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WI no. 00603 / 2009

Document no.

**NATIONAL GENDARMERIE**

ILE DE FRANCE GENDARMERIE REGION  
Paris Investigations Section

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Unit Code 04978	Interview no. 00603	Year 2009	Case file no.
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**ឯកសារទទួល**  
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ថ្ងៃ ខែ ឆ្នាំ (Date of receipt/date de reception):  
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មន្ត្រីទទួលបន្ទុកសំណុំរឿង /Case File Officer/L'agent chargé  
du dossier: C.A. Juy

**ឯកសារបានតម្កល់តាមគ្រឹមត្រូវតាមច្បាប់ដើម**  
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08/SEP/2009

មន្ត្រីទទួលបន្ទុកសំណុំរឿង /Case File Officer/L'agent chargé  
du dossier: C.A. Juy

On Monday 8 June 2009 at 09:20  
I the undersigned, MDL/Chef GEROLD Patrick, Judicial Police Officer attached to the Paris Investigations Section  
Noting articles 16 to 19 and 151 to 155 of the Code of Criminal Procedure;  
Being then at our unit's offices in PARIS 75020, report as follows:

**Delegation:** No. 001/09/046 of 31/03/2009  
DUTARTRE Nathalie Senior Investigating Judge PARIS (75)  
*Investigations concerning: KAING Guek, NUON Chea, IENG Sary, IENG Thirith and KHIEU Samphan*  
*For: Crimes against humanity - grave violations of the Geneva Conventions of 12/08/1949.*  
*Purpose: See attached rogatory letter*

**Transmission:** No. 41016/DEF/GEND of 31/03/2009  
Lieutenant Colonel GOSSET Eric commander of the Paris 75 Investigations Section,  
PARIS (75)

In the presence of Bernard BRUN and NUON Pharat, investigators at the ECCC in Phnom Penh, have summoned before me the witness named hereinafter, and have informed him of the charges in relation to which his statement is sought. -----

<b>Surname</b>			<b>First Name</b>		
<b>THIOUNN</b>			<b>Prasith</b>		
<b>Sex</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Postcode and Municipal district of birth</b>		
M	Married	03/02/1930	Phnom Penh, CAMBODIA		
<b>Parents</b>					
Father: HOI			Mother: BOUNCHAN Moly		
<b>Address</b>					
13 av. du Dr Antoine Lacroix					
<b>Municipal district and Postcode</b>			<b>Telephone no.</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Nationality (if foreign)</b>
LE KREMLIN BICETRE 94 France			01 46 58 18 45	Retired	Cambodian

Having taken an oath to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth, the witness, who was interviewed separately from and in the absence of the Charged Persons, made the following statement:

**Question:** When did you come to France? What studies did you undertake?  
**Answer:** I came to France for the first time in September 1949 to study (pharmacy, *Ecole supérieure des transports*). I did an internship with the French national railway company [SNCF] before returning to Cambodia in late December 1955. I was appointed deputy manager of "operations" of the royal railways in Cambodia. In June 1963 I returned to France for health reasons. I remained there until 1970. I worked for a fuel company and then with the Paris airport authority [*Aéroports de Paris*] as head of the air freight study team; I was involved in the study concerning Roissy Charles de Gaulle Airport, for example. In 1970, after the coup in Cambodia, I joined Prince Sihanouk in Beijing. He was appealing to all his fellow countrymen to join him in forming a unified movement. I was not personally approached. I joined him on my own

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initiative, and I believe this was the case for everybody. I was then appointed minister for coordination by prime minister PEN NOUTH, head of the government in exile. My role was to monitor domestic/foreign relations. I remained in this post until April 1975, when the Cambodian government was overthrown. The FUNK and GRUNK then seized power in Cambodia.

I used to return to Cambodia for two to three days, but I returned on a more permanent basis in late December 1975 to work as an interpreter in IENG Sary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Phnom Penh. I stayed until January 1979 right after the Vietnamese invasion was launched. I left Cambodia with Prince Sihanouk and KEAT CHHON. We went to the United Nations in New York, and I stayed behind. I was appointed permanent UN ambassador by IENG SARY. I remained in this post until 1991 and then became deputy until 1993.

In 1982, a tripartite government was formed; Prince Sihanouk became head of state. Once the tripartite government was formed, I wanted to step down, but the Prince opposed to the idea. I have been retired since 1993. I stayed in the United States until 2001 before moving to France.

Question: Can you explain what the GRUNK was? (its ideology)

Answer: It was a national union with members of various hues, whose aim was to fight the coup and for the return of Prince Sihanouk to Cambodia. The party, which revolved around Prince Sihanouk, was a democratic coalition of all political hues.

Question: What was your role as coordination minister?

Answer: I acted as a liaison between the internal and external parts of the group. The internal part was headed by KHIEU SAMPHAN (deputy prime minister) while the external part was under Prince Sihanouk and Prime Minister PENH NOUTH. I passed on messages and telegrams. I was a postman of sorts.

Question: Did you belong to a student movement? A political movement?

Answer: Yes. I was an active member of an association of Cambodians who were demanding independence. It was the AEK association in France. All Cambodian students in France were involved in this struggle in the 1950s. I was not a member of a political party. Although later on in 1976 when I was accused of belonging to the KGB and thereafter, to the CIA, I was forced by Khmer Rouge to make false confessions in order to save my life. I said that I was a member of the French Communist Party, whereas it was not true. The request for an autobiography must have come from IENG SARY in his capacity as minister. I am not quite sure. We were led compartmentalized lives ten. I did not know whether the others were subjected to this type of exercise. I only found out later.

Question: While you were politically active, were you involved in producing a Cambodian newspaper?

Answer: I have no recollection of such a newspaper.

Question: Which political figures did you meet in Paris?

Answer: IENG SARY, for example; he came to France one or two years after me. I also remember HING Kanthel, CHUON Vaodi (an agronomist), HOU Yuon (member of parliament, and later agriculture minister – who probably died in 1975 or perhaps before) and ING Kieth (public works engineer – he worked for the French transport ministry – now an advisor to the King of Cambodia).

Question: Did you have political functions within the PCF [French Communist Party]?

Answer: Certainly not! I have always been independent.

Question: When you returned to Cambodia in 1955, how involved were you politically? Were you involved in the CPK?

Answer: I have never been a member of a political party, and I am not involved in any party. Moreover, I was not aware of the existence of the CPK; my work with the railways was all I had on my mind.

Question: Why did you leave Cambodia in 1963?

Answer: For health reasons. But I was also falsely accused of being the ring-leader of social movement. Some workers supported a young civil engineer (Mean Kinty) by submitting a petition. All I did was

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present the petition to the railways director, but this got me in trouble, because the director thought that I was the ring-leader. But the main reason I left was because of my glaucoma.

Question: Where in Phnom Penh were you in 1975 and 1979?

Answer: I was at the Foreign Affairs Ministry on the road to PONCHENTONG (the former name of Phnom Penh airport) next to the railway station. The ministry was known as "B1".

Question: What was the structure of "B1"?

Answer: I was a French/English interpreter there. The secretary general was a woman named SO SE. The head of protocol was NI KAN. These were pseudonyms. I never found out their real names. The most active was SO HONG; he may have been the real secretary general. It was the ANGKAR party which made all the decisions. In this case, IENG SARY for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I realised this later while reading books. At the time, it was all too fragmented for me to figure out. We were constantly under guard. We were not allowed to go out. We were all confined. Only the leaders, who enjoyed the party's trust, could move about freely. The ministry had some 15 office employees, in addition to cooks, cleaners, and so on. In other words, it was not divided into departments. However, when travelling as part of a delegation individuals could be assigned a provisional title to make them look good. For example, I was assigned the title "head of the policy department". This sounded good for the country hosting us. In reality there was no such department. You have asked me if I remember SUONG Sikoeun. Yes I do remember him and his French wife (very much to the left politically); he was in the information department. HING Un, I knew him without having ever met him. I later found out that he was at BOENG TRABEK. At the time, I did not know what BOENG TRABEK was. I did not know then where it was located. To this day, I do not know where Boeng Trabek is. You have mentioned Chhan Youran. Yes, he was at the ministry and he was used as an interpreter. Like me, he occasionally went on interpreting assignments abroad. After 1979, he was appointed ambassador in Beijing.

As an interpreter, I accompanied several delegations, mainly in South East Asia.

You have mentioned PHY PHUON. I do not know who it is.

You have mentioned Cheam. Yes, I know him. He was among those who would come to fetch me for interpreting assignments.

Question: When you were in Beijing prior to December 1975, did you know in advance what job was awaiting you in Phnom Penh?

Answer: I had no idea. Nothing was decided in advance. Those at the lowest level, me included, were not involved in decision-making. Decisions were made at a different level. The FUNK programme, which was published in Beijing, was not followed when the Khmer Rouge seized power.

Question: In which administrations did you work?

Answer: I only worked in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I did not even know where the other ministries were located. However, I did know about their existence, I had no dealings with the other ministries. The party issued a publication on the make-up of the government in 1976. For example, the Presidium was at the top with three persons (KHIEU Samphan, 1<sup>st</sup> president of the Presidium and two other persons that I do not know).

Question: Who were your superiors?

Answer: IENG SARY. He was my direct supervisor.

Question: Do you know CHRAING Chamres?

Answer: No. I heard about it at the time. It is the name of a place, but I do not know where it is.

Question: Didn't you go there to mow the lawn?

Answer: No, I never did.

Question: But one witness said something to this effect.

Answer: It is not true. However, I did breed rabbits with NGO Pin at the ministry for several months after being removed from my job. I was accused of belonging to the KGB and the CIA, and trust in me had dissipated. This was in late 1976. I was therefore let go and I wound up being re-educated through manual labour. I was asked to participate in the upkeep of the ministry's orchard.

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Question: Given that you were close to Ieng Sary, what can you tell us about his functions?

- (1) Within the Khmer Rouge regime?
- (2) Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Answer: He was a member of the Standing Committee. In which capacity? I do not know. I used to call him Brother VANN (Bang VANN). The Committee (ANGKAR) made all the decisions. It included POL POT, NUON CHEA, SONN SEN, IENG SARY; I do not know the others. I do not think that KHIEU SAMPHAN was part of the Committee. Obviously within his ministry, Foreign Affairs, he was the one in charge. I was part of the delegations. However, I would like to stress that I never attended meetings between parties, with the Chinese or the Vietnamese in other words. That was secret...

IENG Sary did not act authoritarian with us. Without the intellectuals, the ministry could not function. He needed our foreign language skills and our knowledge about the world. I attended meetings involving both POL POT and IENG Sary. The latter respected POL POT a great deal, and it could even be said that he feared of him. Even though they were brothers-in-law. However, as a member of the Standing Committee, IENG SARY had to implement the decisions taken regardless of whether he agreed with them. He therefore had to implement the foreign policy decided by this committee, in high places.

Question: Were there meetings at the ministry?

Answer: There were criticism and self-criticism meetings, daily activities, lessons to be learnt. They took place more or less every day, every evening. Sometimes they went on a long time, The 15 members of staff at the ministry would meet. Mrs SO SE chaired these meetings. Nobody dared to object to these meetings. We were afraid of being dismissed or being criticised even more. We did not know at the time that people were being executed. I was afraid of being sent to work in the fields, because of my health problems. When the Khmer Rouge seized power, thousands of people were deported to the countryside to perform collective labour.

IENG Sary occasionally attended these self-criticism meetings. He listened and gave advice. He did not perform any self-criticism in front of his subordinates.

*At 12.30 the interview was suspended for a lunch break.*

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The interview resumed at 13.40.

Question: Apart from the self-criticism meetings, were there any other types of meetings?

Answer: Two or three times a year, briefings were organised concerning the situation within the country. You have mentioned Hing Un. He did not attend such events, because he was not part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More people attended these briefings, because the staff there was joined by cooks, odd-job men, and so on; anyone who worked in the building. At such occasions, briefings were given and were followed by high-level decisions on the prevailing situation. The topics included enemy activities, pro-Vietnamese agents and those who were against the power of ANGKAR or those who were against the revolution in general.

Question: Were specific names used in reference to the enemies?

Answer: No, I do not recall.

Question: What can you tell us about disappearances, if any, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Answer: SIEN AN, a former ambassador in Hanoi. One day I noticed that he was missing. Overnight. I learnt after 1979 that he had been taken to TUOL SLENG. TOTH KHAM DOUN, a former ambassador in Beijing also went missing one day. After 1979 I learnt that he had also been deported to TUOL SLENG. In fact I found out much later, after 1995, while reading various documents that he had referred to me in a confession prior to his death as being involved in a plot against POL POT. I am still puzzled about this, because the accusation was reportedly made in February/March 1977. I believe that he was tortured and that the so-called confession was dictated to him. That he was forced to say what he said. I was still puzzled about this. In the ensuing months I was not questioned about it. I believe that my name was mentioned in two confessions. In another incriminating confession, I was alleged to be a member of the KGB.

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When we noticed that someone had disappeared, we did not ask questions. And during meetings, we made no mention of it except to say that the individual concerned had left on transfer. What we said was not the truth. For my part I believed that they had been transferred to the countryside for re-education. It never occurred to me that those who disappeared were executed in camps. I learned this after 1979, after the Khmer Rouge period. And initially I did not even believe it. At the time we were living in a fish bowl, under surveillance. We were suspicious of everybody. So were not keen to ask questions.

Question: Are you aware of the disappearances of HUOT Sambat and MEAK Touch?

Answer: I am not aware of their disappearance, but I knew, because I found out not long after taking up my post at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that former ambassadors had been sent to the countryside for re-education.

In 1977, some of these ambassadors, who had lost a lot of weight, passed through B1 ministry and spent a few days there before continuing to an unknown destination. CHAU SENG was part of this group. I do not know why they transited through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was able to speak briefly with CHAU SENG. He told me that all had gone well, that he had picked coconuts or tapped palm juice. This had hardened him. I did not ask him for further details, such as where the camp was located. You are asking me who decided the transfer of the group. Most probably IENG SARY. The other thing is that I do not know how many people were in the group.

Question: Why were you asked to write your autobiography?

Answer: Because I was accused of being a KGB and CIA agent. One had to justify one's past by revealing it.

Question: Who asked you to write your autobiography?

Answer: IENG Sary himself. I believe he received the order from above. But I am not positive about this. The autobiography was written in December 1976. So it came as a result of accusations.

Question: Did you have to answer specific prepared questions?

Answer: Yes, and I also had to talk about the things I had done in the past. Ieng Sary had suggested I should do this well, in other words, fill in the form correctly. By this he meant that my answers should reflect the spirit of the questions. I therefore wrote that my grand-father, who was prime minister in three governments, was a traitor. The Khmer Rouge were fond of this sort of thing.

Question: Your first wife was French (Christiane GOURET). Was that a problem?

Answer: The Khmer Rouge were somewhat suspicious. But I was never directly taken to task by the Khmer Rouge because my wife was French.

Question: Who were the autobiographies intended for?

Answer: I handed it over to IENG Sary. You would need to ask him if he sent it to somebody. I do not know. I was not questioned by anybody else subsequently.

Question: How do you explain the fact that you survived the purges at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs?

Answer: You would need to put that question to IENG Sary. I believe that I was protected at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because intellectuals like me were needed, and also because I was a member of a well-known family.

Question: What can you tell us about what Soeung Sikhoeun remarks in his book (not yet published) and in his interview of 19 December 2007 to the effect that in 1977, when Keat Chhon and Thiounn Praseth were falsely accused of being CIA agents and were about to be arrested by Khmer Rouge security, Ieng Sary had some strong for Pol Pot, [TRANSLATION] "without these two men, you might as well close down the Ministry of Foreign Affairs". What is your view of his remarks?

Answer: Ieng Sary never said anything about this to me, but it very well be that he made those remarks.

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Question: As an interpreter, did you go to meetings with foreign delegations and visits to the countryside?

Answer: Yes, I was an interpreter. There were many governmental and non-governmental delegations. The purpose of the visits was to show that everything was fine. It was all organised in advance. We always visited the same places. We often travelled to the area between PHNOM PENH/Kampong Thom and SIEM Reap.

Regarding the tenor of communication with foreign delegations, which were often from countries that were sympathizers of the regime, IENG Sary would issue a message that everything was fine. Regarding the question you asked me about the abolition of currency, I do not recall what he said. I believe that this measure was intended to be temporary. As for the displacement of people from towns, the justification was that the possible US bombings also the need to fight the famine. More people were needed in the countryside for agricultural production. I also remember that another goal was to fight infiltrators and spies.

Question: Did your brother Mumm also work in a ministry?

Answer: I am not quite sure. I did not see him then. He was head of a university. I only saw him in December 1978 when I was accompanying US journalists in Phnom Penh. My brother gave a presentation at a workshop using machines, but this is all I can say.

Question: Was the British journalist Malcolm Caldwell there during the visit?

Answer: Yes, he was with the group of journalists. The day before they left, Mr Caldwell was killed in his house. We never found out who killed him. I accompanied his body to Beijing, where it was to be handed over to the British embassy. I later learnt that I had been accused of murdering him. But I did not pay too much attention to this false rumour, because the war with Vietnam broke out a few days thereafter.

Question: What about your other brother Thioeunn? Did he work in a ministry?

Answer: He was a surgeon. He did not know much about administration. He had been health minister. But this was a bogus appointment. His real job during the Khmer Rouge period was head physician at the Khmer-Soviet hospital. I believe that he offered the name THIOUNN for use as a facade. But it is quite possible that someone else was in charge of the ministry. However, I do not know the name of the individual in question.

Some ministries were probably bogus and were headed by front men. Often actual power was exercised secretly by members of the Party's Standing Committee. For example, when I went to the UN in mission in March 1976 to attend a conference on the Law of the Sea with Sam San and Chhan Youran, I was officially official the head of delegation, but Sam San was the one actually in charge and who knew the secret codes for transmitting messages to the Party.

Question: On 28/09/1977 you addressed the United Nations Assembly in New York on behalf of Democratic Kampuchea in response to a speech by the French ambassador in which he expressed concern about human rights violations in Cambodia. You responded by claiming that there were no violations. Why?

Answer: My speech had been prepared by the delegation head, IENG Sary. As I spoke French, I replaced IENG Sary to give the speech. It was obvious that being a high-ranking government figure, IENG Sary could not acknowledge his government's responsibility before the international community, even though in reality the rumours were actually true. I have to say that at the time I was unaware that human rights violations were being committed. The fact that such large-scale killings were committed did not come to light until later, after the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

Question: Do you remember coming to France in June 1976 to negotiate an oil contract with ELF?

Answer: No, I do not remember doing that.

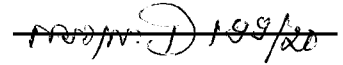
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Question: Did you know KHIEU Samphan?

Answer: I do not remember if I knew him when I was in France. I heard his name in Cambodia when he launched the magazine *L'Observateur*. I occasionally published articles in this magazine under the pen name SAN. KHIEU Samphan had the reputation of being a man of integrity. I met him a few times in Phnom Penh. He was the trade minister and a member of parliament. He had a political career under both SIHANOUK and POL POT. He held a doctorate in economics. I do not know if he was a member of the Central Committee, but I know that he was President of the Presidium. Prior to 1975 he was deputy prime minister of the GRUNK and commander-in-chief of the armed forces, a bogus title, because Pol Pot was the actual commander. Also during the same period, when he travelled abroad, it was IENG Sary who exercised power while KHIEU Samphan was the head of delegation. When a delegation was headed by Ieng Sary it was he who had the real power.

Question: Were you one of his close associates?

Answer: Not really. We worked together. But he did not discuss his decisions. I did not have any contact with him under the regime.

Question: Was his official position known to everyone?

Answer: It was published. He was head of state. I believe that in actual fact his power was more akin to that of a ceremonial leader. The real power was in the hands of the Standing Committee members.

Question: Do you know IENG Thirith?

Answer: She was IENG Sary's wife. I attended their wedding. I must have met her once during the Khmer Rouge regime. It was during a visit to a laboratory in Chroy Changvar, which was managed by one of her daughters.

The Social Affairs ministry appears more structured because it was in charge of the laboratories. I am not certain if pharmacies and hospitals came under Social Affairs.

Question: What was your impression when you arrived in Cambodia for the first time in mid-August 1975?

Answer: It was unimaginable, because the silence and lack of people frightened me. It was like being in a ghost town. We were later housed in a beautiful detached house near the Hôtel Royal. We spent 2 or 3 days there, under excellent conditions. I even remember requesting permission to visit my parents' house but I was told very diplomatically that everybody was busy and therefore it was not possible.

Question: Did you hear about students and intellectuals returning from abroad after April 1975?

Answer: As I remember then, following the victory of the resistance movement, most Cambodians living abroad wanted to return home to help rebuild the country, but none was aware of the actual situation in the country and, in my opinion, people trusted Mr Khieu Samphan. Mr Ieng Sary thus called on Cambodians living abroad to return home, notably in late August 1975, as he was made a stopover in Paris on his way to Lima, Peru. Many Cambodians were seeking to return home to help rebuild the country. At the meeting held in Paris, Ieng Sary invited these people to return and granted their wish.

Question: While you were in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime, did you ever hear mention of the "Cham" and "Buddhist" minorities?

Answer: No.

DONE in PARIS, on this 8<sup>th</sup> day of June 2009 at 18:50. Having read the above statement, I declare that it is true and correct and have nothing to change, add or remove.

Witness

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