

**Review: Huy Vannak, *Bou Meng: A Survivor From Khmer Rouge Prison S-21*, Documentation Center of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, CAM, 2010**

Pages: 79

**Red Terror in Cambodia**

This provides a window into how Communism really works; a system based solely on fear under power of a dictator. There is no Workers' Party ideal, as every Communist is working on self-preservation and fearful of being labelled a counter-revolutionary for no reason, so will betray anyone on short notice.

Another learning is Communists use youth to carry out their most horrific tortures; all the staff of S-12 were between 15 and 21.

Communists also rely on the poverty and ignorance of country people, who are happy when they seize assets of the rich, but sad when they realise they were duped and have to give up everything, including their freedom, to party cadres.

Overall, a sorrowful tale in a system of pure evil.

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**Foreword (pp. 1-7)**

Saloth Sar was born in 1928. He studied in France on scholarship and became involved with French Communists. Back in Cambodia, he became a leader in the Communist Party of Kampuchea, then supreme leader on 4/17/1975.

Kaing Guek Eav was a maths graduate who became head of S-21.

At least 14,000 prisoners were tortured and killed in S-21.

Bou Meng was able to survive by painting portraits of Pol Pot.

Tuol Sleng was the main prison and torture house of the Khmer Rouge (KR).

The KR killed 25% of the population between 1975 and 1979.

### **I) Memories of a Horrible Past (pp. 1-15)**

The KR was in power from 4/17/1975 to 1/6/1979.

Only 14 survived S-21.

All power rested with Angkar.

S-21 employed 1,700 youths from 15-21, transformed by the KR into cruel cadres.

The killing field Choeung Ek was 7km SW of Phnom Penh.

Today, S-21 is the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum.

### **II) Voice of Bou Meng, A Survivor of S-21 Prison (pp. 16-61)**

Most Cambodians have 7-10 children.

There are Khmers, Vietnamese, and the Cham.

Chams were called Khmer Islam under the Sihanouk Socialist Regime.

The Viet Minh cooperated with the KR resistance against the French.

France imposed colonial rule since 1863.

On 3/18/1970, Prince Sihanouk was ousted by Marshal Lon Nol.

Bou volunteered as a Marxist, as did most Cambodians.

In 1973, revolutionary cooperatives made the rich sell all their property, something which made the villagers happy.

Anyone travelling had to get a permit from the village chief.

Revolutionaries were taught to distrust each other.

After Phnom Penh fell to the KR, the population was evacuated to the countryside.

“We became prisoners of Angkar without knowing what mistake we had committed.” [p36]

“We were not allowed to talk to each other. We received meals two times per day ... a [ladle] of porridge.” [p37]

“You’re an artists, so you clearly have CIA contacts.”

“I kept praying to the Buddha to help me.”

Their were no courts during the KR rule.

“No God, no monks here! Angkar has never arrested a person without mistake.”

As the Vietnamese began liberating the country, cadres evacuated people to the mountains in the Cambodian-Thai border.

The KR brutally killed students, intellectuals, and artists.

Pol Pot died April 1998.

The KR killed 2M.

### **III) Individual Memory and International Justice (pp. 62-70)**

On 7/18/2007, a submission documenting 14K pages, 350 witnesses and 40 mass graves was made to the Cambodian Court.

Kaing Guek Eav: “Whoever was arrested must die. It was the rule of the party.”

### **Conclusion: Moving Forward Through Justice (pp. 71-79)**