroeun sought revenge. It was about revenge.

Dany: What kind of revenge? [Ta] Saroeun?

Sokh: I do not know [details] of the revenge, because they were high-ranking people. It was about their well-being. There is only one member remaining in his entire family.

Dany: Only one remaining?

Sokh: Yes, there was one small child.

Dany: Where?

Sokh: [I] am not certain where that child has been taken. One family member remains.

Dany: Regarding the fighting which erupted in Anlong Veng, what was Anlong Veng like before the three-year regime?

Sokh: I do not know.

Dany: What about during the three-year regime?

Sokh: During the three-year regime, I moved around. I was in Kampong Saom. [I] wasn’t familiar with this place.

Dany: You never knew this place? [You only] knew this place later on?

Sokh: I only know this place now. I never knew Anlong Veng before.

Dany: Afterward, when heavy fighting erupted, do you remember the circumstances?

Sokh: Fighting with whom?

Dany: You stated earlier that the Khmer Rouge fought against the Yuon?

Sokh: Yes, there were [battles]. When we became aware of the fighting, we escaped to the mountain.

Dany: Do you remember those events? You said that before you left, you burned your house down?

Sokh: Our group had left and then Ta ordered us to burn down the houses. When they [Yuon] came, and when it seemed as if they would be victorious, Ta ordered [people] to burn the houses. [He] didn’t want them to use the houses for shelter because it would be more difficult to defeat them.

Dany: Once more, when the government soldiers came and attacked at the foot of the mountain, you were hiding in a pile of timber and lots of people were shot dead?

Sokh: They were shot at and then retreated.

Dany: Did you see soldiers dying?

Sokh: I saw only three or four bodies. They couldn’t reach the bodies to take them away. And they could not take others. They took whatever bodies they could. Later, [Yeay] Rann said there were two.

Dany: Wearing?

Sokh: They wore belts possessed with magical powers. They called it magical power.

Dany: You saw the incident with your own eyes?

Sokh: With my own eyes. Their bodies were lying along the canal. Some were in the canal. I saw the incident with my own eyes.

Dany: Khmer?

Sokh: Khmer!

Dany: Their clothes?

Sokh: Soldier's uniforms. But plain, without any decoration. The uniforms were gray.

Dany: Were there any weapons with them?

Sokh: They had taken all the weapons, only the bodies were left there.

Dany: Did you see the armored tanks which had been set on fire?

Sokh: The tanks were burned over there. They took them all away. They were located at the hospital, in the vicinity of Krasaing Pagoda, in front of that house.

Dany: [I] do not know [that place].

Sokh: Beyond this road, two tanks were burned and destroyed. They were burned at the central warehouse. There were two, beyond the Christian church. Four or five tanks were destroyed.

Dany: You saw that?

Sokh: I did after my return.

Dany: The dead bodies?

Sokh: There were no bodies.

Dany: The burned tanks?

Sokh: I saw the tanks which had been burned down. There was nothing left except iron, which they melted to make into pans. The tanks were not taken away. [Ta] Mok kept them there. When fighting erupted later, people from came from the interior and took them. [Ta] Mok planted a garden around the tanks. He did not remove them.

Dany: When you first came to live in the village, what was the village named? Previously you mentioned that because [Yeay] Chem's unit came here, the village was named [Yeay] Chem Village. And for [Yeay] Rann's unit, they named it [Yeay] Rann Village. Later, were the names of the villages changed?

Sokh: Sleng Poa Village! There are old people living in these fields. They lived in Tuol Ponlai. So they called the old village, Sleng Poa Village. Then we took the name of their old village and used it for our village. That is the story of Sleng Poa Village.

Dany: When was it named?

Sokh: It was changed to Sleng Poa after we returned from Hou Nory.

Dany: During the integration?

Sokh: Yes, during integration!

Dany: In 1999?

Sokh: Yes, they formed the village then. Before, the names were [Yeay] Rann Village and [Yeay] Chem Village.

Dany: Why didn't they name it [Yeay] Rann Village?

Sokh: [I] do not know. I do not know. They just changed the name.

Dany: After the return from Hou Nory?

Sokh: Yes, after our return from Hou Nory?

Dany: They named it Sleng Poa Village?

Sokh: Yes, Sleng Poa Village.

Dany: What about the commune [name]?

Sokh: Trapeang Tav Commune.

Dany: Trapeang Tav? When was it named?

Sokh: At the same time as the village!

Dany: Previously, Trapeang Tav Village did not exist?

Sokh: There was no village nor commune when I first arrived here.

Dany: At Anlong Veng District?

Sokh: Anlong Veng District.

Dany: When was Anlong Veng established?

Sokh: When they formed the village and commune, during the integration!

Dany: Before that time, you did not know [the name]?

Sokh: Before it was designated this way, they used the names of the military unit, for instance, Village 980, 786, the name of the soldier, or names of the soldiers' division.

Dany: There were two phases. Prior to the 1999 integration, the soldiers who came here named the area based on the name of their unit. For instance, the people who lived in [Yeay] Chem's unit called their village [Yeay] Chem Village. In [Yeay] Rann's unit, they called their village [Yeay] Rann Village.

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: After the integration, they organized the villages. And the names they assigned are the same as the villages' names today?

Sokh: They formed villages and communes and they named the villages.

Dany: What about the rules and regulations? The rules and regulations of the district before the three-year regime?

Sokh: Before the three-year regime?

Dany: Yes, the rules and regulations during the Samech Ov Regime?

Sokh: I don't know. I was young.

Dany: What about during the three-year regime?

Sokh: Regarding rules and regulations during the three-year regime, I did not live in the base village. After I grew up, I left as the war erupted.

Dany: What about the rules and regulations of your unit?

Sokh: There were none when I entered my unit. Under their leadership, we did not live with restrictions or oppression.

Dany: Easy?

Sokh: Easy!

Dany: Could you move about freely?

Sokh: Yes, at the hospital, we could go anywhere. They arranged work shifts. During our shift, we searched for vegetables in the village, cooked, treated patients, collected firewood, and cooked rice. There were no difficulties.

Dany: What about the rules today?

Sokh: Our current rules?

Dany: Yes!

Sokh: Our current rules are fine.

Dany: What does that mean?

Sokh: For instance, we are farmers, we do our job. We are not oppressed and aren't told what we can or cannot do. We do not do anything which is prohibited. We grow rice and crops in the places where we are permitted.

Dany: Did the three-year regime have any effect on Anlong Veng today?

Sokh: [I] do not know.

Dany: You do not know?

Sokh: That's right, I do not know.

Dany: With regard to politics and people's living conditions in Anlong Veng, are there any problems related to politics?

Sokh: I am not sure of this.

Dany: With regard to [political] parties, are there any problems? Any problems with the local people? Are they satisfied with the local authority?

Sokh: When the price of land rose, there were land disputes. The local authorities sold people's land, and then people demanded that their land be returned.

Dany: There were?

Sokh: Yes!

Dany: Land disputes?

Sokh: Problems occur, but [Yeay] Chem finds a solution. As an example, I have land, and you come and take it. If other people resolve the dispute, they would give the land to you, because you have [more] money. But [Yeay] Chem is not like that. She resolved the problem by returning the land to me.

Dany: She is not corrupt?

Sokh: She is not corrupt. Regarding [Yeay] Chem, I spoke with some people who sold their land. They are now commune chiefs, [Pou] To and also [Pou] Ha. They say [Yeay] Chem is extremely communist. She is stubborn. When solving problems, she doesn't take any risk. But [Yeay] Chem knew for certain the land was mine. She helped me resolve the issue. And the other person lost.

Dany: Do they receive any money?

Sokh: They split the money after selling the land. I heard them say that clearly. I said that she [Yeay Chem] is a real communist, but she solves problems and helps the owner of the land. She does not do it for money. But To does it for money.

Dany: What did To say then?

Sokh: He remained silent.Now if [Pou] Sin buys [the land], they are in charge of the paperwork and land certificate, because they know Ta Ha. They announced that they wanted to sell their land, but Sin did not dare, because he is afraid of [Yeay] Chem. They said [Yeay] Chem is too communist. There is no need to do business with her. She is meticulous. She does not sell people's land. She solves problems and helps people. That's what I said to him. He looked at me with his pale face. He does not know that I am [Yeay] Chem's relative.

Dany: He does not know you.

Sokh: [Yeay] Chem is my niece. However, I call her elder sister, because she is older than I am. From a family standpoint, she is my niece. Her father and I are cousins.

Dany: What other issues are there besides land disputes?

Sokh: There is nothing else. I am not interested in any party. I am not aware of any party coming here to spread their propaganda.

Dany: How many parties are in this district?

Sokh: I do not know.

Dany: Which party is the most influential one in Anlong Veng? In the village?

Sokh: The most active party is the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). Some people work for the Sam Rainsy Party. When they come, they try to convince me to join the party. I

am totally disinterested in joining any party, because I cook and eat my own food. One or two people could not help a party to win the election. They can choose any side they want. I am disinterested in that.

Dany: Why is the CPP the most important party in Anlong Veng these days?

Sokh: It's not really important, but it leads the country so we support the party. For instance, if we voted for the Sam Rainsy Party, they [still] would not win. If we voted for others, they would not win. It is all the same. And if we vote for a different party, the village chief will not support us. We would be isolated.

Dany: So if you supported the Sam Rainsy Party, the village chief would not like you?

Sokh: [I] would not like me.

Dany: Why not?

Sokh: [I] don't know...because he belongs to that party.

Dany: So are you afraid to join another party because the local authority would not like you?

Sokh: Yes! I am not afraid; I am just disinterested. When a large majority of people choose one side, I will join with them. If we die, we all die. If we survive, we all survive. If one or two become leftist, it becomes difficult.

Dany: If historians want to write about the history of Anlong Veng, what elements do you want to be included in the book? If you were the writer, what would you include in the book?

Sokh: I am not knowledgeable about politics.

Dany: No! It is simply the history you have lived through. You know the story just as you have told me [in this interview]. If you were the writer, what would like to include in the book?

Sokh: I do not know. I will have to think about it. The brains of elderly people do not work as well as those of the young [generation]. Besides, my head has been hit two or three times which makes it hard for me to think.

Dany: If you were the writer, what would be the significant events you would want to include in the book?

Sokh: I have no idea.

Dany: You have no idea. Given that you have lived here since the formation of the village and commune, have you noticed any changes over the years? The positive and negative changes in the village and district?

Sokh: When people settled here, their living conditions were deplorable for a long time, but now they live rather well. Before they were empty-handed; they used their strength to work with a hoe. Now there is lots of equipment. They manage their business, earn more income, and become wealthier.

Dany: What else?

Sokh: [I] do not know.

Dany: As a citizen of this community, what is your expectation for the history book my organization will write about Anlong Veng District? What are your expectations of the book?

Sokh: Expectations! I do not understand.

Dany: For example, suppose your district is written about in a book.

Sokh: A book which will be written?

Dany: A Guide Book about the History of Anlong Veng... do you expect that the book will help you in any way? For the villagers and other people in your district?

Sokh: It is easier for me to determine that after I see the book.

Dany: If you see the book, then what?

Sokh: Then I will know about our history. And I will understand. If I don't understand, it's because I'm not accustomed to such a document. I'm not used to it.

Dany: Well, I have no more questions to ask you. Is there anything you would like to add or any issues which I have not asked you about?

Sokh: No, [we have covered] lots of details already.

Dany: Thank you very much for this interview, which has lasted two hours. Thank you so much!

-- End --