SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH ♦ HISTORY

Kalyan said there were large buildings inside the prison area. She was jailed in a building where hundreds of detainees were kept. Those judged guilty of less serious offenses were put in different buildings. Female inmates were not handcuffed and shackled, as were the males. Male prisoners were shackled in pairs by the guards, and the pair had to do everything altogether. Those deemed to have committed more severe crimes were put in cells without enough room to sit down. Their hands and ankles chained, they were left alone and stood until they died.

In January 1979 when the Vietnamese troops invaded Phnom Penh, Kalyan was harvesting rice at Kandoeng island and did not know that the country's political situation had been altered until the cooperative chief rang the bell and announced it. She then returned to her home village. She married

in 1979, and had five children: two sons and three daughters.

Kalyan has been much affected by her pain and suffering, and the loss of her parents and two brothers. She very often has nightmares, and is easily terrified and forgetful. She usually feels lonely and abandoned. After telling me of her experiences, she said she felt relieved and that there are people who care about her.

As a result of this interview and an analysis of her mental health by DC-Cam's and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization's Victims of Torture project, Kalyan should receive consultations and assistance from psychiatric experts to help her deal with her sadness.

Savina Sirik is a DC-Cam staff member working for the Victims of Torture Project.

## FORMER PRISONER OF KRAING TA CHAN

Socheat Nhean

Kraing Ta Chan prison stood on the top of a hill in Kraing Ta Chan village, Kus subdistrict, Tram Kak district, Takeo province. This prison was under the control of Chhit Choeun, alias Muk, secretary of Southwest Zone. According to DC-Cam's research, 1,045 people were incarcerated, tortured and executed in this prison.

All of the prisoners at Kraing Ta Chan were considered to be traitors whose arrests were ordered by Angkar. Lower-level cadres carefully wrote the prisoners' biographies so as to purge enemies who were former officials of the Lon NoI administration.

Say Sen had been an inmate at this infamous prison. He was jailed from 1974 until 1979 when the political system of the Khmer Rouge collapsed. He was arrested because his father was a district chief in the former government.



Sen was handcuffed and shackled by his guards. After three months, he was allowed to go out to herd buffaloes during the day, and at night he was handcuffed and shackled. After a long period of time, Sen managed to gain the trust of his guards,

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and was permitted to sleep in a kitchen hall with another prisoner named Chin.

"In 1975, there were problems. They [Khmer Rouge guards] killed more and more [prisoners]. They let me stay outside [the prison], and ordered me to dig graves. Some were large and some were small. Some graves were 2 meters in width and 4 meters in length, while some were 4 meters in width

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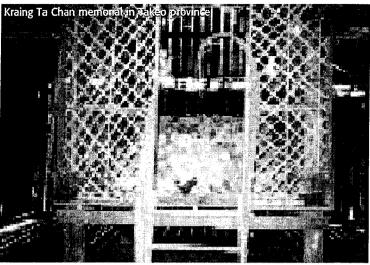
and 5 meters in length. They placed a number of executed prisoners at the bottom of the pit, and then buried them. After adding more corpses, they, in the same grave, buried the dead bodies again," said Sen, recalling his job during the Khmer Rouge period.

Siang, a former Khmer Rouge cadre in Kraing Ta Chan, said, "in mid-1975 such a large number of prisoners were sent in night and day that [I] scarcely found time to sleep."

Sen was an eyewitness to the execution of prisoners at Kraing Ta Chan.

Before the killings began, the prison's guards turned on loud music so that the screams of the prisoners being murdered would not be heard. Then executioners took two or three prisoners to be killed at one time. Sen said that the executioners tricked prisoners by telling them that they were allowed to return to their cooperatives. On hearing the phrase "return to one's cooperative," prisoners became so happy that some of them applauded, but instead they were taken to be killed. Khmer Rouge guards tied the prisoners' hands behind their backs, blindfolded them, and brought them to the killing site. Then they clubbed prisoners on the backs of their heads. When the prisoners fell to the ground, the executioners turned them over on their backs and cut their throats with long swords before dragging them to the grave. "Sometimes they [the executioners] were tired. Therefore, they ordered Chin and I to pull the corpses over to the grave and fill it up," said Sen. According to this witness, some people were jailed even if they committed such minor offenses as stealing coconuts or potatoes, deliberately drinking palm juice, breaking a spoon or a basket, and so on. These prisoners were all executed.

Sen survived because he knew how to make sour palm juice [a local alcoholic drink]. Ann, chief of Kraing Ta Chan prison, ordered Sen to make this



juice both day and night. Sen added that to relieve Ann's fatigue after killing prisoners, Ann ordered him to produce sour palm juice even at midnight. Sometimes Sen, from the top of a palm tree, saw executioners cutting children's throats. "For young children, they [the Khmer Rouge guards] cut their throats, sliced open their stomachs, and took their gallbladders to eat while drinking wine."

Sen's father was also murdered at Kraing Ta Chan prison. Sen remembered that before they took his father to be killed, the executioners ordered Sen to collect cow manure at a stable near the prison. While Sen was gone, the guards had executed his father and placed his body in a grave. After discovering the body, Sen took off his father's clothes, washed them, and kept them for his own use. They told me to gather the manure, but they took my father to be killed," said Sen. Unable to control his feelings, Sen asked Siang, "will I be killed?" "Keep calm! You are allowed to live, so you have to live calmly. If we did not allow you to live, you would have been killed," answered Siang.

In addition to those who were executed, five or six prisoners died every day from starvation or torture during interrogation. The Khmer Rouge guards did not allow the prisoners to move when they were sleeping, even though they were being bitten by lice

E3/5848

SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH ◆ HISTORY

and bedbugs. "I couldn't stay still because I was sleeping with too many lice and bedbugs. With regard to the lice, they were not head lice, but body lice. Many prisoners died of disease and living with lice and bedbugs," recalled Sen.

Some prisoners tried to escape while they were working outside the prison, but were shot and killed by the guards. After gunning down the escapees, the guards ordered Sen to bury the corpses. On one occasion, a guard named Duch raped and killed a young girl, and then ordered Sen to take away her nude body.

Every night, Sen saw guards walking lines of prisoners into Kraing Ta Chan prison. Some line consisted of 20 to 50 prisoners, while others were 100 meters long and escorted by an armed guard unit.

In the prison, Sen was granted more rights than other prisoners, especially the right to move around the prison (to the interrogation and confinement rooms, as well as the killing site), for he was one of the youngest prisoners and could produce sour palm juice for Ann. His job was to take care of buffaloes, dig graves, make sour palm juice, and empty the prisoners' waste containers in the morning. But like the other prisoners, Sen ate gruel. He was freed from the prison in January 1979 at the fall of the Khmer Rouge regime.

Today Sen is 43 and lives in Tram Kak district of Takeo province. Several executioners from Kraing Ta Chan prison are still alive and live freely in their villages, alongside people whose relatives were killed. Every time he sees the killers, it makes him remember the death of his father and the misery that he barely survived.

Sen wants to see the courts try not only the regime's leaders but also the lower-level cadres. Above all, he wants them to answer his question: "Why did they kill so many people?"

Socheat Nhean is a DC-Cam staff member working for the Victims of Torture Project.

