

VOA Khmer Service
Neou Sarem's Oral History

Narrative: Ladies and gentlemen! If you were living abroad while the Khmer Rouge was in power between 1975 and 1979, would you dare return to Cambodia? At that time, one teacher who was living in France returned back to Cambodia although she knew how cruel the Khmer Rouge was. This woman is Mrs. Neou Sarem, who is currently Voice of America (VOA) staff member. Why did she return to Cambodia during this bitter and painful period? Why did she survive while many others died? Mrs. Neou Sarem will answer all of these questions, and she will also tell you about her life and her experiences since she was in France, which is the modern industrialized country, up to the time that she had to live in the farm under the rain and wind. She will also describe her journey to resettle in the United States after the Khmer Rouge killing fields. VOA will broadcast Mrs. Neou Sarem's series of sad and interesting narrative story two times per week starting from Sunday, March 2nd. Please tune on to these series of story. Thank you.

Reasey: How are you Mrs. Neou Sarem?

Sarem: How are you Mr. Poch Reasey?

Reasey: Yes, hello listeners! As you already know, she is the staff member of VOA Khmer Service since 2000. Is that right?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: However, what you have not yet known is that after the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975, she returned back from France to Cambodia. When did you return to Cambodia when the Khmer Rouge came to power? And why did you decide to return?

Sarem: Yes, hello again ladies and gentlemen and hello Mr. Poch Reasey. I worked as a teacher for ten years in Cambodia, and I received scholarship from French government to study in France for one year in 1974. I arrived in France in September 1974. I left two children and my husband in Cambodia. After arriving in France for about eight months, the Khmer Rouge took over the country. I came to France with scholarship. I sent some money back to Cambodia to help support my family. At that time the money was inflated and people became very poor. When the Khmer Rouge took over the country, I saw my life in France not worth living. My children that I took care very well were forced by the Khmer Rouge to leave home in a very hot season. I could not stand living in France without returning back to help my children. I knew what the Khmer Rouge did. They forced people to leave Phnom Penh. We thought that there would be no more shelling and war. But they turned out to force people to leave the city. We didn't understand the Khmer Rouge intention. They took over the country and then they harmed people after the battle. The Khmer Rouge said that they forced people to leave Phnom Penh because the US planned to drop bombs. I heard that at that time when I was in France. And I was thinking how America dropped bombs if America withdrew all forces from Vietnam. I believed that this was the Khmer Rouge's lie. When the country became like that, I was worried very much. I missed my children so much, so I volunteered in a nursery school. When I missed my children strongly, I looked at their photos. I felt that my children jumped out from the photos. At that moment, I was very frightened. I rubbed my eyes and asked myself, "why?" I always imagined that I wanted to hold the earth not to go around. And I wanted to turn the earth to the time that I was a schoolgirl in Sisovath High School. At that time, I did not have children and husband. We were very happy and did not

worry about anything. And now I worried very much. I wanted to return to that period. Sometimes, I wish that a car would hit me and make me lose all memory, not to allow me to know myself. When I saw French dogs eating on the TV, tears dropped down. I could not meet anyone who had children living with them. I could not listen to Khmer music. While I eat my tears dropped on the plate. I always heard the voice of my children calling me in my head. So I walked and shook my head, but their voice was full in my head. I was so frightened of being crazy. Then I decided that staying in France was useless. I had to return to Cambodia. Therefore, I asked the Khmer Rouge members to fill in the application form to return to Cambodia. But I did not apply to be a member of the FUNK (The National United Front of Kampuchea).

Reasey: So how did you join their group?

Sarem: I joined as “Mohar Chun” the ordinary people who wanted to return to Cambodia.

Reasey: So you were not a member of the Communist Party, right?

Sarem: No, I did not join FUNK. FUNK was the National United Front of Kampuchea. In French, FUNK is Front Unit National Khmer. I did not join this group; I returned back as an ordinary person who only wanted to meet my children.

Reasey: At that time, you knew that they evacuated people from the city. Were you feared of your own safety?

Sarem: When I was in France, I always followed up the situation in Cambodia. I listened to radio all the time. I knew about the American Mayaguez boat that accidentally went into Cambodian maritime border close to Kampong Som. The Khmer Rouge shot the boat. I also knew something about Mr. Hou Yun. I heard a rumor that Hou Yun was killed immediately because he was against the evacuation of the people from the city. But it hard for me to believe that the Khmer Rouge killed so many people like we had known afterward.

Reasey: What happened next?

Sarem: After that, I thought that when I returned back to Cambodia, I would give myself to the Khmer Rouge for reeducation. I believed that they just educated me for about six months; then they would allow me to meet my family and children. When I was about to leave, I prepared myself. I bought black clothes because I knew that they wore black clothes. I even bought small lighter flints, medicine, penknives and medicine for children. I almost spent all the money I had on these things.

Reasey: You were preparing, right?

Sarem: Yes, I brought all of these things because I was afraid that my children would die before I arrived. I expected that when I returned back, I would meet my children. I was regretful to leave my children with my husband and my mother when the country turned out to be like hell. I felt that I gave birth to them, so I had to be responsible for them.

Reasey: Yes, thank you, Mrs. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Yes, thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey.

Sarem: I would like to continue that After the Khmer Rouge took over the country, I went to a hospital specialized in stomach- ache almost every month. Doctor begged me not to worry too much. He told me that if I didn't stop worrying my stomach -ache would not recover. One American girl studied with me. When she saw me worry so much, she asked me to hold a demonstration in order to condemn the Khmer Rouge and to ask Red Cross Organization to help find my children. I told her that doing this would not bear any fruit. A priest who was a liaison with foreign students in Besancon, Pere Gilles, asked me not to go as I wanted to go to Thailand to see the situation and find way to go to Cambodia to find my children. He told me that it was so dangerous to enter Cambodia from Thailand. I was always afraid that my dream would become true. I dreamt that in 1973 when I had only one child, the Vietcong fought into Phnom Penh and forced all people to leave Phnom Penh. At that time, I was teaching at Lycee d' Application located close to the "Vimean Eikareach"(Independent Monument). I rented an apartment behind that school. I ran back home and saw the door opened no one there, I ran to my mother-in-law's house near Chinese Hospital. There I did not see anyone, and then I ran to the Central Market. Running forward and backward, I arrived at the ocean and saw a big boat. Then I fell into that boat. I saw one of my relatives inside the boat; her husband was a member of government during Lon Nol regime. They wore Khmer traditional clothes (a kind of outfit for visiting the king). Their children were around them. The boat left the shore, and I cried until I woke up.

When I arrived in France, I met that cousin that I saw in my dream ; her husband worked in Geneva. They came to visit me. At that moment, I was even more frightened. I did not want the story in my nightmare to happen. So I tried to return to Cambodia. I did not tell my husband about that bad dream. In France, since I met my relative who was in my dream. I wrote my husband a letter telling him to prepare the trip to take the children to come to France. I wrote to his sister whose husband worked in goods transporting business: "The Tonle Sab's Convoy". He could lend my husband some money in order to prepare the journey and bring the children to France. I promised to pay back all the money that my husband borrowed from him. In March, my sister-in-law wrote me a letter saying that she agreed to lend some money to my husband, but my husband did not pay much attention on this.

Reasey: How old were your children at that time?

Sarem: The older child was four years old, and the younger one was so young when I left for France; she was just two months old only. When the Khmer Rouge came to power, she was only ten months old.

Reasey: So you departed for France after giving birth to the second child, right?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Ok, let me turn to the time that you said you applied with the Khmer Rouge organization to return to Cambodia. Where did you submit your application form? Was it in Paris or somewhere else?

Sarem: Yes, in Paris, they had a "mission" office there. In the application form, I had to write exactly the same as their words. So I could not write, and I asked someone to help me write the application.

Reasey: Was it in Khmer?

Sarem: Yes

Reasey: Why could not you write?

Sarem: After reading it, I could not write down.

Reasey: Were there a lot of revolutionary words?

Sarem: Yes, there were too harsh words, and I could not write. I asked someone to help me write this. I just signed on the application.

Reasey: At that time, how many people applied with you?

Sarem: Yes, at that time, there were 8 women coming to France including me, and only 3 returned back to Cambodia. Those included me, Suon and Vanna. We submitted our applications together and with a teacher his name is An. He also returned back. Among us there was a woman named Sawathya whose husband attended the meeting outside the country before the country fell. Her husband brought along with him their two sons and a sister-in-law. Sawatha met her husband at Besançon. Another woman was Mrs. Tan Tan, her husband Uy Poho, worked for Care Organization. The US brought him outside of Cambodia by helicopter on April 11.

Reasey: How long did it take from the time you submitted the application and the boarding time?

Sarem: My application to go back was about 5 months before the departure.

Reasey: Did the KR reject some applications?

Sarem: I have no idea about this. I just knew about myself, and I dared not ask them any question. Some of them were too extreme. One of them had confronted with me about the issue that those who received scholarship to study in France were the exploiters. I said that my family never exploited anyone. We were farmers. We worked and studied very hard. What we had today was from our efforts. This woman was the wife of Svay Hokkhy. She told me that although you did not exploit the others directly, you did indirectly. I said I did not exploit anyone even indirectly

Reasey: So you already knew that when you returned back, you would confront with danger, right?

Sarem: Yes, I knew that it was dangerous. But I believed that I was a woman and worked as a teacher. Moreover, my husband was not a soldier; he worked in a bank. Therefore, I believed that we would not encounter any danger. My brother worked in a navy. He was electronic engineer and got scholarship to study in the US, one month after me. I told him not to return to Cambodia because he was a soldier. I was afraid that he would be in danger. But he said he missed his wife and wanted to return home. I told him that his wife was lucky when he as a soldier were not with her in the time that the country fell into the hand of the Khmer Rouge. I told Vanna not to return either. Her husband was very talented; he could survive in the Khmer Rouge regime. I told her to stay in France and follow up the situation of our country. She could also take her husband to France if she continued to stay there. But, Vanna said: "I would stay only when you too stayed in France."

Reasey: What was about the air ticket? Did you pay on your own or did the Khmer Rouge pay for you?

Sarem: We paid on our own because the scholarship provided round-trip ticket. So we gave the ticket to them and they bought group ticket for us. Leaving from France, we transited in China. We stayed in China for one night. The next day, we departed to Cambodia. Some people did not go to Cambodia immediately when they arrived in China. They stayed as tourists in China for one week. The Chinese charged 60 Francs per day.

Reasey: From China to Cambodia, did you fly on the plane the Khmer Rouge arranged for you because at that time there was no private plane entering Cambodia?

Sarem: Yes, at that time only the plane from China was allowed to land in Cambodia. Therefore, those students from abroad such as from the US had to go to France first. In France, FUNK would arrange the trip for those who wanted to go to Cambodia. They bought a group ticket from France to China, and then the plane would take us from China to Cambodia.

Reasey: Thank you, Mrs. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you Mr. Poch Reasey.

Sarem: Before I returned to Cambodia in 1976, the office of FUNK, which was the United Front of Prince Sihanouk, who cooperated with the Khmer Rouge to fight Lon Nol's government, asked us to watch a movie and pay homage to a man who died when FUNK's group had a conflict with those who favored Lon Nol's group. They had a fight at "Phtah Khmer", "Maison du Cambodge" in France. This house was for Cambodian students who went to study in France. When I arrived there, I felt very miserable. The glass was broken; windows fell down, and there were a lot of marked scribbling. We, who came from Besançon, agreed that we would not go to pay homage to the tomb of this FUNK's hero. We just went to watch movie because we wanted to know what the movie was about. At the movie theater, they performed art before playing the movie. The art performance was full of singing and dancing. Then there appeared Vietnamese girls with Vietnamese costume, holding branches of bamboo, singing and dancing. When the art performance finished, they screened the movie for us. The title of the movie in French was "La fleur et le fusil s" which means "Flower and Gun". It showed and described about the activities that the Viet Cong struggled and fought along the ways in the city. They dug holes in the ground to hide themselves. There were many women riding bicycles as I remembered the scene at that time. At that time, we were so startled because we were about to go to Cambodia, but they asked us to watch the movie about the Vietnamese struggle and the Vietnamese art performance holding bamboo branches.

Before I went to Cambodia, I read a newspaper called *Le Monde* dated 5th January. The newspaper reported that foreign countries had tried to donate tons of medicine to Cambodia, but the Khmer Rouge rejected because they said that enemies could infiltrate in all means. And the Khmer Rouge stood in the principle of independence and self-reliance; therefore, they would not accept the medical aid.

When I was boarding on the plane from France, there was a woman whose name is Pok Mona, who used to study at Faculty of Literature and was also a French-language teacher. She was a member of FUNK. She took a package of medicine from a French teacher at the airport. This teacher was also my teacher.

Yes, I would like to continue that in France before going back to Cambodia, I tried very hard to understand the red regime, and I forced myself to find books to read, the books about

communism, especially about Chinese communism. As I was reading, I could not continue because it was very boring, those books. I could not finish; I was so fed up since I saw in the books everything was created by Chairman Mao. Everyone did not have their own decision or their own brains. Chairman Mao thought for them all in China. At the window of the bookstores in France, the book entitled in French "*Quand la Chine s'éveillera, le monde tremblera*" was on display everywhere. This means when China wakes up, the world will be shaking.

Reasey: Before boarding on the plane, how did you feel?

Sarem: Yes, before going back, I stayed at a student dorm in Paris, called "Maison des provinces" or guesthouse for those who come from provinces. On my way to the shower room, I met a Cambodian man who was walking on the way to the bathroom. When he saw me, he asked, "Oh! Are you going back to Cambodia?" He seemed to be happy to see me going back to Cambodia. Then I said, "Yes, I'm going back, but I don't like the Khmer Rouge regime which evacuated people from Phnom Penh. But I have two children there, so I don't know what to do; I have to go back." Then I ignored him and walked to take the shower. When I arrived in Cambodia, I stayed at the camp in Taley. This camp was for those who came from abroad. A few months later, I saw this man coming to the fields that we were harvesting rice. It was very hot at that time. He asked me, "Oh! Are you still here?" I answered, "Yes, I am still here. I haven't gone anywhere yet."

I would like to tell you that the agreement that we went back to Cambodia was that, "when you arrive in China and want to change your mind, you can do so and you can return to France." But I missed my children very much. I could not eat food and my tears dropped down on the plate every day. I imagined about the hardship my children faced inside Cambodia, so I became ill.

Reasey: Yes, this is mental problem.

Sarem: Yes, it was mental problem.

Reasey: Were there anyone who did not want to go back when they arrived in China?

Sarem: Yes, I heard about a man who arrived in China and then he heard that people's names were changed in Cambodia. Then he said, "Hmm...if they changed their names like that, how can I find my children?" Therefore, he did not return to Cambodia. I heard people say like that.

Reasey: Did you remember how long it took from China to Cambodia, Phnom Penh?

Sarem: Yes, I think it was about three hours. And we departed from France on January 6th, 1976, and I stayed in China for one night and arrived in Cambodia on January 7th, 1976.

Reasey: January 7th?

Sarem: Before going back to Cambodia, I was eating at the same table with Grandmother Kim, the mother of In Sokan, who was a doctor. At the table, there were his children Mr. In Sophan, who was an engineer, and his wife. Grandmother Kim's daughter was also at the same table with me. There were many kinds of food and especially Chinese buns. I took one bun, because I had not had this kind of bun for a long time. There was no filling inside.

On the plane from France to China, my seat was next to a man named You Tol, he was an infantry soldier. He came from the US. He returned back to Cambodia as well. And on my right hand side across the aisle, there was a woman with one child. I was polite to her and asked, "What is your child's name?" She replied that, "the child's name as a farmer and worker 'chidl, is A-Va, but in the imperialist term, he is called Kosal." I was very shocked. In the plane from China to Cambodia, another woman carried her youngest kid who was about one year old and led by hand the other two children who were about four and five years old. I asked her, "Do you take these small children to Cambodia during this difficult time?" She answered, "If I kept them in France, they all would become imperialists." When I arrived in Cambodia, I knew that she went to Cambodia ahead of her husband. The other woman also went ahead of her husband, the one whom her child's name was Kosal, the imperialist name. When I heard their answer, I considered about the stance of those who returned back to Cambodia. Thank you.

Reasey: When you stepped out of the plane, what did you see?

Sarem: Yes, when the crew told us that we arrived on Cambodian land. I was kind of confused. My body was trembling. Then I changed to wear my skirt because when we met the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and we wore pants, I think it was not appropriate. When I watched through the windows to the ground, I saw a lot of small cottages. I was so doubtful why there were a lot of small cottages. When the plane arrived at Pochentong Airport, it was like the war was just over in the country. There were burnt and abandoned cars left all over. I saw the Khmer Rouge in black clothes. They were cleaning the glass-windows at Pochentong, and there were not many people. We stepped down.

Reasey: Did anyone come to welcome you?

Sarem: Yes, when we walked down, a bus came close to the ladders of the plane. Then they asked us to get into the bus quickly. They allowed us to take only the handbag and they would take the luggage for us.

Reasey: Did they tell you like that?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Where did they take you to from Pochentong?

Sarem: When we got out of Pochentong, we adventurously followed their leading. Then we arrived at Technology school, the technical school donated by Russia. When I arrived there, I saw a lot of people, standing and watching us as we got out of the bus. They wore black clothes. I watched them and it seem I saw some familiar faces, then I tried to recognize some people whom I used to see in France. They arrived there ahead of me. I saw those I used to know. I tried to examine to recall who they were since I felt that I used to know them. For a while later, I recalled that, "Oh! Srey Touch, that little girl was in France in the city of Nice. Her father's name was Svay Hokkhy. She used to be an active child. At that time, she looked so exhausted, sad and dirty". When I walked to the school, I saw another woman named Ms. Dara. I remembered when I submitted my application to FUNK in Paris; I had asked her if she had any news from Reaksmey, her older sister. Reaksmey used to study with me in Literature school in Phnom Penh. At that time, Ms. Dara told me that those in Cambodia were all safe. But now in Technology school, I saw that she had changed a lot. Her face was so sad. She returned to Cambodia with her only child a head of her husband. Ms. Dara was the daughter of the owner of Hong You bookstore. I would like to tell you that her

older sister named Reaksmey (Ly Mony Reaksmey), the daughter of the owner of Hong You bookstore. Raksmei used to be a teacher of Prince Sihanouk's son with " Nak Maneang" Monique, at Damnak Chamkar Moan (Chamkar Morn Residence).

Reasey: How did you feel at that time, Mrs. Neou Sarem?

Sarem: At that time, I felt very mixed up in my body. I did not know what to do. I stayed quiet. I was not so shocked, but I stayed quiet to see what would happen next.

Reasey: At that time, could you talk to the Khmer Rouge?

Sarem: I did not talk because I thought that when I was in France, some old women whose children participated in FUNK said that when they were fully part of FUNK, they did not say anything. They dared not say anything. Therefore, I believed that as I arrived in Cambodia, I was in this group of people, so I stayed quiet and observed what they would do next.

Reasey: What did they order you to do in the first day?

Sarem: When we arrived, while we were waiting for our luggage, I met one of my friends who stayed in the dorm with me at Norodom Secondary School. She came to France to take care of her uterine cancer before Cambodia fell under the Khmer Rouge. When I met her in France, she told me that she would go to Cambodia. Later, I did not see her in France. Her name is Nap Hong Thay. She worked as a teacher. She was the wife of Mr. Ros Pin, who used to teach Khmer language in China in the 1960s. Thay asked me if I brought some Chinese buns with me. I thought, "Hey, she might be crazy that she asked me if I brought along the buns." She said, "the buns from the Chinese restaurant in China; do you bring it with you?" I said, "No, I don't bring it, that buns have no meat inside." Then I realized that she was so hungry. That's why she wanted to have some buns.

Reasey: So after that, in that day, who came to meet you immediately when you arrived there?

Sarem: Yes, there was a real Khmer Rouge leader, not those who joined FUNK in France. This leader came. I remembered his name, comrade Khorn. He came and he called us "Nhom" (the term denoting Buddhist followers). It was so unfamiliar to me, because the word "Nhom" is the monk's word to call his own mother. When comrade Khorn called us "Nhom", I tried to be quiet and did not dare say anything. Then he told us that our luggage would arrive tomorrow. He asked us to be well prepared, and he assigned rooms for us at the compound of Techno Russe University

Reasey: Did they prepare meal for you?

Sarem: Yes, at first, they treated us as guests of Angkar (Organization). They provided us three meals per day for the first two or three days.

Reasey: Did they divide it for you or you could eat as much as you wanted?

Sarem: No, they gave us as ration, but not much. When we first arrived there, we were not much hungry. We did not eat much when we saw that food.

Reasey: How long did you stay at this Russian Technology School?

Sarem: I stayed there since I arrived there in January until May. After Khmer New Year in April when they finished the 17 April celebration, they sent us to another village called Taley village. However, in Technology School, before sending us to do anything at any place outside this Technology School, we had to go through education session and do” Chivak Torsanak Pakdevath “(revolutionary biography”. After that, they would send us to other places. At that time, Khieu Samphan came to teach. Those who arrived first studied first. They opened the education session in the Amphetheater of this technology school. Before attending the study, when I was still the guest of Angkar, a few days after we arrived, one day I walked down the yard I met a man named comrade Try Meng Huot, who used to work at FUNK office in Paris. At that time, I heard him talked about “ Eikareach Mchas Kar “ “independence and self-reliance”. Angkar had a clear line of independence and self-reliance. I felt very tired of these words. I heard the word “independence and self-reliance” almost every day since I came here. Then I said, “Hmm...what the hell is this “Eikareach Mchas Kar, (independence and self-reliance).” Before I came here on 5th January, I had read a French newspaper *Le Monde*. The newspaper reported that foreign countries had tried to donate several tons of medicine to Cambodia, but Angkar rejected it because they stood on the principle of independence and self-reliance, and that if Angkar accepted the medicine, the enemies could penetrate at all means. Therefore, Angkar did not accept donation. Ms. Mona took a package of medicine from a teacher whose name was like Russian name when I boarded the plane from France to China. This teacher used to teach us at University of Literature. He had tendency toward the red. Then I blamed Try Meng Huot, “what’s the damn of this independence and self-reliance? They gave us a lot of medicine and you did not accept it. This action is called “ A koang Kror “(an arrogance of the poor). We are in hardship; we have to accept foreign aid. And you don’t, my children might all die.” I said this at about 9am. And at about 1pm after lunch, when we was relaxing in the room, they knocked on our door and asked us to attend a meeting. They told us where the meeting place was. When we arrived there, there were full of women attending the meeting. At that time, I saw a child soldier carrying a gun dragging to the ground. He pointed the gun at us. At the meeting, they tell us to talk about why you return to Cambodia. They kind of considered us like the CIA agent or KGB agent. Everyone told them what our purposes were and why we returned to Cambodia. Everyone said they came to Cambodia to help build up the country. On my turn, I said that, “For me, I come back to Cambodia because first of all I am Khmer. Secondly, I have two small children, and I feel regretful and guilty that I leave my children to my mother to take care during the hardship. I cannot stay in France; I have to come back and receive the hardship because I gave birth to them. So I have to come back to help my children, and I am afraid that my children may die before I arrive.” Yes, when I said that, and I cried at the same time at that time. And I told them that now I did not know what to do. I said that, “now I arrived in Cambodia, and I give myself to Angkar. It is up to Angkar whether Angkar takes me to boil, to burn or to roast.” Since that time, my room was earsdropped; I doubted so. There were four women in our room: Suon, Vanna and the woman named Thach Chan Moly and myself. Thach Chan Moly was my student when I taught at Lycee d’Application. Moly returned back to Cambodia with her uncle named Tan Im. She had visited her father-in-law named Kun Wich, who worked as a diplomat in Japan. She brought along two of her children with her to visit her father in law. She could not stay in France, so she returned back to Cambodia leaving her children in France. She came back to find her husband. During the meeting, I did not know the meaning of the word “Kacebe” Getting out of the meeting, I asked the others what” Kacebe” meant. Then they explained me that” Kacebe” was like the CIA of Russia, it means KGB. I was also shocked when they talked about intelligence agencies like that. When Vietnam entered Cambodia, Try Meng Huot went back to live in France. He was killed during the 1980s. After the education session, those who had high stance were sent to work outside technology school. One woman named Poc Yanine went to

work outside with factory workers to dig and deliver soil. Later on, her husband whose name is Khék Kravanh arrived. One day in my room, Ms. Suon cried loudly and said that why our country became like that. Then we three said that “why don’t you know anything? We already know that our country turns into that.” Suon said, “I know, but I don’t know that it turns into this way.” We tried to encourage Suon to strengthen her spirit not to be weak; otherwise, it would cause danger. Before sending us to anywhere, they would open education session. When we walked into the Russian technology school to study, they asked us to walk like the monks walking to beg for food. At that time, Khieu Samphan taught us. I was very shocked because he wore black clothes. The pants were not the French pants. It was the trousers that look like a pajamas used for night sleep and a black shirt and he also wore” a Krama “(a Khmer scarf) around the neck, the same thing we see Khmer Rouge cadres wore. But we had never ever seen that so I was so startled. I used my hands to cover my mouth. I kept looking at him he was wearing the sandals made from car tire. I really didn’t understand. During the study, Suon rushed back and forth. He sat down and listened and then he walked outside. She frequently got in and out. I felt so scared.

Reasey: Because you used to see Khieu Samphan before in normal clothes, right?

Sarem: I had never seen him personally, but we thought those who work in Cambodia would wear French trousers or other kinds and wear a “ chemise” normal shirt. We had never seen that kind of clothes.

Reasey: At that time, did you know Khieu Samphan clearly?

Sarem: I don’t know Mr. Khieun Samphan personally. But I knew that in the past he was a Member of Parliament representing Sa-ang, Koh Thom. He was very well known as Parliament member who is of being uncorrupted and single, living with his mother. Everyone in Phnom Penh knew that he was beaten and naked near Yu Kunthor high school during Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime. When he disappeared, there was a rumor that Mr. Khieu Samphan was arrested by the police or intelligence and put into a container of acid. At that period, some people made a joke that the Chinese who wanted to bribe the high-ranking Khmer officials in Cambodia by calling them “A lauk, A lauk”. Mr. Khieu Samphan is well known that he had never accepted bribe money from the Chinese. I heard that in the past.

Reasey: Was this the first time that you saw his face?

Sarem: Yes, that the first time, I saw him face to face. He stood on the stage. On our floor, there were a lot of former high-ranking people such as Phung Ton, Grandfather Chouk Moeng Mao,(cultural attaché of the Lon Nol’s government), and another man named Tes Saravuth, a teacher. I thought that when “Mr. Khieu Samphan came to teach us, he might come to greet Mr. Phung Ton because Mr. Phung Ton used to be Rector of University in Cambodia and he was an elite official at the same generation of Mr. Khieu Samphan.” But he did not greet him.

Reasey: What did Mr. Khieu Samphan teach about?

Sarem: They taught us to understand about the revolution. They said the revolution started from” bare hands” from nothing. They had fought and struggled against America with bare hands. Khieu Samphan emphasized that the huge victory of farmers and workers forces was that the revolutionary soldiers had fought and squeezed the enemy’s neck by cutting” Peam A Teav communication not to allow the enemies to transport everything in and out Phnom Penh. He said they squeezed the enemy’s neck in Phnom Penh. He said the situation

in Phnom Penh was so fragile like the straw under the sun in the dry season of April. It would be burnt out by a small touch. They taught us to acknowledge that the farmer and worker class had a big virtue on the revolution. They said about the heroism of the low-level class, those who did not have land, because they had sent their children one after another to serve the revolutionary organization. Moreover, low-level farmer had honest stance on the revolution. They talked about their own struggle to fight the American enemies. Some night they did not dare to set fire, not to allow fume to drift into the air. Therefore, the struggle was so tense and so suffering as we listened. Khieu Samphan emphasized about the high morality of the revolutionary soldiers. They never touched people's properties, even one pepper, a grain of salt or a piece of thread. They always requested for these things from people. Khieu Samphan said that now we "Chak smok at base of the palm tree, not at the top" (we produced boxes made from palm leaves at the base of the palm tree, not at the top of the palm tree). And this revolution was achieved 40 years before the plan. He said, "We have already printed money. We can use money at any time."

Reasey: He compared about the trunk and the top of the palm tree because he meant that now they had real practice not just dream like before, right?

Sarem: In the past, we said that palm-leave-box maker at the top of the palm tree dreamt of becoming rich and having a lot of servants. When he got angry with his servants, he might kick the servants, and then he fell down from the palm tree.

Reasey: This means that the Khmer Rouge revolution had been achieved, right?

Sarem: Yes, it was like they had a real and strong foundation. They were at the base of the palm tree and would never fall down.

The Khmer Rouge divided farmers into rich farmers, middle farmers, middle lower farmer, poor farmers and poor lower farmers. The revolutionary organization also divided the educated people such as intellectual class and student class. Students who had a lot of knowledge would be considered as intellectuals, and those who had less education would be categorized as sub-intellectuals. They explained to us about the stance of the intellectual group. Those who had high education did not have strong stance. "They are weak and are afraid of tiredness."

Khieu Samphan also talked about the solution toward Yuon (Vietnamese people) in Kampuchea when the Khmer Rouge evacuated people from the cities to live in the countryside to do farming. He said "Vietnamese people said they did not know how to do farming. They know only how to sell *Banh Hoi*" (a Vietnamese dish consisting of rice vermicelli woven into intricate bundles and often topped with chopped scallions or garlic chives sautéed in oil). Khieu Samphan said that all people in Kampuchea had to do farming. Those who did not know how to do farming, especially the Vietnamese, would be sent back to Vietnam. So the Khmer Rouge had prepared a plan to send the Vietnamese back to Vietnam. They prepared food and sent them back by boats. Khieu Samphan said this problem would be solved easily. He emphasized that revolutionary organization made efforts of all means to make sure that people have the ration of 15" thaing"(2 thaing, equal to 15 kilos of rice) of rice per year. They asked us to try to produce three tons of rice per hectare. They planned to produce rice in many seasons. They had a slogan saying: "Having rice means having everything." He stressed that, "people in the revolutionary society have equal knowledge." I don't believe on that point that people could have equal knowledge.

Reasey: How long did Khieu Samphan teach you and others who just came back from France?

Sarem: It was a three-day study, and Khieu Samphan taught only one day. When he finished, he wished that those who returned back to the country would find happiness in the new regime.

Reasey: After Khieu Samphan taught, did you have chance to ask him outside classroom session?

Sarem: No one dared to ask him anything. After finishing up the study, he went out with no sense of warm welcome. Everyone listened; no one asked.

Reasey: Who came to teach next?

Sarem: Yes, there was another one, named comrade Phum. I didn't know who he was. He was still young. He continued the teaching for the other two days. He taught us about cooperatives which were established in 1973 in Cambodia. Before stepping to establish cooperatives, they created mutual aid teams in liberated zones, which meant they help each other to do harvesting or picking up beans. Moreover, they took land from those who had big land and could not do farming on all land. They would put this land for collective use in the community. In 1973, as I remembered, they created cooperatives, and they put all properties for collective use. They did farming collectively. When the Khmer Rouge won total victory, comrade Phum said, "Now, we control Cambodia, and the achievement that we have to fight to build up our country is we have to produce three tons of rice per hectare by the model of the revolutionary speed of North Korea called "Chollima" the speed of (the mythical winged horse)".

Reasey: How many people stayed at technology school?

Sarem: Yes, a lot, hundreds.

Reasey: Did they all come from France or also from other countries?

Sarem: They all came from France because in order to enter China, they had to enter France first. The Khmer Rouge had a mission office in France. They would change our passports to FUNK's passport. Those who returned back mostly were members of FUNK. FUNK was Prince Sihanouk's front cooperating with the Khmer Rouge to fight Lon Nol's regime. Besides this, those who came from Besançon like me were those who wanted to meet their children. However, some people who lived in France and whose wives came back to give birth in Cambodia before the country fell also returned back and the soldiers who went to study in Thailand, also returned back because they missed their girlfriend.

Reasey: For you, the reason that you returned to Cambodia was to meet your children and husband. But what was about the others who came back to Cambodia? Did they want to meet their children or want to help the country?

Sarem: As I observed, members of the FUNK, the front of Prince Sihanouk collaborating with the Khmer Rouge, dared even take their small children back to Cambodia with them. They went ahead of their husband. They looked forward to the positions in the Khmer Rouge regime. The three of us including me had the same purpose. We wanted to meet our husband and children. And Mr. An the man who came with us also had the same intention. He could no longer stay in France. He was sick and was sent to the hospital. When he arrived, the Khmer Rouge took him to live in Dei Kraham, and he disappeared forever.

Among those who returned were old men and women, who escaped to France from war and whose children joined FUNK. These people also returned, for example, Grandmother Kim, Mr. In Sokan's mother. Another couple was parents of Mr. Try Vann. He joined as a member of the FUNK. The other one went to France with her husband, who was a doctor. But she returned alone to find her children. Her name was Thaach, who was a teacher. Thaach's husband's name was Ho Sinrong. But Thaach could not survive. Ieng Sary's mother-in-law, (mother of Ieng Thearith) and Khieu Thearith, (sister of Ieng Thearith) also returned to Cambodia from Germany. Among those who returned were also many military officers. These officers usually came from the US. Another one used to study with me in Norodom Secondary School from grade 6 to grade 3(in French system). Her name was Hem Maly. Her husband's name was Bun Bengly. She went to France and joined FUNK with her husband. She was so shocked when she heard the Khmer Rouge call Pol Pot's name when she arrived in Cambodia. She came to talk to me, "why there is a name Pol Pot. I have never heard of that name." I said, "Please don't talk to me about the names of those who do revolution in the Khmer Rouge organization. I don't know anyone. I come to this country only to meet my children. I don't care about the politicians who are promoted or demoted. It is their business, not my business.

Especially, another one was the wife of a FUNK member who was a diplomat in Russia. She returned back with three children. Her son named Mony. The daughter named Roth. The other daughter, the smallest one, named Vivath. Vivath called herself Vivathka, like Russian name. Vivath did not know much Khmer language. The diplomat wife had relatives who arrived from France ahead of her. But she had a row with her relatives. They were like her nephews or nieces. Later I heard that she was taken out of technology school without her three children. I heard people say that she called the Khmer Rouge who transported materials back and forth in camions on the road in front of technology school: "These people are like the Choa Haroay, the five hundreds thieves". I heard people said she had called the Khmer rouge like that. Later at BoeungTrabk we saw a light skin man, a new returnee. People said this guy was the father of Mony, Roth and Vivath. When he arrived, he asked his children where their mother was. The children said: "WE don't know. Angkar took her away." Later we didn't see him at Boeung Trabek. Only the three children were left behind with us until Vietnam invaded Cambodia. The tree kids escaped with me.

Some of returnees were servants of the diplomats. These people rarely survived as I thought. Only Grandmother Yem survived when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey for raising all these questions.

Reasey: Yes, you mentioned that when you were staying at Russian-Khmer relationship technology school, they required you to write "Chivaktoasanak Pakdevath" a revolutionary biography. Can you explain what the revolutionary biography means?

Sarem: Yes, the "Chivaktoasanak Pakdevath" or revolutionary biography was collected after studying with Khieu Samphan and with the other guy named comrade Phum for three days. They gathered women and put them in one group. Each person was asked to write a biography in detail and then read it out to all members of the group. After each of us finished reading our biography, all members of our group would raise questions to you to know you better; who you are and what is your stance in the new society.

Reasey: How many hours or days did they allow you to write biography and to do this query session?

Sarem: After writing, they would set a date to do the query session, which was one entire day.

Reasey: How many days did they give you to write the biography?

Sarem: Not long, about two days.

Reasey: Did they ask you to write by hand or by typewriter?

Sarem: There was no typewriter. We wrote by hand and read it out to others.

Reasey: What about when you were in France before returning back? Did they ask you to write something?

Sarem: Yes, they had already asked us to write and describe who we were, etc.

Reasey: You didn't write it in details?

Sarem: Right, not in details. In details mean describing even when we were young, who our contacts was and what we did, where we studied, etc. This was what it meant in details.

Reasey: After you finished writing and reading, those who returned from France could also ask you, right?

Sarem: Yes, everyone who was in the same group could ask. We took turn to read our own biographies. When I finished reading mine, they asked me questions.

Reasey: Were you frightened when you read?

Sarem: When I decided to return to Cambodia, I considered myself as like a dead person already. I was no longer afraid of death, I told the truth. After I finished reading my biography, they asked me questions.

Reasey: What's about the KR cadres? What did they ask you?

Sarem: Those who returned with me and who were on the same plane with me asked a lot of questions to me. I remembered the first question which was asked by Ms. Eit, Ava's mother, who was a nurse asked that, "Why didn't you join the FUNK when you arrived in France?" I replied that, "How can I join the FUNK if I don't like the regime that holds power hereditarily." And I added that, "I did not have money to go to do politics in France. I went to France because I got scholarship from French government, I had sent the money of my scholarship to Cambodia to support my family because in Cambodia we became poor as a result of war. If I wanted to get involved in politics, I wouldn't have to go to France. I can ride a motorbike to liberated zone."

Reasey: What did FUNK stand for?

Sarem: It was the National United Front of Kampuchea, established by Prince Sihanouk.

Reasey: How many parties were there in FUNK? Do you remember?

Sarem: FUNK included Khmer Rouge and Prince Sihanouk, fighting with the Lon Nol's clique.

Reasey: After asking all of these questions, what else did they do?

Sarem: Yes, I would like to finish the previous question. Then Ms. Eit asked me, "Why didn't you go to the liberated zone? If it cost only 12 Riel by motor-cart." I said, "Why I have to go to the liberated zone since the refugees from liberated zone said that the liberated zone was full of Yuon Viet Cong!" Ms. Eit told me that, "Don't call them Yuon Viet Cong. Call them comrade Vietnam." I said, "If they are Yuon-Viet Cong, they are still Yuon-Viet Cong." The other one named Chhay Han Tek. She was the sister of pharmacist Chhay Han Seng. She returned to Cambodia with her husband and children. Her husband was a doctor. She asked me, "Your skin is yellow and your nose is dull. So what is the use of becoming a French teacher?" I said, "I work as a French teacher because I like working as a French teacher. I think this is a career. So working as French teacher is easier than as a Khmer teacher. If I work as Khmer teacher, I criticize the society and it affects others. Therefore, I worked as a French teacher and teach "E. U"; it is easy. It does not bring any problem and this also helps the country because we need French teachers, and I teach French. So I help in terms of finance. The government does not have to hire teachers from France a lot, which charges a lot of money." Another one named Yem Youk Siv. She was also a "doctor en pharmacie". She asked, "Are you ashamed of the others? In France we saw the pictures on the newspapers shown the bodies of Vietnamese floated in the river? The Lon Nol's soldiers had shot them (the Vietnamese) out of the boat in Chrouy Chanvar?" I said, "I was not in the rank of leadership to decide on anything. So I cannot do anything. But as a human being, if we kill the others for the sake of killing, it is an immoral act. But at that time, I heard people said that, they arrested the Vietnamese and put them in the boat. One Vietnamese boy wanted to pee that night, and he asked the guard to find a place to pee. Then there was chaos. The soldiers were frightened and shot. Then the dead bodies fell into the river. The other one Ms. Duong Dara Mony. She asked me, "Why my last name is different from the others in my family? How many step-wives does my father have?" I said, "My father does not have a step-wife. His first name is my last name. The other siblings of mine used my grandfather's name as their last name. That's why we have different last names." Then she continues that, "If you want to come to Cambodia to meet your children. What happen if your children die? What do you think?" I said, "If all my children died, I have to love something with high value in life." Ms. Doung Dara Mony said I had good biography. "So you have to try to build up your behavior in order to find happiness in the new society." After leaving the meeting, one person said something about Viet Cong. She said: "My mother was in Takeo. Sometimes, the Viet Cong came under her house. They came to brush off cow dung under the house." Then I asked her: "Wasn't your mother doubtful? Why did the Viet Cong, who eat their own rice, come to serve you voluntarily? Have you ever thought that they wanted something?"

Reasey: After finishing the revolutionary biography, what happened next?

Sarem: After finishing, they put us into "pourk" or unit in the communist way. Three or four units could be formed into one "Krom" or group. We, the three of us who came back from Besancon France, were in the same pourk or unit. There were the other two women (Suon and Vanna) and our chief of unit whose name was Poc Mona and me. Mona was also a French teacher like me. She went to France and joined the FUNK. Her husband had high position in FUNK. One day later, they abolished our group because while they talked about the stance of being economical, Suon, who was from Besançon like me, said she had not destroy anything yet today, and she also didn't know how to be economical either. Suon pointed at me and said that I was so economical and that I always picked up whatever things I

saw and saved it. But for her today she had not destroyed anything yet. By just saying this, our unit was abolished the next day.

Reasey: Did you know what the purpose of dividing people into group was?

Sarem: Yes, as I understood, they wanted us to educate ourselves, and to look at ourselves, to criticize ourselves to adapt to the communist ideology. We have to practice criticism and self-criticism after work. In the evening, we all had to attend the meeting. They asked us to talk about what we saw as inappropriate and what we had not fulfilled in accordance to their revolutionary principles. It was also about how we missed our children and what is our psychological condition, our state of mind, our depression etc.

Reasey: Did they hold criticism and self-criticism meeting very often?

Sarem: Yes, every evening.

Reasey: Oh, every evening after finishing work, right?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Was the work they assigned hard?

Sarem: Yes, we were divided into units. Sometimes, they assigned us to cook rice, so we cooked rice. We cooked rice with a giant pan, and we were not used to cooking rice with these huge pans, but we had to try and we could manage to do it. We dared not make the rice spoiled or too burning; otherwise, we would have problem, or they would accuse us of being an enemy.

Reasey: Was that in 1976?

Sarem: Yes, it was in 1976. I arrived in early January.

Reasey: At that time, they did not have communal eating yet. So why did you have to cook a lot of rice?

Sarem: We lived there, so we had to eat communally before those who lived in the countryside because we did not have rice, pans. We came back from France, so they put us in a camp, the camp for those who returned from France, as a collective.

Reasey: Talking about cooking rice, did you cook for all the people there?

Sarem: Yes, we cooked for all people there.

Sarem: Yes

Reasey: Did they give you enough food?

Sarem: First we had rice. Then they asked us to mix rice with banana. They boiled banana, sliced them into pieces, and dried them. These were used during the war- time. But they had extra, so they allowed us to eat.

Reasey: Did you go to work on the rice field yet at that time?

Sarem: , First, they taught us to prepare land to plant vegetable, to dig soil and to learn how to carry water because we knew only carrying water on the head not on shoulders. As we carried water, the carrying stick was on the back of our neck not on our shoulders.

Reasey: Yes, it was so difficult. Do they teach you during the study session?

Sarem: Yes, and they asked us to produce number one fertilizer.

Reasey: When they taught you to do these things, did they shout at you or tell you gently?

Sarem: They did not shout because we all were those who returned back from France. Some people did not know how to do anything; those who came from France, especially children of the rich families did not know how to do anything.

Reasey: But those who taught you were Khmer Rouge teaching you how to do the rice field chore or to prepare seedlings, right?

Sarem: Yes, when we transplanted, we prepared land. They took away water hyacinth and taught us to transplant. They did not harm us or shout at us. They showed us how to transplant and to hold seedlings and how to step. It was not difficult to learn what we could see.

Reasey: So did you sleep at the same place?

Sarem: Yes, I slept at the same place in our room.

Reasey: At that time, did anyone dare to ask when could they go to meet their families?

Sarem: At that time, I did not ask, but some people tried to search for the information and they told me that the revolutionary Khmer Rouge cadres from the villages said that, in Chinese revolution so far, some people had not found their relatives yet. I said, "For those who could not find their relatives yet, it meant that their relatives had already died. If they could not find any until 1975 or 1976, this meant that they were all dead."

Reasey: Did you feel tense at that time in waiting like this because your main purpose was to meet the family? But within months of your arrival, you still could not meet your family yet. Was it hard?

Sarem: Yes, It was very hard, I was very depressed, but I dared not ask because I did not like those people to criticize me. At that time, Ieng Sary's mother-in-law was also like me. She liked standing and looking to the road in front of that technology school. I stood and looked at the road because I felt very depressed. I had nothing to look at, but the road. The old woman, Ieng Sary mother's in law, as teacher Thearath, her daughter told me. Her mother stood and kept watching the road because she wanted to see if a car came. She was waiting for her daughter, teacher Ponnary, Saloth Sar's wife or Thearith, Ieng Sary's wife; she was waiting if these people came to see her". It was like she was so worried. She asked me, "Why don't you have children like the others?" I said, "I came here alone. My children and husband are inside the country." Then, she said, "Why they harm you like this?" Her daughter, teacher

Thearith and I knew each other. We taught at the same school. She trained the students to become teachers and I taught young children.

Reasey: Ieng Sary's mother-in-law?

Sarem: Yes, Ieng Sary's mother-in-law, the mother of teacher Thearith.

Reasey: How old was Ieng Sary's mother-in-law? Do you remember?

Sarem: Yes, she was old. I think she was about 70 years old. She was old.

Reasey: Didn't she have any position in the political leadership?

Sarem: She was just a returnee like other old women. But what was special about her was that she had children who held high positions in the country. Teacher Thearith, her daughter, told me that, "My mother, when she arrived at Pochentong airport, she waited for her children such as teacher Ponnary and teacher Thearith, if they came to pick her up at Pochentong airport." In contrast, she saw only the people who used to work for her and later joined the Khmer Rouge. These people came to pick her up at the airport". She asked, "Where are your aunts?" Then they replied, " They are busy." And the Chinese doctors who accompanied her back to Cambodia had also waited for her children who were the Khmer Rouge leaders would come to see them. The Chinese doctors who had waited too long, flew back to China.

Reasey: Oh, so they even ignored their own relatives?

Sarem: Yes, they did not come to pick her up, but when she lived in technology school, I saw people brought her food very often. Some time they brought a big piece of pork for her. Then she said she could not eat alone because she saw the others did not have anything to eat. Therefore, she put the pork for collective food. We cooked food and gave some to her.

Reasey: Did she live separately from the others or together?

Sarem: Three of us (Suon, Vanna and myself) lived next to her room. When she had special food like fruits, she gave us one or two.

Reasey: Did she tell you about her story and Mr. Ieng Sary?

Sarem: We did not talk about that. As I saw her, she was the person who believed in religion and honest. One day, teacher Thearith was in the kitchen. She told me that her mother had sold gold and diamond jewelries in the past. She sold it from house to house. She had made a lot of profit so later on she dared not make too much profit from the others. She marked down the price because she was afraid of sins. And that day teacher Thearith told me that, "They started the revolution in Paris, and you and I we came to get re-educate here." At that time, Mr. Chhouk Moeng Mao was sitting in the kitchen shack with us. He asked Suon that, "Where do you come from?" Suon replied that her husband was in Kampot province. He said that, "Oh, we are from the same hometown. When they allow us to find our relatives, we go there together." At that day, Mr. Chhouk Moeng Mao said that, "A lot of people from agricultural school have come back, but not many teachers." I told him that, "We did not ask each other to come back. We came back by our own decision. At the day that Mr. Chhouk Moeng Mao came to sit in the kitchen shack, we took tools to clean at a nearby pond. As we

carried heavy tools and we were tired, I said that, “We were so tired every day. We don’t have anything to eat, except watery rice porridge.” Mr. Chhouk Moeng Mao said that, “Oh, this is our country. Please don’t complain.” A moment later, he slipped himself and fell down from his chair. We all laughed. He also laughed.

The granddaughter of Ieng Sary mother’s in law came to visit her often. I did not know Ieng Sary daughter, but Moly, my former student, knew Ieng Sary daughter. Moly was her classmate. Moly would say, “Ieng Sary’s daughter comes to visit her grandmother again!”

Reasey: But Ieng Sary never visited her, right?

Sarem: We never saw him coming. Ieng Sary mother’s-in-law stayed with us for a while then she was taken away with her daughter (Khieu Thearath). Later on, when we came to live in Boeung Trabek, Grandma Kim, mother of doctor In Sokan, asked Ieng Sary the day he came to meet us at Boeung Trabek. She asked, “Nephew, are grandmother and Ms. Thearath fine?” Then Ieng Sary replied that, “The enemy made Ms. Thearath hard to stay alive.” Later on, we heard a rumor that she was killed or committed suicide. We did not know for sure. This happened when we were at Boeung Trabek. Thearith was my English teacher at Norodom Secondary School, and Ponnary was my Khmer literature teacher at Sisovath High School.

Reasey: Mrs. Neou Sarem was a teacher, not a member of FUNK who returned from France. And the reason that you returned to Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge regime was not to support them. Is that right?

Sarem: Yes, I did not support the FUNK. But when we wanted to go back to Cambodia, they required us to write a request letter to them, which was like supporting them, the letter that I said I could not write.

Reasey: Did the Khmer Rouge trust you? Did you feel that they spied on you and all your activities?

Sarem: Yes, when I arrived at technology school, The Khmer Rouge, the FUNK’s members, that allowed me to go back, knew who I was. They allowed us to go back because while Mr. Ieng Sary went to France after the Khmer Rouge took power, I heard people say that Mr. Ieng Sary had told those in France, members of FUNK, that:” anyone who wished to return to the country would be permitted to go back. They would go back as the “Moha Chun, the ordinary people “ like I said before I am a Moar Chun. Therefore, they knew who I am.

Reasey: So they did not trust you much?

Sarem: Right, as I observed, they did not allow us to be a core member in their place, but most people who went back were members of FUNK. They joined the FUNK since the war against Lon Nol. As I could see, they used us the same way. They asked us to do the same work. They asked us to cook rice, dig soil, and prepare land to plant vegetable and transplant rice, the same as the FUNK’s members. But we could not be chiefs, something like that. Suon was asked to carry urine downstairs from our room every day. We had toilets downstairs on the ground, so they mixed urine, stool, ash and water hyacinth to produce number one fertilizer. Then we learned to prepare land to plant vegetable. At that time, we dug soil, and the soil appeared in big pieces, so we had to make it into small pieces in order to prepare the land. During the soil digging, I was so angry with the Khmer Rouge. I saw the Khmer Rouge drove Chinese experts in many cars from Pochentong to work in Phnom Penh.

In contrast, those of us who came back from France and who were intellectuals were not allowed to work as professionals. We were in the camps. When I pounded the soil into pieces, I cursed them. This regime was the regime that gave value to the foreigner more than Khmer intellectuals.

For us, after they broke up our “pourk” or unit “that Mona was the chief, they put us in a “pourk led by Mrs. Eit. Our unit included myself, Suon, Vanna, and Am. I called her” Bong Am”, (older sister). She was the servant of Phan Bouy Hak, who used to be a rector of law school. Ms. Am told me that members of the FUNK in Paris helped liberate her from serving as a servant of Mr. Phan Bouy Hak. They took her to live with them. Ms. Am was very cunning and skillful in stealing. One day in our group, she told the chief of the group, Ms. Mona, that she wanted to wash tablecloths. She wanted to sterilize it to get rid of germ. Ms. Mona allowed her to do so. Ms. Am Instead of boiling the tablecloths, she boiled potatoes under it. She stole potatoes at night, boiled and gave me some. I told her that, “Don’t take potatoes to me. I don’t want it.” She said to me that, “Skinny lady, if you don’t take things like this to eat, you will die before you can find your children.” I said that I did not want her to steal things like that; she might be taken for execution. She said that they arrested and killed her “only if you, skinny lady, report to them.” She didn’t only steal that. She even stole milk powder from those who had small children. I tried to explain to her not to think that she was in the servant class and they would forgive her. Whenever Ms. Eit, our unit leader, criticized us, Ms. Am always pinched me. Ms. Eit liked to say that wherever she went, she would always bring her peasant class with her. Ms. Am, at that time just kicked me from under the table. Leaving the meeting, she said that, “what’s the damn of farmer and worker class. They are all imperialists.” Later, Ms. Am was taken to Dei Kraham area and we had never seen her return forever. Talking about Kun Bun-serey, who was a friend of my husband; one day, I saw him carrying Ms. Moly from the pond behind the school to the house. Moly was drowned. At that time, I was so trembling seeing him carrying women during the Khmer Rouge. It was so scary. From that time, Mr. Kun Bun-Serey told Ms. Moly that, “ If you want to do anything you wish to do, just do it because we come to live with no freedom and nothing. Therefore, we should do whatever we wish to do, not to regret.” I told Ms. Moly that, “don’t do anything carelessly, or they will take you for execution with no reason.” Mr. Kun Bun-Serey went to work outside and sometimes brought back sugarcane. He cut it into small pieces and gave us some. One day, he told us that, “When I walked to work, I heard Khmer Rouge women who worked at the rail road said that:” Oh at technology school, a lot of people from France are living there. These people may think that they return and will be able to work in bureau. They said that it is impossible.”

Ms. Mona, who was the chief of our group, got her face full of charcoal’s dust when we were cooking. Every time she went into the kitchen and came back, her face was full of black charcoal. Her skirt always touched the pan. I told her that, “Mona, you don’t have to worry about cooking rice. I will help you. Don’t worry that the rice won’t be properly cooked.” We tried to cook good rice because we saw her look worried and so scared. We didn’t know whether she applied charcoal on her face or she was not used to do this work and the black stain got on her face and skirt. One day, when we were cooking, I took fish to clean at the pond near the kitchen. I saw snails. I was so hungry all the time, but I tried to withstand. I did not show and let the others know about this. I picked up a few snails and put them into the stove to cook. They were overcooked. I tried to get them out to eat. My mouth was full of dirt and charcoal. And sometimes when I went to clean fish, I also caught small shrimps and I ate them raw.

Reasey: In what year did Prince Sihanouk resign from his position in the Khmer Rouge government? At that time, were you already inside Cambodia?

Sarem: Yes, as I remember, it was in April 1976. One day, I was in the communal kitchen. I was asked to cook rice. Then a person asked us like he wanted to do a survey. He asked us in the kitchen that: "If Prince Sihanouk retired, what would you all think?" At that time, I was so doubtful. I thought why they asked us about this. I replied, "This is Angkar's business. I don't know anything. I just return to the country to meet my children."

Reasey: What did you think? Why did they ask you like that?

Sarem: From what I understood, they wanted to test us and see our reaction.

Reasey: But you did not have any information related to this issue, right?

Sarem: After asking us like this, a few days later they convened a meeting. They used the term "meeting" fluently. The meeting was held under the house that we stayed. Then they played a recording speech of Mr. Khieu Samphan, saying that Prince Sihanouk retired, and they talked about the good deed of the Prince who helped liberate the country and the revolution of Democratic Kampuchea. I remember only some words in which I was interested. Mr. Khieu Samphan said: "Prince Sihanouk is the patriotic King." Another one that I remember well was that, "They gave Prince Sihanouk \$8,000 pension fund for him to spend because he had done good things for the revolution. Now he is retired, so he has \$8,000 pension fund per year."

Reasey: What were about other FUNK members who lived close to you? What were their reactions?

Sarem: After listening to the speech, some people had stood up to give their impression. I was so shocked because unexpectedly they raised their hands and said, "Phdach Nga, Phdach Nga!" "Determined!!!" I didn't know what to do and where to raise my hand.

Reasey: What were they "determined" about?

Sarem: They were determined to build up the country, after the Prince got retired. They were determined to lead the country forward. As I saw, some people were good at propaganda. At that time, they got up and said: "determined!" But I was not used to that, so I did not know what to do.

Reasey: How did you feel in your mind when you heard that Prince Sihanouk was retired? Did you think the condition would be worse or better?

Sarem: I didn't care about who held power at that time. I tried in whatever means I could to survive as I went back to the country to make sure I survived to meet my children. We could not do anything on whoever took power and whoever resigned from power. I returned to the country in order to meet my children, to make sure they allowed me to go back and meet my children, and that's it.

Reasey: With regards to your children, during the period that you were living in technology school, did they give you information about the date or when you can meet them?

Sarem: No, and I also didn't want to ask because as I observed, they did not care about whether you met your children or not. I thought like that. But those who lived near me often told me that, "You don't have to worry. You just look at children in our camp. Children eat three times a day, morning, afternoon and evening. Angkar pays attention to children first."

Yes, I listened. I saw children eat more than we did, and we cooked more rice for children. But I saw children around me were hungry. But I always thought that, “We may not have enough food to eat because we are in the city.” I thought like that, and if my children were not dead during the evacuation, and if they went to my hometown in Kien Svay, I think they would be able to survive because we had farms. There were plenty of foods unlike in Phnom Penh. I was always afraid that my mother went to Pursat because she was from Pursat. I believed that if my family went to Pursat, they had little hope because there were not plenty of fruit over there. During the flooding season in Pursat, trees fell down. I thought like that. I tried to control myself in order to survive. (End of 2nd Audio, page 22).

Reasey: Some people who came from France as you mentioned before brought children with them. Were they allowed to live with their family members at that time?

Sarem: Yes, those who came with us at the time we stayed at technology school, they did not separate them from their children.

Reasey: So they lived together and saw each other every day, right?

Sarem: Yes, I would like to tell you that, two of the children whom the KR assigned me to take care of were the children of Ms. Moch i.e. [princess] Norodom Eiravadei, or Moch who came from Beijing of China. Her two sons, their nick names: Chhit Chhit and Teen Toon ; her husband’s name was Ngo Pin, who worked in China as FUNK’s representative. Moch brought her two sons to the country ahead of her husband. Chhit Chhit and Teen Toon loved to play on the ground very much. Among the children there was one when he was not happy with us, he ran to hit his head on the pillar. Then we rushed to catch him because we were afraid that he would break his head. I asked if anyone knew of this child and why he had different attitude from the other children. He hurt himself. Then one person said that Voha always did like that. In France, his mother had tied him up, when she wanted to go out and no one took care of him, she tied him up.

Reasey: How old was he?

Sarem: He was small. He was about 2 to 4 years old. He returned with his father. The mother did not return with them. I asked why the mother did not return to Cambodia, that person said Voha’s mother had just said yes with her husband but when it was time to board the plane, she was not there. So her husband came back with the child. Voha’s father, upon arriving in Cambodia, worked on the field to cut grass, and he always dressed up neatly. Some hungry children had stolen toothpaste to eat. I was told that children in the countryside had plenty of food to eat. But children from France, the son and daughter of Mr. Chhim Khet, seemed to have shrunk down somewhat (Mr. Chhim Khet was a member of parliament during Samdech Sihanouk’s regime. He came to France and joined the FUNK. Mr. Chhim Khet returned to the country with his wife and their two children). The daughter named No and the son named Ko. They were about 10 and 11 years old. I never saw them in France. Immediately when I arrived in Cambodia, I saw them. No and Ko were beautiful. A few months later, they became like small kids. They did not have enough food.

Reasey: At first, their skin was fair, right?

Sarem: Their skin was like a person growing into their teenage age.

Reasey: In the KR regime, the KR raised the status of children. But were children from abroad allowed to study or had any other study activities different from adults?

Sarem: When I was in technology school I didn't remember clearly about class for kids. But in Taley, they taught children under one house every day after lunch. Some children from France did not know Khmer. But when they arrived, they tried to learn. I saw children try very hard. They seemed to know the revolutionary words a lot. Sometimes we tested them. When we saw them wearing trousers, we stripped their trousers off, they said, "Be careful. You could make moral mistake."

Reasey: Yes, children learned language quickly.

Sarem: One girl, her mother called her Ayo, Ayo, the one that her mother carried her aboard the plane. She has two other older siblings. Her brother was Ayi; and her sister was Aya. Ayo did not like me because I had shouted at her once when she played with the door. When she saw me, she turned away. I tried to comfort her so that she trusted me again. She liked Vanna more than me. The three children Ayo, Ayi, Aya, whose mother's name was Ly Mony Vanna and their father was Teav Vino, the architect. Ms. Ly Mony Vanna brought the children back to Cambodia ahead of her husband. Some children asked their mothers to return to France just for a very short time to take candies and then they would come back. Bang Am, who used to be a servant of Mr. Phan Bouy Hak, did not like to look after children. She usually said she preferred to prepare land to plant potatoes. She said these children were not the children of the "Vannak Akthun" or of the very poor families; they were all children of the imperialists. (I would like to correct the part on Mr. Phan Bouy Hak in part 11. He was not the director of Law School. He was the director of Faculty of Sciences.)

Reasey: I would like to ask you that you used to mention about food. They prepared food and shared. Communal eating was introduced to those who went back at that time, right?

Sarem: Yes, at that time, we cooked rice in the large wok. As I told you, the rice was mixed with dried thin slices of banana. Later on, we did not have hard cooked rice but porridge. The porridge was mixed with vegetables and was very watery.

Reasey: As I remember people in the countryside, those who were evacuated, started to have communal eating in 1977. But for your group who returned from France, they started before that time, right?

Sarem: Yes, when we arrived, we did not have rice with us to cook. We had brought a lot of medicine. But we ate communally; they gave us rice to cook and share.

Reasey: You mentioned about medicine. Did they allow you to use or required you to share all together?

Sarem: Yes, when we arrived and after our revolutionary biography, the Khmer Rouge thought that we understood what they did in their regime. They tried to brainwash us so that we gave up our "Kamaset" or our belongings. When I first arrived, I did not know Khmer Rouge terminology. They asked us to give up ours" Kamaset" ours belongings like medicine and clothes that we brought with us. They said the least you have the easiest to build up yourselves. So we had to give up our possessions. They criticized us in every meeting. They always talk about reduction of our belongings. So we knew that we had to cede it to conform to their principles. If we didn't cede it, they would say we had " Kamaset Kras, means you are very sticky to yours belongings". They had criticized harshly the one who is very sensitive or had bad-tempered. They criticized me a lot. They said I was an individual with " Bokul Kras "I said, the word " Bokul " is usually used to refer to dead body like the

corpse in the house before the cremation. So why do you say” I have a Bokul Kras ” (I am not a corpse). They explained that “Bokul Kras” means I had an excessive self-valued: it was very hard for me to accept criticism. I always responded to their criticism. According to KR principal when they criticized you, you were not allowed to respond. But I sometimes could not withstand it.

Reasey: In the meeting, they talked about reducing belongings, does it mean you have to give all your belongings including the medicine to them?

Sarem: Yes, we gave to our unit chief.

Reasey: So they did not take it from you; they asked you to hand over your belongings to them voluntarily, right?

Sarem: Right, they did not remove things from our bag. They asked us to reduce our belongings ; this means that we had to give our belongings to our unit chief voluntarily.

Reasey: Did anyone disagree not to hand to them?

Sarem: As I saw, in the beginning our bag was so big; later on, it became small bag. We also could not carry it if there was lots of stuff inside.

Reasey: What did they do with the belongings collected? Did they divide for people?

Sarem: I did not know where they took it. But they asked us to give up our belongings ,we just did it. We didn't investigate and didn't know what they did with these things.

Reasey: If they took all of your belongings and medicine, what did you do when you were sick?

Sarem: We did not give all of our belongings. We had to think of what we needed. For example, I gave medicines for children to them. I got rid of some of vitamin, malaria pills, fishing hooks , and penknives. I kept some. I kept lighter flints. Among thousand lighter flints, I kept about two hundred.

Reasey: What's about clothes?

Sarem: I almost got rid of all my clothes. I kept especially all the bras .

Reasey: Were you required to wear black clothes?

Sarem: Yes, they asked us to wear black clothes but our clothes from France became kind of look dirty and could not be recognized what color they were.

Reasey: So you don't have to dye the clothes into black, right?

Sarem: We didn't have anything to dye our clothes.

Reasey: How long did you stay in technology school?

Sarem: I stayed there since I arrived in January until they celebrated 17 April ceremony. They made that 17 April ceremony in the Khmer New Year's Day.

Reasey: Were people allowed to observe holiday during the Khmer New Year's Day?

Sarem: Yes, they allowed us to take off for three or four days. We had dessert one time and food was better than the normal days. They had performed art in which children talked about the heroism of Nop Bophan. Before I had never heard of the name Nop Bophan.

Reasey: Who is he?

Sarem: I didn't know. They just sang "O! Nop Bophan". I just listened. They said that the Khmer Republic soldiers killed the revolutionary strugglers. At that time, Vanna just arrived from France, came to join her husband Mr. Kong Bunserey. And Mr. Kong Bunserey was a friend of my husband. Vanna brought her son named Ne with her. When she watched the art performance on 17 April, she said: "I used to watch Opera. How could I watch this performance?" She said like that as she sat close to me. I always signaled her: "They perform for us to watch, just watch". At that time, the boy on the stage who recited the poem was a son of Mr. Hor. Mr. Ho had agriculture skills. His wife, Sophorn, was the sister of Mr. Ing Sokan. Then their child chanted a poem about "Red Heart"(O! Red Heart I take care of you dearly everyday to serve the dear revolution..."). Vanna was the sister-in-law of a rich businessman Tep Khunna. Tep Khunna had a restaurant in France. I asked Vanna, the wife of Kong Bunserey, that, "why did you come back, you already have with you your husband and your child in France?" She told me that her husband always cried because he missed the country and family very much. Moreover, she was also not happy to live in France because she was ashamed of her two sisters marrying the same husband. During the observance, they did not ask us to do a lot of work but to participate in a number of meetings. The Khmer Rouge leaders who presided over the meeting said that the Khmer Rouge revolution was very open. Even the King could also live in the revolution. They said that Samdach Ov [late king Norodom Sihanouk] was reigning in the Royal Palace. The King lived in the Royal Palace and he walked his dog inside the Royal Palace compound. The Khmer Rouge said that they had good heart; they provided rice to Laotians, who asked for assistance. They said that: "For the New Year's Day, if neighboring country requests rice and we don't give them, it is not appropriate."

Reasey: In what month did they allow you to leave technology school?

Sarem: As I remember, it was after the Khmer New Year's Day, the 17 April ceremony. At this point, they prepared for us to leave technology school. As I remember, I left around May.

Reasey: At that time, how did they decide to allow you to leave? Did they think that you had been re- educated enough?

Sarem: I believed the place would be too crowded because there was one group of people after another coming from abroad. Those who arrived first would leave the site first.

Reasey: Were there any of them arriving after you from France or from other countries?

Sarem: I didn't know a lot of people. I knew one person who arrived after me. He was the Director of Lycee d'Application where I taught. He was my former Director. As I saw him coming back, I did not know if he returned from France or from another country. His name was Bi Boeun. I went to greet him. I thought he had worked as representative of the Lon Nol

regime. I saw him return with his wife. I asked him “why do you come back?” He said his wife didn’t want to live in a foreign country.

Reasey: So could you talk to those who returned after you?

Sarem: Yes, among the new returnees. While trying to remove things from his luggage in the presence of the Khmer Rouge, Bi Boeun had said: “This one is my bed sheet.” when the KR had touched it. At that time, I bit my lips and smiled. I thought in my mind that he would be in trouble soon.

Reasey: You already came across that experience, and he just arrived; he didn’t know, right?

Sarem: No.

Reasey: When you first arrived, people came to ask you if you brought any cake with you. Did you miss any food or ask for any cake like that when you saw him arrive?

Sarem: I tell you honestly. It seemed that I was fortunate that I can contain myself. I was so hungry. But I was able to conceal it. I was not like Ms. Thay who had asked me for the Chinese bun. Later, I heard that she asked for sausages from a man who just arrived. She asked him if he brought big sausages with him and those people around her just burst out in laughter.

Reasey: As you were leaving technology school, did you feel nostalgic since you had lived there for a few months?

Sarem: I was happy with the people who helped me. I would like to describe the last view at technology school, especially when I was about to leave. At that time, I became very sick; I had sore throat and fever. There was a doctor among the returnees. He checked me and told me that I had a serious sore throat. Then a man named Lach Virak Phong, he was a friend of my brother; he was a teacher. He gave me Penicillin to cure my sore throat. And he had told me that if I had mouthwash I should use it to clean my mouth in order to kill the bacteria not to cause sore throat again. Another view was about those who liked smoking. At that time, they ran out of cigarettes. There was a man named Hong Sivpha and as he got too addicted, he would search the grass to find cigarette butts that people threw on the grass. We, women, saw him do like that, we thought that he was catching frogs. Mr. Sivpha said that “my mother told me to study to be a doctor so that I could earn money while helping others, I returned to the country in order to help people. Now I had to find even cigarette butts on the grass. This is what we call the mockery of the destiny”. Another view was about Moch (Norodom Eiravadei, the mother of Chhit Chhit and Teen Toon). She felt depressed because when she was in China, she read “Kampuchea” the Khmer Rouge magazine displaying pictures of fruits in Cambodia, full on the ground. For example, jackfruit almost emerged from the ground. Pumpkins and watermelons were big and fishes were plentiful. As she came to live in Russian technology school with no food, she felt very stressful, and she always cried. She only wore black skirt up to her chest since it was hot season. She said that she didn’t want to live; she wanted to commit suicide. Mona, who was our chief of group, felt ashamed for Moch. She followed Moch and tried to explain her. It was said that Moch was pregnant. As we heard that we felt pity for her because a pregnant woman usually felt like a spoiled child. If she wanted to eat anything, she wanted it right away. The Khmer Rouge who came to meet us said that “Don’t believe the photo. It can be enlarged as big as they wish.” Before Khmer New Year’s Day, the Khmer Rouge was not happy with those who had birth

control pills with them; the Khmer Rouge had confiscated all the pills. A woman called A Ti mother looked so pale and I asked her why she looked so pale. She told me that she was pregnant. Then I pressed my chest in shock and asked her, “Why do you allow yourself to be pregnant?” She told me this happened because of the night that the Khmer Rouge distributed the dessert. She could not imagine that it came that way. Later, I heard that she stole food from people to eat. A Ti Mother told me that when she was in France, some people kept their children with her to baby sit. When the children cried, she would give Phenergan to those children. Then I asked her: “Do you bring Phenergan with you for your baby?” I would like to emphasize that the Khmer Rouge who came to strengthen our mind wanted to educate us to know how to destroy “Satrov E Dor Phtey Khnong” the enemy inside of yourself which was our ambition, our passion. They wanted us to destroy “Suon Tour “the selfishness. We should think of others, and they told us that “the Historical Wheel is moving forward, so if you have fell down, the Wheel will run on you, it will crush your hand or your leg.”

Before the KR sent us to anywhere, they tried to educate us to reduce all kinds of our belongings including all jewelry and valuable things. However, I did not give to them my jewelry because I had a little. At the group meeting, my unit chief Ms. Eit (Ava’s mother) talked about jewelry. Then I criticized Ms. Eit because she said that Jewelry did not have any value. I told her “Jewelry always carries value. It does not have value only in the society that does not use it. Other countries use jewelry. If we don’t use it, Angkar can take our jewelry to sell to foreigners. Angkar can buy tractors so that will help us in our labor forces”.

Then a man named Sokha, he was a soldier. He said he drove almost all over the US, but he didn’t want to live in the US, so he returned to Cambodia. He boasted that he could do all kinds of farming work. Every night, I heard him criticize the opportunists, those who tried to gain favor in all political regimes. When we went to Taley, we did not see him coming with us. And before we left technology school, I heard people saying those who were evacuated from Phnom Penh to Kien Svay, my hometown, were evacuated again by boats. And the Khmer Rouge women who patrolled on us when we first arrived, while they saw us put our palms together to salute each other, they looked at each other and said that “What are they doing?” The Khmer Rouge girls did not know how to salute each other by placing both palms together in our traditional Khmer way. When they met one another, they shook hands. When we left technology school, we said goodbye to a flamboyant tree close to our window. The flowers were bright red.

Reasey: After living in technology school for a while, where did you go?

Sarem: After living in technology school for five months, they asked us to go to Taley village. Taley village is also close to Phnom Penh. It is close to a glass factory close to Cheung Ek.

Reasey: Do you remember the date that you left technology school?

Sarem: They transported us over there by truck. I remember that they drove through Stung Meanchey. After this, I did not remember. I never knew that village. We arrived in that village it was in May.

Reasey: Did they inform you in advance? Did you have time to prepare your belongings?

Sarem: Yes, they told us to prepare to leave. As I mentioned, before leaving Russian technology school, they strengthened our mind so that we have to reduce our belongings again..

Reasey: So this means that we knew in advance. As you went there, you did not go back to technology school. You went forward, right?

Sarem: We did not know whether we would return or not. But as they instructed us to go there, we went.

Reasey: On the day to leave technology school, how did you feel inside? Did you feel nostalgic of living at technology school for several months?

Sarem: Yes, I felt nostalgic to the red flamboyant flowers close to my window even sometimes it became spoiled since the Khmer Rouge young guards climbed to guard on its branches. I still loved that flamboyant tree. Indeed, I was like a person who did not want to live in that same place. I wanted the Khmer Rouge to move us to a different place because I wanted to search for my children. Therefore, as I had a chance to leave that place, I felt that I had a new horizon.

Reasey: Was it like stepping forward?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: You went to resettle in Taley village. Was it a new village or an old one?

Sarem: It was an old village. There were about 12 houses and one well as I counted. They were farmhouses. Some houses had walls made from tree leaves with tile roof. Some houses had walls made from wood and with tile roof. As we arrived there, we saw a big kitchen that the Khmer Rouge had built.

Reasey: Does it mean that people used to live there before?

Sarem: Yes, as I knew, before we arrived there, the Khmer Rouge from the base already lived there. They had lived there. So when we arrived, they moved a bit farther from us. They left that village for us.

Reasey: There were only about 10 houses. Were these enough for those who came from technology school with you?

Sarem: Yes, we had only about a hundred people. Women lived with women, and men lived with men. Some women including myself lived in one house. The KR keep one house available so they would divide that house into small rooms so that the couples could stay together as couple the night the KR assigned the couple to come to sleep together. The couple had to bring their own blanket and pillows .

Reasey: So they could not live together as family every night, only some certain nights, right?

Sarem: No , they did not have places for the couples to stay together. As they did like that, I felt so ashamed for those couple. The KR had controlled our life too much.

Reasey: What's about children?

Sarem: Children stayed with their mothers. One house was for children. Big children lived in one group. Small children were allowed to live with parents.

Reasey: Did the guard patrol at night?

Sarem: They assigned us to guard the village.

Reasey: Did they assign you to guard your own place?

Sarem: Yes, we sat under a house to guard our village. They asked us to hold a stick.

Reasey: Did they ask you to guard because they were afraid of the thief or what?

Sarem: They asked us to guard the village. If we saw anyone walked across the village, we had to inform them. In Taley, the banana farm was close to the kitchen, and there were a lot of “Krasaing trees” or *feroniella lucida* trees. A lotus lake was behind the children house. In that village, I observed that there were not many fruit trees, but there were a lot of palm trees and jambolan plum trees, but not many coconut trees.

Reasey: Did they allow you to pick up fruits?

Sarem: We dared not pick up fruits. It was up to Angkar to pick up fruits for us. But they never gave us palm or coconut fruits. It was very interesting and I was happy on the first night I arrived at Taley. I was happy to see fireflies, shedding their green light dimly. This was like hundreds of thousands of electronic lights glowing dimly. The fireflies in Taley reminded me of Beijing, the night that I stepped out of the plane there. I saw dim lights, but this was not as good as the fireflies at Taley. Beijing was dark at that time. One thing that I felt resentful about Taley was that I saw moldy rice crush left over on two metal beds under a house near the well. There were two jars of fish paste full of worms inside. This reminded me of the saving the Khmer Rouge talked at Russian technology school. I saw that they talked one thing, but did differently. The Khmer Rouge was so wasteful. They left moldy rice under the house at Taley while we went hungry and ate only rice porridge. Another interesting thing was a motorbike without a tire.

Reasey: You mentioned that you had arrived Cambodia around May so did you start working on the rice field immediately?

Sarem: When we first arrived, we did not work on the rice field right away. We were assigned to dig up the tree-trunks in front of the kitchen hall. We cut the grass in the flooding area. Doing this work, we had to stand in queue, cut the grass and pushed the grass down into the pond. It was like we were making the rice field levee. We also cleaned up the lotus farm so that we could take the land to plant rice. Beside these, we planted vegetable. We produced number-one fertilizer. Human excrement jars were put in line under the palm trees close to the pond full of water hyacinth. I would like to inform that number-one fertilizer was made up of human excrement mixed with water hyacinth, rubbish, soil or plant. They dampened these with excrement in the jars. Then we used this fertilizer to put on the fields. Sometimes, we dipped the seedlings into the number-one-fertilizer jars and transplanted. Please be informed that we were given rice to eat when we first arrived. We also got big sweet cucumbers once. I secretly had picked up ripe palm fruits that dropped at night, roasted and boiled them to make sweet tea. Arriving there, after we had mentioned about we saw food left under a house to get spoiled, few days later our ration of hard rice became watery rice porridge. As I believed, our group chiefs may have talked to the KR’s chief about the leftovers food that became moldy. Then the KR from the base who lived there earlier, were not happy with us. Therefore, they put more restriction on us and cut down our ration into watery rice porridge.

Reasey: Who were the cooks?

Sarem: It depended on the assignment. There was no man; all cooks were women.

Reasey: Why?

Sarem: I didn't know. They allowed only women to work as cooks. Men were not assigned to take turn to do the cooking. However, the men did the works such as fishing and finding vegetable.

Reasey: There were about 100 people returning from overseas at Taley. There were any KR cadres supervising over you?

Sarem: There was only one KR's chief over there. His name was Hean; he was relatively young. He was the chief over there. There was another person from our side, who was Hean's Deputy, Mr. Try Vann; his wife was Sim. They came from France. Sim was the chief of women while Try Vann was our village chief. He was under Hean, the KR cadre.

Reasey: What was Hean's personality? Was he fierce or gentle?

Sarem: As I remembered, Hean had chicken pox scars on his face. He never wore black shirt. He wore blue or green shirt with a torn at the back. Although it was a torn shirt, he still wore it. I saw him wear only that shirt and a pair of trousers. He seemed to be gentle. One day, he told us "Brothers and sisters who came back from abroad were very rich since you have a lot of luggage. In the context of this society, you are so rich. You have reduced a lot of your belongings to Angkar. You had kept only a small bag." He praised us that we had high devotion.

Reasey: Did he blame you during work?

Sarem: Hean ordered our chief who came back from France to put assignment for us. As for me, at Taley village, I thought that, I would be under the direct supervision of the KR. So, I dared not say anything as I wished like when I was at technology school. At technology school, all people were from France. I was not really afraid of them. At Taley, I did what I was asked to do. For example, we were digging the ground. If the KR cadres ordered us to stop, we would stop immediately. I acted like a robot. As I understood, the KR cadres did not have much knowledge. The more I considered, the more I felt pity on them. They didn't even know how to read and write. So we didn't have to bargain anything with them. They were just the instruments of the KR leaders such as Ieng Sary, Khieu Samphan, and Pol Pot. The KR cadres were like young children who had power but not capable of analyzing thing because they were uneducated. If we tried to find right and wrong, it could invite problems to ourselves. I did what they ordered us to do.

Reasey: Not to have a problem, right?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Those who were evacuated from Phnom Penh and were called the 17-April people worked more than ten hours per day. In the rainy season, they worked both day and night. How was about you who returned from France? How many hours per day did you work?

Sarem: Oh, we got up at four o'clock in the morning; they hit the gong as a signal. We went to work and returned in the afternoon. After lunch, they assigned us to work on the so-called "social work" while our belly was still full of watery rice porridge. I hated doing social work in the afternoon the most.

Reasey: What did you do for the social work?

Sarem: Social work was like making baskets, namely the works besides digging soil. Sometimes, we had to plant vegetable or taught children after lunch. These were called "social work".

Reasey: What was about in the evening? What time did you break from working?

Sarem: We could not work until mid-night because it was so dark.

Reasey: After dinner, did you have any other work to do?

Sarem: The men were assigned to do other work but not women. I would like to talk about the work that I still remember the picture in details. For social work, one day, our group was assigned to clear out the grass around the place that we lived. We wanted to bargain that there was no grass to clear out. But the chief said that this was the assignment from Angkar. So we clear out the grass and vine. There was almost nothing to clean out. We went past the kitchen hall, when I was about to raise my hoe to cut the grass, I paused suddenly, I saw bullets. I didn't know what kind of bullets. I understood that these were bullets. The shape was like weaver's shuttle; they were in yellow color, and their bases were green. These two bullets were on the leaves; they were still look new. I analyzed that if the bullets were left over for long time, it would be dirty, but they were new. Therefore, I stopped cutting the grass. I called people to have a look. I believed that this was a trick. They left the bullets over there and waited to see if we picked them up and kept them for later use. Then we would be arrested. I called people to have a look and they said that, "Oh, these are Seventy-Nine bullets." The chef took the bullets and handed them over to Pou Hean. Besides this, we were asked to guard the place. I guarded alone one night because my partner was sick, with a stick in my hand. When I was guarding, I'll tell you the truth, I was so happy. I watched the sky and stars; I saw the stars shining. The sky was so beautiful, and the stars could move. At that time, I heard palm fruit falling down. I tried to locate the palm fruit depend upon the sound of the fallen fruit. However I could not find the palm fruit in the morning though I knew clearly that it fell down last night. Then I said that, "It must have fallen down into the jar containing number-one fertilizer. Then I took a hat; it was like a soldier's hat. We produced the handle and stirred in the jar. We found the palm fruit at last. I threw it into the pond and kept it there for long time. A few days later, we cleaned the palm fruit up and roasted it for food.

Reasey: Was it because you were too hungry?

Sarem: Yes, we roasted the palm fruit and shared it, with Ms. Sokun and her two children, Pola and Poluch. Ms. Sokun was the sister of doctor In Soka. She returned with her two children. Her husband was Kim Vann, son of Mr. Chau Sen Kosal. During the guarding, I observed that it was easy to see those who wore black clothes at night but difficult to see those who wore the gray ones because they were mingled with the darkness. One day, I saw an old man walking across our village. He was called Ta Nao; he was a KR cadre. He walked across our village at night. When I was guarding, I called his name directly because I saw him in the daytime. I could recognize him at night. I shouted that, "Ta Nao, where did you come

from?” He said that he came from fishing. Another interesting job was draining the pond. We dug up and got lotus rhizomes. Under the lotus leaves I mostly saw a man whose name was Kravann. He was the husband of Ms. Poc Yanine, who was the younger sister of Ms. Poc Mona. Khek Kravann was the younger brother of Mr. Khek Vandy. He arrived after his wife. At Taley he mostly sat and rested under the lotus leaves. As I cut down the lotus, I hit some snails burying themselves in the mud. It reminded me of my first day arriving there seeing those snails water would come out in my mouth, because while I first arrived at Taley, Pola and Poluch’s mother or comrade Sokun had asked me to eat boiled snails with her. She had picked up a lot of snails boiled them and we ate them plain. It was so delicious.

Reasey: Didn’t you have salt?

Sarem: If we wanted salt, we had to take it from the kitchen hall. We boiled the snails secretly, so it was difficult to take the salt. Therefore, we boiled them without salt. The snails were relatively big. Since that day, comrade Sokun and I had a very close relationship. Whenever I had palm fruit, I shared with her.

We cut down the grass and pushed it to the edge of the pond in order to take land to do farming. One day, Mr. Chhim Khet’s wife ran out, shouting and falling down in the water. She said that she had stepped on a big creature in the pond. It was like something wanting to bite her. Her face became pale. She fell down repeatedly when running. Some people went to the spot to find out what it was. They suspected that it could be a tortoise. However, they did not catch any tortoise. Comrade Try Menghuot was the one who supervised our work in cutting the grass and pushed it into the edge of the pond. He walked on the rice field dike overseeing us. He was in black clothes like the KR cadres when we were cold in the water. At that time, my group chief was Ms. Phalla. Our chiefs under Pou Hean were Try Vann and his wife Sim, who was the chief of women. They both returned from France. Another work was to deliver seedling to be transplant. These seedlings were soaked with number-one fertilizer. Sometimes, the dirty water from the seedlings fell on our faces.

In Taley, I observed that rice porridge for the sick was sometimes thick and sometimes watery. I was so doubtful because I was the one who cooked the porridge. Then I looked at the board that the names of the sick were written down. I wanted to know who were sick today. I recognized that whenever the chief was sick, the rice porridge was thicker than usual. So I told people I trusted that, “Before getting sick, you have to look at the board first. When you see the chief’s name on it to be also sick.” After that, the rice porridge came back to normal. (End of 3rd part page 32).

Reasey: Up to that time, did you feel regretful of returning from France?

Sarem: Yes, after attending the education session with Khieu Samphan, I realized that I made mistake of going back to Cambodia. I made wrong decision to come back to Cambodia.

Reasey: Since it was a wrong decision, what did you think in your mind? Did you make any determination since it was already wrong?

Sarem: Yes, when I realized that I made a mistake, I tried to survive. I had to make sure that I survived because I didn’t know what the future would be. I tried to make sure that I would not be taken for execution or die of sickness or weakness.

Reasey: You talk about not to be taken to execution. Did they take anyone to kill within the few months that you stayed in technology school and before leaving from that school?

Sarem: At that time, we didn't see this yet. But we heard people say about "killing". I understood that this regime killed people. They dared to evacuate millions of people from Phnom Penh; they were not afraid to kill one or two.

Reasey: Did anyone coming with you disappear?

Sarem: Some people disappeared. This meant they were taken away. But we didn't know whether or not they were killed. Some people disappeared and never came back. Until now, I don't hear that they are still alive, for example, Mr. In Sophan, who was the younger brother of Mr. In Sokan. He was an engineer. Few days after we arrived in Cambodia, he was asked to repair machine and the fridge. Later, he was taken out leaving his wife who lived with us. His wife's name was Neary; she was gentle and beautiful. She escaped with us when the Vietnamese entered Cambodia. Now she lives in France.

Reasey: Besides those who were taken away, did you see anyone die of sickness?

Sarem: I heard that some people ate too much the watery rice porridge that was still very hot. He ate too fast, and his stomach became too full. He was taken to Russian hospital. As I mentioned earlier, that I made a mistake of returning to the country. At Taley I tried to make sure that I survived. I would not make any mistake to give them an excuse to kill me. Therefore, I determined that I would not say anything outside the meeting. I only talked to those whom I trusted. I tested people in order to preserve my own safety. I tried to talk about minor things to this and that person. Then I observed whether my story appeared in the meeting. I had talked to a person named Bochan. She was the student of College Preah Norodom, two years before me. I told her "If Angkar didn't use the money, how could Angkar measure the value of our money in the world?" I wanted to test her. One day, in a big meeting, her husband called comrade Phorn raised my story about value of money in the meeting. Since that time, I eliminated this couple from my life. It was like playing cards, I had place their cards face down. I didn't talk to those who had reported about me. Bochan's husband had studied in agriculture field. I could see that he seemed to be so proud of himself. He was the person who joined the revolution with the KR organization long time ago. In his own words, it seemed to me that he was a special person. He didn't like the FUNK's members who returned from France. He kept saying that the KR outside the country stole the credit of the fighters inside of the country. Her husband said that he had sent a letter to his children from France saying "When the revolutionary organization won victory and entered Phnom Penh, his children should come out on the streets to welcome Angkar's soldiers". I even dared not talk to my friend Thay who was my classmate since grade 6 at Norodom lower secondary school. I dare not share anything with her. I didn't think she was the person who liked reporting about me. But I believed that she could be absent-minded at some points, and she would say what I had shared with her to the others. And that could bring me problem. I had discussed this with Ms. Taach (Doctor Ho Sinrong's wife), that the two of us, we should be careful with Ms. Thay, (who asked me for Chinese buns when I first arrived). We would not say anything with Thay for our own security. At the end, people I trusted at Taley were only Ms. Thach Chan Moly, my student, Vanna, Ms. Thaach and the other one named Leang. I could discuss serious matters with them. For the rest, I just acted agreeable with them. I even could not open my mouth during meal-time. I had to massage my jaws in order to open my mouth. Ms. Thay kept talking to me that, "Now, you are so quiet, you had changed a lot, you leap forward; you stop talking too much like the previous time." I said that, "Now, I am able to build up myself. I follow Angkar's direction which is to talk less and to work more." Besides, I had a technique in testing people's mind in order to preserve my own security and to struggle to live in the KR regime when I was in Taley, I had determined that I had to stop thinking about my children for a while. I had to separate myself

from them. I did meditation to ask for forgiveness from my parents whom I put more burden on them. I left my children with them to take care of during the hard time like that. I also asked for forgiveness from my husband. I got angry with him when he failed to follow me to take our children out of Cambodia to France. I, especially, asked for forgiveness from my two small daughters. I gave birth to them but didn't look after them during the hardship. I told them in my meditation that in order to meet them, I had to survive first. In order to survive, I had to leave them for a while. It meant that I had to stop thinking about them. I closed the page about my daughters for a while. I hoped that when we were free from that regime, we would see each other. More importantly, I strongly believed that the KR regime would be vanished for sure. I told the people I trusted like Vanna that, "We have to survive to see the KR fall down." I believed that a regime that "Dehumanized Life that goes Against Life" would not stay long. After thinking like that, I felt calm. My stomach ache that I had since I was in France was recovered. This could be the result of my determination not to worry about anything. In the KR regime from that day, I had only oneself and only myself, the Nature and the struggle to survive in that regime. The food, watery rice porridge and vegetable, was very simple. This food might have helped cure my stomach. I would tell you I was a different person in France, since the KR took over Cambodia, I started to hate god. I believed that god was so unjust; he punished innocent people as if they were traitors and corrupted people. Actually, the traitors and the corrupted people lived happily. The ordinary people met hardship. I never prayed for god to help me since the KR took over the country. At Besancon, I didn't even believe in the prayers of the Nurse nuns whom I lived with in France. They told me that they prayed every morning for me, even though I admired the Nurse Nuns practice. These Nurse Nuns, some of them were very old. They struggled a lot. They tried to get out of the Convent even during winter with snow falling down. They rode bicycles in the snow to help sick or homeless people. Therefore, they are my role models. They inspired me, I had confidence that I had to struggle like what the Nurse Nuns did in order to survive. Indeed, I tried to work very hard in the KR regime. I never think about saving my energy. I believed that Cambodian country was still a country of the Khmer people even though it was under the KR. I am Khmer; Cambodia was still my country. Therefore, I would not destroy this country. This meant that I would not destroy any achievement that we made in Cambodia. I worked during KR time without saving energy because I wanted to produce something in the place that I lived in the KR regime as much as possible. When we produced a lot, the production would spread to other places. Or at least, we got enough to feed ourselves and we didn't have to ask from others. Doing so I felt no guilt, because I believed that if the outcomes spread to other places, my children could survive. As I worked so hard, my group chief praised me in the meeting. She asked me what I wanted. I told her "I want to have hard rice." People in our group laughed. They said that I worked so hard to only want to have hard rice to eat!. I said that, "We don't even have hard rice yet. We have only rice porridge. What else do we need? Therefore, we need to have rice first. When we have rice, we can think about other things." As I guessed they were disappointed. They wanted me to answer that, "Because Angkar has educated me well, I believe in Angkar. That's why I have energy to work." They wanted me to say that. As I heard them praise me, I didn't want the KR to appoint me as any group chief because I didn't like repeating the KR theories. I didn't want them to order me or to bring their words to other people. Therefore, I was very careful. I told myself that I had to change my stance. This meant that a few days later I became sick. I registered as a patient. I slept there one or two days. I slept until they hit the gong to receive rice porridge. In addition, I wanted to show to the KR who always looked down on intellectuals. They said that the intellectuals were weak and didn't know how to struggle during the hard time. I wanted to show that those who have education, and the professionals could work to feed themselves like farmers and peasants. We could work under the rain and wind, and we still could withstand that hardship. I wanted to defeat the KR's mentality. More importantly, I didn't want them to see me as the leech in the society. Even in the KR society, I wanted to show them that I was a

person who had enough ability and could live on my own. The KR kept looking down on us, the returnees, saying that our work could not feed ourselves.

Reasey: When you went to work such as farming or digging soil, did you do within your group or join with the base people?

Sarem: We never met the villagers. We only met the core KR cadres such as the women who delivered ammunition to the soldiers during the war. We worked with these people. Sometimes, these people came to transplant seedlings with us. They were all young; some were so beautiful even more beautiful than the most beautiful girl in Phnom Penh. One day, I tried to do transplanting as fast as they did. I could do so for only a few minutes because I didn't have much energy as they did. They were still young. Sometimes, when they were transplanting, they ran up to the rice field dike. They cried loudly. They said they had backache; I noticed this. In the field, a lot of children came to work with us. They worked very fast. They caught the snakes by the tail and hit them against the ground and then threw them into the fire. One day, I was digging soil near the children. I caught a rat running out of the rice field. The children helped me by pulling the skin out. I put the rat on top of lotus leave. When I roasted it, its meat became red like roasted pork. I ate it all. Not a single bone was left. When I worked with the women delivering ammunition, I kept thinking that they were not afraid of leech. Actually, some of them were afraid of the leech more than we were. Sometimes, I heard them cry like they had convulsion, I saw, the leech bit them. One time, we went to work on the rice field with the women delivering ammunition. There was a man named Pou Thae (Uncle Thae). He came to work with us in the rice field. He described the time that the KR occupied Phnom Penh for the first time. Some of them were looking for water. They could not find any water except the water in the toilet. They drank that water since they could not find the jar. Some KR said: "In this place their water comes out from the wall." Pou Thae also told us about the time before the KR victory. After a ceremony like Pchum Ben (Khmer religious memorial day), there were a lot of rice cakes with filling made from pork and beans at the pagoda. Pou Thae said: "The KR military officers sometimes asked their soldiers: 'Do you want to eat smoky rice cakes?'" When the soldiers said yes, they shot at the pagoda to scare away the people. Doing so, both monks and the villagers would run away from the pagoda. Then the KR would secretly take the cakes to eat." He told the story jokingly making us all laughed. One time while working over there, I met "KR nurse". He was a young boy. When he saw me sick, he wanted to give me injection. I said I didn't like injection. I would take some pills instead. I was afraid that he didn't know how to inject the medicine. I was afraid that the injection could cause abscess on my leg. The child nurse gave me some rabbit-dung medicine. The KR said that when they first learned how to give injection, they practiced on banana trees. The KR chiefs told us that B-52 bombs were effective only in the city because there were a lot of houses with glass windows. The houses were tall, so the bombs B-52 could easily destroy those houses. When the houses fell down, the pieces would blast and injured many people. However, the B-52 bombs were not effective with the KR struggling in the forest. The soldiers slept on the hammock. Even though they were affected by the blast, it would be just a minor injure. We just listened to them; actually, we didn't believe it. We understood that just the sound of the B-52 could cause blood to leak out. At Taley, I saw Chinese experts who came into Cambodia to help the KR. They measured the land in Taley. They were in nice clothes. Their skin was white, and they had orange juice. They threw out the orange juice bottle with half bottle of juice left. It reminded me of my friend Ms. Thay, who used to live in China with her husband in the 1960s. Her husband taught Khmer in China. She told me that, "The Chinese people smelled very bad when they walked close to us because their clothes were torn, and they didn't have thread to repair. When their clothes were torn, they used rice glue to repair the torn clothes. Therefore, they smelled very bad. Instead, Mao received guests almost every night. He welcomed the

diplomats by holding parties on the boat in the middle of the river.” I recalled this story. But the Chinese who came to work in Cambodia looked clean; their clothes were white like cotton. We were dirty.

Reasey: In Taley, beside those who returned from France, there were other people returning back from other countries?

Sarem: At Taley, there were those who returned from France, who came from technology school. There were also those who returned from China such as two daughters of Samdech Ov, his sons-in-laws, his grandchildren; servants of diplomats, and the wives and children of those who ran from Phnom Penh into the forest to join the KR and those who escaped the KR by military boat from Kampong Som. The boats were P 111 and the other one that I didn't know the name. Among the returnees from USA especially women came to live with us. The men lived in the place across our village

Reasey: How many people were there?

Sarem: There were about ten women coming to live with me. They didn't come with their husbands. Most of them came with children.

Reasey: Did they tell you why they only came with their children?

Sarem: Some people may have escaped without their husbands. Some were ordinary villagers. They ran into the boats with others. Then they arrived in the US like others.

Reasey: Did they tell you why they wanted to return to Cambodia? Did they tell you the reasons?

Sarem: A woman asked me how to go back to the US again. I asked her: “Why did you come back?” she said that, “I did not want to live in other country. They rented hotel and apartment for us. They gave us a lot of food. But we appealed to come back to Cambodia.”

Reasey: Did you know how they come back? In your case, you had to go to China first. Did people from the US do the same thing?

Sarem: Oh, I didn't know about that. As I understood, they may have come through China like we did. One woman was the wife of a colonel. She had two daughters and one servant. The servant looked fat; she always practiced traditional coin treatment when she didn't feel good. I asked her, “You are fat. Why do you always do Khmer traditional coining treatment?” She said that she was not fat; she was pregnant. I was not sure where her boyfriend was. I told her that, “You had to inform Angkar that you are pregnant so that they will not ask you to carry water, it might cause you to have miscarriage. In the afternoon break the servant did massage for the colonel's wife. I was so scared to see her doing so. I asked the colonel's wife “How do you come back to Cambodia? Who prepared documents for you?” She told me that, a man named Hing Sokhom, who went to study in the US long time ago, who had a Philippine wife, was the one who prepared documents for her. Mr. Hing Sokhom also came back to Cambodia, but he lived in a place farther from my place.

Reasey: Was he Mr. Hing Sokhom?

Sarem: Yes. Mr. Hing Sokhom.

Reasey: Mr. Hing Sokhom was a professor in the US. Is this right?

Sarem: He received scholarship to study in the US. He never returned to work in Cambodia. As I heard, he liked the socialist regime. When the US waged war against Vietnam, he was against the war. He wanted the Vietnamese to win over the war.

Reasey: Does it mean that those who returned from the US had different purposes from you? They did not come to reunite with family but they had difficulty living in the US?

Sarem: As I saw, the woman who came to ask me was ordinary people she had no education, so it was difficult for her living in the US. As I understood, those returnees from the US thought that they could live happily back to the country. They didn't know clearly about the KR regime after they took power. It was complicated living abroad. They didn't care much; they were not afraid of saying anything. For the woman, if I reported about her, she could be executed. The woman who came to ask me how to go back to US had two children. One was 11 years old, and the other one was 12 years old. The two daughters still wore beautiful robes from the US. They innocently played game in front of the house that we stayed.

Reasey: Were they regretful of returning to Cambodia?

Sarem: Among these people, was an old man he had two adult daughters. So he was not put to live among the soldiers who live at Mr. Hing Sokhom's place. He was put to stay at our village. I heard people say that he was a Kien Svay resident. He and his children were visiting one of his children in Kampong Som. When the KR took power, they boarded the boat. His child who lived in Kampong Som did not return to Cambodia after arriving in the US. Only him, his two daughters and his son returned. His son was put to live in the village that Mr. Hing Sokhom lived. One night, the son came to see the father and asked for money. They had argument. As I knew, the father didn't want his son to hold money in hand. He was afraid that his son could make mistake and ran away. Then he would be arrested and killed. The father wanted to protect his son. He didn't give money to his son and they had argument with each other. People whispered that, "His son came last night and asked for money."

Reasey: At that time, money was not used. Why did he ask for money

Sarem: He asked for US dollar, so he may have had plan to escape as I guessed. That's what I heard. We just guessed that way.

Please, Reasey do not ask me about Samdech Ov's daughters, and their families yet I will talk about it in a separate part.

Reasey: Did those who came back from the US that you just mentioned earlier come to live at technology school?

Sarem: I didn't know at that time. I just saw them arriving in the place where I lived. I did not ask them in detail on how they came back. However, I observed that the women coming back from the US were emotionally and physically weak. One old lady took almost everything into account. She didn't like children to play in front of her house. She shouted, "Don't play here don't damage my front yard." Princess Pang, Samdech Ov's daughter was called comrade Yan. When comrade Yan heard the old lady shouted like that, she turned to look at me under the house. She grimaced at me. The old lady said that, "Our country was so rich." In the past, her husband went to dig up young bamboo shoots; she could make a big soup with big fishes that they caught on their own. "In the past, our country had plenty of food. Now, why is it so

poor? We cannot find even ice's water to drink and betel nuts to eat." Later, Pou Hean, the KR chief, visited the old woman. From that time, we saw betel nut dusts and betel saliva under her house.

Reasey: When she had a complaint like that, did the village chief educate or criticize her in the meeting?

Sarem: At that time, those ladies who came back from the US did not work hard like us yet. As I told you a moment ago, the old lady complained like that, Pou Hean had visited her.

Reasey: Didn't they talk about this in the meeting?

Sarem: No I didn't hear them say anything about that in the meeting.

Reasey: Did someone disappear?

Sarem: No nothing happened. However at that time, some men from Hing Sokhom place and the women in my place loved each other. They met each other secretly. Try Meng Huot, who was the chief, said that those who came from the US had brought imperialist culture to poison the Democratic Kampuchea. They met each other at banana bushes. At that time, I was fed up with Try Meng Huot. He talked like the Khmer did not how to love. As I guessed, Try Meng Huot may not have seen the Apsara sculpture at Angkor Wat temple. When those who returned from the US met each other secretly, he accused them of bringing the imperialist culture to poison Democratic Kampuchea. In Khmer culture we heard about a lot of clandestine love story, a girl get pregnant without getting married and people in the village would say: "It the pregnancy from the forest".

Reasey: Out of wedlock?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: In the KR regime, they did not forgive the moral offense like that, which was considered as serious crime. Those who committed this crime would be taken out for execution at a different place. At Taley, was the situation not as serious as other places?

Sarem: As I knew, they just chatted with one another. They just met each other secretly for a few minutes. They were accused of bringing foreign culture in. This is normal in every country. As I guessed, those who returned from the US did not understand the moral offense in the KR regime yet. Moral offense meant men and women who dare loved each other without requesting to the KR organization. Please be informed that the men who returned from the US were good at working. They were young. They were so serious and full of energy. They walked across our village. They were indeed more serious and more energetic than those who returned back from France, most of them were former soldiers. They could work on the rice fields and the farms very well such as while pulling out seedlings, they could hit soil out to clean the seedling very well. They could make bamboo into carrying sticks to carry seedlings. They were so lovely. I really appreciated and admired them that they struggled so hard. Later on, our village had held a big collective meeting with the soldiers who returned from US. We cooked food in that occasion, a spicy sauce and used the Krasaing flowers as vegetable. We cooked dissert and put it in a big jar. As I work in the kitchen, I was too tired, I could not eat dissert. I went to rest. They kept a small bowl of dissert for me the next day. During the meeting, they had played the communist anthem "L' Internationale". For the KR, L'Internationale was the society of the future" In the meeting, I saw Mr. Hing

Sokhom, who was the chief of the other village. He talked as if he didn't like those who returned from the US. He talked like he wanted the people under his supervision get punishment. He said that some people wanted to rebel. Prince Sihanouk's son in law, Phan Han (Princess Pang's husband) had also attacked Prince Sihanouk in that meeting. After that big meeting, some of us from Taley were sent to Angkor Chey. When I returned back from Angkor Chey, I asked sister Bochan that, "Why the village of the people returning from the US so quiet. Where were the women returning from US who live with us?" She said that, "Oh, there was a" Pakdehar happened "I didn't ask any other questions. Later, we knew that those people were all killed.

Reasey: What did the word "Pakdehar" mean? Was it a Khmer Rouge word? "

Sarem: "Pakdehar "means like when Buddha shows Pakdehar meaning Buddha made thing happened because he wants to show us something. For example, Buddha defeated the devil, Mara. Before talking about the two Samdech Ov's daughters and their family, I would like to talk about the stance of those who returned from France in Taley. We tried to work very hard and strictly respected the rules of Angkar and some had respected it to the extreme: One girl named Achou. She was single. She returned to Cambodia with five family members including her. Their names were Meng, Huoy, Hun, and her brother Eng. They were all nephew and nieces of Mr. Chhay Han Chheng, a Doctor en Pharmacie in France. One day, A Chou Angkar had assigned A-chou to water the vegetable. It was raining that night. The next day, she kept watering the vegetable. We told her that, "Chou, you don't have to water the vegetable. it will be too soaked which could spoil the vegetable." A-Chou said that only when Angkar or Pou Hean told her not to water, then she stop watering. Chou's sister was Hun, who was the daughter-in-law of Ambassador Chan Youran. He was Samdech Ov's ambassador. There were another woman named Duong Daramony and her younger brother Duong Meta, and another person was Poch. Poch was so beautiful. One day Daramony was assigned to find vegetable. She was in my group, and she was supposed to work in the kitchen with me. We asked her to find Krasaing Teab (kind of vegetable). We explained to her what Krasaing Teab looked like. Then she went off to find Krasaing Teab. A moment later, she came back and shouted from the distance with fear: "Oh sister, I could not find the Krasaing Teap but I had found only the "Krasaing kpors" (I could not find the short one, but only the tall one)." Daramony said that she tried to climb up the Krasaing tree (Feroniella lucida tree); the snake had chased her, and she fell down from the tree. One day at Taley, during the break from work, I had picked up from the ground jambolan plums to eat. In the evening, my group chief educated me. She said that I walked around at will. I argued back, "Why do you say that I walked around at will? I didn't go for a walk during working hours. I picked up jambolan plums during the break. I ate the fruits in order to gain energy so that I can continue working strong for Angkar. Therefore, I don't agree that I walked around at will." There was an old lady in our village. Her name was Yem. She was the servant of Mr. Sarin Chhak, Samdech Sihanouk's Ambassador. Yem walked unsteadily. Yem had met Khieu Samphan when Khieu Samphan visited the city of Cairo in Egypt. She said: "Khieu Samphan had showed her, the photo in which her son who became a Khmer Rouge soldier was also in that photo". Her son ran into the forest to join the KR. Yem returned to Cambodian with a lot of money. She bought hand watches and she possessed a lot of jewelry. She gave some watches to the KR who stayed near us. One day, she came to tell me that, "Rim, you cannot even be compared to the pigs of "our brothers and sisters"(the Khmer Rouge). Their pigs eat cakes." She said that they made big cakes that were not well cooked, so they gave the not well-cooked cakes to the pigs. They called her to join them eating the good cooked cakes. When she met Khieu Samphan in Cairo, she was told that the returnees would go to their own respective villages. People could return to their own houses. Yem repeated this message. She said that, "Those who came from any village would return to that village. Angkar said like that."

I want to talk about picking up jambolan plum. We had a lot of jambolan plum at Taley so we had asked for permission from Pou Hean to pick ripe jambolan plums. Pou Hean granted permission for us to pick up the fruits. We were able to pick up a lot and put them into one basket. Then we asked Pou Hean to send the jambolan plums to technology school because we believed that those in technology school didn't have anything to eat like in Taley. Since we had plenty, we asked to send jambolan plums there. The jambolan plums were on the balcony of Pou Hean's house. The juice fell down and made hollow on the ground. There was a man named Tan Im, who was Ms. Thach Chan Moly's uncle. He made a complaint because the jambolan plum of Taley was very small he wanted to have fat jambolan plums to eat.

Mr. Phung Ton was the dean of one University in Cambodia. He also tried to work very hard. One day, I saw him carry a lot of bamboos. He wore black short trousers.

Among those who lived in Taley, there were a number of female relatives of Mr. Hor Namhong. They lived there as well. One was called comrade San. She had a lot of children. One of her daughters was Vattey, who was growing into adult. Vattey was so beautiful. Another one was Kannitha. Ms. San's husband was a high-ranking military official. She told me that her brother Hor Namhong told her to bring all children to leave Cambodia to go to France. Her husband had to stay in Cambodia. Another of Hor Namhong's sisters was called comrade Aun. She returned to Cambodia with her husband. Her husband had strong body and was handsome. At Taley, Aun was pregnant. She was not happy with Ms. Phalla, who was a chief of our group. One day, Pola's, Poluch's mother told me that, "Pou Hean or Pou Angkar " said:"For the villagers, one can of rice was shared with 30 to 40 people." Then I told Pola's and Poluch's mother that, "This is not for us to survive. We had one can for just ten people, we walk stumblingly almost every day."

In Taley, they prepared wedding ceremony once. The groom and the bride just stood, held each other hands and determined to live with each other to work for Angkar. Angkar had given them a set of black clothes and a "Kromar" (a scarf). We also had rice for that wedding ceremony.

There was a returnee named Sean; she had a lot of relatives. Her older sister was Yem Youk Siv, a Doctor en Pharmacy. Her younger sister was called A-Sros. Ms. Sean worked very hard. I could see that she loved the KR very much. She was in my group until she came back to France. She later got married with a guard who guarded the KR Embassy in Paris when she returned to France.

Reasey: When you were in Taley, did you meet any high-ranking government officials from the Lon Nol's regime?

Sarem: When I first arrived at Taley, I met a woman. I was doubtful. I thought that the woman looked familiar to me. She looked like a teacher at school in Koky Kien Svay district where I studied. I said that, "Oh, why this teacher was still so young." When I looked at her for another moment, I realized that she was Samdech Ov's daughter. Her name was Princess Chhuok. Her real name was Botum Bopha. Botum Bopha and Princess Pang were siblings. Their mother was Sisowath Pong- Soan Mony aka Princess Moang. Botum Bopha sat under a house next to the house where I stayed. I was told that Botum Bopha was the wife of Sophutra, and Sophutra was my classmate at Sisowath high school.

Reasey: Did you talk to her?

Sarem: The next day, I saw Sophutra. He remembered me very well. He came straight to me. He asked me about one of my friends Heng Hui. He asked me: "where is Heng Hui? Heng Hui was my first love". Hearing this, I rushed to go away from him and got out of that

place. At first, I pretended not to know him. He kept chasing me. He called me: “Sister, I know you very well. You stayed in the dorm at Norodom School, and you walked to study at Sisowath High School. When you returned to Norodom, you walked with Heng Hui every day. Heng Hui stayed near the Psar Chas (the Old Market)”. Then I told him “I don’t know where Hui is”. I would like to tell you that Sophutra loved Hui since we were in grade 10 and grade 11, but Hui always ignored him. One day, Hui forgot her purse with a permission card for Bac I examination on the table where she attended the school end year’s party. Then Hui went back to find her purse and had met Sophutra near Capitol Cinema. Sophutra had helped Hui to find her purse at school in the middle of the night. He also accompanied Hui back home. Later Sophutra invited Hui to watch a movie. Hui accepted the invitation. But on the day to watch the movie, Hui went to Kampot province.

Reasey: Why did you pretend not to know him?

Sarem: I did so because I did not want to have any problem. If we got to know or welcomed anyone quickly, the KR would suspect of conspiracy and investigate us. The KR said that their Angkar has many eyes like the spines on a pineapple. Though the pineapple spines could not see anything, I was always cautious. I pretended not to know Sophutra because I did not want to have any problem. If they knew that we had known each other, they would investigate us, and we would have a problem. And I did not want to have any problem.

Reasey: A moment ago, you just mentioned that you saw Samdech Ov’s daughter Botum Bopha. Did you have conversation with her?

Sarem: I did not know Botum Bopha personally, so I did not talk to her, I just saw her from under the house that I stayed, and she lived as a guest of Angkar. She did not go to work on the field like us. She had three meals per day. When we arrived, we cooked for her breakfast, lunch and dinner. She came to have food regularly at the kitchen.

Reasey: You mentioned about real rice what was it?

Sarem: I meant they ate hard rice, and we ate only rice porridge.

Reasey: What was about the food? Did they cook appropriate food?

Sarem: Yes, it depended on the catch of the day. We cooked one or sometimes two kinds of food for her because she was the guest of Angkar.

Reasey: Was she fed well?

Sarem: Yes, we cooked for her. It was not plenty but it was enough.

Reasey: Did she come to eat with you or eat separately?

Sarem: She ate separately.

Reasey: What did she do when you all went to work?

Sarem: She was the guest of Angkar. She did not do anything. I saw Sophutra walked his dog. His clothes were like the KR cadre. But his shoes were not made from tire. He wore sporting shoes. When I returned from Angkor Chey back to live in Taley again, it was in December it was flooding. At that time, I saw Sophutra have his leg bandaged around and walked with stick. He also walked his dog. I was suspicious because he used to ask Ms. Thach Chan Moly to go with him. Sophutra used to flirt with Ms. Thach Chan Moly. He always praised her. When Moly entered the kitchen to cook with us, he said that the cook was very skillful. He had asked if she wanted to escape: "If so, try to work harder." He said that one day he would take a plane to land in Taley and we all could get on his plane. It should be noted that Sophutra was the one who bombed Lon Nol's government office in Chamkar Morn. After dropping bomb, he fled into the forest.

Reasey: Did he live with the KR until the time that you met him?

Sarem: I am not sure about that. As I guessed, he may have joined with Prince Sihanouk, and then he got married to Sihanouk's daughter Botum Bopha. He came to live in Taley as a guest of Angkar. When I saw him bandage his leg, I suspected it because Sophutra used to ask Moly to run away with him. I thought he had done something to avoid suspicion. He got sprained ankle and one that day, under a house next to the house that Sophutra stayed as I was collecting grains of rice, I noticed that Sophutra's house was quiet. He was the guest of Angkar, and he came to have breakfast regularly. I did not see him even at noontime. At around two o'clock in the afternoon, KR soldiers riding on two or three motors-bikes arrived at his house with rifles and strings of bullets strapped around their bodies.

Reasey: Did they wear from shoulder to waist?

Sarem: They did not wear from shoulder to waist but wore across their chest.

Reasey: Did they wear on their shoulders?

Sarem: No, they wore it across their chest. All soldiers entered Sophutra's house with rifles on their hands. In the evening, children who lived behind the house that I stayed said that they saw Sophutra's family got onto a canoe behind the children's house around 2 AM at night. At that time, Taley village got flooded. From that time, we never saw Sophutra again. (End of Part 4 pages 43).

Reasey: Did you know about his condition or where he was after his disappearance?

Sarem: I did not know. When I knew that he escaped, I realized that he could not escape because he had children and a wife. If he was alone, he may have been able to escape. He could escape only if the "King of White Rat" dug the underground way for him like in "twelve women folk tale" and Taley was not close to the borders and there was flooding at that time. Myself in Taley village, I also had a dream that the "King of White Rat" would come and dig underground way for me.

Reasey: Did you have chance to talk to him very often? Did you have fear seeing a lot of KR soldiers coming in? Did you fear that it would have something related to you?

Sarem: I was not afraid of anything because when I first met him, he came to talk to me and we just had a short conversation. Later on, I did not have anything to do with him. Whenever I saw him, I just smiled at him.

Reasey: What was about the lady whom Sophutra flirted with what happened to her?

Sarem: Oh! Thach Chan Moly my beautiful student? At Taley, knowing Sophutra kept flirting Moly, Pou Hean The KR cadre, always told us to close our window at night. That window was made from palm leaves. We got so angry because it not reasonable to close the window at night when it was so hot. Later on we realized the reason why Pou Hean had asked to kept our window closed, because he were afraid that Sophutra would come to rape Moly. We understood and closed the window not to allow any problem to happen. I told Moly to stay away from him and not to talk to him much.

Reasey: Did the situation end at that point? Or did the KR come to ask you for more information?

Sarem: Nothing more happened. No one came to question me. When Sophutra disappeared, the KR married Thach Chan Moly to Prince Touch (a returnee from “the maquis”(the forest) who had joined the KR during the war). I heard that Prince Touch was the son of Prince Norodom Phurisara. I would like to tell more about Moly. After coming back from Angkor Chey, I saw Moly’s face become swollen. Her face was full of pimples. I asked Moly why she was so different. Then she cried. She told me that she took birth-control pills. She cried more and hugged me. She told me that she would stop calling me “teacher”. She wanted to call me “sister”. She said when I was away to Angkor Chey, they ill-treated her, and she had no one to ask for advises. She was forced to marry Prince Touch. I tried to capture Moly’s facial sadness in my mind. We never saw each other again from that time because Moly was transferred to live in another place. When we were told to close the window, I was even more careful because at that time I listened to VOA secretly almost every night when I was staying in Taley’s village. One of the stories that I remember was the election campaign of President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn Carter in 1976. I listened to Ms. Ang Khen from VOA every night.

Reasey: Besides this, did you meet any other people?

Sarem: There was another story that I mentioned previously. Samdech Ov had two daughters living in Taley. One was Botum Bopha aka Princess Chhouk, and the other one was Norodom Soriyaraingsey aka Princess Pang; Pang revolutionary name was Yan. She was called comrade Yan. When I first arrived in Taley, I saw Princess Chhouk. After staying there for a few months, I saw another woman with big head; her black blouse was too big for her. I kept looking at her and thought that I used to know that woman. Then someone told me that she was Princess Pang, then, I recognized that she was really Princess Pang. She stayed in a house close to the house that I stayed. She had a small baby sleeping and crying in a hammock under the house. A few days later, I heard that the baby died. Princess Pang cried a lot. She said that she tried to ask Angkar to offer some milk for her baby, but they refused that’s why her baby died. I would like to tell you that Princess Pang aka comrade Yan returned to Cambodia from abroad too. Beside her baby, Princess Pang had other three children. Her two daughters were about four to five year old. Their names were Chan and Nuon. The son’s name was Thaug, aged about 12 to 13 years old. Thaug is her son with her first husband whose name was Tep Phally, the son of Phnom Penh City Governor Tep Phan. Thaug’s face was sad every day. Yan used harsh words to Thaug. I told her not to used harsh words to her son and she should be gentle with him and love him. After the baby died, Yan worked with us. She was not the guest of Angkar.

Reasey: Was she the guest of Angkar previously?

Sarem: No, she was not.

Reasey: It was from the beginning?

Sarem: Since she came to live in Taley, she was not a guest of Angkar. She worked like we did. She said she wants to live closely to the people.

Reasey: Did you know the reason why some people were considered as guests while the others were not?

Sarem: As I knew, Princess Pang aka Yan asked her father (Samdech Ov) to live with villagers. She told me that her father asked her to stay close to him, not to go anywhere. Her father said that, "Don't go anywhere. Stay in the Royal Palace with me because their revolution is very radical." Samdech Ov used the French word "Radical"

Reasey: It is strict, right?

Sarem: Very strict.

Reasey: Too extreme.

Sarem: But Princess Pang did not listen to Samdech Ov. She said she wanted to stay close to the people and work like the people. She was very funny; at that time, we were drawing water from a well. She told me that, "you see now I am very close to the people, work like the people. I carry 60 pairs of containers of water per day with you." On that day, when we were drawing water from the well, the rope was broken. She and I fell onto the ground together. We got up and laughed and said that, "this is what we call stay close to the people, carrying 60 pairs of containers of water per day."

Reasey: As you knew, did Princess Pang complain about coming to live closely with the people?

Sarem: She seemed not too depressed, but she complained that the KR did not provide milk for her baby. She said that the previous place was not like that. She got what she requested. She had a lot of food. She even had guava jam. When she came to live in Taley, it was very hard to get thing to eat. One day, I was cleaning eels close to the kitchen hall. Then I heard the sound like punching and hitting. I was doubtful; "what is that?" When I looked ahead, I saw Yan and her husband were fighting each other. Her husband pushed her to the ground, as she tried to avoid his punches on her stomach while he kicked her. The husband kept kicking Princess Pang. I never saw, in my life, a husband had hitting wife like that. My body was shaking. In the evening, I raised that story in my team meeting. I told the group that, "In the afternoon, I saw comrade Yan was beaten under her house by her husband, comrade Han. I wonder why in this revolutionary regime the husband beats the wife like in the old regime." My chief of group Phalla said that, "Angkar has all kinds of means to educate people." Hearing this, I kept quiet.

Reasey: Beside you, did anyone else see the fighting?

Sarem: Only me saw it because I was assigned to prepared eels for food. At that evening, Yan did not come to the meeting. Ms. Phalla, my group's chief, at our group's turn to work in the kitchen. Phalla had asked Pang to serve her as she was her maid, Phalla would say "take a big spoon and two knives for me." Phalla attitude had annoyed me. During our

group meeting, I educated Ms. Phalla. I said: “You behave like a master in the old regime. When you do things in the kitchen, you do not care to keep things close to you. You asked your maid to take things for you. In this regime, comrade Yan is not a slave. Why did you ask her to do thing like that for you?”

Reasey: What did she reply?

Sarem: She did not reply anything to me. But when she said Angkar had all kinds of means to educate people, I understood why she asked comrade Yan to serve her like a slave, why she didn't ask other people to serve her?

Reasey: What did you want to say?

Sarem: When Phalla said” Angkar had all kinds of means to educate people” which meant that Yan’s husband could beat her, and Phalla used her as a servant in the kitchen. It means Angkar wants to break you.

Reasey: Does it mean this was a kind of measure they took to educate people?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: When you were working together, did Princess Pang ever tell you anything besides work, for example, family story?

Sarem: Princess Pang was indeed happy working with me. She told me a lot of stories. She told me that, the KR high-ranking officials had opened "Veak Seuksa" - education sessions - in China. I don't remember their names. I am not sure if they were Khieu Samphan or Ieng Sary. They had opened education sessions for Cambodians living in China, and then.

Reasey: Was it before 1975?

Sarem: I don't remember. I just knew that they held education session over there. Yan told me that at that time a film star wearing big black eyes glasses attended the session and asked, “I am a film star. If I return to Cambodia, what do I do? Then the facilitator replied, “Working on the rice field.” “What do I bring along with me to Cambodia?” The facilitator replied “Mosquito Nets and medicine to weaken snake venom.” Comrade Yan told me that” the film star fell hard to his chair”. The star was hopeless. How could the film star work on the rice field?” Then she told me about her story entering through Ho Chi Minh Trail to Laos, to the region under the control of communist Laos. During the Khmer New Year’s Day, she went to dance with the Pathet Lao, in Samneua with her father Samdech Ov.

Reasey: I would like to invite you to continue to describe your life in Taley. Please continue from the previous day.

Sarem: Last time, I had talked about Princess Pang. Her original name is Norodom Soriyaraingsey aka comrade Yan. I will continue talking about her life in Taley. One day when I was taking a break at noon under my house in Taley, some women got “krasaing tom” (ripe *feroniella lucida* fruits) and ate it there. Seeing people gathering, comrade Yan took her two daughters (Chan and Nuon) to join us. They sat on a large bamboo stand under the house. I asked her about the people who came back from China. S Yan told us about a woman who had brought a box of French cakes from China for her relatives. The lady hoped that as soon as she got off the plane, she would be able to go home. Her house was along the road from

Pochentong Airport to Phnom Penh. Then the woman told the bus driver that, “Oh, this is my house. Please stop.” The bus passed her house. The driver did not stop the bus. The woman tried to hold the cake box not to break the cake inside because she wanted to keep the cake in good shape for her relatives. When Princess Pang aka Yan described that story, she stood up and walked unsteadily holding the cake ‘s box balancing her body as the lady standing in the bus ready to get out with her cake’s box. We, who watched had imitated her action by balancing our bodies backward and forward. Working with comrade Yan, I had a pity for her. She was the daughter of the King and came to stay with people. I would like to tell you that I was a child of the farmers. I used to walk to my farm. Sometimes, I stumbled on a piece of soil and fell down. But life in KR regime was worse than a farmer life. For comrade Yan who was a child of the King to lead a life like the one in KR regime with us was living in hell. I believed it was unbearable for her. I admired her. She could bear that situation. One day, I saw Yan sitting under a house where children were studying to read and write Khmer language. At that evening, I asked her that “Comrade Yan, why do you sit under the house with the children?” She told me that” to study to write and read with the children I was shocked; I rubbed my chest. I shouted, “What! The daughter of the King does not know your own national language!” Then, she said that, “I was naïve when I was young, I believed there were Nak Mean Bun (super natural mighty beings who have power). I even believed old people who told me that eating the ends of sugarcane would give me the power to swim. After eating a lot of the ends of the sugarcane, I had jumped into the pool and got drowned”.

Reasey: Didn’t she really know have to read and write or was she just joking.

Sarem: Yes, I saw her sit there to learn the Khmer alphabets; I asked her that, “If you don’t know to read and write Khmer, did you know other languages?” You know, children of the rich and high- ranking Khmer officials usually studied at a French school. They may know French or English better than the Khmer language; Yan said: She didn’t know any language, she knew only the word "smooth". Do you know smooth, Reasey?

Reasey: Is it English?

Sarem: She said that” smooth” meant when she ate delicious food, she would use the word “smooth”. She told me that she was not boastful. She was the most beloved child of Samdech Ov. She had joined Samdech Ov many times for meals. The other children rarely had a chance to do so. At that moment, I recalled Samdech Ov’s words. He said that when he took Princess Pang to foreign countries when she was young, she did not know the language. However, if she wanted to go to the toilet, she just slapped her own buttock, and people would understand her body language, what she wanted.

Reasey: Talking about teaching, did they have real curriculum?

Sarem: They just taught children to be able to write and to read Khmer language because those children from France, did not know Khmer language.

Reasey: During that period, as I remember since I was also a child, I did not have a chance to attend any real classroom. They did not have any appropriate curriculum. The study went on for only a few months. But I am very interested in what you mentioned. Those who came back from abroad had a clear curriculum. How many months did the children study?

Sarem: They studied only during our stay in Taley for that few months. As I saw, the teaching was not really serious.

Reasey: How old were the children?

Sarem: They were in mixed ages ranging from 7 to 12 years old.

Reasey: What textbook did they use in teaching?

Sarem: I did not observe the teaching. I just saw they were teaching children. I did not ask the teachers or see what they taught. I just knew that they taught kids how to read and write.

At Taley those who came from France, especially those who were the FUNK's members, most of them did not like comrade Yan. They often said that comrade Yan (Princess Pang) damaged Cambodian name when she lived in China. They said she always demanded many things. Chinese people blamed Princess Pang that, "you have come to live here and spent the money of the Chinese people."

Reasey: Thank you.

Sarem: Yes, I like to continue,

Princess Pang told us that when she returned from China, the KR had invited all of those who accompanied Samdech Ov to attend a party in the Royal Palace. The guests had dressed up like in the previous regime. They tried to match blouses with skirts, and with the purses and the shoes. When they arrived, they saw all the KR in black clothes. The KR did not have table manners. Those who came from China did not dare to pick up food to fast. Within a moment, the food had gone from the plates. Then comrade Yan told us that while they held the second party, lessons learnt, the guests this time in their black clothes, ate much faster than the KR.

Reasey: Because they had experiences.

Sarem: Yes since then no third party. One day at Taley village, it was our turn to cook. Princess Pang was assigned to pick up vegetable. The chief said, "Comrade Yan, you go to pick up vegetable." Then Yan took a big basket on her head and went out to find vegetable. At about three o'clock, she came back with no vegetable. She whispered to me that she had stolen and ate 60 ears of corn from a farm.

Reasey: Did she eat them raw?

Sarem: Yes, and I asked: "Why did you do that? How did you eat 60 ears of corn? It is too much." She said it was young corn, so she could not eat much from each ear. She said that after eating, she farted and flattened a bunch of grass.

Reasey: The KR did not plant vegetable. Why asked her to pick up vegetable? Or wild vegetable?

Sarem: Yes, to pick up wild vegetable such as cactus. We eat even cactus. We asked her to pick up vegetable such as wild spinach, but she hid herself and stole ears corn. I said that, "If the KR saw you doing so, they would kill you." She said that, "If they killed me because you reported to them."

Reasey: She did not get any vegetable for the kitchen so the chief may have known, right?

Sarem: We understood that she could not find any vegetable.

Reasey: Oh, did she tell openly that she could not find vegetable?

Sarem: Yes, she could not find vegetable, and she whispered to me that she stole 60 ears of corn and eat it all.

Reasey: If she could not find vegetable, people would have nothing to eat that night.

Sarem: People from "the economic unit" brought us some vegetable. But we had to find some more.

Reasey: As you worked at the kitchen hall, you did not need to go to work on rice field, right?

Sarem: At Taley village we take turn to cook

Reasey: Did they shift people once a week or how many days?

Sarem: It was once a week.

Reasey: When you did the cooking, did you have enough food to eat or did they keep an eye on you?

Sarem: We have our portion. But one day in the afternoon, a woman whom we called Ayo's mother asked me to go to the kitchen with her. Then I followed her. Arriving there, I saw three to four people hiding in the kitchen and eating. As I saw that, I walked out. The reason I returned to Cambodia because I wanted to see my children, so I have to survive. I tried to control myself. I would not steal anything to eat. I would not make any infraction of the rules in the KR regime. If I stole, I would do it under the noses of our group's chief. For example, one day, they distributed banana to us. They had put in front of me a small banana and gave a big one to the person next to me. Then I switched the banana in front of them. We all were very hungry, I could not go along with them to steal food to eat like that. So I walked away.

Reasey: If they stole food for themselves like this, the others would receive smaller portion right?

Sarem: Yes. So I walked away. But I also did not report anything.

Reasey: Did Princess Pang tell you about Cambodian issues and other events happening that you did not read in the newspapers or hear of before?

Sarem: Oh yes, she told me about March 18, 1970,'s event, at time she was abroad. She went to the shopping center with her entourage. Suddenly, those who accompanied her disappeared. She was very surprised why those people deserted her. When she returned to the guesthouse, she realized that Samdech Ov was ousted from power. When she went to live in

France, she worked as a baby-sitter for her sister Princess Bopha Devi while princess Bopha Devi took vacation, so that she could earn some money.

Reasey: In the event of March 18, 1970, did she mention that she was staying with the King (the former King)?

Sarem: She was abroad. I don't remember well. As I recalled, she told me she was in England. I am not sure.

Reasey: Did she mention how she felt in her mind?

Sarem: When they deserted her, she realized that she lost all those who used to accompany her. No one came close to her. Oh, when we worked together, I had told comrade Yan that when I was studying in College Preah Norodom, I was asked to learn how to dance traditional dance at Chanchhaya Royal Palace or sometimes we had to go to "Damnak Moha ksatreyanee" (The Queen Mother House) near Independent Monument. At the Queen Mother's house, I saw her also learning to dance when she was about 5-6 year old. She wore a robe, and her hair was tied with ribbon. She wore shoes with socks. Then she raised her hands and danced. Her fat fingers curved so dearly.

Reasey: What did she say?

Sarem: She said that she did not dance well at that time. But she went and tried to imitate the dancers. One day in Taley village, we harvested rice. I remembered that day was extremely hot. She and I were harvesting rice close to each other. Then a man who just returned from France saw me and asked me that, "Are you still here?" I said "Yes, I am still here; I have not yet gone anywhere." And comrade Yan also replied that, "Sister Rim will not go anywhere. She will stay in Taley village to do the revolution until Taley has electricity." The man was Mr. En. When comrade En walked away, Yan came to ask me: "Why did this guy ask you that question?" At that time, I dared not tell comrade Yan that I had met Mr. En at Maison des Provinces in France before I returned to Cambodia. At that time I had condemned the KR about the evacuation of people from Phnom Penh in front of comrade En. And I dared not allow comrade Yan to know about this story. I just told her that, "This guy might have resented something I said. That's why he said like that. Yan said that this guy used inappropriate words. He talked like he wanted you to be taken away for execution. Sometimes, when she talked to me, Yan showed her behavior that she did not like her sister Princess Chhouk because Princess Chhouk came to live as a guest of Angkar, which exploited the labor forces of the people. She wanted Princess Chhouk to be like her, live with the people. When I came back from Angkor Chey, I heard that comrade Yan or Princess Pang had a big row with her sister Princess Chhouk in Taley. I didn't understand why Princess Pang could fight against her own sister Princess Botum Bopha. When I lived in Taley, I observed that Princess Chhouk or Botum Bopha rarely came out of her house. She seemed to be very gentle. When I lived in Taley for that few months, I observed that Princess Pang had pity self-pity. She was remorseful because she did not listen to her father and said that, "my father tried to explain to me that this revolution was so radical". He asked me to stay with him. He would ask the KR to put me as a staff working in the Royal Palace close to him. But I did not listen to my father." During my time with comrade Yan for a few months, I never heard her talking about her mother. Whenever she talked, she always talked about her father Samdech Ov. When I returned from Angkor Chey to Taley, Princess Pang was gone.

Now, I would like to tell you about the place where they had put those from the US. After people from the US were gone, they replaced them by those who returned from abroad via Ho

Chi Minh Trail. Later I saw Nuon Khoeun and Phlauk Sophan there. And I heard people said Cheng Sy -Yum Boan and others came through there too. And Some of them stopped under a house at our place to take a break after they cleaned up the rice field of bad grass, I knew Nuon Khoeun and his wife; I pretended not to know them; Nuon Khoeun and his wife at that time, did not recognize me or they also pretended not to know me. I am not sure about that. But we did not talk to each other.

Reasey: Who were the people you just mentioned?

Sarem: Nuon Khoeun wrote a book entitled: “*Damneu Chhpors Tov Teus Khang Lek,*” (*Westward March*). Nuon Khoeun joined the Maquis during Lon Nol regime after a quarrel with Thach Chea. Thach Chea was the minister of education during Lon Nol regime. He was replaced by Keo Sangkim. Later, Thach Chea visited Keo Sangkim in 1974 at the ministry of education. From there they both were taken to Yukunthor High School by protesting students. They then both were shot. Keo Sangkim died on the spot while Thach Chea died in the hospital. Those involved in the killing had joined the maquis. I heard people saying that those who were taking a rest under that house included the people who had participated in the killing of Thach Chea and Keo Sangkim at Yukunthor High School. Nuon Khoeun was my classmate at Institute de Pedagogy in Phnom Penh. Mr. Phlauk Sophan was from Electricite du Cambodge. He received a scholarship to study in France and joined the FUNK. He returned to Cambodia through Ho Chi Minh Trail before the KR took over the country with his wife. Cheng Sy-Yumbun was also among them.

Reasey: Who was he?

Sarem: Cheng Sy-Yumbun was a high-ranking military officer in the “Sangkum” regime. During Lon Nol regime, he was also one of the military commanders. When Prince Sihanouk was ousted from power, Cheng Sy-Yumbun controlled the Northeastern zone. The issue was that person had allowed one bridge connected to the Northeastern zone to be destroyed. The bridge was not big; it crossed a canal. Then the Lon Nol regime accused him of allowing the enemy, the Vietnamese (Viet Cong) to have more advantages. At that time, the Lon Nol regime was fighting with Viet Cong. Therefore, they arrested Sy-Yumbun. Later on, he managed to escape from prison to join the maquis with his wife. He came to live in Taley village close to the village that we stayed.

Reasey: Do you know how many returnees came through Ho Chi Minh Trail?

Sarem: I don't know. I just knew that there were Mr. Phlauk Sophan and others that people from France knew them.

Reasey: Does it mean that they traveled from China to Vietnam by car and then came into Cambodia through Vietnam?

Sarem: I don't know how they made their trip. I just knew that they went through Ho Chi Minh Trail to Cambodia. The people I mentioned such as Mr. Phlauk Sophan, his wife Chan Saroth used to stay in dorm at Norodom secondary school before me. She was very thin, and during the KR time she was even skinnier. A woman named Bochan, who was Saroth's classmate, saw her walking across our village, Bochan ran to kitchen hall and called Saroth “Hey Athesankhalik”, (skeleton) because Saroth was so thin. Saroth did not reply and walked to her village. At that time, we laughed; we were not afraid of the KR because that Bochan was so funny.

At their village, there were some wives of the high-ranking KR officials. They joined the maquis with their husbands. Their husbands had passed away leaving wives and children behind. So there were a lot of people living in that village after the returnees from US disappeared.

Reasey: They were the family's members of those who had made contribution for the KR revolution?

Sarem: Yes, they came to live there.

Reasey: Did they have to work on the rice field like you?

Sarem: I saw Nuon Khoeun and Phlauk Sophan came to pull the bad grass off the rice field. As I saw, some of them did not wear black clothes. They wore white shirt. I saw Phlauk Siphon wore the kind of hat that Vietnamese soldiers wore when they entered Cambodia. I saw him wearing that hat.

Reasey: Did you observe that they had better food than you or the same?

Sarem: They stayed at a different place, so I did not know about that.

Reasey: You didn't know?

Sarem: I didn't know. I did not even know where exactly they stayed. I just knew that they walked past our village, so they knew our place. (End of Part 5 page 51).

Reasey: When did you leave Taley village, in what year? (Beginning part 6)

Sarem: As I remember, it was in September 1976. They ordered people to leave one after another. On my turn, they took a bus to transport us. We did not know where they took us. The bus went on, we arrived at Chba Ampeou, and I began to recognize the villages because my house is in Kien Svay. I saw people drying red corn on the road at Chba Ampeou. Then we crossed Veal Sbov village. I saw my relative's house that used to be the house of "Nak Maneang Marriette" at Veal Sbov. The bus came across Chrauy Ampil, Prek Eng, and Wat Mony, which is my village. I had gazed the surrounding to look for familiar faces. Finally, we arrived in Angkor Chey.

Reasey: Was Angkor Chey the new place?

Sarem: Yes, it was the new place that went through the path of Angkor Chey pagoda. I knew Wat Angkor Chey because in my childhood, I went there for "classe promenade" (school's field trip). The bus did not bring us to Wat Angkor Chey. They just drove us through the path of that pagoda. Then half way to the Pagoda we were asked to stay at a mechanical warehouse for one night. The next day, they brought us to Angkor Chey working site. When we walked through Angkor Chey dirt road, it was so slippery like it was applied with pork fat. We saw the evacuees; they were returning from the working place. We arrived at about dusk, and it was raining continuously.

Reasey: Did you and the others realize that they changed your living place?

Sarem: We did not know. We just knew that Angkar asked us to leave. They never told us the reason.

Reasey: Did they allow you to take your entire luggage?

Sarem: Yes, we took our backpack. That's all what we had.

Reasey: Were you afraid that they would take you to execution?

Sarem: At that time, I did not fear anything. They took the bus to deliver us; I got on to the bus. I did not fear of anything because I realized that I did not do anything wrong.

Reasey: What was about the others? Did anyone show any fear?

Sarem: I did not see anyone in my bus show any fear.

Reasey: Was this the first time that they changed your living place since you left Technology School to live in Taley.

Sarem: Yes, this was the first time that we left to live in Angkor Chey.

Reasey: Please continue.

Sarem: Arriving at Angkor Chey, we stayed in the mechanical warehouse for one night. That night we heard a person talk loudly. He cursed this and that intellectual. He did not care about our feeling that we needed to sleep that night. The next day, they took us to a working site. They divided us into different groups. For example, I did not have husband, so I was asked to live with women unit in one shelter. They had iron beds put next to each other. Some beds that they put against the wall had many levels. We worked until late at night and went to bed at around two o'clock in the morning. At five, they beat the gong, and we had to get up to work.

At Angkor Chey, there were a lot of mosquitos. It was like the rice husk spreading on our legs whenever we put the legs outside the net. One morning when they beat the gong, some girls shouted, "I have not yet gone to sleep; they beat the gong for us to get up again. I will not get up." I laughed quietly. I saw them bend and stretch their body. They yawned and tried to lift themselves up. They poked out their eye wax and walked to work without changing the clothes. At that time, Angkor Chey planned to speed up to finish all kinds of work (meaning to finish work completely in a short period of time).

Reasey: Did they change the group at that time?

Sarem: Those who had children and husband would be put far from us. We didn't even know where they were. After two days living in Angkor Chey, our identity was revealed. They knew that we were from abroad.

Reasey: Who was that?

Sarem: A woman working there knew that we were from abroad. A man named Kong Bun Serey was walking to work. Then a woman called him and said that, "brother, I know you very well. Your house is close to the" electricity cabin". And you went to France. He was very surprised of why she knew him. That woman said that she used to work as a servant at a house close to Mr. Kong Bun Serey's house. Knowing that, the KR at the hospital house

asked Ne (the child of Mr. Kong Bun Serey and Ms. Vanna) to read and translate the medicine name for them.

Another woman named Im studied in the Faculty of Literature in Phnom Penh. After graduating from the faculty, she went to France. She got married to Meng, who studied in the US, specializing in business. He got a master degree then came to France and returned to Cambodia with his wife, Im and his brother-in-law. People who recognized Ms. Im knew that she was the daughter of the owner of a bicycle store in Kampong Cham. So the identity was revealed. They investigated me. I told them that Angkar sent me there. They asked me to exchange their sandals with my lighter flints.

Reasey: Did you exchange openly or secretly?

Sarem: A woman whispered to me if I wanted to have tire sandals, "Please give me a pack of lighter flints." I agreed and gave one pack to her. The next day, she came back and told me, "I lost them now. Please give me another box." I told her that, "I have only one box left. I don't have more." I lied to her. She gave me another pairs of tire sandals laces in case when the old ones broke. The sandals helped me a lot.

Reasey: So you did not meet many people when you were in Taley, but when you arrived at Angkor Chey, you were able to meet many people?

Sarem: I met only the core revolutionary women of the KR at Angkor Chey. Among this group of women, some had worked as deliverer of ammunition during the war while some others were the children of ordinary people. After victory, the KR organization mobilized those youth to join mobile units. Therefore, Angkar sent those female youth to work in the "Kang Neary" or women group.

Reasey: You mentioned about women group. Does it mean that there were no men in this group?

Sarem: There were very few men in that place. I saw mostly women.

Reasey: Did they work on the rice fields like the others?

Sarem: Angkor Chey was covered with rice fields. The rice fields were like checkerboard pattern; they were so beautiful when we looked at them in some occasions. The sky was blue. If we walked along the dikes and forgot about the tiredness for a while, we could see beautiful scenery.

The big chief at Angkor Chey was Om Chey (uncle Chey). I was always waiting to see Om Chey. People said that within the few days of our arrival, Om Chey would come to conduct education session in the corn storehouse. I was wondering who Om Chey was. When I entered the storehouse and waited for the opening meeting session, I surprisingly knew Om Chey. I said, "Oh, Om Chey was Norng Suon," his real name. I knew him because I used to see his photo in the newspaper. His two front teeth looked like hoes. He ran a newspaper called "Prochea Chun"(The *People*). Reasey, you may not know this newspaper. It had a plow logo.

Reasey: What year was this newspaper established?

Sarem: It was in the 1950s-1960s. The "Prochea Chun" (*The People*) newspaper had a plow as its logo. Norng Suon was a member of this newspaper.

Om Chey opened the education session. He said that he was arrested and imprisoned in Samdech Ov's regime. In Lon Nol regime, he was released. When he was free from detention, he did not waste a single day. He ran into the forest immediately to continue to do the revolution again.

In the education session, Om Chey said that the KR revolution was the revolution of the collective. This means that "it is good for the people, and we do everything for the people." He gave some examples. "We are now building up the country. After that, we will build football field for each village. All villagers will use this field collectively. The field is not for any individual person." He criticized those who collected properties and kept in their own houses during after the evacuation of the people from Phnom Penh. He said that this was not in accordance with Angkar's policy. He said like that.

Before the meeting, the women roasted corn. They roasted ripe corn. They ate the corn and produced loud sound near my ears. I almost could not listen to the education session. Some people brought the corn to me. I dared not eat and kept it in my pocket.

Reasey: Therefore, at Angkor Chey, the chief of the village, group chief and other chiefs were replaced, right?

Sarem: Yes, we joined the people at Angkor Chey. Those who were our group chiefs were no longer the chiefs any more. At Angkor Chey, they cooked rice, not in large wok like we did in Taley. They cooked rice in their improvised electric rice cooker that looked like a fridge with two doors. They steamed the rice in that rice cooker. They used electricity to steam rice. The way to cook rice was to put rice right into the metal trays. Then they cut the steam rice into pieces like cakes. They distributed one piece for each person.

Reasey: Did you work in the kitchen hall?

Sarem: They did not allow us to enter the kitchen hall. However, I saw there was more food than Taley. But the food was not clean. I ate with the women over there. Sometimes, they ate dirtily. Sometimes, I could not eat food; I just ate rice without food.

Reasey: They were not clean.

Sarem: I saw the nasal mucus flowed out from their noses. Seeing this, I could not eat the food. One day, a woman came to ask me. She might be a chief. She asked me "Where did you go last night?" I said, "Last night, I did not go anywhere." She threatened me, "Why couldn't people find you at your bed? Did you go to the hospital?" I said, "I don't know where the hospital is." Then he said that, "Don't pretend not to understand. Don't serve the enemy's trick" Then I kept asking her, "How to serve the enemy's trick is?" She threatened me again, "I ask you where you were last night." Then I tried to recall where I was. Then I said that, "Oh, in the dusk, I went to the bed at the end of the hall because I saw people gathering. I went to listen to their chit and chat. A woman came from Svay Rieng. She talked about her story. If you don't believe me, you can go to ask them." The issue ended at that point. Later, you know what they did; they moved me to the hospital house.

Living in the hospital house, I saw some women come to receive treatment in the house. One got serious fever. Even I tried to hold from above firmly, her body was still shaking like a

tractor. I saw the KR produce medicine. They sliced a kind of “Lmut fruit”(sapotille) into pieces and dried them under the sun. Then they pounded them into powder. This was the diarrhea medicine. I secretly read the medical books that were written in Khmer. The head of the hospital was a woman; she was fat and short like a kind of a fat worm. Her wrists were bigger than our ankles. In the morning, she sat on her heels. Some girls took toothpaste and toothbrush for her. Then she sat on her heels and brushed her teeth. I saw she had a lot of oranges in her place..

At Angkor Chey, whenever I walked, I always tried to sleep. I closed my eyes and trained myself to walk straight forward without falling down from the dike. When I was allowed to rest, I almost fell into deep sleep before my buttock hit the ground. I was so tired; my body became soft.

At Angkor Chey working site, when I saw dogs I heard those female comrade shouting “A-Nol, A-Tak, A-Tam”. At first I was curious, I want to see what going on. I didn’t see anything but their dogs; I realized that, “Oh, these people named their dogs A-Nol, A-Tak, A-Tam.” A-Nol was Mr. Lon Nol. A-Tak was Prince Sisowath Sirimatak. And A-Tam was Mr. In Tam. I heard this many times in the rice field. I heard “A-Nol, A-Tak, A-Tam” almost everywhere.

Sarem: Lok Poch Reasey! Today I like to talk to you and to our listeners about whom I met and who came from Wat Mony in Khbal Koh commune Kien Svay district .

Today, I will tell Mr. Poch Reasey and our listeners about those whom I met at Angkor Chey. Besides Norng Suon alias Om Chey, whom else did I meet? At Angkor Chey, after I was moved to live in the Hospital house, I was even more careful because I believed that they would keep an eye on me. They suspected that I did not stay in the assigned place. I didn’t know whether or not they believed me that I did not go anywhere.

A woman in the mobile group told me that there was one person coming from Wat Mony to work near Angkor Chey working site. She asked me to meet that person, and I dared not go. Later, the woman in the mobile group came to ask me again, “Do you go to meet the person from Wat Mony yet? Do you want to know the information about your daughters, right?” I said: “ I am afraid to go, I didn’t where to go.” Then she took me to meet the person who came from Wat Mony to work near Angkor Chey working site. When I arrived, I saw the girl . She was really from Wat Mony. She was the daughter of my second cousin. Her mother was sister Rom, and her father’s name was Chhom. She came to work there. When she saw me, she wondered, and said, “Aunt, I saw your parents, daughters, husband and relatives gathering at our village, except you.” At that time, I dared not tell the daughter of my second cousin that I returned from France. I just told her that I was not at home when I was evacuated from Phnom Penh. Therefore, I was separated from my family until now.

Reasey: Did you ask about your family and daughters?

Sarem: Then she told me that the families who were evacuated from Phnom Penh and returned to their home villages would be expelled again. They did not allow people to live in their own villages. My entire family members were moved out from my house and were transported by boat to resettle in a new place since the Pchum Ben days. This was September in 1975. The daughter of my second cousin told me that, “Grandmother Lis and Grandmother Hoy were the last persons to be taken out of the village.” Grandmother Lis was the youngest sister of my father. Her name was Mlis. Grandmother Hoy was also the cousin of my father. I called her Ming Hoy.

The daughter of my second cousin added that, “Ta Vong was the first person to be taken out.” Ta Vong was Mr. Tim Dong. His wife was Mach. The girl told me that “Grandmother Mach and her children was evacuated by boat with my husband and daughters like other people from Phnom Penh”. She told me that my house that was close to the house of Grandmother Hoy was pulled down. When I heard her say like that, I recalled when I was at technology school. At that time, I heard a rumor that people in Kien Svay were evacuated by boat. So the rumor was true. She continued that even the villagers who never visited Phnom Penh were moved out from their village. Only few families were still in the village. For example, in her family, her father died long time ago. Her mother stayed in the village with children; her mother had never been to Phnom Penh. So she was allowed to stay in the village.

At that time, I wanted to keep my own safety. I just met her once and knew all of these stories. I dared not give any of my stuff to her. I was afraid of breaking the secret. Since that time, we never met each other again. Om Chey, Norng Suon, came to transplant the rice among us a few feet from me. He smiled while looking at the mobile group transplanting rice. At that time, he wore a dark green raincoat, and he wore a hat. We also had raincoats but dared not wear them.

At Angkor Chey, I met some other people. One person came to me and asked, “Have you ever performed in the movie?” I looked at her face. I was surprised. “She asks me if I used to be a movie actor as if I look like one film star.” Then she told me that, “If you used to act in the movie, don’t tell them that you did so because I saw them taking a few actors to execute.” She had a few ripe bananas in her pocket, and she gave me one. The banana was dwarf. When I got it, I only pinched of the tip on the top. I enjoyed eating the banana including its skin.

Reasey: Did she mention the names of those film stars?

Sarem: No, she did not mention the names of the film stars. She just knew that they killed film stars.

Reasey: You heard the information about your family. Was this the first time since you returned from France?

Sarem: Yes, this was the first time that I saw the person from my own village.

Reasey: The one who used to see your family members, right?

Sarem: Yes, yes she is my relative we knew each other very well. My house located in the ten-plot land. This meant that we knew each other very well from the beginning to the end of the land.

Reasey: This might make you feel very emotional. Dared you ask for permission to see your family? Was it allowed?

Sarem: As I told you earlier, they did not care whether you wanted to meet your family or not. They did not care. They said that in the Chinese revolution, people had not yet found their family members until now.

Reasey: Did it mean that there was no hope?

Sarem: No, I did not have hope.

Reasey: But you were happy to some degree that she saw your family. This meant that they were still alive.

Sarem: This was since 1975 during Pchum Ben days. I did not have much hope. I just knew clearly that my families were evacuated out of my village.

Reasey: How many months did you stay at Angkor Chey?

Sarem: I went there since Pchum Ben that was around September. I stayed there until November. One day, when I was taking a bath at Angkor Chey's lake I met a person. She came to meet me and said "You look like people from Phnom Penh." I told her that Angkar sent me to work there. She said that, "Angkar evacuated me here." She didn't take much belonging with her. She slept naked at night everyday. Then she shouted that, "Oh, I hate that damn Angkar so much because they lied to me. They said that we would leave only for three days." She didn't bring much belonging with her. She brought a little. Now, her daughter and her slept naked at night because she washed her clothes at night. At that time, she asked me, "Did you have needle and thread?". Then I said that, "I will bring a needle and thread for you tomorrow." I told her that I would put the needle and thread at one place, and she didn't need to come to see me, because I wanted to protect my own security.

Besides this, I saw some people on the way to work. There, I saw a very skinny boy with only bone and skin. He held a can with no rice. There were only about ten grains of corn soaked with water; the corns became as big as the thumb. I felt so shocked since I saw that boy. I almost suppress my hunger. I felt very pity of him because I had a piece of rice.

Some young female youth tried very hard to please the chiefs at Angkor Chey when they saw them cooked dessert. They kept the white milky dessert in their room only for their group. I saw a girl roast babies rats on the dike of the rice field on a piece of corrugated metal sheet. She turned the roasted babies rats up and down. Seeing her roasting the rats, I felt so nauseated.

Reasey: Didn't you see that kind of starvation at Taley?

Sarem: At Taley, we lived among our group; we never saw the others, (the evacuees). At the hospital house, a girl told me that, "When you hear the radio turned on loudly in the distance, this is the time that people are taken away for execution over there. They turned on the loudspeaker very high so that people will not hear the screaming and crying sound. At Angkor Chey they turned on the radio every day very loud. One day I heard that Mr. Khieu Samphan went to Colombo Sri Langkar to attend the non-alliance countries conferences. He talked about the stance of Democratic Kampuchea at that time. When I was at Angkor Chey in September 1976, I also heard the radio broadcasting that Secretary of Communist Party of China Mr. Mao Zedong died.

Reasey: Since you were at Angkor Chey, did you see the real pictures in Democratic Kampuchea including the execution?

Sarem: I just heard people say about that.

Reasey: Did you hear?

Sarem: Yes. One woman praised Ms. Poc Mona, who came back from France like me. Mona was our group chief when we were at technology school. That woman said "Doing revolution

like Ms. Mona is called a just revolution, it Angkar way “When she said like that, I felt so scared. I thought in my mind that, “How come she praises Mona on the rice field openly. When did she get to know Mona?” Later on at the hospital house, I saw her face and eyes become blue. She was taken to the hospital.

Ms. Mona called herself black French because people in her house spoke French all together. At Angkor Chey, she was good at struggling to live. Even though the workers at Angkor Chey ate dirtily, she could eat with them. I kept looking at Ms. Mona; she struggled a lot. Sometimes, I could eat only rice but not food. As she saw me look so weak, Mona gave me a bottle of Coramine; it was the medicine for the heart. She told me that, “Keep this medicine because you have children. You need to survive to see your children.” She didn’t have children so she gave the medicine to me. When the girls at Angkor Chey saw Ms. Mona carrying firewood to the kitchen, they said why Mona was so clumsily. Hearing that, I helped Mona to turn the base of the firewood to the front.

Reasey: When you were at Angkor Chey, did the situation become tense than at Taley?

Sarem: As I understood, we arrived on the time they were fighting to achieve their goals. Therefore, they turned on electricity and asked us to work at night. We arrived back at our hall at midnight. There were plenty of fish at Angkor Chey. Close to the hospital house, there was a small pond. People drained the water out and caught baskets of fishes. However, we were not allowed to catch the fish to cook. It was absolutely forbidden. There were also a lot of snakes over there.

Reasey: Did you observe that the KR divided people into two classes? For example, they had new people, those who returned from abroad and those who were evacuated from Phnom Penh. Was the living situation much different from the base people?

Sarem: We did not go there and stay with the base people, actually. We stay with the mobile groups. It was Angkar’s working site; it was not a cooperative. So you can see that the children that I saw lived in the cooperative. The old woman who slept naked at night also lived in the cooperative. They even told us that if we could manage to escape to any cooperative, Angkar would not be able to find us.

I saw some people were good at stealing. They stole things very fast, even faster than the thieves at Baghdad City. They walked close to the kitchen and grabbed dried and salty fish quickly. They put the salty fish into their shirt and walked out innocently.

At Angkor Chey, a woman gave a young winter melon that was sweeter than cucumber. The taste was not bitter. Sometimes, I followed the girls to pick up rice that grew wild on the dikes to eat, which cut my mouth.

Some returnees from France could not walk steadily. They usually slipped off the road. Returning from rice fields, the married couple from France forced themselves to hold each other’s hands so that they could help each other to walk steadily. These people were criticized. The KR said that, “You held each other’s hands while walking?” This happened to a woman named Phuong, a returnee from France, who was the wife of Mr. Loy Sim Chheang. During the time that she lived at Angkor Chey, she fell down all the time when walking. She kept asking me that, “How can I walk without falling down?” I told her: “You have to walk fast like running on the slippery road. Do not dig your toes to the ground; it doesn’t help. It even makes you fall down more.” She tried to do like what I told her, but she still could not

manage to do so. I said that it was hard to do like me because I walked like that since I was a child.

Some women in the mobile group asked me for powder to do the make-up. I gave them and told them not to do the make-up during work; otherwise, their faces would become bruised. I kept this powder in case I met my children. I kept it to apply to my children's groins, which might have irritation. Some women asked me, "How old are you? Sometimes you look young, and sometimes you look old." Then I told them my age. They said that, "Oh, at your age, you are not allowed to work in the mobile group. You have to work in grandma group.

Reasey: When did you leave Angkor Chey?

Sarem: I left Angkor Chey in around November.

Reasey: What year was it?

Sarem: It was in 1976. Out from it they put us to stay at Om Chey's house for a while. His house was in Boeung Keng-Kang. It was the former house of Mr. Ung Hong Sath. Reasey! Do you know Mr. Hong Sath?

Reasey: No, I don't.

Sarem: Mr. Ung Hong Sath was the President of the National Assembly during Samdech Ov's regime. Om Chey lived in that house. Leaving from Angkor Chey, we stayed in that house temporarily. We were given rice and salty fish. We received a piece of fish for each person. I was so unfortunate. My piece of fish was stolen when I was busy distributing rice to the others. When I turned back to my own rice, my piece of fish disappeared. I tried to control myself; I didn't make loud voice because I was ashamed of the others. I was also ashamed of myself. Then the women around me gave me small pieces from their own rations, and I could eat rice with them. In the evening, Ms. Norn and I climbed up a house opposite to Om Chey's house. We cut the strings of the curtains. The string was so useful later on. I used this string to tie hammock when we escaped the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

Reasey: Why were you moved out of Angkor Chey?

Sarem: This was Angkar's direction. They asked us to stay there for only a few months. Then they moved us out. After that, they transported us to rest for a while at Om Chey or Norng Suon's house. Then we were moved back to Taley again.

Reasey: How many days were there?

Sarem: We stayed at Taley for about ten days. Then we were asked to move out hastily. All people in Taley had to leave at the same time. They called those who were working at the field to the village for moving out. They almost could not prepare the luggage on time. At that time, we were cooking palm juice to make sugar. When we were asked to leave the site, we understood the palm juice would be left behind. Therefore, we filled the palm juice into "our bidons." Some people managed to get some palm juice in a hurry while others could not. Then we left the site all together.

They put us to stay at a place on the way to the dam to Russian Hospital. They called that place Boeung Trabek. We could reach Boeung Trabek from Kbal Thnal. Before reaching Russian Hospital, we turned right. Then we would see a roundabout. Close to the roundabout,

there was a school called Chhiv Neang Neang School. We were asked to walk into the road at the right hand side of the roundabout. I never knew that place before. We stayed there for about ten days. Then we were moved out again. However, we didn't go anywhere far this time. They moved us to stay close to the roundabout.

Reasey: Was Boeung Trabek a village or district?

Sarem: It was a nice village; it was rich of coconuts. There were a lot of coconut trees. I heard people say that Chhiv Neang Neang is the name of Lon Nol's wife. We stayed close to that school. On the right hand side of the roundabout, there was a former noodle restaurant. The restaurant had no wall but roof. Therefore, they used that former restaurant as the kitchen hall. We cleaned the houses to stay since there were plenty of houses.

Reasey: What about those from Techno when they moved, did they go anywhere altogether?

Sarem: No, they didn't. For example, I was moved from Taley to Angkor Chey. Some people didn't go; they continued to stay at Taley. Suon, who came from Besançon like me, was not moved anywhere. She was just moved from technology school to Taley village. She didn't go to Angkor Chey. Vanna went to Angkor Chey with me. When we arrived back to Taley, Ms. Thay, my friend, told me that she just came back from one working site called Ta Khmao as well. Some people were asked to move to Ta Khmao. Ms. Thay moved out with Ms. Thaach, wife of Doctor Ho Sinrong to Ta khmao. However, only Ms. Thay returned to Taley. We didn't see Ms. Thaach coming back. Ms. Thay said that, "I don't know where they took Ms. Thaach to."

When Ms. Thay stayed at Ta Khmao working site Thaach became chief of women over there. She tried to gain favors from the chief of the working site. When it was time to return to Taley village, Thay didn't see Ms. Thaach coming back. Ms. Thaach told Ms. Thay that she missed me very much because Ta Khmao was rich of fruits. Sometimes, jackfruit was left ripe in the bushes, and there were not many people over there. Therefore, some fruits were left ripe and dried on the trees such as star apples because there were few people but a lot of fruits. Ms. Thaach missed me because she believed that if I came to Ta Khmao with her, I would be able to eat as much fruits as she did.

Reasey: Weren't some people at Boeung Trabek moved out?

Sarem: When we were moved out from Angkor Chey, we moved altogether; no one continued to stay there. We came back altogether. We returned to Taley. When they closed Taley, they moved us all to come to Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Were the chiefs from Taley still chiefs at Boeung Trabek?

Sarem: When we came to live at Boeung Trabek, everything had changed. Those who were chiefs at Taley were no longer chiefs. This time, we saw comrade Keut. He was about 50 years old. Later on, I heard that his real name was Sarin, and his wife was Phlek Vipha, who was the sister of Plek Chhaat and Phlek Chhat. Sarin or comrade Keut returned back to Cambodia through Ho Chi Minh Trail before the KR took over the country. Angkar appointed him as chief at Boeung Trabek. His mother in law also returned back. Her name was Loeum, she was old.

Reasey: When you were at Boeung Trabek, was it the transplanting or harvesting season?

Sarem: When we returned to Boeung Trabek, it was cold season. As I knew, it was around November. At around four o'clock in the morning, they hit the gong asking us to wake up. It was still dark, and the children cried loudly when their mothers took them to children's center so that the mothers could go to work. Arriving at Boeung Trabek, our important task was to produce number-one fertilizer.

Reasey: Was it for rice fields?

Sarem: Besides producing number-one fertilizer, we were asked to plant vegetable and send the vegetable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Mr. Ieng Sary. We planted many kinds of vegetables such as a kind of zucchini, gourds. We made square boxes to grow the gourds. We made sure root that the root go down deeper into the ground in layers so that it could produce more fruits. We could see that the gourd that we planted produced a lot of fruits. We even planted sugarcane. Keut, the chief over there, looked so happy. Some of us who returned from France brought some seeds along with us. We could even plant a kind of lettuce with had hard leaves called Romaine lettuce. Later on we tried to find other seeds. Later on we had lemongrass. We planted many kinds of vegetable. No matter how much we produced, the KR chiefs did not allow us to eat our vegetable. We did not have much to eat. We had to transport this vegetable to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When we first arrived, we could eat only wild vegetable. Our teeth became black as we ate more and more "Phlov angkep" (a wild aquatic vegetable). One woman just arrived from France; she was a flight attendant. She came down from the house with her make-up on. As she saw our black teeth, she asked that, "Oh, do you pain your teeth black?" A few days later, she disappeared. Some people said that Angkar took her away. She might get killed.

We planted vegetable and cleaned up the pond at Boeung Trabek. In the process, we pulled down small cottages built in the pond. We cleaned everything up. We collected water hyacinth, chopped them into pieces and mixed with human waste to make number-one fertilizer. After cleaning the pond, we set up the poles like straight line to prepare fields to plant "Trakuon" (Ong Choy or *iponoema aquatica*). We tied few pieces of Trakuon to each poles. We set up the poles in an appropriate distance from one pole to another ensuring that we could go on little canoe to harvest the Trakuon in that pond.

Reasey: Since you returned from France, lived in technology school and then came to live at Boeung Trabek, did any other high-ranking KR leader come to observe you?

Sarem: At Boeung Trabek, Savorn was the KR leader. He stayed close to us. Later Ieng Sary came to visit us. At that time, a group of diplomats came to live at Boeung Trabek. They stayed at the place where we stayed when we first arrived. We were asked to move out from that place, which was kept for the diplomats. Then Ieng Sary asked all diplomats and us to meet in Chhiv Neang Neang School. We were asked to stand in queue to enter the school. The KR checked us; they even get our sandals from us and shook it. At that time, I had only a small gold necklace I borrowed from my sister. I didn't have any other gold. I wore the necklace with Buddha pendant to France. I dared not cede this necklace to the KR because it was my sister's property. I kept it with me to the meeting in my pocket. Arriving there, the KR checked everything including our sandals. Then I believed that, "If the KR sees my necklace, I will have problem for sure. I took out the necklace and dropped it near my foot. I buried the necklace over there. Then I entered the school to attend the meeting. Getting out of the meeting, I could not find my necklace.

Reasey: It lost?

Sarem: Yes. Before entering the school, I saw a woman with green eyes. I looked at her from the distance. I said to myself that, "Where does this woman come from? Her eyes are green. No Cambodian people have green eyes like that." Then another woman told me that she was French. I was so doubtful why the French girl was with the KR. Later on people told me that she was the wife of a KR cadre from France. He was Mr. Sikoeun. She returned to Cambodia with him. Later, she wrote a book entitled "*Beyond the Horizon: Five Years with the Khmer Rouge*." When I entered the school, I was surprised to see "Nak Maneang Nanette" (Princess Nanette), "Nak Maneang Monique's sister" (Princess Monique's sister). Her husband was Prince Sisowath Metheavy. I recognized her because I had seen Prince Metheavy at my cousin's house Eap Kim-Chorn who got married to Prince Sisowath Sirikmatak's. Her name was Princess Vitourya. She was called Machas Tou. I used to visit my cousin's house and saw Princess Nanette and Prince Metheavy. So I recognized her quickly. Prince Metheavy used striped mattress cloth to make scarf wearing around his neck. I also saw Mr. Ang Kim-Khorn, who accompanied Prince Sihanouk back to Cambodia. I saw him still wearing a ring. I saw many different people at that occasion. They had a party over there. The KR cooked winter melon soup with pork ribs for us. In the meeting, they criticized us, the intellectuals, harshly. They said we were like this and that. They looked down on us so much. We almost could not swallow the food. They put the food on the table and covered them with colorful scarves used for tying hair. It looked so strange. At first, I was so mad to be scolded. Our crime was by just being an educated person. I thought that I might not be able to swallow the food. As I thought deeper, I told myself that I would follow comrade Yan, Prince Sihanouk's daughter attitude at the second party in the Royal Palace. We acted like we were just emerging from hell and never had any food to eat for long time. We ate almost everything on the table and took a full-fist of candy and put them into our pocket. (End of part 6 pages 62)

Now, I would like to continue the story at Boeung Trabek. Besides planting vegetable, we planted cassava. It was called a strategic plant. We also raised ducks. Angkar assigned us to raise ducks as breeding ducks. Besides ducks, we were asked to raise pigs. We had a big female pig. We called this pig "Mee Damrey" (an elephant). The KR got a male pig to crossbreed with the female one. We were also asked to raise rabbits. They took the rabbits to Institute Pasteur to do experiment.

Reasey: How was the eating situation at Boeung Trabek? Was it tough?

Sarem: We continued to eat rice porridge at Boeung Trabek. One day, they allowed us to eat rice for the first time. The cook rice was white like jasmine flower. My tear dropped down as I saw hard cooked rice for the first time at Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Did you know why they allowed you to eat hard rice?

Sarem: I didn't know; it was up to them. When they allowed us to have hard rice, we had rice to eat. They gave us rice and the very broken rice to cook rice only on the special day like the 17 April Day or mass wedding in the camp. On these occasions, we were allowed to eat rice. Sometimes, they brought bread for us at Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Where did they get the bread?

Sarem: There was a story about the bread. There was a man who was the son of (Mr. Sarin Chhak, a FUNK's Ambassador). Sarin Chhak son said that, "Oh, our brothers and sisters could make bread?" By saying this he invited problems to himself. They kept observing him

because he looked down on the KR peasants. Later, we knew that the KR ran out of rice so they used the flour to make breads. They made big bread and gave it to us.

Reasey: How was the taste? Was it delicious?

Sarem: It was good like the previous one. When we got bread, we didn't know what to do with bread, but since we could keep the product from our garden, the not in good shape eggplant for our kitchen, and we also had a lot of coconuts since there were plenty of coconut trees there. We made coconut milk to make eggplant soup with snails from the pond to eat with the bread.

Reasey: Was collective eating still practiced at Boeung Trabek?

Sarem: Yes, still collective eating.

Reasey: Were you still a cook in the kitchen hall?

Sarem: Yes, we, women, were still the cooks at Boeung Trabek. We took turn like when we were at Taley. It was very hard to cook the broken rice. Therefore, one day, with the broken rice we created a kind of plate in style of " Bay Bi". With lotus rhizome we got from the pond at Boeung Trabek shredded into small pieces. We mixed it with our cooked snails flavored with roasted rice, our broken rice was served in By Bi style. Ho Savath, a returnee from England, said that he would not eat the rice with the Vietnamese name. He said that, "Why don't you call this kind of plate with the Khmer name?" That day, Ho Savath had praised his teacher Ponnary. He said she was so gentle. Only the reactionaries always harmed his teacher. Teacher Ponnary was Pol Pot's or Salot Sar's wife.

There were a lot of coconut trees at Boeung Trabek. The ones grown under the shadow were not good. They were very weak. We cut down secretly those weak coconut trees and got the young core inside. We used the young core coconut tree to create a kind of sweet and sour salad mixed with snail and smashed young tamarind that grew in front of the kitchen hall. Sometimes, we collected young coconuts from here and there, the one that the KR had thrown away after they drank the juice. We picked up these coconuts, cut them apart and pulled out the meat inside. We cleaned the coconut meat sliced it and cooked it with our wild spinach to make soup. We didn't have much meat. Savorn came and saw our food, he not happy. I remember that Savorn was so angry to see us have that kind of food. On our last observance of the 17 April Day, the KR allowed us to eat hard rice and dessert. That day we created "By Daung". We cooked rice and kept it until it became warm. Then we mixed the rice with coconut meat and some salt. We ate this rice with boiled vegetable. Our dessert was a pudding called "Nom Peak Poon ". "Nom Peak Poun" is black. The way to create this kind of pudding was to burn the palm leaves. Then soaked the ashes into the water, strained it to get clear black water, then soaked the rice into that black water with shredded coconut and then grinded the rice, which appeared to be black liquid powder. The liquid powder got the partum of the palm leave then cooked it on small fire. The pudding was so creamy so delicious. I would like to tell you that even though we had rice only on the ceremony days, our food look good. Savorn, the KR chief, did not like us. He was not happy to see us be able to create good look food. He was angry and wanted to warn us that no matter how much the KR want to starve us, we still had look good food. Savorn said "No matter we starved them, those" imperialists" still find ways to create good look food on their tables". Please be informed that Ms. Rene and her husband uncle Lou were the ones who knew how to make Peak Poun pudding. Om Lou was" Hotel Le Royal's manager" during the old regime. Om

Lou was a relative of Doctor Thioun Thioeun. Om Lou, his wife and his older sister in law were taken to live with us at Boeung Trabek.

Comrade Keut , who was our first chief at Boeung Trabek, tried to give us enough food, not to be too starved. However, we were still skinny. We were too skinny. When we sat on the chair, we hurt our buttocks. We had to place a scarf under the buttocks. When the Vietnamese was fighting into Cambodia, the KR organization asked us to cook rice mixed with cassava's leaves grown behind the kitchen. The rice mixed with cassava's leaves smelled so bad. We had a very hard time to eat this rice. We felt like throwing up.

Reasey: When you lived at Boeung Trabek, did you see any difference from other places you used to live?

Sarem: I would like to inform you that Boeung Trabek was the last camp that those who returned from abroad stayed. Boeung Trabek was different from Taley and Angkor Chey working sites. Boeung Trabek was a very hot place. They fought each other harshly to gain power. There were a lot of meetings at Chhiv Neang Neang School, many times. I didn't want to attend those meetings because Savorn scolded us too much. He said that we had degrees, and he asked us to use our degrees to produce something visually. He used the words, "our head deserves to be beaten with the hand of a hoe." He used the word "hit our head with the hand of hoe" numerous times. At each meeting I had counted it on my diary like I counted the scores in a football game. I had collected about 30 to 40 times the hand of a hoe hitting our head after each meeting. When working, we had to be very careful. When digging soil, we had to be careful not to break the hand of the hoe; otherwise, we could be accused of being enemy. One time, Ms. Phalla, the group chief, said that a hoe was broken with intention. She meant that the person who broke the hoe did it with intention.

During our stay at Boeung Trabek for almost three years, the chiefs were changed like changing clothes. As I remember, the name of the first chief was Keut or Sarin, who entered Cambodia through Ho Chi Minh Trail. His wife was Vipha. Another chief was Mr.Hing Un, he also returned from France. His wife was Toch. Another chief was Pheak. Pheak was a doctor from China. He was a resident from Battambang. Another chief was Moan. He seemed to be an electrical technician. His wife was Ly. Moan and his wife Ly was Angkar's agent. During the evacuation of people from Phnom Penh the KR put these people in one group. After the revolution, these people were put to live with us. The other chief was Huy. He had a broken leg. He came from Dei Kraham; he was also the chief at Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Does it mean that the politics at that time get tenser and tenser?

Sarem: The KR had a slogan "In a hot moment, the enemy will show up." This meant that they forced us to work very hard. We had to work until we almost had no time to rest. We had to even work at night. They called this social work. For example, they asked us to pound the corrugated metal sheet to make baskets, at night. We pounded it to get a flat sheet of metal with a heavy tool called "elephant leg." With the loud noise from pounding, my ears almost became deaf. As I told earlier, our work was also to clean the pond. We carried aquatic plant and water hyacinth out of the pond. Try Meng Huot, who supervised our work, told us that, "For our brothers and sisters at the countryside, some women worked until the uterus fell down. Therefore, you have to work harder. If you fall down and break your hand or leg, Angkar will take care of you for the rest of your life." Then I and Ms. Siny said loudly that, "We have to work hard, but we have to be careful not to break our hand and leg so that we don't give more burden to Angkar."

Reasey: Did the hot moment mean that you had to work on the rice fields or something else?

Sarem: As I said earlier, we didn't grow rice at Boeung Trabek. We planted vegetable. Hot moment meant that they always had work for us to do. Some people made complain when they were too tired. When they heard complain, they accused us of being enemies. This meant that they wanted to see who could withstand the work. Those who could not would be called enemies.

Reasey: Was anyone not able to withstand the hard work and accused of being enemy?

Sarem: Some people argued against the chief. They said that, "Doing so is not appropriate." Sometimes, they asked us to do work inappropriately. For example, they asked us to clean the pond for growing Trakuon (ong choy). We had the seeds ready to plant. Then they took out labor forces that were supposed to plant the Trakuon. Therefore, we understood that cleaning the pond was in vain. The water hyacinth would come back again. If they kept some forces to plant Trakuon and some others to do other work that would be better. If we complained like that the chief would say that we were disobedient. They used us like soldiers. We had to turn right or left according to their order. They want us to obey them blindly even though they did wrong on us.

Reasey: Did those who complain receive any punishment?

Sarem: At that time there was a person named Vuth, a returnee from France. He was criticized often. I didn't know what he complained about because he was in the men group. He was always pointed out as enemy. He became so thin. Some people at Boeung Trabek camp isolated Vuth, they avoided talking to Vuth because they said Vuth was an enemy, but myself I talked to Vuth as usual. A few days later, Vuth disappeared.

The returnees who lived at Boeung Trabek came from several countries. Some came from France and China. Those who returned ahead of me and used to stay in Preah Vihear were also sent to live at Boeung Trabek. The servants of the diplomats also came to live there. The wives and children of the KR cadres who died struggling in the forest also came to live at Boeung Trabek. Doctor Thioun Thioeun relative also came to live with us were sister Rene, her husband Om Lou and her sister Nith. These three people were the evacuees from Phnom Penh.

Reasey: Did they eat collectively or separately?

Sarem: We ate together in the same kitchen hall.

Reasey: So they gathered all people together at that time. Did you foresee that there would be any measure?

Sarem: I didn't know. When the chief was replaced, we were called to attend the meeting very often. I was thinking that I was like being summoned every day to the martial court to hear the prosecution. When Keut, the first chief at Boeung Trabek was removed, Savorn the KR cadre who oversee the whole Boeung Trabek said "If Keut was not people of Angkar he would have him been taken away long time ago." Savorn said that, "Comrade Keut was like a temple boy. He only slept and ate; he didn't encourage people to work." As I mentioned earlier, comrade Keut paid much attention to the people living in Boeung Trabek camp. He allowed us to use

coconuts in our food because a lot of coconuts fell down on the ground. We picked them up and used the coconuts to make soup.

Reasey: During that period of time, had you ever seen anyone was taken for execution?

Sarem: As I told a moment ago about comrade Keut , Savorn said that, “If comrade Keut was not an Angkar’s people he would have been taken away long time ago.” At that time, we knew that comrade Keut was taken away, but we didn’t know when and where they took him. Only his wife Ms. Phlek Vipha remained at Boeung Trabek. At one meeting in Chhiv Neang Neang School, Ms. Vipha pointed finger to some KR cadres who were sitting in front of us guarding with rifles. She said that, “You are all the enemies. Angkar would not do like that.” Later on, Ms. Phlek Vipha and her children disappeared.

Reasey: Did she disappear forever and never returned?

Sarem: Later on, we learnt that they were all taken to execution. After every meeting, a Jeep car arrived to take people out to fulfill other tasks. A lot of people were taken away. The car was full of people; they sat in the front of the jeep, in the backseat, and on both sides. The people were so happy to be transported out. I remembered Ms. Ho Savath was the most, Ho Savat a returnee from England. He smiled so happily. He sat on the edge of the jeep and waved goodbye to us.

Reasey: Did they tell you where they took these people?

Sarem: They said that Angkar had to take them to the new working site.

Reasey: Did it mean that they were taken to execution?

Sarem: I didn’t know at that time. The jeep came and took people out. An old woman named Yem was a servant of Mr. Sarin Chhak. She raised pigs with me. She asked the children who were tending cattle on the road to Russian Hospital that, “Angkar transported out a lot of our comrades. Where does Angkar take them? Does Angkar take them to do the revolution in other places?” Then the children said that, “What kind of car do they get on?” The old lady said that, “It is a Jeep car.” The children said that, “On a Jeep, they go to do revolution in the ground.” The children said that the Jeep car was the car of the security unit. Then, Grandmother Yem whispered to me that, “Rim, the children said that our comrades were taken to do the revolution in the ground. What does it mean?” I told Grandmother Yem that, “The revolution in the ground means that the KR buries them in the grave. This means that they are executed.” Grandmother Yem rubbed her chest and said that, “Oh, a lot of our comrades went out. They were so happy; they waved their hands to say goodbye to us. They didn’t realize that they were taken to be executed.”

Reasey: Did she talk quietly or loudly?

Sarem: She talked to the children. The place that we raised pigs was far away from people. It was close to the road to Russian Hospital. She asked the children and still she could not understand. So she came to ask me.

Reasey: Was you frightened hearing that information?

Sarem: I was not frightened at that time they fought each other for power. A man who came back from France named Thach Van Phat asked me after a meeting that, “Sister Rim, we had

to raise the fighting flag ” I said that, “I don’t have any flag. I came back to Cambodia not to fight for power. I wanted to meet my children. I don’t care about those who fight each other for power. I have no idea about this red regime.” After the meeting, some people asked me that, “What do you think when we are in the struggle time and we criticize each other harshly like that?” Since they asked me like that, myself and Vanna, who came from Besançon, said that, “We were just waited to see what happen next.”

Reasey: Were you careful with your words when you heard the children said about doing revolution in the ground?

Sarem: Yes, I did what I was asked to do. I respected their order. When I was told that Angkar did not allow us to set fire or to produce smoke, I understood quickly that there must have been someone who did not like Angkar and wanted to set fire to destroy Angkar’s properties. That was why we were not allowed to make fire at this time. Later, they told us to pour out at night the boiled water that we kept in the jar for drinking. They did not allow us to reserve water in the jar. We had to boil new water in the morning. Therefore, we fill in our water containers to drink at night. I understood that there must have been poison in the jar.

Reasey: Was there any problem in their internal leadership?

Sarem: I could see that people from Preah Vihear fought for power at the Hospital house. There was a man named Chea. He might have come back from China. He was a doctor. He was assigned to take care of the Hospital house. I heard people say that they convened the meeting secretly in the Hospital house. At that time, I stayed close to that house. Bun and Khem were the children of the diplomats. They got married and came to live with us. They asked me that, “Sister, what faction do you join? I said:” I didn’t join any faction”. They said: “Last night, we saw people running backward and forward under the house that you stayed.” I said that, “I didn’t see anyone running last night. I just came down to take shower.” But I saw that night people had coordinated something. Ms. Aun was the sister of Hor Namhong. She came from Taley like me. She had a small son, and her husband also stayed there. At that time, Mr. Hor Namhong also stayed in the camp near us. Hor Namhong’s mother was Lam we called her Grandmother Lam; she stayed in the camp with us. Ms. Aun didn’t like Ms. Phalla and Try Meng Huot who used to be the chiefs at Taley. She came to ask me “Sister, these people harmed us a lot at Taley. Now they are about to become chiefs again. We have to make sure that they are not able to become the chiefs.” I told her “I return to the country because I want to see my children. Therefore, I don’t care if they become chiefs ten or twenty times. They understood the revolutionary politics, so it is up to them. I don’t care; I am an ordinary person. I will do what I am ordered to do.”

Reasey: I would like to invite you to continue talking about your life in the KR regime, please.

Sarem: I would like to tell you that people still arriving at Boeung Trabek one after another. Even in 1977, more people were arriving. I remember a man named Hing Un, who was chief of the FUNK in France. He was the Director of Agriculture Department in Phnom Penh during Prince Sihanouk Regime. He returned back to Cambodia with another man named Sieng Hak, who was expert in gas transportation. Hak was the son-in-law of Sarin Chhak. Later Kang Sanirath, his wife, Ket, and his two children also arrived. Sanirath had studied in Literature Faculty with me in Phnom Penh. Eng was an expert in preserving food for long period. The last person who entered Boeung Trabek was Tep Kunnal; he returned back with his wife. Tep Kunnal now get married to Pol Pot’s widow. Another woman named Tat Chan Savy was an eye doctor. She came back from France, and she was single. She was

the daughter of Mr. Tat Heng, who was inspector of education. Another woman was a daughter of a diplomat. She could speak five languages. She returned the same day with Tep Kunnal and his wife. The last person entering Boeung Trabek was Khuon Chhoam, coming from the US. We called him Om Chhoam. He was the father of Khuon David, who worked in the FUNK's mission in Paris. I would like to tell you that after Tep Khunnal entered Boeung Trabek for one night, we were moved out. Tat Chansavy, who was at my age, had asked me something. I just told her that at this place she had to talk less and listen more. After this, we left each other because I had to prepare my luggage for the next day to move out from Boeung Trabek. As I mentioned earlier, we encountered a lot of issues when we lived at Boeung Trabek. My group chief, named Yun, did a lot of bitter things to us. She always criticized San and me. Comrade San was a doctor. Yun said that I did not listen to Angkar's meeting, that I always looked at flower three at the yard during every meeting." The Bopreuk flowers fell on the ground and spread out like a mat. She said my mind did not concentrate on Angkar's meeting. Then she asked me to describe what Angkar said at the meeting, the previous days. As I could describe all of Angkar's words, she could not say anything more. She could not report anything about me. For comrade San, who was a doctor, dared not kill animal. However, Yun the chief of our group had force comrade San to cut tortoise's neck. Comrade Yun said that, "In this regime, we are like living in the heaven. After returning from work, food is already on the table for us. No other country could do like our country, we had food on the table ready for us to eat like this after work." We at the back laughed after hearing what she said. At nights, Yun had nightmare. She talked in her sleep about arresting someone. Yun, my group chief, was a servant of a diplomat. She said that the Vietnamese people and Cambodian people were like brothers and sisters. But the governments made them become enemies.

The day that Angkar sent about 20 of us to work in a new place the children of the diplomats also joined us. At that time, Hor Namhong's daughter was also in the group of diplomat children. She was about 16 years old. There were other children of diplomats such as children of Mr. Chem Snguon and Mr. Ieng Kunsoky.

Reasey: Did they inform you in advance or transport you there immediately?

Sarem: We did not know in advance. Immediately, they asked women to pack luggage. The vehicle was waiting for us on the road. When we arrived, we saw children of the diplomats sitting there already.

Reasey: Were you worried about that? When they transported people out, this meant they took people to execution, but they lied that they took people to work. Were you frightened at that time?

Sarem: I was never scared living with the Khmer Rouge. When they transported me anywhere, I was never worried that they took me to execution, never. At the road we saw a vehicle that was not the Jeep. The vehicle was like a commercial bus that transported people from Phnom Penh to Prey Veng.

Reasey: They were different.

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: How long was there to travel to that place?

Sarem: The pagoda that we traveled to was Wat Sleng. It was a working site. They took us to sleep in the temple of that pagoda. As I knew, that place was not far from Phnom Penh. It was in the West of Phnom Penh. It was about 10 kilometers from Phnom Penh. So we stayed in the temple and they assigned us to work. We harvested rice and delivered rice to store in the pagoda yard. Later, they asked us to dig and deliver soil. Many people came from all directions. For our group were all women. Male and female youth came from other places that we did not know.

Reasey: Yes, they were delivering soil, building dams, and digging canals, right?

Sarem: Yes, they asked us to dig soil to build dams.

Reasey: Does it mean that they transported you to Wat Sleng, slept and worked there?

Sarem: Yes, we slept at Wat Sleng. Then they allowed us to have food with them like when I was at Angkor Chey. Arriving there some of us met their relatives. When we were walking to work, people seemed to recognize some of us and knew that we were from France because they knew their relatives. The next day, we lost our belongings in the pagoda. I had 250 Franc; I reserved it for myself. While returning from work I didn't see my money I lost all my money. However, I did not say anything, I kept it to myself.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. I would like to continue to describe my story at Wat Sleng working site. There I met some female youth who used to work at Angkor Chey working site. At Wat Sleng, I saw a girl who is jumping to get the coconut from the tree, and asked her that, "How is Oum Chey?" She shouted: "He is a traitor!" At that time, I was very frightened. Oum Chey or Norng Suon was a chief at Angkor Chey working site. When I heard her say about betrayal, I dared not say anything more. Then she said that, "They all are traitors. They are still betraying us even here in Wat Sleng. They don't give us anything to eat. They give us only rice and fish paste sauce. Those at Wat Sleng are also traitors. They eat plentifully while they give us nothing to eat except fish paste sauce." Since we had only rice and fish paste sauce like she said we went to rice field to pick up "Mo orm"(caraway) that grew beautifully with purple flowers on the dikes. We picked it up as vegetable to eat with the watery fish paste sauce. As we ate too much, it almost damaged our stomach.

Reasey: What year was that?

Sarem: As I remembered, it was in late 1977. We took rice to store in the pagoda yard. The rice was piled up like a mountain, and it had golden color. At midnight, people shouted "a fire a fire". We all ran out of the temple. I was so frightened because I tied my hammock to the pillars of the temple for sleeping. I crawled out; I was so afraid because Mss. Mony and Miss. Sothy, who were daughters of Mr. Hing Un, slept on the shelves. I was afraid that they might step in a hurry on that shelves, the wood frame might fall on me. As I was crawling out of the temple I saw a former monk's house was already on fire. The pile of rice also caught the flame. No one took water to put out the flame. Only us, women who came out from the temple took water to put out the flame. However, the fire had already reached its peak, so we could not do anything much to put it out. We were about to cry because we felt sorry for the rice that we had put a lot of effort to carry it to store over there. Then I saw a person standing close to a pillar that was almost completely burned. The pillar was about to fall down over that person, but he luckily moved himself out just a second from the dangerous spot. We said

that, “God, he is so lucky.” The next day, we got to know that someone had poured gasoline around the temple in order to burn us to death.

Reasey: Who wanted to burn you to death?

Sarem: I just heard people saying like that. They said that gasoline was poured around the temple. Later on, I heard people say that those who poured gasoline to burn down the rice in the pagoda yard were the enemies who had staged several sabotage activities. They said those” enemies had injected water into the vein of the revolutionary soldiers.”

Before the rice was burned down, one night, I heard people shouting “enemy, enemy.” As we heard the voice, we came out of the temple but saw nothing suspicious. Actually, we saw some girls who had joking around while jumping up to pick coconuts at night, and they shouted like that.

After the fire, they sent us to live in one house far from the pagoda. The children of the diplomats also came to live near us.

Reasey: You mentioned about the children of the diplomats. What regime did these diplomats work for?

Sarem: Those children were the children of Hor Namhong and Chem Snguon. They used to be the diplomats of Prince Sihanouk’s Front. They returned to Cambodia. These children of the diplomats also lived in the other camp at Boeung Trabek under the supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Ieng Sary as the Minister.

Reasey: How hard did you work and how hard did they work? Did all your work were the same?

Sarem: Yes, when we lived at Wat Sleng, we did the same thing, carrying rice to the temple and other things like digging soil.

Reasey: What’s about eating?

Sarem: We ate at the kitchen of the working site.

Reasey: Did you have a chance to talk to those children of the diplomats?

Sarem: Yes, at Wat Sleng I observed that the children of the diplomats criticized each other so harshly. They did not have compassion on those who were weak or those who had weak body. I saw that Chem Snguon’s daughter was so weak, so she could not work much. Her health was not good. Then the other children criticized her so cruelly. I thought that these people had zero tolerance for each other. It is normal that some people have good health; some don’t. So they could not work equally. Two weeks later at Boeung Trabek I saw a car driving across our village into the place where the diplomats were living. The car was green. I believed that the car was to get a corpse. It must have come to transport the body of Chem Snguon’s daughter who was weak and had difficulty to breathe at Wat Sleng working site. A few days later, I heard that she died of a heart attack after returning from Wat Sleng. Another girl was a daughter of Mr. Ieng Kunsoky; her mother was Bun Thuok. When we walked back from working site of Wat Sleng to our compound at night far from the temple I saw her shaking. She felt scared of something. She didn’t look like having a normal feeling. She told us that she was so afraid of staying at Wat Sleng working site because there were a lot of

enemies. Then comrade San, who was a doctor, and I told her that, “Don’t worry much because Angkar had transferred us to live far from that pagoda. Try to concentrate so that you have energy to work for Angkar.”

Reasey: Talking about life at Wat Sleng, were people required to wear black clothes or they could wear other colors?

Sarem: At Wat Sleng working site, most people wore black.

Reasey: Does it mean that black clothes were not required?

Sarem: We were not required to wear black.

Reasey: I see.

Sarem: Now, let me talk about a person whom I paid close attention to when we were working at Wat Sleng working site. Among our group who went to Wat Sleng, there was a person named Vun. Vun was a servant of a diplomat. Vun entered Cambodia through Ho Chi Minh Trail. Before returning to Cambodia, she was trained to deliver heavy things up to the mountain in China. When Vun entered Cambodia to the liberated zone through Ho Chi Minh Trail, she praised the revolutionary cadres that they were so gentle and polite. At Wat Sleng, there were many people from different places coming to work. Sometimes, they sent us to work far from our place that we could not come back to lunch on time. They delivered food to us. They delivered rice and food by ox-cart, and our chiefs of groups had to take care of our ration. One day, we were waiting for our shares. We kept on waiting and later realized the food ran out. Only a little food was left. Vun reacted with great anger. Vun said that, “These people are enemies and traitors. They came to take rice a head of others and didn’t think of anybody.” We were so scared when we heard Vun talk like that. I had no surprise seeing them taking rice without leaving some for the others. This means that the KR organizers were not responsible. I used to see some examples in Taley. We raised the issue of economical stance because the Khmer Rouge had left over crust rice and fish paste that became moldy under the house at Taley. So we had criticized them about economical stance. In turn, they imposed restriction on us. They cut our rice porridge ration. Therefore, when I heard Vun talking like that, I thought that she was inviting trouble to herself because we were under their control. When Vun arrived at Boeung Trabek she had asked Savorn to send her to go to see a dentist. Savorn was a big chief at Boeung Trabek. Savorn replied that, “You went to the dentist many times in the old regime; now leave that place for our brothers and sisters. Later Vun disappeared from Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: May be they took her away.

Sarem: Yes. At Wat Sleng working site, during the break before dinner myself and I San, who was a doctor and whose daughter was Soth. We called her San-Soth so that we didn’t confuse her with another San, whose daughter was Yan. We called her San-Yan.

San-Soth and I we love Nature. During every break before dinner, I would sit near a bamboo bush to watch sunset together with San-Soth. The sun was like a big fire ball, and it was lowering downward slowly to hide itself in the horizon spreading the red light around half of the sky before going to bed. This was the haven scenery that is still in my heart until today. During the break, San-Soth described her regret that she left her husband in China and took her daughter back to Cambodia. San went to study in China since she was young. She was the daughter of Mr. Vang Y. She studied in China because her brother also went with her. I heard

that she was an adopted child of Mr. Zhou Enlai. Her brother also returned to Cambodia, bringing his Laotian wife with him. When the Khmer Rouge took over the country, San-Soth asked her husband for permission to return to Cambodia. She said she missed the country very much. Her husband dissuaded her not to return, but she did not listen to him. And now she waited for news from her husband. She told me that she did not want to live in Boeung Trabek anymore. She wanted to work as a doctor at Russian Hospital because she was good at acupuncture. Then she asked me "How about you?" I told her "for me, when I decided to return home, I had already thrown away my life, so I want to stay in Boeung Trabek because I did not have any skill like San." San could work in other places to help many other people, but I would continue to do labor work at Boeung Trabek until I met my daughters. Doing labor work was better than doing the work that I had to repeat Angkar's words. My tongue was stiff. I could not repeat the words of revolutionary Angka. San missed her husband. She told me that when she was leaving, her husband and her had sung a song "The Mekong River Flows." They said goodbye to each other and said "Although we are far away from each other, we still drink the same water from the Mekong River."

One day at Wat Sleng working site, we were sent to harvest rice. I got my foot cut with a corrugated metal sheet. As the weather became so hot and I was not well, I stood up, stretched my body and said, "Oh, Mighty Sun! Why don't you have mercy on workers and peasants who are harvesting rice profusely? Why do you shine like burning fire? Why don't you make up some clouds so that we have some shadow? Be careful in the meeting this evening, I will educate you, Mighty Sun. You don't help to encourage the revolution at all." Those who were harvesting rice laughed all together. We felt relaxed and continued harvesting rice. At the meeting in the evening, Ms. Phalla, who was my group chief, had criticized me that I did propaganda to the people during working hours. The next day, I got serious fever; I could not go to work. In the afternoon, I saw the KR cadres taking a lot of corpses to cremate. I smelt burnt corpses too much, so I asked another sick person if she saw the KR cadres take corpses to be cremated. Hearing my words, she hurried over to hug me and said, "Sister, you are hallucinating." Later in the evening, Ayo's mother who was less sick than me walked to take rice porridge for me. Every time we watched the Sun set at the rice field, San always made fun and asked me that, "Do you still want to educate the Sun?" We all laughed and I told San that, "When I come back to Cambodia, I feel like I had already thrown away my life." That's why I replied to Ms. Phalla who had criticized me about the joke, I had created that joke just to release the stress so our comrades could feel relaxed and could continue to work well under that burning sun.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey.

Sarem: I would like to continue the story at Wat Sleng. About one week before returning back to Boeung Trabek, during the lunch break, we saw a small white car driving across the rice field. The car was so fast. We asked each other "Who drives the car so badly?" Some people knew that was the car of Ieng Sary's son-in-law. He came to observe our working site.

One day when we left the kitchen hall at Wat Sleng, I saw Ms. Hem Ravann. She was a student at Norodom School, but she was in a higher grade than me. She was standing and watching people coming out of the kitchen hall. She dressed like a KR cadre.

At Wat Sleng, there were a lot of frangipani trees, which produced a lot of flowers. The KR said that they sold these dried flowers to Hong Kong to make tea. The tea made from this frangipani flowers could clean up poison inside the body.

After I got a little better from my wound at my foot. I could not carry soil. They asked me to sit and dug up the earth to get the soil for them to carry away to make a dam. I had made a cave to break a huge piece of earth. I saw that piece of earth going to collapse, I crawled out from the whole, but the female youth outside of the whole had asked me in and to continue to dig in more. I said, "No, if you want to go deeper, do it yourself." Then I crawled out. I had not even stood up yet; when I looked back, I saw the soil all over the girl as she crawled into the cave. Workers there tried to dig her out from the fallen wall of dirt and dragged her away to the hospital. Some comrades told me that, "Be careful. You may have a problem." I said: "How can I have a problem. I already told you guys that the wall of dirt is going to fall and you didn't believe me."

One day in the evening when I was walking back from work, I saw a "lambretta" driving into the front yard of our house in the rice field. So I told Ms. Dany that, "Dany, this car will surely take you to see your husband." Dany asked me that "How do you know?" I replied that, "Angkar broadcasted through the radio that Angkar had cut off diplomatic relation with Vietnam, so your husband who is a diplomat in Hanoi will return home."

Then Dany was told to prepare her luggage and was taken out. I would like to tell you that I called Dany, "The Bulldozer", when we were living in Boeung Trabek because she had a strong body. When we flattened the corrugated metal sheet to make two-handled basket, and Dany and me, we sang along our work. We could sing because the pounding sound covered our voice. We sang French songs.

Dany returned to Cambodia with a little son. She also had other three siblings returning to Cambodia. Her full name is Poc Dany. Her older sister is Poc Mona; her younger sister is Poc Yanine. Her siblings held important position in the KR rank. Ms. Poc Mona was always a chief, and Ms. Poc Yanine taught English to the KR youth cadres. Cheng their stepbrother was also a returnee. His wife was Thai. Cheng's wife did not come with him. Savorn had mistreated Cheng harshly. Savorn had ordered him to get a haircut until Cheng 's head looked like" a coconut for a spirit". A few days after Dany left Wat Sleng working site, we also left. Vanna from Besancon was the happiest one because she did not like the ladder of the house that we stayed. The ladder was made from bamboo. Every time she climbed the ladder, she looked miserable.

Returning to Boeung Trabek, we were put to live in one house at the gate to the site. We cleaned up that house. A moment later, Ayo's mother shouted, "There is a bunch of US dollars." We all said that, "Take it out". We counted the money. There was 700 USD. Then we gave the money to the chief who was responsible for that place. At night, people shouted that, "A guy has entered the village." We came out of the house and stood on the balcony. People could not find the person who entered the village that night. As we stood on the balcony, we saw a lot of jars put next to each other near the kitchen hall. People said that they saw that person getting close to those jars. We, women, said that, "Open the jars and be careful." Finally, they found the person hiding inside a jar. The person was the KR cadre who controlled over us. His name was comrade Morn. He said that, "I've come to test all of you guys. How good you guys are in catching the enemies."

I would like to tell you that when we arrived at Boeung Trabek, Savorn was still a chief. He made us work a lot. When I first arrived, I was shocked to see Eng so skinny. Eng had a skill

in preserving food for longer period. Eng's neck became so small. I asked him, "Eng! Why are you so thin, and why you look so miserable?" He said that, "when you left the site, we worked so hard ; we worked until death. There were a lot of problems happening such as accusing each other of serving Vietnamese."

I would like to tell you that at that time Vietnam was fighting along the borders. Savorn asked us to dig the ground at nights to make pools. He said that these pools were to raise fishes. I was so shocked why he asked us to do. I said that to myself, "Why we need to dig pools to raise fishes when we already have a big pond at Boeung Trabek. If you want to raise fishes, you can put baby fishes into the pond. Why do you need to dig pools between the houses? If you do so, the houses may fall down into the pools." However, we dug the ground every night.

At our night work to make the pools for raising fishes they played tapes recorders for us. We heard that Vietnamese soldiers burnt down many houses and raped many Khmer girls. They talked about the feeling of Vietnamese soldiers who came into Cambodia to fight. Some did not want to come but had to force themselves to come because they had a hard life. They needed sugar for their mothers. At that time, Savorn told us that if we had color clothes, we could wear them. If we had any seeds, herbs seeds we could plant those seeds so we will produce herbs and lettuces.

Reasey: Today we continue talking about the situation at Boeung Trabek working site. Was the situation there still tense or was it better later on?

Sarem: Please be informed that the situation at Boeung Trabek was still tense. Savorn asked us to attend the meetings many times. At one meeting, Savorn had asked Chhoan (Sarin Chhak'son) to repair a radio. Chhaon got a degree in electronic engineering. Savorn put a table outside the meeting place for Chhaon to repair the radio; Chhaon could not repair it. Savorn criticized that, "What kind of engineer you are. You cannot repair even one radio." As I observed, Savorn did not give needed tools to repair. Coming out of the meeting, some of us asked Chhaon, "Why don't you ask for some tools? If you already have all tools, and you cannot do it, he can blame you."

I was assigned to raise ducks. I was so scared because they did not give me any duck food, so I asked for a canoe. Savorn abuses Dany's brother (Cheng) a lot because he had a Thai wife. His wife did not come with him. I heard a rumor that they suspected that Cheng was a CIA agent.

Reasey: Was he arrested or just being defamed?

Sarem: Later, they all disappeared. One day, when we were working on social work, a woman named Ly approached me: I called her comrade Ly. Her husband's name was Moan who used to be the chief at Boeung Trabek working site. Comrade Moan used to work as an electrical technician at "Electricite du Cambodge". Later, he became agent of the KR, so he was assigned to live at Boeung Trabek working site with us. Ly told me that Savorn had told her husband that the Angkar's soldiers were very good at fighting. They fought the Vietnamese deeper into Prey Nokor (Saigon). Upon hearing that, I laughed. I said that, "Hey, comrade Ly. I think those KR soldiers never saw any market. When they fought across the border to the Vietnamese side, they saw a market, and they thought it was Prey Nokor." Then I said that, "Prey Nokor was so far from us and big. Those soldiers may get lost in the streets of Prey Nokor and cannot go anywhere else." Ly and I could share each other secret. We never broke the secret.

Before the Khmer New Year's Day in 1978, female youth were trained to perform on the stage. Both male and female youth made all effort to learn how to perform. They used the word "enemy, enemy" which meant fighting the enemies of all forms, and everywhere. They pointed the finger straight to us and shouted that, "Fight the enemies of all forms and everywhere." Standing and watching them, we were startled, we kind of losing our balance a little, because they pointed their fingers to us. This meant that the situation was tense, and they were searching for enemies all the time. Chief of our place was changed very often. Pheak was placed to be the chief of Boeung Trabek. He was a doctor. People called him Pheak, the "Boeung Trabek's Tycoon", so everything in Boeung Trabek was up to "Pheak the Tycoon".

Reasey: At that time, the KR abolished classes. When people called him the "Tycoon" would there be any problem?

Sarem: People were joking around among themselves by calling Pheak, "Pheak the Tycoon". Pheak could not stay on the position for long. He was taken out. After that, Hing Un became a chief. At that time, some people criticized me that: "You had deep intellectual manner. Wherever you went, you always picked up paper to read. They even said that I read Mao's little red book secretly at night." I told them that I could not read anything because my eyes could not see any word. I needed a lot of light to read. One day they talked about water policy. I gave a lot of ideas, so my chief asked me to write a report about my impression on water policy. I refused; I said that I was not good at writing. My group chief Chheng Toch, Hing Un's wife wrote for me and asked me to read in the meeting. I could not read because my eyes could not see. I saw Vun wearing white glasses sitting in front of me. I grabbed her eyes glasses to wear; then I could read. From that day on, they no longer accused me of reading book secretly. I told them that I might have read Mauger a French textbook with large print.

Reasey: At that time, the KR got support from China. Why didn't they allow you to read Mao's little red book?

Sarem: I was also doubtful but dared not ask why they did not allow us to read communist book. I told them that I didn't even have that red book. Since the situation at Boeung Trabek became tenser, I ceded my personal radio. Grandmother Yem also ceded more of her gold. I saw grandmother Yem have a lot of gold. I always suggested her that she should have kept some gold for her own life. Then I said that, "Oh, these bracelets are so beautiful with traditional decoration. You should keep one or two for souvenir. Keep these two for souvenir." But Grandmother Yem ceded all her gold. People who wore correcting eye glasses almost dared not wear it. Savorn appealed to find people who knew how to make color paper to create pictures according to the rhythm of music. Savorn wore silk sarong and short t-shirt when he came to observe us digging the ground to make pool. He sprayed fragrance; his wife wore Vanna's hand watch Timex that she bought from Besançon. As we saw that, we signaled each other and laughed derisively.

One day, somebody had picked up a printed paper from the road stating that, "keep serious vigilance of the United Front's people. Be careful; they may run away." On the other day, they asked us to attend the meeting. We also saw Ieng Sary came to preside the meeting. I remembered he was in a black car. The car looked like a sealed cabin. The back mirror was so narrow.

Reasey: Was this the second or third time that you met Mr. Ieng Sary?

Sarem: This was the second time; he came to the meeting. We were curious when we were asked to attend the meeting at Boeung Trabek and why Ieng Sary also attended this meeting. With the presence of Mr. Ieng Sary, the chief of Boeung Trabek Mr. Hing Un had report about the efforts of vegetable plantation. He said that the plantation work went on well and produced a lot of output. He also reported about the amount delivering to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mr. Ieng Sary. However, Ieng Sary was not interested in how well we worked on vegetable plantation. He wanted to know about the situation at Boeung Trabek. Then one person stood up. It was Kang Saniraht a fresh returnee from France. Sanirath came straight to Boeung Trabek. He talked about the pressure from both Savorn and his group chief. Some people complained about life in technology school. They had said: "When we were asked to attend the meeting at the Amphe theatre of technology school, we were asked to walk like the monks. We had to walk in queue. At Boeung Trabek, we were not even allowed to walk up to national road, the road to Russian hospital. We had to stay inside." Then we told Ieng Sary that, "We heard some female KR youth's core said that we were actually in prison." Ieng Sary knew about the situation that Savorn asked us to dig the ground between houses near Chhiv Neang Neang School to raise fishes. He also knew that Savorn was the one who said that comrade Keut the former chief of Boeung Trabek was a useless person. Ieng Sary was kind of shock and said that, "When they put restriction on you, why didn't anyone bring the complaint to me at the top." We didn't understand on how we could file the complaint to the top people since Savorn was already on top of us. How could we file complaint against Savorn since we didn't even have a way to go? If we had to report something to the top we have to go via Savorn.

Reasey: So you didn't even know that you could file a complaint, right?

Sarem: No, we didn't even know where to go because we had only Savorn.

Reasey: When he heard that, did he take any measure?

Sarem: Yes, he had rearranged the leadership at Boeung Trabek. I remembered that Ieng Sary fired the old chiefs. He appointed Peou as the chief of women and food warehouse that we received our ration every day. I knew Peou ; her real name was Sambun. She was a teacher. She went into the liberated zone after her husband, after 1970. When she arrived there, a rumor said her husband had already died by hanging himself. Her husband was Chy Kim-An, who was a high-ranking KR cadre and who ran into the jungle since the 1960s. He got a degree in agriculture engineering. The KR sent Peou to stay with us at Boeung Trabek. She had 12 children.

After the new chief was appointed sister Peou had asked me to help. I knew her since she was single. She was a friend of my second cousin named Uy Sandap, Peou used to visit Sandap's house at Phsar Kap Ko and I got to know Peou. Peou tried to persuade me to take up the position as chief of the duck house to replace her daughter named Na, who was the former chief of the duck house. At that time, I was a member of Na's group. Ieng Sary took Na to work at a different place. Miss Mom, Peou oldest daughter who was the former chief of women group, was also moved to work at a different place. As I mentioned earlier, I did not want to be any chief in the KR regime. However, I saw that the KR had changed their attitude as they broadcasted on radio. They talked about nationalism, not about classes struggle any more. Since they were at war with Vietnam, they talked about nationalism very often. They said that the Vietnamese had took off their "Mok Neang"(Angel face) and had put on their "Giant Face" to fight with them. In the past, they were friends.

Reasey: Where were the former chiefs who were fired?

Sarem: Savorn had taken away some of Boeung trabek former chiefs. But the chiefs that Ieng Sary fired were still there. Ms. Phalla and Mr. Hing Un were still at Boeung Trabek. But Ms. Phalla was so sad. Leaving the meeting, she covered her head with a scarf like the person who was mourning.

Reasey: Why did Ieng Sary come to replace the chiefs himself?

Sarem: I also did not understand. I did not ask anything; I just listened. I heard people say that Savorn had escaped and was arrested. So I could understand that Savorn must have done something wrong. Savorn escaped by riding on a motorbike. I dared not ask them to confirm where he was arrested. I just knew that he was arrested. When Savorn was arrested, we heard a rumor that the ground that Savorn ordered us to dig up was to bury some of us. When I heard that, I felt goose-bump because I knew that Savorn did not like me.

Reasey: At that time, what was the food situation? Was it better?

Sarem: As I mentioned. When fighting with Vietnam occurred, the situation became tenser. They did not give us much food. Sometimes, we were asked to mix rice with cassava leaves because we could possibly escape from Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. I would like to continue telling my story. After Ieng Sary re-organized the new leadership, the KR gave books and magazines to us to read. Some were in French. However, most magazines talked about political stance of the communism. They criticized the free world. At the time we were allowed to read magazines and newspapers. An engineer Sieng Hak criticized me. He said that, "Sister Rem, why do you dare to read these books immediately?" I said that, "Hmm, Angkar put these books for us to read. Why not read it". They also allowed us to listen to radio. They also remind us to listen to radio after lunchtime.

Reasey: Was it the KR radio?

Sarem: Yes, it was the KR radio.

Reasey: Within the period that you lived with the KR, had you ever listened to radio such as VOA secretly?

Sarem: Yes, I listened to VOA when I was living in Taley. At Boeung Trabek, I dared not listen to the radio because the situation was so tense. I was afraid that this would bring danger to me. However, I read some books secretly. The book that I was interested in was about then Prince Sihanouk's experiences at the UN. The title of the book was "*Mes Journees a l'ONU.*" The section in the book that I remembered the most was the part that the prince wrote in a very humorous way. The prince wrote that the US tried to please Khrushchev, leader of the Soviet Union. At that time, Khrushchev visited the United Nations in New York. The US prepared a motorcade to accompany Khrushchev's trip to the UN. Journalists flocked to cover him. They even kept looking up at the hotel where Khrushchev was staying to almost break their necks. The journalists wanted to know where he would go next or to see if Khrushchev appeared at his Hotel's window. However, no one paid any attention to the prince at the UN. He had to park his car far from the meeting place. There were only a few people

accompanying him, not like the Indonesian president who was accompanied by many, many beautiful women, as Samdech referred to them as “Bopha” .

Reasey: How did you find that book?

Sarem: At Boeung Trabek, we were asked to clean up houses for people to stay. When I was cleaning, I saw that book. I was interested in that book, so I kept it I read it to the end. Then when I got bored, I took the book out to read it again and again so that I could have some laughter. Grandmother Yem, who lived with me said: “Rim, you always laugh when you read that book. You laugh like a crazy person.”

They screened the films for us to watch many times at Boeung Trabek. One Chinese film entitled “The country that is scarce of water.” Some films were documentary films about Pol Pot’s visit to China. Watching the films, some people from the liberated zone could recognize some people in the films and shouted, “Oh, that is comrade Paong, but he already betrayed the revolution; he wanted to kill Pol Pot and was arrested.” Later, they showed a film on Lon Nol, whom the US evacuated from Cambodia. At that time, Lon Nol cried before boarding the plane. Then Ms. Aun, Hor Namhong’s sister, whispered to me that she used to work for the United Front such as delivering goods to the FUNK in Paris when she left Cambodia. She told me that her brother Hor Namhong, while she working for him in the kitchen of some embassy, had expected that the kitchen and the pantry had to be clean, neat and meticulously arranged, otherwise Hor Nam Hong would not be satisfied.

One day, we were asked to go to Olympic Stadium to watch circus performed by the Chinese. They had caught live fish from the floor of the Olympic Stadium.

They also asked us to watch art performance in Chaktomok Hall. The artists were from Romania (the Ceausescu’s people), the name of the show: “Kamrorng Phkar Phnom Carparthes” (les Guirlandes de Carpartes).

Reasey: were they coming to perform directly?

Sarem: Yes, they came to perform in Cambodia. However, when we arrived, the play was over. We could see only the KR female youth carrying real hoe with white sharp edge to repair the railroad.

Reasey: Was it on the stage?

Sarem: Yes, it was on the stage. I had mentioned about Ms. Dany earlier. She was a wife of a diplomat in Hanoi. When the KR broke up diplomatic relation with Vietnam, her husband came back to Cambodia, and she was taken out from Wat Sleng at that time. She also went to see the play, but she attended in the position of a diplomat’s wife. She dressed up in Sampot Haul (Khmer silk skirt) and white shirt. We saw her and smiled at her from the distance.

Reasey: You dared not talk to each other, right?

Sarem: No, she was far from us.

Reasey: Was this a new change since people were not allowed to see art performance in the past?

Sarem: Yes, this was a big change. The KR even talked about to establish high school and faculty. They appointed some people at Boeung Trabek to teach at the faculty. These people included Vanna, who returned from Besançon. In this process, these people were asked to attend a meeting with high-ranking KR leaders at Buddhist Library near the Royal Palace. However, I did not ask whom they were going to meet. They even arranged the marriage. Before going to be a teacher as planned, Vanna should get married to someone.

They asked all the chiefs at Boeung Trabek to go on a tour once. Only me who was the chief of duck house was left behind. The rest was on the tour. Then Sanirath came to me and told me that, “Sister Rim, in Boeung Trabek now, there is only you who is the chief of duck house, has the highest position. No one has higher position than you. Therefore, you have to assign people to do this and that.” I said that, “Sanirath, I only take care of my ducks, not to allow them to run away from the cage. Those who do what, has to continue to do their respective work. I do not need to assign this person to do this or that person to do that.”

When they returned back from the tour, I did not ask them where they went because the KR said that, “Once you keep the secret, you win over the enemy half way already.” Therefore, I dared not ask them anything, for my own safety. I heard them talking to each other that they took a train to Battambang. They boarded the train to see how good or bad the rice production was. I heard that Pol Pot and Ieng Sary were also on the train.

Reasey: When you heard that the KR wanted to establish a faculty, how did you feel?

Sarem: At that time, I did not care about it. Hearing this, I thought they might want to do so. But, I shook my head alone. It fitted with the KR slogan that said, “Angkar is still young, but Angkar has deep experiences.” They didn’t even have a primary school yet, and they wanted to establish high school and faculty. I was thinking that they might want to establish the faculty that taught only a few numbers of selected students to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or to work abroad. I laughed in my mind. A few days later I heard that Ieng Sary came back again. He asked for history books. If they bought these history books, they would have to spend a lot of money. At that time, I looked at Try Meng Huot in the eyes because he took a lot of good books and technical books that doctor Seu and I had collected. I collected the books and piled them up under the house. I put corrugated metal sheet on top of the books to protect them from the rain. But, Try Meng Huot had burned down all those books. I thought that, “What’s the hell why he wasted his time to burn down all the books that we kept under the house.” He did not only burn down the books but had also criticized me that I had high intellectual possession inside. When they criticized me so badly, I made a self-criticism and asked myself “Why am I so different from others? Why do they believe the KR? Why I cannot believe them? Try Meng Huot had PhD in chemistry. How can he get rid of his intellectual nature so quickly? I am just a small teacher. Why it was very hard for me to get rid of my intellectual nature?” The more I thought, the more I saw that these people were too extreme. As I understood, they might want to have positions in that regime. They were not honest to themselves. For me, I could not do that. Sometimes, I blamed myself about why I was so different from them.

Reasey: How many people were called to be faculty teachers?

Sarem : I did not know how many. I saw Vanna, who returned from Besançon with me, were called to meet the KR. Others were also called to meet the KR. Some people told me

that.” You are the chief of duck house, with Vanna as member. Vanna becomes a teacher. You are her chief and cannot be a teacher. Are you disappointed?” I said that, “I am more happy to work at the duck house.” I would like to tell Mr. Poch Reasey that I was tired of doing teaching work. I did not wish to become a teacher any more. I worked as a teacher since I could earn enough to live on until I became poor in Lon Nol’s regime. Since I was born, I never had a chance to look after ducks or chicken. In our family my grandparents did not allow us to raise chicken, ducks or pigs. When my grandfather went to ask someone’s daughter to get married to my father, he stopped doing so by just seeing that they had a pig cage under their house. But, at Boeung Trabek, I had a chance to paddle a canoe to pick up snails in the morning. I could see the Sun rise on the water at Boeung Trabek, catching the snails floating like black mushrooms in the pond. I also collected water hyacinth for ducks and pigs food. I could sing French songs and Khmer songs and chanted the poems alone as I wished. I was happy. I did not want to teach again. It seemed like I have a picnic everyday with empty stomach, and see the Nature. I collected snail eggs from the dangerous spots at Boeung Trabek and kept them at secured places so that people would not step on them. The snail eggs were like white blossom flowers.

Reasey: When they selected the teachers, did they choose directly or ask for volunteers?

Sarem: They selected; they did not ask us.

Reasey: Did the KR know that you returned from France and you were a teacher? Did they know that?

Sarem: They knew everything because we gave our biography to them. They knew who was who. The KR ‘chiefs said: “That Boeung trabek was, the cream of the crop full of human resources. They could find signers, musicians or engineers. They could come to pick up these kinds of people from Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: How was the plan? Did they achieve as planned?

Sarem: I just heard that. They asked the selected people to attend the meeting and to go on the tour as I told you earlier. Then the plan got stuck at that point. I did not see anyone go to teach at anywhere. However, those selected people were later moved to live in another place.

Reasey: Did you later meet those who were selected to be teachers and moved to a different place?

Sarem: When we ran out of Boeung Trabek, we met these people.

Reasey: Was it in 1978 when the KR planned to establish faculty?

Sarem: It was a bit earlier, but the situation was getting tenser and tenser. I did not tell you earlier. Savorn said that Angkar’s soldiers were very strong. One Angkar’s soldiers could defeat 30 Vietnamese. Since I heard that I started to get my backpack ready and kept it close to me all the time at night. Then I told those whom I trusted to prepare their luggage. Ms. Ket, Sanirath’s wife, always wore skirt wrapped around her chest because it was so hot. I told her that, “You should wear good shirt because one against 30 is not a winning, but a running away strategy.” Then she asked me that, “How do you know this?” I said, “Why don’t you listen? Angkar said one against 30. You can understand by analyzing this word.”

Reasey: What did the Khmer Rouge radio or their meeting talk about problem with Vietnam at that time?

Sarem: They tuned on the radio for us to listen to their broadcasting that Vietnam and Cambodia were at war. The conflict led to a very contentious situation. They said that the Vietnamese fought into and occupied almost half of the Eastern Zone. The Khmer Rouge told us that in the battlefields they saw dead bodies wearing Khmer Rouge's tire sandals among the corpses of Vietnamese soldiers at the Vietnamese side. The KR had planned to get the people from Dei Krahom back to Boeung Trabek. As I remember, it was in July it was the season of high water.

Reasey: When you heard of the war with Vietnam, how did you and other people feel?

Sarem: At that time, we were very careful. We were afraid that they accused us of serving the enemy's trick. As I told you earlier, I talked to only those whom I trusted. I told Ms. Ket not to wear the skirt wrapped around the chest. I told her to wear proper shirt since the Vietnamese was not far from our place. The Vietnamese were about 50 to 60 kilometers from Kien Svay, my hometown. If we get caught, the Vietnamese might take us as Khmer Rouge, and they would kill us.

Reasey: So in your mind, did you think that the Khmer Rouge regime was about to collapse?

Sarem: For me at that time, my life was like facing a crocodile in the river and tiger on the land. The most important thing was to preserve my life. Though I did not like the Khmer Rouge, I also did not want the Vietnamese to invade Cambodia because it was extremely hard to accept. Before that, I used to tell Vanna not to hang herself to commit a suicide. I told Vanna that, "You should not commit a suicide. If you commit a suicide, the Khmer Rouge would drag and spit on your body. They would call you a national traitor. But for us, they are the national traitors because this regime kills a lot of people." I told Vanna "I think the Khmer Rouge regime can survive only until 1980. If they can survive longer than that, I would dare to raise the hoe to fight them because I cannot stand living in the regime that makes life not to be life anymore." I used to say that to Vanna.

When Vietnam fought the Khmer Rouge, The KR had stopped paying respect to the party flag and turned to respect nationalist stance. So I agreed to be the chief of the duck house. But I was still very careful. When I raised ducks, the Khmer Rouge did not give any food for the ducks. I found duck food by myself at Boeung Trabek. I collected very dried ripe fallen coconuts that sat on the field for long time, and I had made a pile of it like a hill in the yard of the duck house. I also caught snails and grew lemongrass for the ducks. The ducks that I raised had all their babies survived.

If we were negligent, we could be accused of being an enemy. So I had to be very careful, and I did what I was asked to do. Beside the duck house I was also appointed to be the chief of a children center. They also asked me to raise rabbits for the Pasteur Institute.

One day, the children had cause a fire in the rabbit house. I was so frightened at that time because I was afraid of being accused of sabotage. A man named Ta Chor, who was a school inspector coming from the liberated zone, criticized me a lot. I replied to him that I had taught the children everything, but they were careless.

Reasey: So when the situation changed to nationalism, was the relationship between the Khmer Rouge and those who returned from abroad better?

Sarem: At that time, there was nationalistic stance. After arresting Savorn, life was better, not too much pressure on us. They stopped looking down on intellectuals. There were full of intellectuals at Boeung Trabek. We felt relieved. When those at Dei Krahom returned back, the situation was tenser, and they asked us to dig trenches. They all prepared like I did. I prepared myself long time ago. I already packed my luggage. As a new chief of the children center our team was responsible to prepare food for children in case if we have to escape, children needed food that could last for long time and in good condition. The Khmer Rouge told us that, "Sisters! brothers!, since you've already remaked yourselves, you can go into the forest with us." Then we thought that, "At first, they said we were useless. We had only force but no stance. Now they praised us that we can go into forest with them."

Reasey: This was because they needed forces. At that time, did you hear shooting sound?

Sarem: Some people said they heard the shooting sound. My ears were a bit hard. So if the sound was little, I may not hear it.

Reasey: As you mentioned, the Khmer Rouge realized that Vietnam would fight into Cambodia. That's why they prepared people to run into the forest and prepared food, right?

Sarem: Yes, I thought they knew, because they said Vietnam had occupied almost half of Eastern Zone. I just listened. We tried to strengthen our stance not to be careless.

Reasey: Were you feared of security? Were you feared that war was coming again?

Sarem: Yes, at that time, we could not do anything in advance. It depends upon the situation, what we could do was to secure our life.

Reasey: In your mind, did you think that when you were out of Boeung Trabek, you might meet any family members?

Sarem: Yes, I thought like that with some people. I said this has fallen into our wish because we were like in detention. When we were out to the open we would meet more people. Finally, we had to leave Boeung Trabek. (End of part 8 page 82).

I would like to continue. Those who came from liberated zone and came to live in Boeung Trabek with us were those who fled to forest and joined the Khmer Rouge. One woman named Nith; her husband was doctor You Kimyeat. He joined the Khmer Rouge when the KR fought into Kampong Speu during the Lon Nol regime. Nith told me that in Chamkar Leu district the KR encountered a lot of subversion from the KR who came from Vietnam. They killed each other several times. Nith had met the KR's messenger many times at Botum Watey pagoda before she ran into forest with her son (Luch) so that she could meet her husband even though a fortune teller had told her that her husband was already dead." If we measured the time from his death until now by the high of the grass, it about up to our waist, but Nith didn't listen.

Nith told me that in the liberated zone, if they wanted to eat Chinese buns from" The Cristal Restaurant", they just sent the messenger to Phnom Penh, and the hot Chinese buns would be

served over there. Ms. Kong, (the daughter of Mr. Chy Kim An and Ms. Sam Bun whom we always called sister Peou) when we lived at Boeung Trabek told me that doctor Thioun Thioeun had a small house in the forest, and the inside of his house was fully covered by a giant mosquitoes net. He taught French to his children at night. The KR criticized him. Therefore Khieu Samphan while returning from abroad had brought a lot of cans food for his mother. When Ms. Nith and Ms. Peou arrived at the liberated zone, their husbands were already dead.

There was another family. It was Yin's family. Her mother was Yan, and her sister was Vorn. She said that those who lived in the liberated zone were very afraid of B-52 bombs. They hated the pilot, and they even dared beat the art performers who acted as pilots in the play. After every art performance, the performers who acted as pilots came down from the stage with fear; they need bodyguards to protect them.

In the liberated zone, after giving birth to a baby, they did not bury the placenta; they kept this for food. And the KR told the villagers that banana flower helped the brain a lot. In the KR regime, they cursed a person named Chhuon very vehemently. Chhuon, a military commander was accused of land grabbing in Samlot's region, then a drama was created, a drama talking about the heroism of a courageous woman who dared bring food to feed those who escaped from Samlot to live in the forest by hiding the raw rice in the tail of her "sampot kben" (the traditional Khmer skirt). She had cut off two of her fingers when the snake had bitted her during her journey. The song was that "My dear child, my fingers are nothing, and you should not feel sorry."

At Boeung Trabek, we also welcome a judge named Chan Bopha and his wife who had joined the maquis during the war. His wife said she met Phuong Magaing who entered the forest ahead of her. For her life, it was easier in the liberated zone because Angkar had a policy of buying expensive things from Phnom Penh and sold back cheaper in the liberated zone. She said that she had brought a lot of money with her. If she wanted to eat" Nom Banchock or Banchheav "(Khmer noodle, and pancake with stuffing served with spicy fish sauce and herbs), she would buy the whole stand and share it with the local. Judge Chan Bopha one time had strongly criticized revolutionary Angkar's song at Boeung Trabek while he heard the word "absolute tool of the party." Later on this family disappeared.

Ta Chor who was inspector of education also came from the liberated zone. At Boeung Trabek, Ta Chor who likes to hold hand with man was very shocked when a returnee from abroad had refused to hold hand with him. Ta Chor said that foreign culture is spoiling the revolutionary society. He did not like to hear people talking about man loving man.

The late returnees to Boeung Trabek was a woman, people said she was Mr. Ho Tong Lip's daughter, (Ho Tong Lip was an expert in agricultural research). She was also pregnant. She returned with her husband. I wondered why this family returned so late, then Keat Kolnei, Keat Chhon's sister, said that, "There are plenty of people who just arrived. Some people are allowed to live with us and some, Angkar took them to live in other places like the case of Long Chhoamdara from Toulouse who also came back, but Angkar took him to a different place". Then, I knew that Long Chhoamdara, who was my relative, also came back. He was Tim Dong's nephew.

The KR had sent three evacuees to live with us. Among them, a man named Lou, we called him uncle Lou. He was a relative of Doctor Thioun Thioeun. Uncle Lou's wife was Irene and her sister Nith. When these three people arrived, they praised Boeung Trabek a lot. They said our place was neat and well organized and clean.

I would like to tell you that when the KR asked us to listen to the radio, we got angrier with the KR. The KR broadcasted that we had a ration of 15 Thaings (112.5 Kg a year) of rice and three meals per day with dissert. Thiounn Prasith, who was the KR representative in the UN, told the UN about that ration, but we, inside the country, did not have enough food, we were starving. One day, hearing the KR radio criticized socialist Vietnam by saying that Vietnam charged a lot of taxes from people; having heard that, sister Irene came to me and told me that “ But the KR take everything from us because they do collectivization.”

Then Uncle Lou said that when he had allowed Ieng Sary to use his house at Kep during Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime, Ieng Sary’s daughter said that, “this house was so nice.” Ieng Sary told his daughter “Sooner or later, this house will be ours.” Uncle Lou said, “This is collectivization.” I would like to inform you that uncle Lou was the manager at” Hotel Le Royal” in the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime.

At Boeung Trabek, the KR organized marriages for a number of people. Doctor San-Sot got married to a man whom we named “broken-head Heng” because a piece of wood fell on his head. He got to know San Sot when he stayed in the hospital to treat the wound of his head. After San get married, the KR gave to her a bunch of letters from her Chinese husband. She felt very resented of why the KR had kept her letters like this? She had waited and waited for news from her husband. She felt hopeless; that’s why she decided to marry again. San was very disappointed: “This is the stance of the KR that say those who have foreign spouse mean they are already half national traitors.” Three months later, San was pregnant. The KR asked her to move to another place without her husband. Before leaving Boeung Trabek, San came to see me and told me that her real name was San Neary. Later I heard that San died when the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. At that time San had a job in the propaganda office as a Chinese translator.

Reasey: How did you feel about those who came from Dei Krahom?

Sarem: Most of the people from Dei Krahom had brought their newborn baby. Those who did not come included teacher An, (from Besancon like myself). Some returned alone. A woman named Ms. Tin; her husband’s name was Svay Hokkhy. I did not see her husband when she came back from Dei krahom. I wondered and asked one woman: “Why didn’t Mr. Svay Hokkhy return?” Then a woman who was sitting next to me said that, “He was eating by ants on the tree”. I said, “how come?” Then she said, “This may be because the wife has higher political stance than the husband.” Later, the KR took Ms. Tin out of Boeung Trabek. Later on, we happened to know that widow Tin became the wife of Thiounn Prasith who was the KR representative in the UN.

Another woman, her name is So Vimoan, from Dei Krahom; she was not happy with us at Boeung Trabek. She said we were selfish; that’s why Savorn took her aunt Phlek Vipha and the husband Keut, who was the first chief of Boeung Trabek, to execution. Another woman named Phuong, who was the wife of Loy Sim-Chheang, (Mr. Loy Sim Chheang later became member of Cambodian Parliament from Funcinpec Party). Phuong told me that she loved the KR cadre at Dei Krahom because they were gentle and kind. She even dared say that she could die for them. Back from Dei Krahom, Phuong had small lamps made from Penicillin bottles. The bottles contained oil and pieces of gravel inside. As I guessed, some people had put diamonds inside. Some KR had their lamp laces made from gold.

Later the chief of Boeung Trabek was the one who returned back from Dei Krahom. His name was Huy. He walked unsteadily. His wife was Siev. They had two or three children. At that

time at Boeung Trabek, they distributed cigarettes. I did not smoke, and I was angry. I said, “We even cannot find rice to eat. Why the KR produced cigarettes in white pack and distributed to us?” Then I registered to receive cigarettes. But I gave it to those who smoked. I gave to Ms. Chhayrat, Sarin Chhak’s daughter. And I gave to grandmother Yem. One day, I brought cigarettes to grandmother Yem then Yem whispered to me near a pigpen: “Rim, the children who tended cows sing “Moha Lort Phloas, Moha ock Kdet“(Great Leap Forward, Great Fall Down on your buttocks). Why do they sing like that?” I told grandmother Yem not to say anything more of this to other, because it could bring danger to her. She said, “Why do the children sing like that? “I said, “May be those children know what we don’t know or they don’t like the Angkar”.

Reasey: Talking about the cigarettes that they distributed, did they put brand name? Did they mention where it was made or imported or made in Cambodia?

Sarem: The pack was plain white, no logo on. But the Cambodian was addicted to cigarettes that why the KR produced cigarettes to satisfy the smokers. They did not care about food for us.

Reasey: So, was the situation such as eating better at that moment?

Sarem: No, we did not have much to eat. That’s why I was angry. I was frustrated to see cigarettes distribution because I did not smoke, and I believed that more production of rice was better.

Reasey: Did they distribute anything else besides cigarettes?

Sarem: While living with the KR, I saw they distributed black cloth and scarf two times, but I registered for only one time because I want to get it for Ms. Ket to make clothes for her husband named Sanirath. For me, they gave more work to me. They asked me to take care of children and raise rabbits.

Reasey: In addition to raising ducks, right?

Sarem: Yes, and I was so scared. I was afraid that if I made a mistake, they would harm me.

Reasey: They caught your mistake, right?

Sarem: Yes, but sister Rene had helped me a lot. We worked so hard. When we became tired, we would take turn to take a small rest. They asked me to make food that could be kept for long time for children.

Reasey: How many children were there? Do you remember?

Sarem: There were 4-5 newborn babies. And there were about 20 children.

Reasey: And two only people took care of them right?

Sarem: Yes, sometimes, someone helped us and took some children to work at different places. And I looked after the small children. One child got his head swollen. I was so frightened. I saw him hitting his head against the bed. I tried to put cushions to protect him. I thought his head became swollen because he hit it against the bed. When I asked the doctors,

they said that his head was swollen because he lacked nutrition. The doctor told me not to be frightened. To prepare food for children at that time, I had collected fresh vegetable, cooked it with rice and beans, to make soup and it was so delicious

Reasey: The vegetable was fresh.

Sarem: I said even the soup from “Tavern” was not as delicious as the one we made. I collected mosquito nets and rubber cloth to create some kind of diapers for small kids. The mosquito nets was easy to use because it soft and dried quickly.

Reasey: It is also easy to wash.

Sarem: Yes, and it is also light. As I was asked to prepare food in case we have to leave Boeung Trabek, I had collected Guigoz cans to sterilize it. Rene Uncle Lou’s wife was very good at cooking these foods for kids. We steamed the bean until it dried and then we put the bean into the can. We gave two cans of bean to the mothers who had one baby.

Reasey: At that time, was it in late December or early January?

Sarem: At that time, it was in late December 1978. Eventually the KR came to tell us that we had to leave Boeung Trabek. We asked each other “Where do we go?” When we got onto the truck, they told us that we have to go to the railway station.

Reasey: Was it railway station in Phnom Penh?

Sarem: Yes

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. We arrived at that railway station.

Reasey: Was it the railway station in Phnom Penh?

Sarem: Yes, as I remember, it was on January 6.

Reasey: 1979?

Sarem: Yes, 1979. When we arrived there, I saw a lot of injured people. Some cushions were soaked with blood. The clothes soaked with blood were left over at the railway station.

Reasey: The injured, were soldiers or civilians?

Sarem: I think they were KR soldiers. So we did not have a place in the train, they took us back. When we arrived back at Boeung Trabek, we saw piles of fishes beneath the house close to the kitchen. All of us boiled and roasted the fishes as we wished. As we did not know how to do with the remaining fishes, we could not even make Prahok (the fish paste for reservation). At that time, we were very frustrated because since we came to live at Boeung Trabek, the KR never brought a basket of fishes for us. At the time that we escaped, there were piles of fishes left over. Some people made fun of uncle Sophy the fish man at our place by saying that, “Uncle Sophy! You just did not go to catch fish for one day, then plenty of

fishes came up for us from the river by themselves.” The next morning, the KR transported us to the railway station again.

Reasey: Did you hear sound of gunshot?

Sarem: I did not hear much. As we were so busy, we did not pay attention to the sound.

Reasey: What’s about the next day?

Sarem: When we came again, we had places in the train. When we got into the train, a person named Sim who worked in the agricultural area blamed me that I worked as a chief of duck house so why didn’t I boil some duck eggs for them? Then I said: “I only do things, when Angkar assigned me to, because they said that we didn’t have to take anything with us when we left, only ourselves and our bag, because the KR soldiers would come to control our place.”

Reasey: The Khmer Rouge killed people in some villages during the escaping as we heard that the Vietnamese was arriving. As for your experiences, did you see this case?

Sarem: At our place, as I believed, they had killed a lot of people before we left. It was when they took people away and said that they were searching for enemies. When we escaped, we did not have any danger because everyone tried to respect what they called high-level organization’s discipline.

Reasey: Please continue.

Sarem: As we got onto the train and when the train arrived at Sdok Ach Romeas, the train got stuck-up there.

Reasey: What province was it?

Sarem: Sdok Ach Romeas is in Kampong Chhnang province. During the Sangkum Reastr Niyum regime, a lot of government soldiers were trained there. When the train arrived there, and when they asked us to get out, we thought that the train just stopped for a while. In fact, we were not allowed to get onto the train again. They asked us to walk on a big path in Sdok Ach Romeas. Then we arrived at a place called Khlong Popork. There they asked us to stay in a big house and then we prepared food. We stayed there, in the afternoon a person had turned on his radio. Those KR who joined the Vietnamese soldiers broadcasted on the radio that they already destroyed the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique who cared only about their own family. They promoted only their relatives to high positions. The radio said they had already destroyed this clique. I was so surprised hearing that because I did not follow the event. A while later we saw shelling and bombing in Kampong Chhnang. May be the gas storage was bombed. As I understood, it might be the place that the KR had constructed an airport in Kampong Chhnang.

Later they assigned us to go to a place near Phnom Ang. We could see Phnom Ang, they asked us to stay in a booth on the hill. They sent some of us to do harvesting with the local. Our group had a lot of men. Upon returning from harvesting rice, the men said that they saw a lot of women harvesting rice. “When they saw us, they cheered,” the men said. They said,

“Where did these people come from? Why they had a lot of men?” The men in our group were frightened when they saw those women cheered and shouted like that.

Reasey: How many people were there who joined the trip with you?

Sarem: More than 100.

Reasey: A lot. How long did you stay there?

Sarem: We stayed long. Sometimes they woke us up at 2 in the morning to move to other place then returning to the old place very often. They asked us to help watering the villagers’ vegetables. One day, a plane flew over our place. A woman named Yin was so afraid of the plane because she used to live in the liberated zone. Immediately when she saw the plane, she lied down and hid her head, her buttocks up. I was so startled at that time. She asked me “why don’t you lie down?”

Reasey: She had that experience.

Sarem: Yes, and I did not know where to lie down. It was in an open space. Even I was lied down the plane could still see me. She was traumatized.

Sometimes they asked us to help le local grinding rice grains and asked us to get the rice at the frontline. I always volunteered to do this work because I was alone. The others usually had small children. We did not take any basket with us when we went to collect rice at the frontline. I wore two layers of trousers. We used one pairs of trousers to put the rice in and carried it back to our place.

Along the way to collect rice, one time we encountered shelling which destroyed the branches and almost hit our heads. We bended down and crawled. That day, we were not able to collect rice. Back to our place, Mr. On’s wife whose name was Uk Keo-Khunnan lost her Rolex hand watch. Then we went back to look for that watch, it was stuck on the branch of a bush tree.

We could do anything that they asked us to do. We could make small mills. The local there said about us “These Chinese guys are good at everything.” We had even doctors in our group. One doctor, his name was Seu, and his wife was Seo Ry. Residents in the cooperative asked doctor Seu to treat sick people. When he came back he brought some ripe bananas with him.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. One night, they asked us to get up and leave the place at two in the morning when there was still some light rain. They asked us to count our team members starting from one, two, and three, we found out that we lost three people. They were Hong Sivpha and Ath. I don’t remember the third person’s name. As we walked almost till dawn, they asked us to return to our old place. Therefore, we concluded that these tree people had escaped.

Reasey: At that time, did you think of escaping?

Sarem: I and other people in our group believed that it was difficult to escape. If we did so, we may have died in vain. I kept discussing with Leang. If we went to Samlot, it might be easier to escape because it was close to the border. On the other hand, we did not have

intention to escape because we wanted to meet villagers so we could search for more information about our family.

Reasey: So at that time, did you have hope again in uniting with your family?

Sarem: Yes, I always kept thinking that way, but I did not put much hope for fear of disappointment. Within the period that we were running around, some people from the cooperative ran to join the Vietnamese side while some others joined Pol Pot side. At that time we were very cautious because we stayed in their place. We did not know who was for the Vietnamese side, who, was for the Pol Pot's side .

Reasey: So you did not know who was who, right?

Sarem: Yes we did not know which side they belonged to. Therefore, we did whatever the people who controlled that place asked us to do.

Reasey: Was the forest you stayed far?

Sarem: Yes, it was a real forest. There were wild pigs, and we set traps to catch them. Bu the KR leaders lived nearby.

Reasey: Did the KR soldiers follow you?

Sarem: I met only those who were called base people. We did not know who was a soldier and who was not. We didn't know.

Reasey: At some places, as I remember, when the KR gathered people, the soldiers came along with them so that people would not run. Didn't you have that?

Sarem: No, we did not have KR's soldiers with us. We didn't dare make a fault step. We followed their orders.

Reasey: Was there a chief to control the group?

Sarem: We had a chief. We waited for order. One day, when we were asked to cut tree to clear the forest, we saw a destroyed small plane with grass growing around it. Then we cleared the grass to see if there was some iron that we could use. We tried to break some iron, but it was so hard. One day I saw a big tree. The female villager told me that tree is the" Preah Phneou" tree. Reasey, you know that tree?

Reasey: Yes, I heard that name.

Sarem: People use "Preah Phneou" bark as diarrhea medicine. They took only bark and roasted it and then boiled it for drinking. I was happy to meet medical tree like that. I hugged that tree and prayed for the spirit of" Kru Pich Sdeck Thnam".The greatest Guru and the King of medicine to protect us. We were happy to pick up Sadao flowers or (Neem).

It was about mid-February; they allowed us to make another trip. They asked us to reduce our belongings again. So we reduced our belongings for Angkar and for other people. At that time, sister Rene still had a lot of antique silver coins. She gave me 4-5, and she also gave me

a bunch of Prak Duong (traditional currency). In addition, she gave me a kind of small pestle handle, the top made from ivory, size of fifty cent US's Coin. This time, they told us to walk to Bavel. The cooperatives would give us food on the way. But we requested that Angkar should allow each of us to take food with us. We all have to carry our share of food. I told the children in my unit to keep their bidons safely to preserve water and their Guigoz cans always with them because in such a difficult situation, we all needed to be self-reliant.

When we were leaving, I recalled the interview between Elizabeth Becker and Pol Pot when she visited Cambodia with an English man Malcolm Caldwell. I asked people in our group about Elizabeth Becker and Malcolm Caldwell. They knew the story and told me that Caldwell was killed. I was shocked because I forgot that story.

I saw forest fire. Looking from the distance, it was like the Chinese Great Wall with small light. Then we arrived at a beautiful field with "Tamoung trees" growing along the lake. That place was called O Kley. Then we met a lot of our people who was not in our group. It was like we had a picnic over there. Looking to the other side of the O Kley, we saw deer drinking water from it. O Kley looked like a giant wok. There, I met Vanna. I told Vanna not to get married with the arrangement from the KR because from now on we might meet villagers, and we could also search for the information about our family. At the end, most of the orphans from my unit left me. My legs got hurt. I could not keep up with them.

Reasey: How many people left?

Sarem: There were three small girls remained with me. As we were walking, a girl named Chea met her sisters Avy and Apha and Chea had joined her sisters. So I had only two girls with me. One was Chan and the other one was Ry. Chan was the daughter of Manina Kirivat and the granddaughter of Huot Sambath and Ry is the granddaughter of Sarin Chhak. In our group now there were two other women, Suon and Sean. Sean is from Paris. She is the daughter of Yem Yisin and two men. One was Toek Sundet and the other one was Deny. Seven of us were behind the others.

When we were walking, we saw wild chicken. We saw pockets of orchids growing on the trees. When we got tired, we went into the stream to take a bath with our clothes on. We had walked across the village called Prey Kpos (high forest). There were a lot of big houses in this village. As we walked a bit farther from that village, we saw fishermen cottages. At that night, they gave smoked fish to us for food. We ate until we were full that night. We continued our journey the following day.

On the way, we saw a KR head quarter with bamboo fence growing around it. Close to that, villagers raised a flock of ducks, the ducks took bath in the pond nearby. It was around mid-February. We slept on an ox-cart track. A man we called Sasa's father had turned on his radio and we heard that the Shah of Iran was deposed from position. The Iranian King had married another young wife named Farah Diba. They had one son who would be the future King. Now, he was deposed from the throne. As we walked across the forest, for many days, we finally arrived at Amleang at around 10 O'clock in the morning.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. When we arrived at Amleang, we took a rest at the public stand on the side of the dirt road. There we saw the KR workers. They wore factory uniform in blue with strings bags of rice strapped across their chests. There were many groups of these workers walking one group after another. Therefore, we waited until they walked

before us for a long time. However, when we were too hungry, we took risk to ask for food from the cooperative at Amleang. When we went to ask them, they gave us some. I remembered that on that day they cooked banana flower soup. They cut the banana flower very neatly, and the soup was also clean. They gave each of us only a small bowl of soup. It was so delicious. The chief of the cooperative was very gentle. We were very respectful to people at Amleang cooperative.

Reasey: Where is Amleang?

Sarem: I think Amleang is in Kampong Speu province. It was the KR base. The KR always ran into Amleang. While waiting for the workers to go ahead we had boiled tamarind seeds for snack. There, I saw Ms. Si-Y. Her husband was Mr. Ros Sarin who also came from France. Si-Y carried a big luggage on her head. We only had small bags. Seeing Si-Y, I felt pity for our old women such as grandmother Lam (mother of Mr. Hor Namhong), grandmother Loeum (mother of Ms. Phlek Vipha), and grandmother Kim (mother of doctor In Soka). Grandmother Kim was happy some months ago when she met her son In Sopheap who had worn sunglasses while he came to visit her at Boeung Trabek. I thought “I myself can hardly walk and how about those grandmas?” Then a person took some medicine for us. It was Ms. Yem Yok Siv. She told us. “People went ahead of us including those grandmas.” Even Ms. Kong who carried a son who had a polio disease also went ahead of us. Siv said that Ta Chhoam (Khuon David’s father) was faster than the others.

When those workers were gone, we walked on the path at Amleang. The car could also drive on this path; it was a beautiful path. On both sides of the path there were a lot of rice fields in good shape. At around late noon, I could not walk more because my legs got hurt. Then I said to myself “Although ghost, devils or the Vietnamese arrested me, I would never run at this time.” I could not run. My legs were so painful. If I have to die, I would rather die because I could no longer walk. Little girl Chan troubled us a lot because she got stomach pain from eating too much porridge made from tamarind’s seeds.

Then we took a rest at one place. That place was so nice; it was like a picnic place; there were a lot of chairs made from rattan. So we took a rest at that place. A moment later, I saw a truck. Then I waved the truck to stop, and the truck stopped. Then I asked them “Comrade! May I send two children with you?” They asked me back “Where are you going?” I said: “I didn’t where to go. Angkar had told us to go to Bavel. I don’t know which way.” The driver said: “Oh, so we go to the same place. Why don’t you come on the truck with us?” I said, “I have a lot of people to go with me, four more.” The driver said, “Call them out, and we go together.” So we all jumped on the truck. There were not many people in the truck, just about 15 people; and they had a sack of rice in the truck. They also had cooking pots. There was a man standing at the outside of the right door of the truck, he carried a gun. The truck was dark green; the truck was called “Aseen”(made from China). They told us that “If the truck stops at any place, do not get off. If you get off the evacuees along the road might jump into and take your place in the truck. You cannot run as fast as they do. If the truck gets stuck, we will push it.” Then they started to throw rice at the bottom of the pot away. I told them “Don’t throw it away. Please keep it for me.” They said, “This is the left-over rice. Don’t eat it.” I said “I have little rice, so I will take that left over rice to make rice porridge.” So they gave the left over rice to us. As the truck went on, we saw the evacuees on the way in the forest, and the scene had reminded me to think about the miserable evacuees from Phnom Penh in April 1975. We saw ox-carts and crowds of people. Some were sick, they just lied down along the dirt road, their private parts uncovered. When I saw that, I dared not look at this. I closed my eyes. I couldn’t help them. It was also difficult for me just to help myself, so everyone had to care about themselves. The truck just went on. They did not care about who were on the road. We

stopped once at Talor Hatil in Pursat province. I saw a lot of children with sad face. I got off the truck to see if I could recognize anyone there. I gave vitamins to some children.

With god help, I arrived in Russei cooperative in Battambang province. It was in Moung Russei district. Arriving there, I saw a lot of people setting up their camps. The owners of the truck told us: "We've arrived at the destination. Please get down from the truck." It is up to the people there to give us assignment. We registered our names in the office over there. Some people quietly told us "You have to be careful with wording. One new evacuee had complained with anger about not having enough food and Angkar had to be responsible. A man came and cut the throat of that person. Hearing that, we tried to listen to their advice. Then I saw those who had escaped by train with us.

Reasey: You met them again?

Sarem: I saw Ms. Nith (the wife of doctor You Kim Yeat), I saw her on a jeep with the KR soldiers. I saw her getting off the car. I asked her, "Ms. Nith, where did you come from?" She said:" She went to see the road to Kos Kralor. People could not go to Kos Kralor because the Vietnamese fought from there". Later, the KR took us to live in Russei cooperative. At Russei cooperative, we met uncle Chhliev. He was not that old, but we called him uncle. Uncle Chhliev arrived earlier. So there were three men now in our group. Living in Russei cooperative, we were asked to do harvesting, to pull bad grass from the rice fields. I saw orange farm; it was long out of sight. But on the orange trees there were woody vines.

Reasey: Didn't anyone take care of the orange farm?

Sarem: We didn't see any orange, and the leaves became dry. I was so shocked, why the orange farm did not have fruit. It was unreasonable.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Yes, thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey. And the houses of the local were dirty. The joists and floor of some houses were full of bedbugs. It was scary. A lot of people developed eye disease. Their eyes became red and were full of eye wax. The cassava was piled up under the house of the chiefs of cooperative, but they did not give it to people. They ate among themselves. I had collected leaves from white lead tree in my two pockets every day. I ate those leaves with rice. Sometimes, I got some salt.

At the area, we occasionally ran from one place to another. They said, "Oh, they are coming. They are coming. Take your luggage and run." They said the Vietnamese chased us. That night, the moon was bright. It was March. We slept in the open. So we had joking around: "Tonight, we don't sleep in the Mercure four-star hotel, but in the Thousand-star hotel."

They were very cautious in Russei cooperative. They did not distribute salt to us because they were afraid of enemies. The enemy needed salt.

One day, they had sent one person to do harvesting in another place. That person had a baby, so I requested to take her place." I did not have any children, and she had a baby. She needed to breastfeed her baby, so it might be difficult for her". Then someone said, "Why do you want to go in her place? They take her to execution." So I stopped talking.

At Russei cooperative, we were not allowed to pick the small cassava root remaining in the field, if we dare touch it, they would accuse us of stealing and kill us. I thought "Those small

one in the field are the left-over ones. Why don't they allow us to pick it up for food?" Hearing them saying this, we dared not pick up anything.

Later they told us that they would send us to another cooperative with plenty of coconut, and palm trees. We followed them. As I was walking, I saw only forest. Finally, they asked us to dig up the tree trunks and burn down the bushes to make space for shelters. It was totally in the middle of the jungle. They called that place "Tracheak Chet". They had built a kitchen hall, and we stayed there in the open. Some were from Eastern zone and other places. I saw some children who had not had food for a long time. They were very skinny like the statue of Buddha showing ribs, and flies were all over their faces. I closed my eyes because I could not stand seeing this.

Staying there, we had to walk for about one hour to reach the lake to take a bath. People dived and took water until that small stream dried. We slept: in our hammock under the trees.

One night, I dreamt that two groups of people constructed a gate into the pagoda. One group worked carefully. The other group on the ground shouted that, "Come down. Let us go up and work. You took so long on that." Then the one on the ground climbed up to do the gate construction. In just a short time, the work was done. Looking from the distance, the gate was beautiful, but when looking close it was not beautiful. Waking up, I told Suon, who slept next to me. I told her exactly what I just mentioned. Then at our group's meeting in that evening, a man named Proem from Eastern zone criticized me. He said that, "Your dream has political message." I was shocked "Oh, what kind of political message does my dream carry? I don't understand." I would like to tell you that Proem had a father-in-law, a mother-in-law, kids, and a pregnant wife.

At mealtime, they distributed small amount of rice to us with no food. I could not eat, so I just ate a little. I gave my remaining share to uncle Chhliev. Then Proem came to ask me whether Chhliev was my husband. I said "No. He only walked along the way with us." Proem was kind of jealous about why I didn't give the rice to him because he had small children.

I would like to tell you that Proem came from Svay Rieng province. He was a KR cadre. He used to eat human livers and hearts fried with cabbage. He told me that it was so delicious. Then I just wanted to turn to a different topic by saying that, "I never heard about human eating human internal organs, I only heard the giant in the folktale do so, not a human." Then Proem said: "It is easy to kill human" He describe to me how to kill a person by holding that person tight then stabbing the side close to the heart under the shoulder blade with a sharp knife."

While I stayed there, I met Sun, who was the deputy chief of the Khmer Rouge at Tracheak Chet village. He told me that he was from Pursat province. I said that, "My mother was also from Pursat province, her village is Por Takouy". Then Sun said, "I am also from Por Takouy village. He was a grandson of grandmother Kao Ny". I said, "I know grandmother Kao Ny", her house was close to my grandma Tim, my grandpa Touch house". Every time I visited Pursat, grandmother Kao Ny had asked me to go to her house. She gave me mango jam.

From that time on I had a good relationship with Sun. So I gave some clothes that I bought for my husband to him. He told me that he worked as a military police officer in the past. And he could become the Khmer Rouge deputy chief in that place because the Khmer Rouge had almost killed all of his own people. Sun told me that during the evacuation of people from Phnom Penh, he met some women from Sisowath family. When he saw them in starvation,

he felt pity for them, and he stole some rice and gave it to them, but they did not know how to make un-husked rice to rice. They would peel the rice grains one by one.

Later the KR asked us to build cottages far from the place that we tied our hammocks. Then I met another person from Chhoeu Kach Ksach Sar of Prey Veng province. She used to live in Kompong Cham province. When the Khmer Rouge captured Kompong Cham, she returned to Chhoeu Kach hometown. The reason that he came to live in Battambang was because the Khmer Rouge had sent healthy and well-built people to her place to show that Battambang had a lot of food to eat, so the people in that village had agreed to go to live in Battambang. And her 16-year-old son had married a girl who was the same age. They always had arguments. Each of them wanted to live with their own mothers. Hearing this I kept laughing secretly because I wonder why they got married at a very young age? The woman told me that they followed Angkar guideline to increase the population size, and they also wanted to get married in order to stay in the village. The woman said: "It is lucky that they had only arguments. Some couples who were married by Angkar ate manioc tubers, and then died of poison."

At almost the end of April, at our group meeting, Proem talked about my dream in the meeting. This time, I stood up and replied to Proem: "Comrade Proem, I don't know what you want from me. Why do you raise about my dream again?" I told Proem that I had only one head in this forest, and "You have a few children and a pregnant wife, you also have mother and father-in-law." As I understood, Proem might want my life, that why, I had responded to him that way.

Reasey: Was it in the meeting?

Sarem: Yes, it was in the meeting with Suon and others who worked there with us.

Reasey: You could no longer stand him. That's why you dared to answer that way, right?

Sarem: Yes, I believed that if I stayed quiet and allowed Proem to threaten me, Proem would threaten me more. I would like to tell you that I was like I had no fear of who wants to kill me at that time. Whether I died or not, I had to respond .

Reasey: Did you answer like that?

Sarem: Yes. In the meeting, there was one person who just escaped from Phnom Penh. He was in our group . He said "We are all trying to survive from the Vietnamese; we should not fight each other in this forest."

That night after the group meeting that Proem had discussed about my dream, we slept in the cottage with no roof. Suon said to me "I don't know that you, skinny lady, are so brave." I said: "I have to".

In the morning, I intended to talk to uncle Sun about that issue, but he did not show up.

Since Proem had given me a hard time about my dream, I always kept to myself any dream. Once I dreamt of seeing my friend, Huy, sitting with her legs crossed in a dried well. She told me "Sarem, you will have noodle to eat soon." I replied "How can I eat noodle in a remote forest like this?" Huy told me "Wait for two or three days. You will see." At that time, I waited to see the 17 April Day at Tracheak Chet camp. But they did not celebrate any ceremony. Moreover I saw a lot of people walking on the road near the camp. Some carried

boxes on their head, and some carried bags. I believed that people might change their living places. Later on, I saw some KR soldiers with grenade launchers walk by our place. I also saw Mercedes driving on the dirt road in the jungle. Sun came to see us at almost the end of April 1979. He told us “brothers and sisters, Angkar demobilizes us now.”

Reasey: Could you explain about the word “demobilization”?

Sarem: Demobilization means that Angkar no longer kept us with them. We were free to go anywhere.

Reasey: Where was Angkar?

Sarem: There was no Angkar, so they set us free. The man who informed us about this demobilization told us that we could go to find rice by following the local.

Reasey: How many people were there in your group? And how you feel?

Sarem: At that time we were eight. I was so happy like I could fly. It was like I was free from the Hell. So we followed the local villagers to find rice at Phnom ROUNG about four or five kilometers from our place. We had pounded the rice to get rid of the husk, cleaned it, we cooked our rice and ate until we all were so full. It was heavenly delicious. The rice was sweet. Uncle Chhliev managed to get a piece of beef from the local, and the beef was also delicious and tender. The jungle was full of aroma of cooked pork fat throughout the forest. Unlike before, we smelled only the smell of the dead bodies, and we heard only the sound of flies swarming the corpses. Staying in that forest was not like in Boeung Trabek. There we could pick up mango that dropped from the tree to eat. In this forest, I usually picked up dried Prich leaves and kept them in my pocket to eat. I would then put the dried leaves in my mouth for a while until it became tender sweet, and then I eat it. We ate the dried Prich leaves like vegetable.

Reasey: You mentioned that you went to collect rice. Did you collect it from the warehouse or somewhere else?

Sarem: We collected rice from the place where the KR had stored it. Before they demobilized us, they asked us to transport rice to store in their place.

Reasey: So you already knew the place, right?

Sarem: No, I did not know. But Sean who stayed with us used to transport rice to the storehouse. So we followed those who knew the rice storing place.

Reasey: Besides being happy, did you think of anything about your family?

Sarem: Immediately when I heard about the demobilization I told those who walked with me that I would walk to the West. Those who wanted to go with me were welcome. If they didn't want, it was up to them. I would aim to the West.

Reasey: Does it mean you wanted to go to the camp?

Sarem: Yes, I would not return to Phnom Penh. I would go straight to Sisophon because I used to live in Sisophon when I started my teaching career. I would go to the house that I used to stay in Sisophon. Then I would prepare my journey to Thai border.

Reasey: Did you have intention to search for your family first?

Sarem: When I heard about demobilization, I thought right away that if I returned back to Phnom Penh, the road was far. Moreover, the Vietnamese fought on the way every day, so I might have danger. I thought that I would return to France. This time I wanted to make sure that I survived, and then I could search for information about those who survived later. If my children were still alive, I would try to work to earn money, and I would use the money to take my children out of Cambodia.

Reasey: You thought that way. You did not take risk like you had done before, right?

Sarem: No.

Reasey: When they demobilized your group and you started your journey out, did you see the Vietnamese troops?

Sarem: One day I went outside to collect water and when I was cleaning that muddy water, I turned around and I saw one Vietnamese soldier. I was so startled. We did not expect that the Vietnamese soldiers arrived at our place. My body was shaking. I turned my face away. I thought I lived through the history and I saw the Vietnamese invade the country with my own eyes.

Reasey: Did the Vietnamese soldier ask you anything?

Sarem: No, he did not ask anything.

Reasey: When you decided to walk to the West, did you start the journey right away?

Sarem: Yes, at that time, I had enough rice. I started my journey right away. On the way, Deny got dysentery and died. I also got dysentery. I dreamt that my daughter called me to live with her. But in the dream, I realized that my daughter already died. I told her that, "Mom does not want to go to live with you." Since that day, the dysentery was no more with me. Suon was good in washing the dead body. Uncle Chhliev and Deth dug the ground. Then we all buried Deny's body. After that, we said goodbye to him and continued our journey.

On our way, we saw Proem walking with his family. He wore clothes like the KR cadre. He carried luggage and walked along with his children and his pregnant wife. I said to him "Comrade Proem! Why do you dress up like the KR cadre? Be careful! It may bring you danger." He turned to look at us. We all wore black pants but our shirts were colorful but looked dirty. Hearing me saying like this, Proem was aware of the danger. He thanked us, and we said goodbye to each other. In late afternoon, we stopped and cooked rice. At dusk, we continued our journey so that we could catch up the others since we didn't know the direction. We tried to follow some ox-carts ahead of us. When we reached an open space, all the ox-carts had disappeared. At that moment, I felt very frightened." I felt my hair stand straight up". I could not see anything. It seem like, I was in a surreal world.

Reasey: Did all of them disappear?

Sarem: Yes. So that night we slept at the entrance to a charcoal- making pit. Then, a little far from us we saw light shooting up in the air. In Cambodian belief, this is called "Preay

Hos”(fire of the witch). We pretended not to be scare by thinking that it was a phosphorus surge.

Reasey: Was it the fire-streams?

Sarem: Yes, it moved up swiftly. We said to ourselves “Oh, we’re not afraid of it. It is just a phosphorus stream.”(End of 9 page 97).

Reasey: So, after staying at that place for one night, you continued your journey, right?

Sarem: Yes. In the morning we continued our journey from the earth pit charcoal . Along the way, we met villagers, then few women from Svay Rieng walked very fast toward me and asked if I had some medicine, they said: “You should share some with them otherwise the medicine would be confiscated at the check-point ahead of us.” We just listened but did not believe them. The vitamin pills produced a strange aroma that allowed the passengers to know that we had it. At that moment, I ignored their request and did not give any medicine to them.

On the way, we saw bamboo containers for palm sugar that people had threw away after use. We took those containers, broke them into pieces and shared with each other to lick the left over sugar. Arriving at Khnob, we saw a lot of social work houses. We stayed in one of the houses. We were informed that those who carried books had to be careful, because the Vietnamese had arrested some already. Hearing this, I destroyed my diary that I wrote down the events I encountered every day. In my diary, I also took note of sister Mui’s recipe to cook roasted pork. Sister Mui was from Siem Reap province, and she was born to a real Chinese family who escaped from China in 1949. I also saw Ms. Phuong’s recipe for frying crispy vegetable. Ms. Phuong was Loy Sim Chheang’s wife.

I had exchanged malaria medicine with the local for Prahok, a salty fish paste. I got two Guigoz cans of Prahok. At that time, we made a cart to carry our luggage. There was a rice mill at that place. The villagers flocked there to get materials from the rice mill. Seeing that, I also joined them to find something useful but nothing left.

Reasey: You mentioned about the malaria medicine. Was it the medicine that you brought from France?

Sarem: Yes, it was the medicine that I had kept.

Uncle Chhliev put some of the baggage on the small cart, and we carried some. On the way, we always picked up ong choy and eatable wild ferns for food. I had one mosquito net that was also used to catch fish on the way. As we walked forward, I saw a lot of cassava left to dry on the side of the dirt road.

Arriving at that village, we had asked the local for some cassava, but the villagers said no. Instead, they told us to go to Chhker Kham Proeus (Dog Bites Deer) village to get fresh cassava. When I arrived there, I met a person with whom I studied at Norodom Lower Secondary School. Her name was Meas Mouly. She sat on a house ladder. I said, “Oh, you Mouly! Mouly!” Mouly told me that one of our classmates, named Meach Vimuth, daughter of Mr. Meach Kun, was still alive. Vimuth and her son had gone to Battambang. Mouly told me that her husband was abroad.

After gathering some fresh cassava, we continued our journey. It was May first, the day that we went to find the cassava at Chhker Kham Proeus village. I remembered the day because it was the Labor Day. We left Chhker Kham Proeus village and arrived in another village where I met the sister in law of my young sister. When she saw me, she recognized me immediately. She told me "All of them are dead!" I asked, "Who are they?" She told me that my sister, You Sophal, her daughter, and her husband, Mr. Hak, are all dead. I wished that she would not tell me how my sister died because I didn't want to face the cruel reality.

I would like to inform you that my sister, You Sophal, was a teacher. I borrowed a gold necklace from her when I went to France. My sister husband was Set Thonghak, a civil engineer. Hak sister was a colonel wife. She said, that her brother Hak did not want to survive in the KR regime.

The sister in law of my sister was a colonel wife. She has tried to please the KR. by working so hard. Her hands were wounded a lot. She was assigned to work as a cook. She tried to secretly save some rice porridge and gave it to Hak, but Hak refused to accept it. He preferred to die rather than to eat the rice porridge. He said that he would not live in that cruel and barbarous regime. Hak sister had survived with her two daughters, Sou Sowatheary and Sou Sunthary. Her two daughters were my students at Lycee d'Application.

Hak sister added that my sister was not afraid of the KR. The KR always kept an eye on her. Even when she dug the ground and buried something, they would dig it up at the spot to see what she had buried. They even followed her when she went to defecate because they believed that my sister was a rich person and she might have buried gold. I would like to inform you that my sister had meningitis when she was single. She was unconscious many times. When she recovered, she talked bravely without fear of angering anyone. She had unstable mind. After leaving my sister's sister-in-law, my tears dropped down unconsciously. I felt so sad for losing my beloved sister. After that, we arrived at a national road. We walked like flying because of the smooth road.

Reasey: Was it a national road?

Sarem: Yes, it was a national road. When we were walking on the road passed some houses, we saw villagers dancing Ramvong to collect rice. We took a rest at one secondary school in Mong district. There, we met a man whose hair was long to his shoulders. He had a guitar and played the music from the old regime. I asked him, "Where did you get this guitar from?" He said that he had made a breaking into the KR's warehouse to get his guitar back. I asked: "Why is your hair so long?" He said few months before the KR's regime collapsed he had hidden himself in the forest; he did not allow the KR to use him. Then we sang the song with him the famous "Annie."

Reasey: Were people still wearing black clothes at that time?

Sarem: People could wear whatever clothes they had. Actually, we did not have many color clothes. We had saved mostly black clothes that we brought from France. They were light and strong.

Reasey: Didn't the people suspect you of being Khmer Rouge base people when they saw you wearing black clothes?

Sarem: No. However, Ms. Sean, in our group said she had heard villagers saying: "People who came from France and other countries as Ieng Sary followers were now running

in disperse”. Upon hearing this, we continued our journey the following early morning. We carefully hide our identity.

Reasey: Were you afraid of being confused?

Sarem: Yes, when I arrived in Battambang, I tried to find my uncle’s house. His name was Yim Phan and his wife’s name was Duong Phan. His house was on the way to the governor’s house. I could not find the house, instead I saw Vietnamese soldiers chasing to arrest people on the side road in front of the bridge to the governor house. Arriving there, I saw Ms. Thay, (the Chinese buns lady. She was the wife of Ros Pin). She was making a fire to cook rice with Srey Vanheng. Srey Vanheng was a carpenter at Boeung Trabek. They joined our trip, so we had nine people all together in our group.

When we arrived at Anlong Vil in Battambang, I smelled the aroma of something like noodle soup or rice soup. Immediately, I remembered my dream at Tracheat Chet in which my friend Heng Hui , who was the wife of Mr. Khou Kim Touy, told me that I would have noodle soup to eat very soon. However, we did not stop at that market. We continued our journey. We arrived at Phnom Touch-Phnom Thom. It was raining, so we took shelter under a house with no wall; only the roof remained. At that time, the other people who also took shelter under the house said that, “the Vietnamese soldiers had allowed many Chinese to go to the border. Therefore, the Chinese sold rice to buy gold. The gold now is expensive.”

Before departing from the place where we took shelter, I had tried to sweet talk my two girls Chan and Ry to ask for palm sugar from the one lady who took the shelter with us. The children got a few spoons of palm sugar and we shared it with each other.

Reasey: Was the money being used at that time?

Sarem: We did not know about the currency. The lady who gave us sugar was so beautiful. She was as beautiful as Nak Maneang Monique (princess Monique Sihanouk). She had a big ox-cart and two oxen with fatty humps. She had many children. Her 16-year-old son got married to a 16-year-old girl. His wife was 5-6-month pregnant. The lady had a fire-extinguisher container that was full of palm sugar. We knew that she was the wife of a high-ranking military officer in Pailin. She said that she had escaped to Thailand when the KR took over the country, but she could not live there so she came back to Cambodia. She told me that Pok, whom I knew, had left for France. Pok was the owner of a pharmacy in Pailin. She was a sister of Hay Neary, who was the owner of Banteay Srey Pharmacy in Phnom Penh. I asked the lady: “Do you want to go to France? We can go together.” She said that she would go to Pourk to grow rice. I thought that she might be the wife of a Vietnamese KR cadre now, that why she had an ox-cart and fatty-hump cows. But, in 1982, I met her again in Minnesota during a Thanksgiving Day. She just arrived in Minnesota because the Thai authority had dumped her at Dangrek Mountain. Her name is Sok Son. Sok Son told me in Minnesota that, she got her big oxcart from the KR. who had abandoned it.

We continued our journey under the rain to Svay Sisophon. On the way, we saw Vietnamese trucks covered with tent. The numerous trucks were delivering goods. We also saw Vietnamese soldiers, especially when they took a bath. The Vietnamese soldiers liked ladies who had light skin. Most of the Vietnamese soldiers sang some Khmer RamVong’s songs such as the song “Stars in the sky”. One day, a Vietnamese soldier told Suon that Sean was a KR. Suon defended Sean by saying that Sean did not know about politics. Sean just said what she could think of. When we left that place, Suon told Sean to be careful with her words because we did not want to have any problem with the Vietnamese soldiers on the way to the

border. Please be informed that Sean was very loyal to Ieng Sary and Pol Pot. Sometimes, she even wanted to follow them to the mountain.

On the way from Phnom Touch-Phnom Thom, I kept asking people if they knew anything about my family and my siblings. I tried to listen even to the people praying to see if they were from my home village. Accidentally, I heard someone praying about “Lok Po, Lok Vihear, Lok Ta Dambang Dek, Grandmother Tep spirit and Lauk Ta Porpeal Khae”. Therefore, I asked her where she from. She said that she from Chroy Ampil. Then I asked if she knew my extended family members such as Tim Phuong and Noam Mich who lived in Chroy Ampil. She knew the names I mentioned. I asked her where the people in my village Kbal Koh were evacuated. She said they were evacuated to Pursat. She added, “You should not have any hope. If your children were young, don’t expect, don’t hope that they are still alive, unless there were a miracle from Tevada to save them.”

Arriving at Mongkul Borei, crossing the bridge from the post office, I felt pity of myself, I heard a very soft music resonate in my brain. My tears dropped down unconsciously. Mongkul Borei was the place that my husband and I met for the first time. The Japanese Hospital in Mongkul Borei was our souvenir place. When I heard that music in my head I wondered that the composers might have the same situation like me so that they could compose music. I continued my journey with tears to Sisophon.

Arriving at Sisophon, I went to the house of grandfather Tuy and grandmother Yoeurm the place that I stayed with them for two years when I was a teacher at Sisophon, single at that time. Grandfather Tuy and Grandmother Yoeurm were distributors of alcohol. Their house was on the corner of the road to Sisophon Secondary School and the road to Siem Reap province. The Vietnamese soldiers at that time used their house as the head office. Seeing that, I asked the Vietnamese soldiers where the house owners were. They pointed to a small cottage behind that house. There I met grandmother Yoeurm with whom I used to stay. I gave her a cleaver that I had brought all the way from France to Cambodia, a phahom (a large scarf), the vitamin pills, the malaria medicine and other medicine that I had kept. I asked her if she allowed me to take her grandchildren, Srey Thom and Polay with me I would take them if they wanted to go to France, I could help them. She did not allow her grandchildren to go with me, so I said goodbye to her. I asked her to pass on my words for my mother. I told her to tell my mother that I went back to France if she saw my mother by chance. I felt very pity for her because during my stay with her family, when I listened to a Thai radio station, she asked me not to listen to Thai songs because the songs reminded her of the painful experiences when Thailand occupied Cambodian land in the 1940s. The Thai took her land and divided it into small plots and gave them to the villagers, making her family poor. And now again, the Vietnamese took over her house; she lived in a small cottage. I felt very pity for her.

After that, I took a rest near the railroad. I asked villagers to allow us to sleep under their houses. No one would allow us, so we all slept on the railroad.

Reasey: Was there any train running at that night.

Sarem: No. The railroad was so warm. Arriving at Sisophon, I sold my belongings. I sold underwear, and bras that I brought from France. I also sold skirts. I got nine Chee of gold (more than an ounce). I also met some of my former female students at Sisophon market. They called me” Nak Kru” (Teacher) I whispered to them not to call me “Nak Kru”. After selling most of my belongings we had some seed money.

At Sisophon market, then I met the brother of the owner of Banteay Srey Pharmacy. His name was Sang. He told me that the KR had killed his sister Hay Neary and her entire family including her husband Samith Peng-Nguon and their sons. The KR killed them all because when the Vietnamese were about arriving, Mr. Peng-Nguon showed pleasure and said that he would come to Phnom Penh to take back his pharmacy.

After that, we continued our journey to O-Chrov. On the way, the people who worked for the Vietnamese tried to stop me from leaving. One man said: "You have dark skin, where do you want to go to?" I said that, "The KR is chasing me. If I stay, I don't feel safe. If I go, I could be dead or alive. I'm happy to take that chance, run away from the KR." I had a needlepoint and a watch that had no strap. I gave it to the man. I said that, "Please take this needlepoint for your wife and take this watch to put a strap on to wear."

Reasey: Today, we will continue to talk about your journey to the refugee camp in Thailand. What else did you encounter in your journey forward?

Sarem : Oh, I would like to tell you my experiences along the way. Some people said that there were a lot of thieves in red uniform in Thailand. Those thieves would ask people to change to their clothes and the thieves will take all of our belongings. Hearing this, I did not believe it. In Kob Nimit village, there were a lot of people, like they were at a ceremony.

Reasey: Were these people on the journey to Thai border?

Sarem: Yes, because the Vietnamese had allowed the Chinese to get out from Cambodia. That's why the "Sveitraan", the soldiers working for the Vietnamese had tried to stop me, I don't look Chinese.

While I was waiting in the crowd, Suon had asked two men to lead us to Thai border. The men had big axes in their hands. I was so frightened seeing that. So I told them that I was not in a hurry; I waited to see if my family members coming on that way too. Then I gave them something not to make them angry. I told my team that they were men, and we were women. Those who walked with us would not help us if these men raped us. We should walk in the big crowd. If they collected gold, we could give them some.

In the morning, the time we continued our journey. I felt very pity for myself and for my country. I almost cried. The Vietnamese shouldn't invade our country. Cambodia may become member of the Indochina Communist Block like what people at Boeung Trabek said, and Vietnam would dominate Cambodia. I was tensed. I felt my chest going to burst and I almost could not step forward. I took out some gold and gave it to the crowd leader, and that reminded me of Grandmother Yem, who was the servant of Mr. Sarin Chhak and who ceded all of her gold to the KR at Boeung Trabek, and now what her life would be with no gold in hands.

Talking about the two children Chan and Ry who walked with me, when they heard that we were going back to France, they walked faster leaving us behind. They were so delighted to hear that we were going back to France. They competed with each other in walking. I shouted to them: " Chan and Ry, Wait for me. You may get lost."

On our way, there were signs of robbery, I saw cooked rice scattering on the road. Female bra hanged on tree branches. I was scared seeing that because the robbers checked even rice in the pot. They were suspicious that we hid gold and diamond inside the rice. The Thai robbers had even tried to find gold in women underwear.

Reasey: Were they searching for gold?

Sarem: Yes, I dared not wear underwear just my pants that all I did not want them to touch my skin.

Reasey: There were no people on the way?

Sarem: Yes, there were a lot of people. When we arrived at one place, we were ordered to sit down at gunpoint.

Reasey: Who were they, soldiers?

Sarem: When I heard the word “sit down,” I sat down. When I looked at them, they were like the KR since they wore black clothes, but their trousers were short. I tried to look at their shoes that were not made from car tire. When I listened to the words “sit down,” their Khmer accent was unclear I thought they are Thai thieves. Pointing guns at us, they selected one person at a time to come out of the crowd. Then they searched for our belongings. We were so frightened seeing them asking people to come out one after another. We were afraid that they would rape women in front of us. On my turn, I took off scarf from my head and gave all the things to them. I gave them Prak Duong , silver coins and even the handle with ivory head that Rene gave me. I gave them everything in the hope that they would not check my body.

Reasey: What could the Thai robbers get if you were just getting out of the KR regime? You did not have any property.

Sarem: At that time, Thai robbers were like digging the buried treasure. They had collected a lot of gold and diamond.

Reasey: Did they beat you?

Sarem: No, I did not see this.

Reasey: At that time, were you afraid of stepping on a landmine?

Sarem: The leaders who guided the way for us knew the road situation. So we kept following them. We did not have any danger from stepping on a landmine. When we arrived at the border, some people threw away rice and fish paste. We tried to collect those things as much as we could because we did not want to sit and beg for donated rice at the camp.

Reasey: Why did people throw away rice and other things?

Sarem: Some people did not think deeply. They threw away the rice they had in hand, because while they almost reached the camp, they did not want to carry heavy things.

Reasey: How long more did it take to reach the border?

Sarem: We got to the Thai border at around two o'clock in the afternoon. We departed in the morning. It was about in the middle of May. Immediately, when I arrived, I looked for foreigners. I wanted to meet journalists so that I could send information to my brother in the US.

Reasey: Was it a camp?

Sarem: That place was Nang Chan. It was not a camp. When we arrived, we put up tents to make a shelter. We followed other people by setting up the tents. I saw a person who looked like French, so I walked toward him and talked to him in French. I told him that I needed paper to write letters and envelopes. He said he was not French. He worked at the American Embassy. He said his name is Richard Cocher. I called his name Richard Cocher in French way.

Reasey: So he was an American representative?

Sarem: Yes, I told Mr. Richard Cocher that I worked as a teacher. I came back from France when the Khmer Rouge took over the country because I wanted to meet my children. All my children were in Cambodia. He said you was teacher, did you know Mr. Kus Cheav? I said : “ I heard that name”. Then Mr. Richard Cocher pointed to Mr. Khus Cheav and told me “Tell Mr. Khus Cheav that you need envelopes and paper to write letters.” Mr. Richard Cocher told me that Mr. Khus Cheav is his assistant. After that I approached Mr. Khus. As I waited too long and no one brought me any envelopes or paper, I went to meet Mr. Richard Cocher again. Then he went himself to take paper and envelopes for me. I wrote letters to France and to America with Richard Cocher address as my returned address.

Reasey: Did you give the letters to him?

Sarem: Yes, I gave the letters to him and we set up a tent at Nang Chan camp. At Nang Chan, some people changed their clothes from the black ones to Sampot Haul (Khmer colorful silk skirt). And it was not appropriate.

Reasey: Was this because they were living in the forest?

Sarem: Yes, we lived in the forest.

Reasey: What was about eating at Nang Chan?

Sarem: I had rice that I collected on the way and the rice that I carried with me. I cooked it for food. In the morning we women collected vine leaves and picked up snails from rice fields. The men who came along with us cooked rice. There was a pond nearby, and I had a few fishing hooks left. I asked the men to take my fishing hooks to catch fish. When we got few fishes, we dared not eat the fish we sold it. We bought candies and asked the two children who came with us to sell the candies.

Reasey: Was it traded in Thai Baht?

Sarem: Yes, in Thai Baht, because we did not know how long we would stay there. We did not have money, and we ran out of gold.

Reasey: At Nang Chan camp, how was it managed?

Sarem: Yes, there were people who managed the work over there. The next day, we registered our names. I registered my name separately from the others. I also registered the girls who came along with me separately because I dared not take other people’s children with me. I was afraid that their parents would ask to take their children back, and that would bring trouble to me.

Reasey: So all people had the same purpose, which was to travel to the third country, right?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: When you registered your name, did you clarify that you wanted to go to any country?

Sarem: Yes, in the registration form, I made clear that I wanted to go to Europe, Australia, Canada and the US. At Nang Chan, I tried to search for Hui, Mr. Khou Kim Touy 's wife. I knew that Hui had an air ticket that her husband in the US bought for her since I was in France. However, Hui could not leave the country before the KR took power. I believed that if she still alive, she would come to Nang Chan camp. If she did not come, this meant that she either died or was evacuated to the mountain with the KR.

Reasey: How did you know that refugees were accepted to live in other countries?

Sarem: Yes, we believed that some people would surely come to pick us up. For example, for me Pere Gilles who was in France had promised me that he would take me out of Cambodia if I came back. At Nang Chan, we dared not walk here and there because we were afraid of the Thai. We were afraid of being noticed which would invite a problem to ourselves.

One day, I went to the registration place to find envelopes. I did not speak Thai language. Arriving there, I made a gesture and said that "Sarong chutmay," Then I got envelopes and paper to write letters. One Thai man kept looking and smiling at me. At night, there was someone coming to pat my head. I believed that person was that Thai soldier. I was sleeping in my hammock, and I saw a tall person like the one I saw in the afternoon. At that time, I prayed to everything including my grandparents. My body became dead still in the hammock, but a while later, the guy left.

Reasey: How was the security over there at night?

Sarem: Some girls were very worried; some of them cried. They thought they would be safe arriving at that place but our danger was that we might get rape. We tried to make ourselves look ugly. We made our hair become disorder and our faces looked dirty to ensure that they were not interested in us.

Reasey: What was about representatives of foreign countries such as the US? Did they come only during the daytime and return at night?

Sarem: When we first arrived, we saw them. Later we did not know where they were. Especially, there was a Chinese Association, which helped those who were half-Chinese. Some people sat and waited for donation, but we did not because we did not like begging for donation. A rich person gave us about ten packs of noodles. She said that we were different from the others. She never saw us sit and beg for donation, she always saw us eat wild fern boiled with fish paste.

Reasey: How long did you stay in Nang Chan?

Sarem: We kept sleeping in hammocks in the open field for a while and then we saw a school building nearby. When no student came to class, we took a risk to go to sleep on the veranda of that school. It was after the Thai soldier patted my head. Sleeping in the veranda of that school, we were fine, so some people had followed us. Among those who came was a teacher who used to teach at Sisophon with me. His name was Chhuon Khamseng. His wife, children, brother and sister all came to sleep on the other side.

For those who followed us I had explained to them that they needed to be clean. They should not have defecated here and there. When the Thai came they had to look straight into their faces while talking to them:

“Do not show fear. If you show fear, they will look down on you”. I said.

The under the school was also full of people. We had no problem because people had kept everything clean like what I told them. They acted respectful. The men who came along with us had work to do as cleaners at Nang Chan at night. When they got money, they bought cigarettes. I was so furious seeing them buying and smoking cigarettes. I did not dare even buy food with the money I got from selling fish.

One night, I heard the Thai beating the men who came back from work to stay with us, especially, Srey Vanheng. Then we got up and shouted in Khmer, “Why do you beat them? Don’t do that. It not appropriate and it is illegal.” Then they stopped. The Thai came to pull Suon’s leg many times. They came at night. When they came to pull our legs, we all woke up and sat all together. We shouted at them, “Why do you disturb us?” Then they went away. They might get angry. That why they beat the men who slept close to us.

Reasey: Were there any soldiers coming to guard you?

Sarem : I did not see anyone coming to guard us. I only saw the Thai who worked at the registration hall, they might be our guards. Instead they harmed us like the one who came to pat my head.

Reasey: How many days did you stay in Nang Chan?

Sarem: I stayed there for about two weeks. Then a bus came to pick us up. When I was in line waiting to be called, I saw a familiar person who was standing close to a well. She looked like my second cousin named Uy Sandab and then she ran to me. She also recognized me right away. It was not Uy Sandab, but Un Vannet another second cousin of mine. Vannet asked me, “Where are you going?”

I told her: “They may take me to Bangkok.” She asked me if I had any valuable things, and she wanted to give me a ring. I said that, “You don’t have to give me anything, I’m going to Bangkok. I don’t need any money.”

We were so happy to see each other. Net told me that when the KR took Battambang, she had given some money to her husband Neth Sorn, a veterinarian in Battambang to flee the country. She guessed that her husband might be living abroad.

Then Mrs. Thay,(the Chinese bun lady) who kept the money from selling cadies, brought some money to me. She said that we had about 300 baths. She wanted to give me some, but I refused, I want her to keep the money because she was not able to leave the site yet. The two

young girls were also not able to leave. So was not uncle Chhliev. Only Suon, Sean , the other man named Vanheng, the other one named Det and I were able to leave the camp.

Reasey: Who decided on who was allowed to leave and who was not allowed to leave?

Sarem: I didn't know. I believed they selected only some people. At that time, we heard a rumor that Thai Authority could expel the refugees.

Reasey: They had expelled some refugees back to Cambodia?.

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Were you interviewed before you were selected?

Sarem: No, I was not interviewed. They just registered my name two times.

Reasey: Where did they transport you.

Sarem: Leaving Nang Chan, I went to Lumphini. Some people went to Suan Plu.

Reasey: What was the difference between these two camps?

Sarem: I didn't know. One person who went to Suan Plu camp went to France. However, some people who lived in my camp also went to France. Arriving at Lumphini. I was so frightened. I tried to ask an organization over there to help bring to me the two young girls whom I registered separately. I had promised that organization to look after them because I heard that Thai Authority was about to transport those who were in Nang Chan camp to Dangrek's mountain or Preah Vihear. However, they could only bring Ry but not Chan. I heard that Thailand was asking for 250 USD from the UN or the US for each refugee. Otherwise, they would expel all the refugees from their land.

At that time, I received a letter from Pere Gilles. I thank him for having a plan to come to get me in July. He praised my fate that I could escape from the KR revolutionary wheel, and I could get out of Nang Chan before the Thai expelled us. At Lumphini camp, I had sent the photos of my children and my husband to Pere Venet so that he could help me find them.

Reasey: How many days did you stay in Lumphini camp?

Sarem: I stayed there for about two weeks. At that camp, I met my former student from Sisophon. He remembered me. He came to greet me and gave one Sarong to me. As I got the Sarong, I changed my trousers, washed and dried them. Then someone stole my trousers. I had only this old Sarong left. Then sister Rene arrived there. I didn't know where she got a set of clothes for me. At Lumphini, in the shower room, I heard a girl saying that she thanked the "Black", because of the black people, she knew how to do farming. She was able to enjoy Nature. At that time, I was so curious. I tried to find who the black people were. I thought she meant the African people. After that, I understood that she called the KR the "black people".

At Lumphini, I saw the Hmong alphabet for the first time. The Hmong alphabet is like the French alphabet. At Lumphini, I met Pin Darin. She used to study at Institut de Pedagogie in Phnom Penh with me. Her husband's name was Ung Rethyong. I also met Kod, Meas

Phirun's sister. Kod told me that Ms. Meas Phirun, wife of Hul Hong, had gone already to the US. I met the wives of military officials such as Madam Nop Paramon.

Arriving at Lumphini, I saw former military officers trying to recruit people to start a struggle movement. At that time, I felt fed up with some military officers of the Lon Nol regime. They did not fight hard enough but committing corruption by stealing weapons and selling them to the enemy. Some officers did not remove names of their dead soldiers from payroll. They kept the names in order to get the salary for themselves. Some officers only thought of their own safety. They did not send more soldiers to help those who were ambushed while fighting against the enemy.

I thanked Sawathya and her husband Mr. Tan Bun Suy. They had sent me 40 dollars from Besançon. I used the money to buy fruits and gave some to others. I also used this money to buy clothes.

At the camp, some people asked me to change my birth date to lower the age. Especially, Cambodian-Chinese said that only young people would be hired to work. We still kept our own age. Some people said that their relatives said that there were not many Khmer women in the US. Therefore, they had to try to make connection with Cambodian women so that when the Cambodian women arrived in the US, they would get married with them. Then, some people came to make friend with us.

Reasey: When you arrived at Lumphini camp, did people come to interview you over there?

Sarem: Yes, the American came to interview us many times. Mr. Kus Cheav and his wife Thida Khus worked as their translators. In the interview, I was asked whether I joined as a member of the KR in France. I said that I did not join as member of the KR organization. I just submitted my application to the FUNK bureau for permission to come to Cambodia. They asked me, "When you live abroad. Will you get remarried again?" "I have not thought of finding a husband at all". I replied.

Reasey: Did you go to France at that time?

Sarem: After the interview, they gave me a letter. Then I knew that I was going to the US.

Reasey: Oh, you didn't go to France?

Sarem: No, I didn't.

Reasey: Did anyone sponsor you at that time?

Sarem: When I filled out the form, I listed in my family record that my brother lived in the US. When I left for France in September 1974, my brother also went to the US one month later. He did not return to Cambodia. I remembered his address in my brain. I memorized three addresses: My place at Besançon; Pere Gilles and my brother's address in the US.

Reasey: Who sponsored you to the US?

Sarem: At that time, I saw USCC organization in my paper of sponsorship.

Reasey: Was it a religious organization?

Sarem: Yes, it was US Catholic Charity that helped get me out.

Reasey: So did they think you would practice Christianity or was it part of humanitarian assistance?

Sarem: They volunteered to accept us. I did not convert to their religion.

Reasey: Did they ask you to do any agreement that you would convert to their religion?

Sarem: No.

Reasey: No?

Sarem: Exactly not.

Reasey: What day did you leave Thailand?

Sarem: Before leaving, the officials in the camp allowed us one day to visit Bangkok if we needed to buy some clothes or other stuff.

Reasey: Did they accompany you or just allow you to go freely?

Sarem: We went on our own.

Reasey: Oh, were you in Bangkok already?

Sarem: Yes, Lumpini is in Bangkok.

Reasey: Oh, yes.

Sarem : Only when I boarded the plane from Thailand that I believed I was really able to escape from the illiterate KR regime. But I was worried about my family members whom I was not able to find yet. I arrived in the US on June 16, 1979.

Reasey: 1979?

Sarem: Yes, I arrived at San Francisco at dawn. When I looked down, I could see that San Francisco city was like hugging the beach tightly in their deep sleep. Getting off the plane, we got on to a small domestic plane to Stockton. Arriving at Stockton at the airport, I saw one American, two Asian women, and two young children waited to receive us. Our group included Teav Vannol, my student at Lycee D'Application, his pregnant wife and another family with two or three children. At that time, I spoke English to the American. I said that, "I come here alone." He said, "Oh, you speak English!" I said that, "I speak a little." One of the two women was Khmer; she was the wife of Mr. Savooun. The other woman was a Philippino. She was the wife of Mr. Kit Pong.

Reasey: How did they decide that you went to Stockton?

Sarem: Only when I arrived at Stockton did I realize that Cambodians in Stockton such as Mr. Kit Pong and Mr. Koy Savooun volunteered to help us to start our life by getting

assistance from the USCC for us as the refugees. I was put to stay at Mr. Koy Savoeun's house. Two months later, I was able to find my brother by asking people around. My brother's name is You Sam Ok.

Mr. Sun Sreng who was living in San Jose, was a navy officer from Cambodia like my brother, told me about my brother.

Reasey: Was he your sibling?

Sarem : Yes, he was my blood brother. He came to pick me up in the middle of the night. I went to live with my brother in San Jose.

Reasey: Within the first few months that you arrived in the US, what did you do?

Sarem: I said I wanted to take three-month vacation because I had worked so hard during Pol Pot time. My legs were still hurtful and dried. I said that I didn't yet have to study English at school. I watched TV at home to make myself familiarized with English.

I heard a rumor about the orphan girl Chan (the daughter of Manina Kirivat) who came with me to Nang Chan that was expelled by the Thai to Dangrek Mountain. And the rumor also said that the villager had adopted Chan over there. Later, I heard that Chan was taken by her relatives to live with them. At that time, I prayed for Chan to be safe.

Pere Venet had sent a letter to me saying that he had not yet found my daughters. Living in the US, seeing a lot of fat people reminded me of those who starved in Cambodia. When I saw people wearing eyes glasses I was afraid that the KR may kill them.

Reasey: When did you hear the information from your family in Cambodia?

Sarem: Yes, it was six months later; this was in November. I received a letter from France. Sister Daung, my second cousin and wife of Mr. Chau Xeng Ua had sent me that letter. (Sister Daung had received information from Neak Phlek Phirun, because Ka -Meun my second cousin from Kien Svay had sent a letter via Neak Phlek Phirun to Mr. Chau Xeng Ua from Cambodia). The letter mentioned only names of those who were still alive. Among my family members, only my sister named You Sokphoeun alias Chea survived. In my uncle You Phon's family, only his daughter named You Phidan alias Srey Mom survived. The family of Daung's sister named Dan had one daughter named Po Kalyanny alias To, survived. My father's sister named You Malis also survived.

Reasey: What was about your own family? Did you receive any information from them?

Sarem: The letter said that only my sister survived.

Reasey: Oh, really?

Sarem: After reading the letter, my body seemed like breaking into small pieces. My brain collapsed. My body shook, I could neither sit nor stand. I tried to breathe deeply. A moment later, I felt better. I shaved my head to mourn the dead. I was told that my two brothers who did not go with my parent were still alive. One was living near Thai border, and the other one was living in the region along the river. This information was true.

Reasey: Did you continue to live with your brother?

Sarem: Yes, I continued to live with my brother. Before having the news, I learnt to drive. I passed the test to learn to drive. However, upon receiving this information, I passed even red light. I believed that if I continued to drive the car, I would die for sure.

People at Stockton asked me to give a talk at University of California, Berkeley. They said that some Americans wanted to establish a mobile ambulance to help refugees at the border.

Reasey: Did you know the detail of your family members? Did your husband and daughters die of starvation or something else?

Sarem: The clear information about my family was that a few months later, my sister You Sokphoeurn alias Chea sent a letter from Khao I-Dang saying that she was at Khao I Dang with To. She got my address from my sister-in-law Nuon Chan Bopha in Australia. The letter also said that only my sister survived. She was evacuated to Pra Prakkaun in Pursat province. The KR not allowed our family to eat the food that they found. My sister Chea, my husband, and my brother You Sam-At were sent to work with the mobile unit.

Reasey: In a mobile unit?

Sarem: Yes, my mother and father looked after my two daughters. My father died first and my youngest daughter died after my father.

Reasey: Did they die of disease?

Sarem: They were starved and then got sick. My mother saw my second daughter die with her own eyes. My sister said that my mother was like out of control. She even dared steal rice from the KR storehouse. She said that she would not steal from neighbors around her; she wanted to steal rice from the damn Angkar because they harmed us so brutally. She stole just enough to eat because she didn't want my eldest daughter to starve.

Reasey: She was angry?

Sarem: Yes, it was in Pra Prakkaun in Pursat province. It was the place where my parents were evacuated. The KR accused my mother of stealing rice to exchange for gold. They imprisoned my mother. They tied my mother and dragged her with a horse, leaving my older daughter Sakura alias Tat, age five years old, to live alone. Seeing this, my sister asked the KR to look after my older daughter. My daughter was very sick at that time, and then she died. My brother You Sam-At died of hard labor. My husband was in a mobile unit far from the other family members. My husband asked for information about the family from the villagers who came from Pra Prakkaun. He was told that all my family members had died, except Chea, my sister. Hearing this, my husband became sick and died. The KR had axed the head of my aunt-in-law. Her name was Phin Narum, wife of my uncle You Phan. Each time I received the letter from Thailand, I almost dared not read it. At Pra Prakkaun, my husband had requested my sister to convey a message to me to naturalize to French nationality, not be a Cambodian anymore. Living in the US for many years, I still dreamt of the KR persecuting me, especially on April 17 I always get sick. Until 1989, I recovered from this nightmare because one time I dreamt of my sister who was imprisoned by the KR. I prayed to Buddha to give me "Mighty Power" so that I could be invisible, then I entered the KR prison to help my sister to get out. In my dream, I managed to rescue my family members.

Since that time, I had recovered no more nightmares and I could listen to the Khmer music.
Thank you, Mr. Poch Reasey.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Thanks Mr. Poch Reasey.(The End Page 111).

Narrative: Dear listeners. Hello VOA comes back to you again. Tonight Ms. Neou Sarem is the guest speaker of this program. She will answer all your questions related to the oral history which is about the life of those living abroad and returning to Cambodia during the KR period. Mr. Poch Reasey is the moderator of this program.

Reasey: Thank you. Hello ladies and gentlemen and hello Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Hello, Mr. Poch Reasey.

Reasey: Yes, today we return to meet our listeners again. But we are not discussing about the oral history. We are in "Hello VOA" program so that our listeners have a chance to make phone calls and ask you questions. So far we have discussed oral history in 62 parts, and I have asked you a lot of questions. Now we'll give this chance to our listeners. Please call 012 51 51 94 if you have any question or doubt and want to ask Ms. Neou Sarem. While we are waiting for our listeners, please let me ask you. Where is your birthplace?

Sarem: I was born in Khbal Koh commune, Kien Svay district, Kandal province. I was born on 18 March. In the year of my birth, my father owned a boat transporting goods from Cambodia to Prey Norkor or some ports in Lower Cambodia (South Vietnam).

Reasey: What was about your mother?

Sarem: My mother was a resident from Pursat. She lived in Por Takuoy village in Pursat province. Her house is close to the railroad.

Reasey: Before giving the floor to Mr. Nget, can you please describe your education background?

Sarem: I studied in Khbal Koh commune. Then I went to study in Kor Ky School. After that, I took exam in order to go to study at Norodom Secondary School. At that time, all candidates were girls. After finishing secondary school, I continued to study at Sisovath High School. Graduating from high school, I attended pedagogical school. Then I became a teacher and taught at a school in Sisophon. Two years later, I came back to teach in Phnom Penh at Lycee D'application, which was in Faculte de Pedagogy (Ecole Normale) close to the Independent Monument. In 1974 I received a scholarship to study in France.

Reasey: Now please let me give the chance to Mr. Nget from Battambang. Hello, Mr. Nget.

Nget: Hello, brother.

Reasey: Please tune down your radio not to rumble the sound.

Nget: Yes, I am now far from the radio.

Reasey: Please raise your question.

Nget: Hello, brother.

Reasey: Yes.

Nget: Hello.

Reasey: Hello, please go ahead.

Nget: Yes, hello. I would like to ask sister Neou Sarem that what year she returned to Cambodia?

Reasey: Yes.

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Yes, thank, please.

Sarem: I received the scholarship to study in France and I returned to Cambodia in January 1976 when the KR took over the country.

Nget: When you returned, the KR already took power, right?

Sarem: Yes.

Nget: Where did you live?

Sarem: As I discussed in the oral history, when I first arrived, the KR put me to stay in one school called Russian Technology School. They kept all those who returned from France. After that, they moved us to different places such as Angkor Chey, Taley village and Wat Sleng. Then they moved us to Boeung Trabek camp.

Nget: Oh, was it Boeung Trabek?

Sarem: Yes.

Nget: At Boeung Trabek, did the KR call you the intellectual at that time?

Sarem: Yes, this meant those who returned from France. They put us in one group. They did not put us with local people. At that time, those who returned ahead of me were put with local people.

Nget: So were you at Boeung Trabek?

Sarem: Yes, I lived in Boeung Trabek until the Vietnamese fought into Cambodia.

Nget: When they arrested Savorn, did you live there?

Sarem: Yes, I knew, but I didn't know when. When Savorn disappeared, we knew that he was arrested. Savorn was the chief over there.

Nget: Was it at Boeung Trabek at that time?

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Mr. Nget, do you have any other question. I want to give this chance to other listeners to ask questions. Please finish your questions.

Nget: Yes.

Reasey: Do you have anything else to ask?

Nget: I...

Sarem: Do you know Savorn?

Nget: That's all what I want to talk to her.

Sarem: Mr. Nget. Do you know Savorn?

Nget: Yes, at that time I was studying there too.

Sarem: Where did you study?

Nget: I studied at Boeung Trabek with Savorn.

Sarem: Oh, I used to see the students in black clothes, studying near Boeung Trabek.

Nget: Yes, teacher Nin was my English teacher.

Sarem: Yanin, Pok Yanin?

Nget: Yes, Yanin.

Sarem: Yes?

Nget: Yes, she was my teacher.

Sarem: Yes?

Reasey: Thank you, Mr. Nget, for joining our "Hello VOA." Now let us receive questions from venerable Sambat from Koh Kong. Please ask your questions.

Sambat: Hello, Mr. Poch Reasey and Ms. Sarem.

Sarem: Yes, respectfully greeting.

Sambat: I would like to ask two questions. First, how did you escape from the genocidal KR black clothes and go to the US? This is the first question. Second, how old are you now? These are all my questions. Thank you.

Reasey: Thank you.

Sarem: I could come to the US by walking through Kok Nimet road and then went to Nang Chan. I arrived in San Francisco in the US on 16 June. I could not catch the second question.

Reasey: How old are you?

Sarem: I am now 68 years old.

Reasey: Please, ladies and gentlemen, call to 012 51 51 94. While we are waiting for more questions, I would like to ask one question that we had not discussed in the 62-part oral history. After arriving in the US, you established a Khmer radio in the US. Could you please briefly describe about this?

Sarem: At that time, I lived in Minneapolis city in Minnesota State. When the US was engaging in the Gulf War, I told Cambodian old people that, "Now the US is waging the Gulf War." They said that, "There is no war." They did not understand the language, never listened to radio and didn't have a radio. I thought that "These old grandmothers and grandfathers don't know the events happening around them. We should have a radio in Khmer language." As I eagerly wanted to produce a radio, I stopped working. Then my husband and I produced a radio program called "The Khmer in Minnesota" from 1992 to 1999. When I came to live here, I transferred this task to others.

Reasey: Did the radio still go on?

Sarem: Yes, the radio program still continues.

Reasey: Now we have Ms. Chantha from Kampong Thom. Hello, Ms. Chantha.

Chantha: Yes, hello Mr. Poch Reasey and hello Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Yes, hello.

Chantha: I have two questions. First, I just want to know how you escaped from Cambodia to the camp. I have listened to some parts and missed some parts. Sometimes, I followed up and sometimes not. I want to know what year you left Cambodia. Second, as I listened to your story, you did not receive much torture from the Pol Pot regime. According to your oral history, you received a minor harm unlike me at that time. I was young. However, my family, parents and the entire Cambodian people received serious torture. However, as I listened to your story, you had bitter experiences at the time that you walked young children across Kok Nimet to the camp. You met robbers, but you seemed not to receive any torture. Is it true? I was not able to listen to some parts. Therefore, first, I want to know what year you left Cambodia. Did you receive torture like me and the other Cambodian people in the Pol Pot regime?

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Chantha for your questions. And thank you for following up our program. Please Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: I would like to tell Ms. Chantha that my group was not those who were evacuated to the countryside. We were different from Cambodian people who were evacuated from Phnom Penh. We were the ones who returned to Cambodia from abroad when the KR already took over the country. Therefore, the KR put us in the camps as I mentioned earlier. We didn't have rice or food. We had only watery rice porridge. They assigned us to work like others such as delivery dung and other things. Sometimes we could not walk and the KR took hundreds of us to execute. For me, I was not starving but I didn't have rice and food. They looked down on us because we were intellectuals. The KR did not like our degrees. They only like the degree that one could visually see. Talking about torture, the KR never tied or beat me because I never stole anything from the KR. But the KR beat my mother and towed her with a horse. My two daughters died of starvation because they were evacuated to a different place that I didn't know.

Reasey: Thank you, Madam. Now we have Mr. Pheak from Banteay Meanchey. Hello, Mr. Pheak.

Pheak: Yes, hello from Thmor Pauk district, Banteay Meanchey province, and hello Ms. Sarem and others. I want to know that when you returned from France and lived in Boeung Trabek, how many people lived there. Did you see Hor Namhong? This is my first question. Second, I thank you that you have valuable life, much more valuable than diamond. According to your description, your experiences were so sad. I thank you that you survived the KR regime. Thank you and good bye.

Reasey: Thank you, Mr. Pheak and please Madam.

Sarem: Thank you, Mr. Pheak. For Mr. Hor Namhong, I just knew that he worked as a diplomat for Prince Sihanouk's United Front fighting Lon Nol. All diplomats were asked to return to Cambodia to serve the KR politics with Prince Sihanouk. I never met him. I just knew that he lived in Boeung Trabek close to the place where I lived. He lived among the diplomats. For us, we were ordinary people, students and teachers, so we were put in one group. I never met him, but I saw his children and his relatives who lived with me. Especially, his child was assigned to work at Wat Sleng with me. But we were in different groups.

Reasey: He has only one question. But second, he wish you that you have valuable life.

Sarem: Thank you. I also appreciate my fate. But I survive alone. My husband, children and parents all died.

Reasey: As we are waiting for questions, I would like to ask you one question. Since you left Cambodia in 1979, have you ever been back to Cambodia?

Sarem: I went back once in 1993 when UNTAC was in Cambodia. At that time, I worked for one organization called MRA. It was a humanitarian organization. I attended the meeting with this organization for two weeks and then came back.

Reasey: How did you feel when you returned in 1993?

Sarem: Only when I closed my eyes could I see Phnom Penh. I saw only my relatives' houses but did not see them. They all died. Only the cousin from my father's side survived. My relatives lived in Kien Svay close to Phnom Penh. The KR did not like those who lived close to Phnom Penh.

Reasey: Did you visit all the places that you used to live?

Sarem: No, I didn't go even to Boeung Trabek.

Reasey: Didn't you want to go or you did not have chance to go there?

Sarem: I saw technology school. At that time, I was so busy. Moreover, I still felt sorrowful, so I didn't want to see those painful places.

Reasey: Ladies and gentlemen, this is "Hello VOA" program. Tonight, Ms. Neou Sarem is waiting to answer your questions about her life in the KR regime. I would like to ask one more question. Do you still stay in touch with friends who returned from abroad to Cambodia and survived the regime?

Sarem: Yes, I stay connected, especially friends whom I knew at Boeung Trabek during the KR. They are still alive. Some people returned with me; we used to study together. They went to France to get medical treatment. She went there alone. For example, for me I received scholarship to study in France alone. When the KR took over the country, I went back alone. They survived the regime and returned to live in France. Sometimes, we visited each other. For instance, I visited them in 1997 and 1998. I went to France for the first time in 1989 after the KR. I wanted to meet those who lived in Boeung Trabek. At that time, we did not have pain and sorrow like when we were under the KR. We made fun of our sorrow like telling jokes. We talked about how Savorn persecuted us. Savorn asked us to reduce our belongings but gave our belongings to his wife. He used our perfume, wore silk sarong and watched us digging soil. Savorn asked us to dig a pond to raise fish. He asked us to dig the pond near the house inside the school compound at Boeung Trabek. I was doubtful why they wanted to raise fish near the pillars. Actually, Savorn dug the pond in order to bury us. But we didn't know.

Reasey: Are you still angry with the KR?

Sarem: I am angry with the KR leaders, the high-ranking leaders. I am not happy with them. They are well-educated but turn the country into that way. For the KR cadres who are illiterate, I have pity on them instead because they follow order from the high-ranking leaders. Like what Savorn said some KR cadres could not have the same understanding of Angkar's policy. Hearing this, I thought this was a great danger because the policy would depend on individual's interpretation. I could see they even could not read and write. Therefore, I did whatever they asked me to.

Reasey: Where does Savorn live now?

Sarem: Savorn?

Reasey: Yes.

Sarem: As I knew, Savorn was killed by his fellow KR cadre. He was the chief at Boeung Trabek. There was another KR leader who controlled over him. Savorn received order from the higher leader. As Savorn persecuted us too much and executed too many of us, he was taken to execution. After arresting Savorn, Ieng Sary came to Boeung Trabek to re-organize the new leadership.

Reasey: Thank you, Madam. Now we have one listener Mr. Kolan from Kampong Cham. Hello, Mr. Kolan.

Kolan: Hello, Mr. Poch Reasey and Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Yes.

Reasey: Yes....

Kolan: I want to know when you left your husband. I listened to your story that you broadcasted from Beijing; I didn't hear about your husband. This is the first question. Second, among people who came from France, who became chiefs at Boeung Trabek? Third, Can you publish and distribute or sell your oral history for documents? That's all I have. Thank you.

Reasey: Thank you, Mr. Kolan.

Sarem: I would like to correct that I never broadcasted from Beijing. We broadcasted oral history through Voice of America in the US. What I told you that I went to France because I received scholarship to study in France. I went to France alone. My husband and two daughters were in Cambodia. I asked my mother and my husband to look after my children. When I told the story, there was no part related to my husband. So I did not talk about my husband. In the last part, I talked a little about my husband.

Reasey: What was about chiefs at Boeung Trabek?

Sarem: At Boeung Trabek, Savorn was a high official from the KR side. Kaet was the chief representing those who came back from France. He returned to Cambodia by walking through Ho Chi Minh Trail. Therefore, he joined Samdech Ov's United Front. He became chief at Boeung Trabek. This is about Boeung Trabek. Talking about technology school camp, Pheak was the chief. Oh, he was not Pheak; he was Try Menghuot. The high official of the KR side was Phum. His deputy was Khorn. Hor came back from France was also the chief at technology school. At Boeung Trabek, Sarin was the chief. There were Pheak, Hing, Un, and Morn. Huy was the latest chief when the Vietnamese was fighting into Cambodia.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem. We only have a very short time. Please describe a little bit about your remarriage in the US?

Sarem: When I arrived in the US, I knew clearly that my husband, daughters and parents were dead. I understood that I was old now. I wanted to have children because my two daughters were dead. I met my current husband. We have one child. Now she has grown up. She is over 20 years old. She lives in Minnesota. She has a job now.

Reasey: Thank you, Ms. Neou Sarem. And thank all listeners who always tune on to listen to "Hello VOA" program. Goodbye, Ms. Neou Sarem.

Sarem: Goodbye, Mr. Poch Reasey.

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