

CAMBODIAN NATIONALISM AND ITS RELATIONS TO MASS KILLING AND GENOCIDE  
(1975-1979)



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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย

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เมื่อกล่าวถึงพลพตไม่ว่าจะในฐานะระบอบปกครองหรือในฐานะบุคคล ผู้คนส่วนใหญ่ในกัมพูชาจะนึกถึงความโหดร้ายทารุณของระบอบนี้ก่อน เพราะภายใต้ระบอบนี้ประชาชนประมาณ 1.7 ล้านคนต้องเสียชีวิตตั้งแต่ประมาณกลาง ค.ศ. 1975 ถึงต้น ค.ศ. 1979 กระนั้นก็ตาม พลพตและสมุนบริวารของเขาก็อ้างว่า สิ่งที่เขากระทำลงไปนั้น เป็นการปกป้องประเทศชาติอาชญากรรมของคนเหล่านี้ถูกคลุมปกปิดไว้ส่วนหนึ่งด้วยธงแห่งความรู้สึกชาตินิยม ประเด็นของงานวิจัยฉบับนี้คือ ชาตินิยมของพลพตในช่วงสมัยกัมพูชาประชาธิปไตยเป็นรูปแบบที่รุนแรงสุดขั้วของชาตินิยมกัมพูชา อันเป็นผลมาจากความเชื่อผิดๆ ที่ว่า การเข่นฆ่าผู้ที่ถูกพิจารณาว่าเป็นศัตรูเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นเพื่อปกป้องประเทศชาติ “ญวนผู้รุกราน” เป็นความเชื่อหลักของความคิดชาตินิยมประเภทนี้ การสัมภาษณ์อดีตผู้ปฏิบัติงานพรรคของเขมรแดง โดยเฉพาะผู้ที่เคยทำงานใกล้ชิดกับพลพต ได้ชี้ให้เห็น ปัจจัยส่วนหนึ่งที่อยู่เบื้องหลังการเข่นฆ่าประชาชนจำนวนมากในช่วงสมัยกัมพูชาประชาธิปไตย โดยเฉพาะที่เป็นพลเรือนชาวเวียดนามและชาวกัมพูชาที่ร่วมมือหรือสนิทชิดเชื้อกับคนเหล่านี้ ยิ่งไปกว่านั้น เอกสารต่างๆ ของพรรค โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่ง “ธงปฏิวัติ” ก็ถูกนำมาใช้เพื่อเผยแพร่ความคิดชาตินิยมที่ต่อต้านเวียดนามในสมัยกัมพูชาประชาธิปไตยด้วย

เมื่อมองย้อนกลับไปในช่วงสมัยอาณานิคม ก็มีหนังสือพิมพ์ “นครวัด” ที่เสนอความคิดชาตินิยมต่อต้านเวียดนาม นอกจากนี้ ในช่วงครึ่งแรกของทศวรรษ 1970 ก็มีทั้งสิ่งพิมพ์และเหตุการณ์ทางประวัติศาสตร์ที่แสดงให้เห็นถึงความคิดชาตินิยมต่อต้านเวียดนามอย่างรุนแรงเช่นกัน ในงานวิจัยเรื่องนี้ผู้วิจัยจะเริ่มด้วยการเสนอภูมิหลังทางประวัติศาสตร์ของชาตินิยมกัมพูชา จากนั้นก็จะเป็นการพิจารณารูปแบบชาตินิยมต่อต้านเวียดนามในสมัยกัมพูชาประชาธิปไตย และสุดท้ายจะเป็นการวิเคราะห์ผลที่ตามมาจากความคิดชาตินิยมแบบนี้ การศึกษาค้นคว้าเรื่องนี้เสนอว่า รูปแบบของชาตินิยมสมัยกัมพูชาประชาธิปไตยเป็นอันตรายต่อมนุษยชาติ ดังนั้นจึงสามารถใช้เป็นบทเรียนเพื่อที่จะหลีกเลี่ยงไม่ให้โศกนาฏกรรมต่อมนุษยชาติที่ได้เกิดขึ้นในกัมพูชาอุบัติซ้ำขึ้นมาอีก

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Talking about Pol Pot as a regime as well as Pol Pot as a person, most people in Cambodia would start with the atrocity of the regime under which about 1.7 million people perished from mid-1975 to early 1979. Yet, Pol Pot and his followers claimed that what they did was to protect the nation; their crimes were partly hidden under the banner of their nationalism. This research argues that the nationalism of Pol Pot during Democratic Kampuchea was an extreme form of Cambodian nationalism which resulted from a false belief that killing those who were considered enemies was a must in order to defend the nation. “Yvon Invader” became a main belief of this kind of nationalism. The interviews with former Khmer Rouge cadres, especially those who had worked closely with Pol Pot, revealed part of the factors behind the mass killing during Democratic Kampuchea, particularly, the Vietnamese civilians and their Khmer associates. Moreover, party documents, particularly the Revolutionary Flag, are used to feature Cambodian nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea against the Vietnamese.

Going back to the colonial period, Nagara Vatta newspaper did prove the nationalist idea against Vietnamese. Additionally, during the first half of the 1970s, a strong nationalist sentiment against Vietnamese can be found in several publications and historical events. In this research, I will firstly review the historical background of Cambodian nationalism. This is followed by a discussion of a form of nationalism against Vietnam during Democratic Kampuchea. Finally, the consequences of the nationalism against Vietnam will be analyzed. The study suggests that the form of nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea was dangerous for humanity; so it can be a lesson learned for avoiding a repetition of the recent history of human tragedy in Cambodia.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies      Student's Signature .....

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Rationale

In the last few decades, when people in Cambodia spoke about the Pol Pot regime, most of them started talking about the atrocity of the regime. It was the worst time of their lives. My parents often recalled their experiences working as part of a mobile unit; they toiled so hard but were only provided with a meagre bowl of rice or porridge to eat. My father lost his oldest brother who had worked as a teacher before 1975. He assumed that his brother was killed by the Khmer Rouge soldiers. My neighbor, Srei Sok, discovered that his father, Srei Phon, was killed by the Khmer Rouge after he saw his father's photo in Toul Sleng<sup>1</sup> several years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in early 1979.

I also heard about a row of people were sent to a security office and killed during Pol Pot regime. Growing up I also read primary school text books published during the 1980s in which “Pol Pot, Ieng Sary Clique” and “Genocidal Regime” were frequently mentioned. A decade ago, I was too young to understand history; I heard about Pol Pot from old people and national radio, they said that about three million<sup>2</sup> people were killed during the Pol Pot leadership of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) commonly called the Khmer Rouge regime or Pol Pot regime.

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<sup>1</sup> Toul Sleng is a former school which was turned into a security office (S-21) during the Khmer Rouge (1975-1979).

<sup>2</sup> The death toll from 17 April 1975 to 7 January 1979 remains an issue. Serous estimates range from 740,000 to 3.314 million perished, according to Fawthrop and Jarvis. Ben Kiernan came up with his estimation of 1,671,000 while demographer Marek Sliwinski came up with similar number of 1.8 million perished. Michael Vickery estimated as small a number as 740,000 people. Government source claimed 3 million people perished with which Dy Kampoly agreed in his well-known book that has been distribute to Cambodian teacher and students almost all over the country. However, official website of Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) claimed at least 1.7 million people perished.

Later, I read more books and had chances to meet former Khmer Rouge (those who had been working for the Pol Pot regime) living along the Cambodian-Thai border. I worked for Youth For Peace, a local NGO in Cambodia, on the project “Voice of Former Khmer Rouges” for two years from late 2010 to early 2012. Through the project, I met close to a hundred former Khmer Rouge cadres across the country, especially in Battambang and Pailin provinces.

I was surprised when some of the former Khmer Rouge told me that “Pol Pot is a true nationalist”. This was in stark contrast with the impression I had gathered about the Pol Pot regime and Pol Pot as its leader. They started to explain to me about Pol Pot’s nationalism by connecting the issue of nationalism to Vietnam and its association as an enemy of Cambodia. I wondered why they felt that way.

This led me to the question, “why during Pol Pot’s leadership did nearly two million people die if he was a true nationalist?” A former bodyguard of Pol Pot told me, “They (those who were killed) were traitors, who could endanger the nation” (13MOT, January 05, 2013). During my interviews with those former Khmer Rouge cadres, a number of them revealed that they still support the leadership of Pol Pot and claim that those who were killed were enemies of the nation.

Talking about nationalism, Cambodian people would refer it to anti-colonial nationalism. The nationalist hero in the heart of the people must be King Norodom Sihanouk who was given the name “Father of Independence”(Sihanouk, 2005) in 1953, a title still in use in modern times. Benedict Anderson, the author of “Imagined Communities” named Song Ngoc Thanh as father of Cambodian nationalism (Anderson, 2009).

However, they probably do not realize that Pol Pot’s supporters also name Pol Pot as a true nationalist of Cambodia even though Pol Pot is widely known as one of the people who was chiefly responsible for the loss of life of around two million Cambodian people including thousands of ethnic Vietnamese and other minority groups.

After gaining independence from French rule in 1953, Sihanouk led Cambodia along the non-aligned path. This non-alignment was interrupted by the Vietnam War

(also called the Second Indochina War). A turning point in Cambodian history was marked when Sihanouk was ousted from power on 18 March 1970 by the pro-American Lon Nol. With the fall of Sihanouk, Cambodia was at war with both communist Vietnam and the communist Khmer Rouge. In 1975, the communist Khmer Rouge won the five-year civil war and took control Cambodia for almost four years under the official name Democratic Kampuchea and about 1.7 million people were killed.

It is interesting that Pol Pot's supporters labelled the crimes committed during Pol Pot regime as the need to destroy traitors and defend the nation. They probably think that they are also true nationalists of Cambodia. This provided ample motivation for those perpetrators to commit crimes, and the role in which nationalism played in this needs to be examined.

Moreover, after more than thirty years, many people who were living during the Pol Pot regime still remember the myths and "history" that the Khmer Rouge leaders taught them in order to stir up nationalism against Vietnam. A former mobile unit member recalled that lower-ranking cadres in the Khmer Rouge frequently reminded people about the historical invasions of Cambodia by the Vietnamese. "Don't Spill Master's Tea"<sup>3</sup> (កំពុបតែអង្គ) was taught very often to show that Vietnamese were cruel (13MKS, February 09, 2013).

For these reasons, it is necessary to get information from those who were living during the Pol Pot regime in order to partly answer the question, "How were myths used to stir up nationalist fever at the grassroots' level?"

Regarding the history of the Pol Pot regime, there are many authors working on and publishing numerous books and articles, most of those books give details of what happened during the Khmer Rouge regime. Memoirs have been written by many people who lived through the Pol Pot regime and in these memoirs they tell their experiences of the regime. For example, "First They Killed My Father" is the

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<sup>3</sup> A myth that most of Cambodian people viewed as bitter historical event is Cambodian people were killed by Vietnamese.

title of a memoir written by Ung Loung. Similarly another author famous for his memoir is Pin Yathay. He also gives details about his life with his family during the Pol Pot regime before he fled to the Cambodian-Thai border.

Many books have also been written by many scholars such as David Chandler, Ben Kiernan, Steve Heder, Alexander Laban Hinton, Nayan Chanda, Stephen Morris, Henri Locard, Elizabeth Becker and others regarding the history of Democratic Kampuchea including Cambodian-Vietnamese relations, factors of mass killing and genocide, the rise and fall of the Pol Pot regime and other related topics. What these books haven't provided in detail is to include nationalism as one of the factors of mass killing and genocide during the Pol Pot regime (see my literature review for more detail).

I strongly believe that the role of nationalism against the Vietnamese during Pol Pot regime is one of the factors contributing to the mass killing and genocide during that time.

Due to the aforementioned reasons, I would like to propose a research thesis on "*Cambodian Nationalism and Its Relations to Mass Killing and Genocide (1975-1979)*".

## 1.2 Research Questions

- What are the characteristics of Cambodian nationalism after independence?
- How were history and myth used to stir up extreme nationalism in Cambodia during the 1970s?
- How did post-independence nationalism during the Pol Pot regime give rise to mass killing and genocide during the Pol Pot regime?

## 1.3 Research Objectives

The three main objectives of this research are as follows:

- To trace the development and define the characteristics of Cambodian post-independence nationalism

- To study how this nationalism gained its dominance during the regime of Democratic Kampuchea in 1975-1978
- To analyze the contributions of post-independence nationalism during the Pol Pot regime to mass killing and genocide.

#### **1.4 Major arguments**

During the second half of the 1970s, in the name of defending the nation, nationalism was used by the Cambodian leaders to gain support from the people and to legitimize their crime of killing those who were named “enemies”, particularly Vietnamese enemies and their associates in Cambodia.

The nationalism of Pol Pot during Democratic Kampuchea was an extreme form of Cambodian nationalism in two respects: firstly, a false belief that killing those who were considered as enemies was a must in order to defend the nation; secondly, by using Cambodian history and myth as a basis for the fight against Vietnamese, Pol Pot stirred up a nationalist fervor against Vietnam claiming to take back Kampuchea Krom (The Southern part of Vietnam), attacking and killing Vietnamese civilians.

#### **1.5 Significance and usefulness of research**

This research proposes to produce significance in three main areas. Firstly, this research will give possible answers to the question, “what part did nationalism play in the crimes committed during the Pol Pot regime?” which is necessary to fill the gap of Cambodian history about the role of nationalism in hiding crime and genocide during the Pol Pot regime. Secondly, it will be a reference for further study of Cambodian nationalism after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea. Finally, it will also be a lesson that the present generation and following generations can learn from to avoid repeating the mistakes of history in a country whose leaders hide their crime under the name of nationalism.

#### **1.6 Methodology**

The initial idea and some sources for the research for this thesis is based on my two years working experience with former Khmer Rouge cadres at Youth For Peace, a local NGO in Cambodia, on the project “Voice of Former Khmer Rouges”

from 2010 to early 2012. Throughout the project, I met nearly a hundred former Khmer Rouge cadres in different provinces in Cambodia. I interviewed those former Khmer Rouge cadres about their lives before, during and after the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979). For these interviews, I used a semi-structured technique to allow the interviewees to describe their lives chronologically. I usually ended the interview with their views on what they had done during the Pol Pot regime and the regime itself as well.

Interestingly, those who live in Battambang, Pailin, Banteay Mean Chhey and Oddar Mean Chhey provinces mostly viewed the regime positively. These provinces were the stronghold of the Khmer Rouge group after they were overthrown by the Vietnamese in 1979. Those former Khmer Rouge cadres who live in the provinces that I mentioned above followed Pol Pot after the fall of their regime in 1979. They might have been Pol Pot's followers because they still support what Pol Pot did during the Pol Pot regime. They labeled Pol Pot as a true nationalist. Therefore, interviewing them was necessary to get information to answer to the question, "How did post-independence nationalism pave the way for the rise of mass killing and genocide during the Pol Pot regime?"

In order to accomplish my research objectives, I selected three groups of people to be my interviewees. Firstly, I conducted in-depth interviews with former Khmer Rouge cadres in Pailin, Battambang and Oddar Mean Chhey, Svay Rieng provinces. I had already interviewed some of them once during my field work for the 'Voice of Former Khmer Rouges' project. Therefore, in most cases it was my second meeting with them and I got them to talk more deeply about nationalism and their views on the Pol Pot regime.

These interviews were also an attempt to find out the reasons why they needed to kill Vietnamese people and their associates whom they considered as enemies and how they expected those people to cause danger to the nation. These interviews were also used to answer the question why do they think the Khmer Rouge leader, Pol Pot, was a nationalist leader?

Secondly, in-depth interviews with former Khmer Rouge soldiers and cadres in the East Zone (Kampong Cham, Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces) were also conducted in order to discover how those soldiers had been educated to stir up nationalist ideas against Vietnam and how the policy of Pol Pot was implemented by those soldiers regarding killing Vietnamese. More importantly, these interviews were aimed at understanding the way Pol Pot associated those soldiers and cadres as enemies under the name of “Vietnamese Head, Khmer Body”.

Finally, ordinary people who were living under the Khmer Rouge were also interviewed to find out how history and myth were introduced to people to stir up the nationalist ideas against Vietnam. Additionally, interview with a person who worked in the ministry of propaganda and education was conducted. As they had been in charge of the Khmer Rouge’s publications, he gave some detailed information about publications against Vietnamese in both public publications (newspaper) and internal publications (party magazine).

Additionally, court procedure transcriptions, court reports and other publications of case 001 and case 002 at Extra-ordinary Chamber in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC) were consulted. In fact, the court procedures of case 001 and 002 have involved different stakeholders. For example, in case 001, several victims, former Khmer Rouge cadres, experts, witnesses etc testified in the court.

Lastly, the main source of this research was based on achieved documents such as newspapers, magazines, party documents, communication letters and other documents from the Cambodian National Archive, Center for Khmer Studies and Document Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). In addition I also listened to radio shows which were broadcast during the Democratic Kampuchea era; these are available at Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center. Additionally, books, and articles in Khmer and English were also significant sources for this thesis.

### **1.7 Scope of Research**

- Nationalism: I limited my study mainly to Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979) focusing on anti-Vietnamese nationalism.



- Genocide: For the crime of genocide this study is limited to the crime of genocide against Vietnamese only. The definition framework of genocide will be based on the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (article 2).

## 1.8 Literature Reviews

To study the history of Cambodia, especially modern history, researchers might need to review the works of David Chandler. Specifically, the books he wrote about the Khmer Rouge regime, for example, *History of Cambodia, Facing the Cambodian Past, Voice from S-21, Pol Pot Plan the future* etc. Additionally, Ben Kiernan also published a number of books and articles concerning Cambodian history during the Pol Pot regime.

These are not the only two prominent scholars who have worked on the topic of history of Cambodia during the second half of the 1970s, there are many Cambodian writers who wrote their memoirs, for example, Ung Loeung, Pin Yathay, Seng Theary and in addition other foreign scholars have written about this period of Cambodian history. Some of these authors describe the factors of mass killing during the Pol Pot regime while very few of them linked those mass killing factors to genocide and nationalism.

### 1.8.1 Factors of Mass Killing

There are many factors concerning crimes against humanity and other crimes which are normally known as mass killings in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979) mentioned by different authors. Those crimes even started before the victory of the Khmer Rouge over Lon Nol regime in April 1975. Disconnection of the Khmer Rouge from Vietnamese political line was a factor that led to the killings.

The Khmer Rouge went away from the Vietnamese political line when they refused to accept the Vietnamese requests to honor the cease-fire in 1973 because they believed that they could win the war by themselves without Vietnamese military protection. This is what David Chandler proved by pointing out that Pol Pot became a secret enemy of Vietnam.

Pol Pot started to get rid of those who had been trained in Vietnam and those who were loyal to Vietnam. Many of those people were disarmed quietly and removed from positions and some took refuge with Vietnamese units withdrawing from the country. Others were executed by the Khmer Rouge (Chandler, 1992). Similarly, Morris also mentioned that Pol Pot's purges of the Khmer Viet Minh during the early 1970s had diminished the prospects of Hanoi directing the Cambodian revolution (Morris, 1999).

In David Chandler's book, **Facing the Cambodian Past**, the author pointed out the way the Pol Pot regime revised the history of its own party in order to disconnect it with the historical enemy, Vietnam. This confirmed the disconnection as a factor leading to the killing of those who opposed this idea. Before 1976, the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) recognized and celebrated the anniversary of the party, which was founded in 1951.

In 1976, CPK celebrated its 16<sup>th</sup> party anniversary by recognizing the year 1960 as the start of the party in order to mark a new start of the party's history, which means removing Vietnamese influence (Chandler, 1996). The change of the party's history led to the elimination of those who were considered opponents of the party's revision and suspected of being Vietnamese supporters. Chandler gave the example of Keo Meas who was arrested and later killed because he was suspected to be an enemy of the party (Chandler, 1996).

In another book by David Chandler, **Voice from S-21**, he gives detailed information about the belief of Pol Pot concerning external and internal enemies which is one of the main factors of mass killing during that time. After briefly introducing external enemies including the powers opposing socialism, led by the United States, and "revisionists" or hegemonists like the Soviet Union, Vietnam and their allies, Chandler gives detailed information about internal enemies.

Internal enemies are explained to be the "hidden enemies burrowing from within" and needed to be cleansed (Chandler, 2000). He also linked internal enemies of the CPK to the CIA, Vietnam and so on. "Purge" is the word used to indicate the elimination of internal enemies within the CPK. In this book, S-21 played an

important role in eliminating those enemies. For example, Ney Saran and Keo Meas, senior cadres of the party, were brought to S-21 in September 1976 (Chandler, 2000) (p. 54).

The author of “**Why did they kill**”, Alexander Laban Hinton, indicated several factors of mass killing and genocide in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime. He found that revenge, purges of its followers, manufacturing of differences among people and some other factors are the root causes of mass killing and genocides. Additionally, the Khmer Rouge’s ideology linked honor and killing (Hinton, 2005). In part one, the author examines the root cause of genocide in Cambodia. He firstly explained revenge as a cause of the mass killings which had been encouraged by the Khmer Rouge through class struggle during the five year civil war (1970-1975). Soldiers of Lon Nol, government officials, rich people and police were victims of this kind of revenge which took place mostly after Pol Pot came to power in 1975.

Secondly, he tried to answer why the purges took place during the Pol Pot regime by examining power and patronage in this communist administration. He quoted from one Khmer Rouge tract stating the need for cleaning from inside the revolution in order to get rid of those hidden enemies (Hinton, 2005). Once a leader was accused of betrayal or suspected to be enemy, the whole patronage line must also be destroyed. In another part of this book, he looked at the power relations between the micro and macro levels in order to explain the complicated motivation of the perpetrators. He claimed that obedience was not the only motivation for those perpetrators during the Pol Pot regimes. There were many other complex factors that motivated them to commit crime.

Regarding the act of killing Vietnamese civilians during the Pol Pot regime, Ben Kiernan, who wrote **The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979**, describes the way Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia were expelled from Cambodia in 1975, and the way some of those Vietnamese were killed afterwards. He also briefly introduced several cases of massacres of Vietnamese civilians inside Cambodia. Cited from Bangkok Post, 1<sup>st</sup> of September 1977, Ben wrote, “The largest massacre appears to have occurred in

Kompong Chhnang province, where about 420 Vietnamese adults and children were executed in mid-May 1977”(Kiernan, 1997) (p. 297).

David Chandler also mentioned the killing of Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia after 1975 in his book, **Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot**. He mentioned that the plan of CPK for dealing with the remaining Vietnamese in Cambodia became more serious “when a directive from ‘870’, the party’s standing committee enjoined regional cadres to round up ethnic Vietnamese and turn them over to state security” (Chandler, 1992) (p. 141) and the first attack of CPK soldiers in mid-year.

The war against Vietnam in April and May 1977 is also linked with the killing of Vietnamese civilians. The secret attacks by CPK soldiers killed 222 civilians in An Giang from April 30 to mid-May 1977(Kiernan, 1997). The idea of Pol Pot and his followers to defend and take back Kampuchea Krom is also briefly explained.

Kiernan explained the way that Pol Pot tried to defend the nation by attacking Vietnam. He described the chronological events of CPK military attacks in 1977 and the plan of Pol Pot against Vietnam. The concept of “One Khmer can kill thirty Vietnamese” was also introduced then, according to Kiernan. Henri Locard, author of **Pol Pot’s Little Red Book: The Saying of Angkar**, claimed that ethnic Vietnamese were the only ethnic group that suffered so much during the Pol Pot regime. But in his view some Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia were lucky because they were expelled once by Lon Nol’s program and were expelled again by the Pol Pot leadership in 1975. Those who were expelled had more chance to survive as they went back to Vietnam, while those who stayed with the Cambodian people in Cambodia after 1975 almost entirely perished.

### 1.8.2 Genocide

Soon after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea in early 1979, the new government, a government that was not recognized by the United Nations, People’s Republic of Kampuchea called Democratic Kampuchea a “genocidal regime” calling

it the “Pol Pot and Ieng Sary clique” and comparing Pol Pot to Adolf Hitler (Chandler, 2008).

A domestic court, backed by Vietnamese experts, created a special tribunal to try top leaders of the Pol Pot regime. “The People’s Revolutionary Tribunal” was the name of the tribunal that was held in Phnom Penh. The tribunal charged Pol Pot and Ieng Sary with the crime of genocide based on domestic law but the conclusion and judgment also made reference to international law punishing the crime of genocide as stated in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide of December 9, 1948 (Fawthrop, 2004).

Tom Fawthrop and Helen Jarvis, co-authors of **“Getting Away with Genocide? Elusive Justice and the Khmer Rouge Tribunal”**, studied genocide in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime based on its legal aspect. They tried to clarify whether or not the Pol Pot regime can be regarded as a genocidal regime. It is incredibly hard to directly answer this question because legally the definition of genocide is based on the Geneva Convention of 1948. Yet, in Extra-ordinary Chamber in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC) there is a court law giving a similar definition framework of genocide to apply to Cambodian case to try those top leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime. From this book, it is important to keep track with the process of ECCC in order to understand the condition of genocide. Will those who had high responsibility and the top leaders be prosecuted with the crime of genocide?

As mentioned above concerning the factors of mass killing, in his 477 page book, Kiernan also mentioned genocide against minority groups of which Vietnamese were one of the groups who suffered heavily from the Pol Pot regime. As he wrote, “There is no question Democratic Kampuchea waged a campaign of genocide against ethnic Vietnamese”(Kiernan, 1997) (p. 460). His claim about genocide against ethnic Vietnamese was based on his estimate of the death toll of Vietnamese people in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime (1975-1979) that all Vietnamese who stayed in Cambodia remaining from the repatriation in 1975 virtually perished (Kiernan, 1997). He also included the killing of Cham and Chinese people during Pol Pot regime as crime of genocide.

### 1.8.3 Nationalism

#### 1.8.3.1 Definition

If we firstly look at the definition of nationalism given by Oxford Dictionary, it simply gives a definition of nationalism as a “patriotic feeling, principles, or efforts in an extreme form of this, especially marked by a feeling of superiority over other countries; and advocacy of political independence for a particular country.”(dictionary, 2013). It is true that the definition of nationalism is not fixed like a name of an object, but it is anthropologically, culturally, historically and politically defined. That is why John Coakley accepted that it is difficult to establish an agreed terminology in nationalism studies (Coakley, 2012).

Hans Kohn studied the origin of nationalism. He traced the birth of nationalism back to the second half of the eighteenth century during the French Revolution. However, he claimed that the real action of nationalism took place during the end of the eighteenth century when many countries in Europe tried to become independent states. The development of nationalism also went along with the political and cultural awakening of the masses during the nineteenth century, forming a nation-state which is called cultural nationalism. He then gave objective of nationalities as part of the definition of nationalism. He stated that nationalities come into existence only when certain objective bonds delimit a social group such as common descent, language, territory, political entity, custom and traditions, and religion. The most important element is a living and active corporate will. Additionally, nationalism is an idea, an *idée-force*, which fills man’s brain and heart with new thoughts and new sentiments, and drives him to translate his consciousness into deeds of organized action Another (Kohn, 2005).

Gellner briefly explained that nationalism is defined as a sentiment which is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle, or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment”(Gellner, 2006) (p. 01). The definition of nationalism is also related to the definition of the nation. Benedict Anderson wrote:

It (the nation) is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined (Anderson, 1991) (pp. 05-06).

Anderson gave the final definition of the nation as an imagined community because regardless of any unjust action, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship and people are willing to die for such limited imaginings (Anderson, 1991). A nation is also defined by Anthony Smith as any social group with common and distinctive history and culture, a definite territory, common sentiments of solidarity, a single economy and equal citizenship rights for all members.

All in all, the definition of nationalism can be a sentiment in people's mind resulting in some of these major elements such as common descent, language, territory, political entity, custom and traditions, and religion. This nationalist sentiment is an imagined community that the feeling of comradeship and willingness to commit organized action. It exists in two forms: (1) the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle and (2) the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment.

### **1.8.3.2 Nationalism and Racism**

The confusing definition between nationalism and racism has been hard to distinguish. There is some overlapping definition between the two. In this research, I employed the conceptual definition of Anthony Smith giving the differences between nationalism and racism.

Anthony Smith firstly looks at the characteristic goals of nationalism. He states that the three main goals that inspire nationalism are citizen autonomy, territorial unity, and historical identity. He also briefly states that the aim of the nationalist is to foster her community, its sense of solidarity and its autonomy (Smith,

1979). While racism is defined as a doctrine that divides the world into racial castes locked in a perpetual struggle for domination in which the allegedly physically superior are destined to rule the inferior and form racial elite (Smith, 1979). Racism attempts to perfect nature through eugenics, both to breed 'pure' ethnic groups, and later to create a racial elite and aims of all racial breeding was the formation of a segregated 'master-race'.

In Asia, the interrelation between nationalism and racism is even more complex. He shows that the three levels of nationalism as an interrelation with racism are: the ethnic or tribal, the state or territorial, and the 'pan' movement that seeks to unify a number of culturally similar into a larger political community (Smith, 1979). While nationalism covers all three levels, racism is involved in the ethnic and the 'pan' movement. As he mentions above the three main goals that inspire nationalists are citizen autonomy, territorial unity, and historical identity. Among these three main goals, territorial unity is rarely found as the main goal of racism. The two main goals of racism are 'pure' ethnic groups, and the creation of racial elite (master-race). It comes to the conclusion that racism partly involves ingredients of nationalism but not all kinds of nationalism necessarily need racism.

### **1.8.3.3 Nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea**

Publications concerning nationalism during the Pol Pot regime are small in number. In the regime, there were only party publications such as "Male and Female Revolutionary Youth", "Revolutionary Flag", "Black Paper" and other secret documents for the internal use of the CPK. Scholarly books and articles published after the fall of the regime focus mainly on the atrocities of the regime which we mostly hear from the victim's side, factors of mass killing, hardship of the people and what happened to Cambodia after the fall of Democratic Kampuchea.

Including nationalism during the Pol Pot regime as one of the factors of mass killing during that time was not widely found in the works of those scholars. The factors explaining mass killing that were very much related to nationalism were associated with "traitors". It was one of the factors of mass killing because the CPK claimed that to kill those traitors was paramount to defending the nation.



Kiernan discussed in his article, “**Myth, Nationalism and Genocide**”, about the similarity and differences of Pol Pot’s nationalism and Sihanouk’s nationalism. He claimed the difference between the two regimes was in the definition of traitors. Pol Pot defined “traitors” or “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds,” as those who did not accept Khmer Rouge leadership in an anti-Vietnamese crusade (Kiernan, 2001) (p. 192).

David Chandler also briefly mentioned the role of nationalism during Pol Pot regime in which the Vietnamese were still a major enemy. Still, the limitation of the role of nationalism in these scholars’ works about Pol Pot regime should be improved upon.

## Chapter II

### Historical Background of Cambodian Nationalism

Before I specifically talk about nationalism in relation to mass killing and genocide during the Pot Pot regime, I would like firstly to review the historical background of Cambodia and Vietnam relations from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century and Cambodian nationalism since the 1930s to the fall of the Khmer Republic in 1975. This chapter will be divided into four parts.

In the first part, Cambodia-Vietnam relations from the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century will be reviewed. The second part, Cambodian nationalism during French rule will mainly focus on the events of the last two decades from the late 1930s to the early 1950s. The form of nationalism after gaining independence from France to the fall of the Sankhum Reastr Niyom regime of Sihanouk will be discussed in the third part. Finally, nationalism of Cambodia during the Lon Nol regime will be discussed, focusing on the year 1970 to the fall of the regime in 1975. It is believed that the historical background of Cambodian nationalism contributed to its development to the extent that Pol Pot's nationalism was influenced from the previous regimes.

#### 2.1 Cambodia-Vietnam Relations from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century

During the period from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century were the time when Vietnam had influenced Cambodian court and the time when Cambodia was a weak kingdom under pressure of both Siam Kingdom and Vietnam, the powerful neighboring countries. Vietnam defeated Champa in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and extended their territory southwards. Up to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Vietnam took over most of the Champa territory. Since then Cambodian territory became the target of the Vietnamese expansion(Heidhues, 2000). This section will highlight the loss of part of Cambodian territory to Vietnam and the imposing of Vietnamization in Cambodia.

##### 2.1.1 The Loss of Kampuchea Krom to Vietnam

After the fall of Angkor Empire in 1431, Cambodia was in downstream and became a weak nation in between the two stronger neighbors, Vietnam and Siam. The Cambodian history during the 17<sup>th</sup> century was almost full of foreign invasion

and civil war. Early of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Cambodia was a tributary kingdom of Thailand. At the same time, some prince and kings also sought alliances with the Vietnamese (Sodany, 2005).

One of the significant event happened during the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the first Cambodian king having Vietnamese wife. Cambodian king Chay Jetha II (1618-1628) accepted the Vietnamese princess of the Nguyen dynasty to be his wife (Leclere, 2005). According to the Great Cambodian Chronicle, the inter-national marriage of the king made a special relationship between Cambodian and Vietnamese courts. More importantly, the special relations allowed the Vietnamese to use part of Cambodian territory of Mekong delta as the military base fighting against the Trinh Dynasty (Soth, 1969). This part of history is also agreed by some historians. David Chandler describes the growing number of Vietnamese people after the inter-national marriage. The settlement of Vietnamese people in the Mekong delta was increasing after the victory of the Nguyen dynasty over the Trinh, and the administrative control of the area was also under the Vietnamese rulers. During the 1620s, the Cambodian port of Prey Nokor was controlled by Vietnamese and changed its name to Saigon after the Cambodian king permitted them to build a custom house at the port. Up to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Cambodian territory of Mekong delta was under Vietnamese administration (Chandler, 2008).

In short, this part of Cambodian history became the crucial point for Cambodian elite and people to view Vietnam as invader which they believed that Vietnam had used the princess to get Cambodian territory.

### **2.1.2 The Imposition of Vietnamese Control during the first haft of 19th Century**

Early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ang Chan was crown as king of Cambodia by the Thai court. However, Ang Chang also sided with Vietnam. While maintaining his subservience to Thai court, he sent tributary to Vietnam showing a strong relations with Vietnam (Chandler, 2008). Chandler claimed that Ang Chan was the first Cambodian king who allowed Vietnamese emperor Minh Mang to operate the Vietnamization process in Cambodia. The Cambodian King needed to dress like the Vietnamese officials and respected the Vietnamese King (Chandler, 2008).

The successor of Ang Chan was his daughter, Ang Mei, a successor who was believed to be installed by Vietnam in order to easily control Cambodia. There was plenty choice to choose better male successor, but the installation of Ang Mei was Vietnamese choice. According to Treng Ngea, Vietnamese king Ya Long sent a representative to choose the next king who was Ang Mei. They tried to avoid those princes who fled to Thailand. The princess was crown in 1834 (Ngea, 1973). The Great Cambodian Chronicle claimed that Vietnam aimed to turn Cambodia into a Vietnamese province, reformed Cambodian administration and replaced it with a Vietnamese administration model, change people habit, culture and ways of living (Soth, 1969). The chronicle also added that Vietnam forced Cambodian official to use titles given in Vietnamese language. The destruction of Buddhist pagodas, and the building of Vietnamese temples was also mentioned (Soth, 1969). Additionally, the imposition of Vietnamese culture on Cambodian culture was severe. The Cambodian people were told to wear trousers, but not the tucked skirts, to have long hair, but not Cambodian short hair and to learn the Vietnamese language (Chandler, 2008). The imposition of Vietnamization was strongly practiced during the reign of Ang Mei. It more or less influenced on how Cambodian people during that time and following regime viewed Vietnam.

Moreover, Adhemard Leclere mentioned a deep Vietnamization during Ang Mei reign which names of provinces and city were changed to Vietnamese names or Vietnamese pronunciation. For example, Phnom Penh was changed to Nam Yang while the names of 33 provinces during that time were also changed (Leclere, 2005).

Besides the Vietnamization program, during early 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were some events and myth showing cruelty of Vietnamese on Cambodian people. The excavation of the Vinh Te Canal in southern Vietnam by using Cambodian workers in 1820 was one of the well-known events. In 1817, the Vietnamese officials in Saigon use thousands of Vietnamese and Cambodian workers to dig a forty kilometers canal linking the Gulf of Siam to the fortified citadel of Chaudoc. Cambodian people were seriously suffered from the excavation of the canal, and it became a symbol of Vietnamese mistreatment of Cambodian people (Chandler, 2008). The Great Cambodian Chronicle written in the 1850s about 30 years after the event described,

“Workers were divided into two groups. One Vietnamese marched at the head of each group, another at the back, and a third in the middle. The Vietnamese would beat the Cambodians on the back, to make them hurry [...]. Everyone was exhausted, and covered with mud.” (cited by Chandler, 2008: 145).

“Don’t Spill the Master Tea” was also known to happen during Ang Chan reign in the 1820s. Some historian regarded it as myth while few account of Cambodian historian put it into the history book. Treng Ngea claimed in his book that the story of “Don’t Spill the Master Tea” happened during the early 1820s (Ngea, 1973).

In summary, Cambodia-Vietnam relations during 17<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were Vietnamese domination. In this context, it has been a subject for Cambodian people to view Vietnam in negative way.

## **2.2 Cambodian Nationalism during the French Protectorate**

Nationalism of Cambodia during the French protectorate was notable in the late 1930s with the establishment of Nagara Vatta Newspaper. Ben Kiernan regarded this as the modern form of nationalism in Cambodia, which contributed to its success in obtaining full independence from the French. Penny Edwards reviewed the two main developments of Cambodian modern nationalism during the 1930s and the 1940s. First, a Khmer-Language Newspaper Nagara Vatta, which was first published in 1936, was regarded by many scholars as the birth of modern Cambodian nationalism. Second, an anti-French demonstration in 1942, which was commonly called the “Umbrella War” in which thousands of Buddhist monks and people participated, was also regarded by some as marking the advent of modern Cambodian nationalism (Edwards, 2007).

Secondly, the influence of the Japanese in Cambodia will be addressed in connection with the anti-French demonstration in 1942 and the coup in 1945. The rise of rebel groups against French rule after the return of the French in 1945 will be presented in third part. Finally, the role of Sihanouk in the struggle for full Cambodian independence will also be discussed.

### 2.2.1 Nagara Vatta Newspaper

Nationalist movements against French rule happened several times before what some historians called modern nationalism emerged from the late 1930s. Some of those movements were the rebellions of Achar Sva (1864-66) and Pou Kombo (1865-67), attempting to claim the throne of half-brother Prince Si Votha (1876-77), and the significant anti-colonialism shown by the anger of peasants in Kraing Leav and Kampong Chhang provinces in 1925 (Kiernan, 1985). However, we can see the rise of Cambodian intellectuals marking modern nationalism when they got together to establish a Khmer newspaper, namely the Nagara Vatta newspaper.

Pach Chhoeun and Sim Va founded the newspaper called Nagara Vatta. But the most important person who was responsible for the creation of this newspaper was Son Ngoc Thanh, a highly educated person who had studied in France for a year. Because Son Ngoc Thanh was a government official, he could not publicly get involved in the publication of the newspaper. Therefore, we cannot find his name in the newspaper even though he wrote many articles for Nagara Vatta (Mol, 1971). According to David Chandler, there were three main channels for giving knowledge to the Cambodian people during the 1930s such as the Buddhist Institute, Sisowath High School and Nagara Vatta newspaper. The founding of this newspaper marked a significant step in the development of Cambodian nationalism through education. The newspaper attempted to wake the Cambodian people up rather than to fight directly against the French.

Moreover, the writings in the newspapers were mainly against the Vietnamese domination over Cambodian administration, the monopoly of business by the Chinese and the joblessness situation of Cambodian intellectuals (Chandler, 2008). That's why according to John Tully, the newspaper mostly attacked Vietnamese rather than the French (Tully, 2002). More importantly, we can see that the hatred of and the accusation against Vietnamese as an invader can be found in this newspaper. In one commentary article, the writer compared the invasion of Hitler to conquer other countries in Europe to the invasion of Vietnam against Cambodia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Chandler, 2008). This is the effect of Cambodian history during the first half

of 19<sup>th</sup> century on how those intellectuals viewed Vietnamese. More importantly, the articles against Vietnamese ambition during that time continued to contribute to the anti-Vietnamese sentiment for next generations.

In this context, anti-Vietnamese sentiments had been rooted in Cambodian intellectuals and ordinary people at least since the establishment of this newspaper in 1936. The idea of nationalism against the French was also injected into readers' mind through this newspaper (Mol, 1971).

There was a mindset problem during that time, according to Mol Chanbun; that is, that most of the elite during that time gave less value to the Khmer newspaper because of the influence of the French language at the time. They chose French newspapers to read in order to show off their education. Therefore, at first most readers of Nagara Vatta were poor people, workers and those who could not read French. Later the number of readers increased (Mol, 1971). The newspaper lasted for several years and broadly influenced Cambodian readers. Its influence was mentioned by Chandler who indicated that in early 1937 more than 5,000 copies of each issue of this newspaper were published, and the number of the readers must be greater than this (Chandler, 2008), as one copy was normally read by more than one person.

However, the arrival of the Japanese in Cambodia during World War II made some changes in the standpoints of Cambodian intellectuals. They turned to support the arrival of the Japanese and protested against colonialist France. For example articles published by Nagara Vatta newspaper and the Buddhist Institute from 1940 to 1942 supported the Japanese arrival and increasingly criticized the French colonialist (Chandler, 2008). Because writers of this newspaper were brave enough to criticize the French and Khmer administrators, every issue needed then to be approved by the French. The French took out some sensitive articles which were mostly against them. This censorship, somehow, made the newspaper propaganda even more effective because the censored pages were found in blank papers which let readers knew had been suppressed by the French (Mol, 1971). It significantly led to the common purpose of full independence from the French.

### 2.2.2 Japanese's Influences and the Failed Revolution

In 1940, Japanese troops entered Cambodia as a result of a secret agreement with the French in which the French still had authority over Cambodia. Son Ngoc Than sought Japanese cooperation and later planned a revolution against the French with Pach Chhoeun, Achar Hem Chieu, Nuon Duong and other important people.

Whenever Achar Hem Chieu, a well-known Buddhist monk, went out for Buddhist teaching in the provinces or in any ceremony, he tried to persuade participants to be brave nationalists in order to stage a revolution to take back the pride of Cambodia from the French colonization. He had been assigned to educate the Red Army (soldiers) and Black Army (Police) along with other well-known monks such as Achar Pang Khatt, Achar So Hay, Achar Uk Chea, and Achar Kheiu Chum (Mol, 1971). Additionally, Son Ngoc Than and Pach Chhoeun also went out very often to educate people about nationalism and the plan for the revolution.

The relationship between Son Ngoc Than and the Japanese was strong enough to protect Son Ngoc Thanh from the French authorities during that time. According to Bunchan Mol, the plan for the revolution was very positive at first because the French were very busy with World War II. Therefore, there were not many French soldiers in Cambodia. He claimed that in Kampong Speu, one of the Cambodian provinces, there was not one single French soldier residing. Through monks, Achar Hem Chieu and other monks were very active in persuading monks and people to plan the coup while other activists carefully fulfilled their tasks (Mol, 1971).

Unfortunately, the plan spread to the ears of the French. Achar Hem Chieu and an activist, Nuon Duong, were arrested on 17 July 1942. The plan for the revolution then failed. As the first plan failed, Son Ngoc Than planned another mass demonstration with the support of Japanese soldiers (Mol, 1971). On 20 July 1942, a big demonstration was held by a thousand people; half of them were monks. The demonstration which was believed to be supported by the Japanese and led by Pach Chhoeun in cooperation with Son Ngoc Thanh, "marched along Phnom Penh's principal Blvd to the office of the French resident superieur, Jean de Lens,



demanding Hem Chieu's release" (Chandler, 2008) (p. 206). The clash between the demonstrators and the security at the French office occurred after the demonstrators wanted to enter the French office, and Pach Chhoeun, a demonstration leader, was arrested.

The demonstration was also known as the "Revolt of Parasols" or "Umbrella War" because most of the demonstrators were monks who used parasols as their weapons to fight against French security forces. As Pach Chhoeun was arrested with a number of demonstrators, Son Ngoc Thanh fled to Battambang province, a region under Thai administration, before continuing his journey to Japan. In 1943, Hem Chieu died because of his illness at Poulo Condore (Mol, 1971). These incidents were signs of the demand for independence of Cambodian intellectuals as well as ordinary people. Tully called the failed revolt of parasols another important milestone in the development of Cambodian Nationalism (Tully, 2002).

The presence of Japanese troops in Cambodia during World War II was very significant as a brighter way towards full independence from the French. For example, the attempt to Romanize the Khmer alphabet starting from the new French resident, George Gautier, in 1943 was not successful partly because of the Japanese occupation. Cited from *Jeune Cambodge* published in 1943, David Chandler quoted George Gautier's words saying that the Khmer alphabet was out of date and comparing the Khmer alphabet to a badly tailored suit (Chandler, 2008).

However, it was not popular for most of the Cambodian people, especially monks. The Romanized Khmer was practiced until March 19, 1945, when the French were overthrown by the Japanese. Once Cambodia was independent from the French after the Japanese coup, the first action was to rescind the Romanization of the Khmer made by the French.

The Japanese paved the way for a short lived period of independence for Cambodia until the return of the French. Under the umbrella of the Japanese, King Sihanouk declared independence on 13 March 1945 and changed the official name of Cambodia from "Cambodge" to "Kampuchea". Cambodian independence was still valid due to the Japanese force staying in Southeast Asia. Sihanouk then

acknowledged the monk demonstration in 1942 as a significant step to get rid of the French. He presided over a rally commemorating the monk demonstration (Chandler, 2008) with Pach Chhoeun and Son Ngoc Thanh. The fall of the Japanese turned Cambodian history into another phase of colonization. Even though the surrender of Japan could not guarantee Cambodian independence, when the French returned they could not regain their full colonial control.

### **2.2.3 The Rise of Rebel Groups**

Besides the rise of political parties after World War II, there were several rebel groups rising to fight against the French. Soon after the Japanese surrender, the movement of rebel groups started their activities again. They did not welcome the return of the French. In contrast, they tried to fight them. However, the role of rebel groups in Cambodian independence was still questionable.

#### **2.2.3.1 Khmer Isarak**

The Khmer Isarak movement was founded in 1940 by the Khmer nationalist, Pok Khun, who was residing in Bangkok, Thailand. Its activities were only to run a radio in the northwestern region which Thailand had just taken from Cambodia. The anti-French colonialist was clearly growing in the northwest region after the Thais knew that they could not control the region anymore. Therefore, they supported the Khmer Isarak movement to rebel against the French (Lamant, 2009).

Bunchan Mol who fled from Phnom Penh after the return of the French in 1945 claimed that he and his uncle, Pok Khun, founded Khmer Isarak in order to drive the French from Cambodia (Mol, 1973). With weapon supply from the Thai government, the Khmer Isarak increased the number of its members remarkably. In early August 1946, with an armed force of more than a hundred, Khmer Isarak launched an attack in Siem Reap. On 7 August after midnight, they attempted to seize the hotel in the city where many French people were residing, but it was not successful. The Khmer Isarak could only seize some weapons and release some prisoners (Mol, 1973). But the attack marked a successful mission for the Khmer

Isarak as it could remind Cambodian people of the need to regain independence from the French.

However, Mol criticized his group heavily about the cruelty of the Khmer Isarak against suspects who were accused of being French spies. Additionally, the Khmer Isarak could not unite their groups as one. After the attack in Siem Rap, There were three groups of Khmer Isarak according to Mol. These groups survived at first by obtaining some food from the people living in the areas (Mol, 1973).

Up to early 1948, Dap Chhuon's Issarak group was the most powerful one in Battambang, according to the reports of the French security unit. His group had about 800 armed combatants during that time. Dap Chhuon also had good relations with Lao Isarak and Ho Chi Minh (Lamant, 2009). However, the cooperation between Khmer Isarak and the Khmer Viet Minh group was not smooth because Khmer Isarak leaders such as Chandara and Dap Chhuon had nationalist sentiments – they were as anti-Vietnamese as they were anti-French (Tully, 2002). At this point, we can say that the rebel group already had anti-Vietnamese sentiment in their minds.

According to the reports of the French security unit, it was clear that there were many Issarak groups. Some of those groups had only hundreds or less than a hundred members. They survived by robbing people and smuggling. Those groups could not unify themselves because the spirit to fight against the French and the spirit to get full independence from the French were never the common priority for them (Lamant, 2009). There were many groups which emerged and called themselves Khmer Isarak who had a bad reputation for banditry. Claiming himself as one of founders of the Khmer Isarak, Mol Chanbun was very disappointed to see those Khmer Isarak groups.

Isarochak<sup>4</sup> was known in public as someone who referred to the act of some Khmer Isarak groups that committed robbery from people to supply their groups (Mol, 1973). For example, Dap Chhoun was known as an uneducated, cruel person, according to the reports of the French security unit (Lamant, 2009). Moreover, Put

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<sup>4</sup> It is a reverse spelling of the Khmer phrase which means "Issarak is robber".

Chay, a leader of a Khmer Isarak group in Kandal province who had led a small Khmer Isarak group since late 1948, was also known to be cruel (Lamant, 2009). From this evidence, rebel groups still had a limited role in demanding independence.

### 2.2.3.2 Khmer Viet Minh Group in Cambodia

The involvement of the Khmer Viet Minh group in the Cambodian nationalist movement was a little bit later than other movements, but it brought a huge impact on Cambodian independence too. A group of Khmer Viet Minh described themselves as another Khmer Isarak group led by Son Ngoc Minh. According to John Tully, the Khmer Viet Minh group in Cambodia was a far stronger force than the Issarak in both politics and the military. Up to the year 1953, there was a force of over 9000 well-disciplined and motivated Viet Minh in Cambodia (Tully, 2002). Viet Minh cooperation with Issaraks in May 1948 launched a significant attack on the Franco-Khmer forces holding up the Phnom Penh-Battambang train. It was the first cooperation between the two resistance movements that caused the French great unease (Tully, 2002).

From 17 to 19 April 1950, the first national liberation congress was held with Khmer, Vietnamese and Ethnic Chinese as members. The congress elected to the contemporary central committee such as Son Ngoc Minh as president, Sieu Heng as minister of defense, Chan Samay as minister of finance and Tou Samouth as the minister of information and propaganda (Lamant, 2009). All members swore that they were very loyal to the cooperation between Cambodia and Vietnam against the French and determined to fight for independence. They tried to unify all levels of classes in Indochina to fight for independence.

The following day, on 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1950, this association of Khmer Isarak (Unified Isarak Front) declared the independence of Cambodia while no agreement had been reached. According to Morris, the Viet Minh group in Cambodia met a lot of difficulties in political activities and the leaders of the Viet Minh were people who were Vietnamese-Khmer, for example, Sieu Heng and Son Ngoc Minh (Morris, 1999).

However, the Viet Minh forces in Cambodia were more effective than other rebel groups. The effectiveness of the Viet Minh group made Sihanouk fearful of the

possible consequence of the expected Khmer Viet Minh victory in Cambodia. Sihanouk told a British reporter that “a Viet Minh success would mark the end of Cambodia as an independent state” (cited by Tully, 2002: 465) and lead Cambodia to join the Communist states. It became a hot topic that later Sihanouk brought to the attention of France, the United States, and Canada.

#### **2.2.4 Sihanouk's Nationalism**

The significant role of Sihanouk in Cambodian independence was made known in the last two years before Cambodia gained full independence. In his book, Sihanouk claimed that his first attempt to gain independence was made during the Japanese presence in 1945. However, it was a failed mission after the Japanese lost World War II (Sihanouk, 2005). To make this point, I will briefly introduce Sihanouk's nationalist mission for full independence from 1952 to 1953.

The turning point for Sihanouk was when he decided to remove the Democrats from government and took power as prime minister. Then he promised the people a mandate to wrest full independence from the French within three years. According to his book, the letter that he presented to the Cambodian people on 15 June 1952 reads, “I promised with people to successfully get full independence for Cambodia in three years at most in order to transfer all authorities that the French still hold them and those authorities limited our internal and external sovereignty” (Norodom, 2005: 42). However, it was not a popular action, for the democrat supporters later accused him of being a traitor. They also blamed him for holding negotiations with the French instead of fighting them (Chandler, 2008).

Up to mid-1952, the French had given some political power to Cambodia within the French Union. It was not real independence and Sihanouk knew it (Tully, 2002). In early 1953, when the National Assembly did not approve the national budget, Sihanouk decided to dissolve the Assembly. He told the French correspondent that he was the natural ruler of the country with unquestionable authority (Chandler, 2008). In February 1953, he left Cambodia for France giving the reason as treatment to improve his health. In fact, his trip to France was purely political. He wrote in this book that he was stationed in Napoule and wrote letters to

Vincent Auriol, the French president, in order to ask for full sovereignty for Cambodia. The meeting with the French president had no result (Sihanouk, 2005). The discussion with Letourmeau, a French official responsible for colonial states, ended without any fruitful result either. Letourmeau knew Sihanouk was making a trip to America and he warned Sihanouk about the possibility of changing the Cambodian King. Sihanouk ignored the warning (Sihanouk, 2005).

Sihanouk traveled from France to Canada bringing two big issues to present to this country. The first issue was the fight against communism; France was a representative of the free world in Indochina. The second issue was the insatiable demand for independence of the Cambodian people (Sihanouk, 2005). He told Canadian radio that the biggest issue Cambodia was facing was insecurity. “The issue was even worse because Communist Viet Minh group and Khmer Isarak groups made a lot of propaganda with people who needed independence”, he said (Norodom, 2005: 51). He knew that the issue of a communist threat in his country was the main point to discuss here. Once again, in the United States, he told the New York Times that unless the French granted independence, there was a real danger of a general insurrection in which the Khmer people would make common cause with the Khmer Viet Minh (New York Time, 19, April, 1953, cited by Tully, 2002: 477). It was a very smart move for this young king.

He returned to Cambodia on 14 May 1953 with an estimate of several hundred thousand people there to welcome him. It proved that what the French said about most Khmer not caring about politics and independence was wrong. He then continued his Royal Crusade for Independence by travelling to Siem Reap with ex-Issarak leader, Put Chhay and Dap Chhuon before he moved to Bangkok (Tully, 2002). The Thais did not welcome Sihanouk and this forced him to go back to the autonomous area of Siem Reap (Chandler, 2008). According to Chandler, the reasons for the French decision to finally grant Cambodia full independence were related to the war in Vietnam and the anti-war movement in France including the growing demand of Sihanouk. In Vietnam, the French lost many battles and would completely lose the country in the near future. In France, a growing number of people opposed the war in Indochina (Chandler, 2008).

Additionally, in Cambodia, while the newly appointed Prime Minister Penn Nuth was in charge of negotiations with the French, Sihanouk pressured the French by organizing a vast parade of about 30,000 soldiers, police and militia in Battambang on 23 August (Tully, 2002). These were probably the main reasons that explain the French decision to grant Cambodia independence peacefully.

In conclusion, the modern form of Cambodian nationalism awakened Cambodian people to demand independence. Even though the majority of the Cambodian people did not read, Nagara Vatta, the newspaper contributed to the rise of Cambodian nationalism which was also linked to the monks demonstration of 1942. In connection with nationalist sentiment against the Vietnamese, a number of articles can be found in the Nagara Vatta Newspaper, but this was not yet the main topic, as the demand for independence from the French was the main goal. At the end of the colonial period, Cambodia, led by young king Sihanouk made a proper move to gain independence peacefully. However, we cannot deny the fact that the Issarak and other movements during French rule also had important roles in bringing back Cambodian independence.

### **2.3 Cambodian Nationalism during Sangkum Reastr Niyum**

It was quite easy to define nationalist movements during French rule because those groups claimed the goal of liberating the country from the French more or less shared this common goal. After Cambodia gained full independence in November 1953, the post-independence nationalism cannot easily be defined. In this way I will look at the development of Cambodian post-independence nationalism based on traditional nationalism according to which a particular nation should be entitled to self-determination (Coakley, 2012). This idea of nationalism is applicable to Sihanouk's nationalism, which demanded that Cambodia stay away from both the Communist world and the Free world. Additionally, I also take into account the counter-groups of so-called left-wing and right-wing groups who claimed to reshape the state in accordance with their imagination.

This section will start with the early stage of Sihanouk's policy which can be linked to the nationalist sentiment through his claim of self-determination. Then the

idea of protecting the collective interest of the nation by countering the opposition from the left-wing which was originally a product of Communist Vietnam and the right-wing supported by Thailand and the United States will be dealt with in following part. It will be one part of the nationalist sentiment during Sihanouk regime. The section will end by examining the counter-groups movement which in the late Sihanouk regime led to one major uprising.

### **2.3.1 Early Stage of the Sihanouk Regime**

After independence, Sihanouk was seeking a way to stay in the political arena. It was not possible anymore for him to do this if he was the king of Cambodia because the constitution in 1947 changed the country from absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy which limited the power of the king. The possibility of the emerging parties, the Democrat and Pracheachon, gaining a majority in parliament in the coming 1955 election also encouraged Sihanouk to jump into politics. It became a threat for Sihanouk's power and popularity if he stayed on the throne. So, he needed to enter the arena to take hold of Cambodian politics. He found the way out by abdicating from the throne. On 2 March 1955, his abdication was announced and he regarded himself as "Citizen Sihanouk" (Osborne, 1994).

To keep him in politics, in early April, he established a new political movement called "Sangkum Reastr Niyum" (People's Socialist Community). He did not regard this movement as a political party even though it took part in the election in 1955. Sihanouk's decision to compete in the 1955 election was prompted by his expectation that he would win as he had an overwhelming popularity as the "father of independence". It was proven that Sihanouk's popularity among Cambodian people was great enough for him to win the elections, when more than 98 per cent of the people participating in the referendum of 1955 (Jeldres, 2005, wrote exactly 99.8 per cent) supported his royal crusade for full independence (Chandler, 2008). Not much different from the result of the referendum, the elections result in 1955 showed that Sihanouk won the majority of the votes. The official result was around 83 per cent of the votes cast went to Sangkum candidates, around 12 per cent of the votes went to Democrats and around 4 per cent of the votes were received by



Pracheachon. According to this official result, members of the National Assembly would be made up of Sangkum candidates (Osborne, 1994). He had full power to lead the country under his movement of Sangkum Reastr Niyom.

In the same year before the elections, Prince Sihanouk went to India and met a person whom he claimed had really influenced his decision. This was the Indian leader, Nehru. In his memoirs, Sihanouk wrote, “Nehru and I got along well together, and he influenced me in my option for neutrality.” (Jeldres, 2005: 58). That was the decision for him to attend the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, where he could claim neutrality for Cambodia in the confrontation between the West, led by the United States, and the communist camp, led by the Soviet Union and its allies (Osborne, 1994).

A year later, Sihanouk explained three main reasons for him to choose neutrality. This can be found in his speech at Kampot province on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1956. Firstly, he took the example of the First Indochina War (Franco-Vietnam War) which lasted from 1946 to 1954 that Cambodian people died for the cause of other countries. At the end, Cambodia united to demand for independence peacefully without siding with any of the parties in the war. “That was our creation of neutrality”, Sihanouk said. Secondly, he stressed that the Geneva agreement of July 1954 included the Cambodian declaration not to side with any war allies and not to allow any side to have military bases on Cambodian soil. Thirdly, Sihanouk claimed that his decision on neutrality was also based on the interest of his people. He said, “Our neutrality was approved and still has been approved by all of Cambodian people” (Sihanouk, 1956). For this self-determination, Sihanouk claimed to be the only person trying to keep Cambodia at peace.

He legitimized his Sangkum Reastr Niyum by holding a national congress twice a year to give voice to all the people. He claimed his nationalism served the collective interest of the people. But, at the same time, Sihanouk used the congress to neutralize the opposition – mostly the left-wing and the right-wing groups (Osborne, 1994).

### 2.3.2 Khmer Serei and Sihanouk's Reaction

Khmer Serei was a group of rebels who were led by a former prime minister, Son Ngoc Thanh for a short time in 1945, when Japan took power from the French. Son Ngoc Thanh had been a long time enemy of Sihanouk as he criticized Sihanouk since Cambodia was under French rule. According to a Sihanouk letter dated on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1960 addressing to the public, Sihanouk wrote that during the Geneva conference in 1954, Son Ngoc Thanh asked the major powers to divide Cambodia into two parts in which one part would be under his administration, but the world rejected this proposal and ordered the dissolution of Son Ngoc Thanh's soldiers (Sihanouk, 1960).

Based in Thailand, the Khmer Serei was comprised of Cambodian military forces that were recruited, paid, and armed by the Thai and South Vietnamese who worked under the command of Son Ngoc Thanh (Chandler, 2008). The group criticized Sihanouk's neutrality and strongly suggested that this neutrality would be consumed by the communist insurgency soon. The main criticism of the Khmer Serei group can be seen from the Ministry of Information's document released on 18 May 1959, "Khmer Serei said that (1) they were struggling for the nation; (2) they were people of the free world; (3) they thought Cambodia should not be in a position of neutrality; and (4) they said there were many communists and (Sihanouk) allowed those communists to attack South Vietnam and Thailand" (Cambodia National Archives, Box. 314).

In the same document, the Ministry of Information responded to those criticisms by pointing out that those leaders, Son Ngoc Thanh and Sam Sary, were traitors of the Cambodian nation. According to this document, they were traitors because: (1) those Khmer Serei were not struggling for Cambodia, but they were struggling to take Cambodia to sell it to other foreign countries. The document continued to interpret Sam Sary's name as a Vietnamese name in order to show that Sam Sary was a puppet of Vietnam (South Vietnam). (2) Responding to when Sam Sary and Son Ngoc Thanh said they were Free Khmer, the document emphasized that they were not real Free Khmer because they were traitors of the nation, religion

and monarchy. The document continued, if they were Khmer Sereis, they would live in Cambodia as Cambodian people did; but they were guerrillas. (3) The document claimed that what Khmer Serei leaders said about Cambodia to the effect that it should not be neutral was against the will of the people. “[...] they are traitors because they acted against the will of millions of Cambodian people.” (4) The Khmer Serei’s claim that there were many communists in Cambodia were not reasonable because communists were in China and North Vietnam (Government-document, 1969). All of these responses used very bad words against those Khmer Serei leaders such as “traitors, dogs, puppets and so on”. It was easy for Sihanouk to neutralize this group because this group was based in a foreign country, Thailand, allowing Sihanouk to discredit the group effectively.

As Sihanouk defined the group of Khmer Sereis as traitors whom he thought would endanger the nation, the members of the group who were arrested inside Cambodia were tried in secret and then executed by firing squads. Furthermore, the film of the execution was also shown to the public (Chandler, 2008) probably to intimidate the existing Khmer Serei and to paint the image of traitors in the people’s minds.

In Sihanouk’s Letter, he accused Son Ngoc Thanh and Sam Sary as traitors because they sided with what Sihanouk regarded as enemies of the nation, imperialist groups in Bangkok and Saigon, and they tried to destroy the peace and stability of Sangkum Reastr Niyum in Cambodia (Sihanouk, 1960). Later in 1962, Sam Sary disappeared and Chandler assumed that he might have been assassinated by one of his foreign patrons (Chandler, 2008). However, we can see that the group was very poorly organized and was not effective.

### **2.3.3 Sihanouk and the Communist Group**

The communist group in Cambodia had been rooted in the movement against French rule. They originated from the Vietnamese communist group called the Viet Minh in relation with the Indochinese Communist Party. In early 1951, the Indochinese Communist Party dissolved itself into three parties in each country in Indochina. Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party (KPRP) was the communist party in

Cambodia which was founded in September 1951 (Chandler, 2008). Upon his return from France, Pol Pot, who later led the party, joined the KPRP with other French educated students and other Cambodian communists, but he did not get a significant position in the party. After the party leader, Sieu Heng, defected to the government, those communist people who had been educated in France could get important positions in the party in 1960, the year that the name of the party also changed to the Kampuchean Workers Party (Morris, 1999). One of those was Pol Pot who got a position which was third in rank after the party secretary, Tou Samut, and the deputy, Nuon Chea.

In 1963, Pol Pot became general secretary coming up from the third to the first place in the party after the disappearance of the former party secretary, Tou Samut. The activity of this party was not significant during those years. The pressure of Sihanouk over this communist group forced them to flee to the countryside with some prominent leaders such as Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Son Sen, and Nuon Chea, leaving the other prominent party leaders, Khieu Samphan, Hun Nim, Hou Yuon, to remain behind and engage in legal politics (Morris, 1999). The group later operated their activities under the shadow of the Vietnamese Communist forces that had used the eastern zones of Cambodia as a sanctuary and supply centre since 1965.

Pol Pot went to North Vietnam in 1965. The trip lasted about nine months during which he undertook several courses of study regarding building the Party, politics, combat, and economics (Chandler, 1992: 74). After Pol Pot had left Vietnam for Cambodia, the Vietnamese leaders understood that the Communist Party of Kampuchea would need to be under the Vietnamese political line in order to get help for both arms and political struggle (Chandler, 1992).

A former secretary general at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs claimed that the Pol Pot regime had never been under Vietnam (12MSB, October 9, 2012). Another former interpreter of Pol Pot also claimed that Pol Pot's trip to Vietnam was the turning point for Pol Pot related to his view of communist Vietnam. He said that Pol Pot saw a plan of the Vietnam Communist Party to conquer Cambodia and Laos and unite them as one Indochina under Vietnamese authority (12MSS, December 18,

2012). Again, this is one side's point of view, which is that of Pol Pot's supporters during his leadership, and which remains the same now.

However, David Chandler concluded differently that Pol Pot could not show his independent stand or act against Vietnam during that time because the Vietnamese could choose someone else to be the leader of the Cambodian Communist Party (Chandler, 1992). Later, Pol Pot went back to Hanoi once again for political discussions in November 1969. For the Khmer Rouge leaders during the 1960s, revolutionary values of their party were still more important than Cambodian values of ethnic hostility toward the Vietnamese (Morris, 1999). Pol Pot probably tried to hold on to his nationalist sentiment of anti-Vietnamese in his mind in order to accomplish the communist movement.

Anyway, if we look again at the way Sihanouk treated the communist group and Khmer Serei group, we will see differences in his treatment of the two groups. Osborne presented several factors showing that Sihanouk's neutrality was not in the middle. Sihanouk's relations with the United States and the Free world's supporters were fragile while his relations with China were increasingly agreeable. He criticized the United States very often because his rival right-wing group in Thailand was believed to be partly supported by the United States and the welcome during his trip to the United States was nowhere near as warm what China had given him.

In China, the prince met with hundreds of thousands of people assembled by the government (Osborne, 1994). Moreover, Cambodian relations with the neighboring countries, South Vietnam and Thailand, were not good as Sihanouk already regarded Thailand and South Vietnam as external enemies, while naming Son Ngoc Thanh as an internal enemy. The death of Thai Prime Minister Sarit, the Vietnamese President, Diem, and the president of the United States, Kennedy, were all welcomed by the prince. "Sihanouk said the three would all meet in hell" (Osborne, 1994: 163).

In his court, he also employed those who held communist sympathies such as the two French advisers, Charles Meyer, and Jean Barre. At this point, Chandler also mentioned three consequences resulting from closer relations between

Sihanouk and the communist group and Communist China. Firstly, many Khmer newspapers that were published under Sihanouk's approval favored the left-wing group. Secondly, leftist students who returned home from France such as Khieu Samphan, Hou Nim and Hou Yon were in parliament after the 1962 election. Thirdly, Sihanouk decided to stop receiving American economic and military aid in 1963 (Chandler, 2008). These reasons showed that Sihanouk's 'neutrality' leaned to the left-wing side.

Sihanouk was over confident about himself even though he could not steer the Cambodian economy in the right direction. As Chandler wrote, Sihanouk never believed that his people could turn against him. "Cambodia was Sihanouk" (Chandler, 2008). However, he was annoyed by the communist movement at the end of Sangkum Reastr Niyum. One example of that was the Samlaut Uprising. People involved in the Samlaut rebellion were partly influenced by the communist group, but the main cause of the rebellion resulted from the fall of rice price which the state monopolized and controlled, indebtedness and the suppression by the military (Osborne, 1994).

Kiernan claimed the rebellion was fully prepared by the communist group (Kiernan, 1985). The uprising was regarded as marking a new development of Cambodian politics. The rebellion started after about 200 angry peasants attacked soldiers, killed two of them and captured their rifles on 2 April 1967 (Chandler, 1991). The response of the army was to crackdown on the villagers, and the villages were put to the torch leaving more than a hundred people dead (Osborne, 1994). Osborne called this rebellion the first time there was rural insurgency against the post-independence Cambodian government rather than the colonial regime (Osborne, 1994). Sihanouk also threatened those communist members that he would deal with them the same way he had done with the Khmer Serei.

Citing BBC news released on 24 April 1967, Chandler wrote, "On April 7, Sihanouk declared that he might "treat the Khmer Reds as I have treated the Khmer Serei." (Chandler, 1991: 165). Later he tried and executed three communist members (Osborne, 1994). In May 1968, Sihanouk allowed the official bulletin to publish his

order to summarily execute 200 rebels in the northeast (Osborne, 1994: 97). Sihanouk claimed himself to be neither a Khmer Serei nor a Khmer Red. "I am pure Khmer" (Chandler, 1991).

#### 2.3.4 End of Sihanouk

The end of the Sangkum Reastr Niyum came as a result of a coup d'état in 1970. The Sangkum Reastr Niyum was nearly at the end of the line after more than a decade under Sihanouk. Amid the chaos in Cambodia, Sihanouk went to France on 7 January 1970 claiming, as his reason, a health problem that needed to be treated in this country as he normally went there for treatment every two years (Jeldres, 2005). The departure for France of Sihanouk was claimed by Osborne as an old tactic that Sihanouk had used so many times before. "He believed that his absence would bring his opponents to their senses and rally his flagging supporters to his side." (Osborne, 1994: 207). But he was wrong. His long stay in Paris was part of the reason of the coup because he gave his opponents time for effective planning.

Two demonstrations leading to the day of the coup were believed to be planned by Lon Nol. On 8 March 1970, there was a small demonstration against the presence of the Vietcong in Cambodia in a provincial town and other frontier towns of Svay Rieng province, one of the provinces Vietcong soldiers used as their military base. On 11 March 1970, a huge demonstration against communist Vietnam was held during which the embassy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), and the embassy of Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (the National Liberation Front) were burned down. Sihanouk believed that it was part of the plan running up to a coup (Jeldres, 2005). On 18 March, Sihanouk was deposed by the National Assembly and he called this unconstitutional and labelled it a coup (Chandler, 1991).

In summary, it was amid the Cold War that Sihanouk had led Cambodia through neutrality. It was hard for Sangkum Reastr Niyum to stay neutral while its neighboring countries were communist (North Vietnam) and Free World (Thailand and South Vietnam). Therefore, Sangkum Reastr Niyum needed to deal with the communist movement and the Khmer Serie movement. A number of scholars

claimed that Sihanouk to some extent favored communism and he strongly pressured the Khmer Series movement. As a result, he defined those Khmer Series members as traitors of the nation. He ordered the execution of a number of them publicly. Were they all the traitors of the nation? Were they all defined as traitors because they were against Sihanouk? Anyway, under the leadership of prince Sihanouk, Cambodia was in peace at least until the mid-1960s.

## **2.4 Cambodian Nationalism during Khmer Republic**

This section will mainly focus on the nationalism against the Vietnamese government and people. I will try to distinguish between ideological confrontation and the nationalism against the so-called “historical enemy” or “hereditary enemy” which led to the massacre of Vietnamese civilians and tried to figure out the people’s perception and the government’s stand-point over the acts against the Vietnamese. I also look at the communist Khmer Rouge nationalism against Vietnam when the Khmer Rouge secretly turned against Vietnam and Vietnamese-trained cadres after 1973. The discussion will be based on government publications, reviews of history books, literature, newspapers and other documents.

### **2.4.1 Sihanouk Siding with the Khmer Rouge**

On the day he was deposed, Sihanouk flew to Peking to meet his old friend Zhou Enlai to get support, even though Soviet Premier Kosygin gave him full support for military struggle and guided him not to cooperate with China (Jeldres, 2005). After Sihanouk landed in Peking, he was warmly welcomed by Zhou Enlai and later met Pham Van Dong who offered help for military struggle. Through the support of both China and Communist Vietnam, Sihanouk called for a broad front of a national union and a national liberation army (Jeldres, 2005) and he called on the Cambodian people to participate in guerrilla war against the Lon Nol government that he called “Our enemy” (Chandler, 1991). His cooperation with Communist Khmer Rouge was mainly through his former members of the national assembly who had fled to the jungle after the Samlaut uprising in 1967. Now, they were warmly welcomed by Sihanouk. Those intellectuals were Khieu Samphan and Hou Youn, both French-educated economists, and Hu Nim, a lawyer.



Later the cooperation between Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge resulted in the formation of a government in exile, the Royal Government of National Union. The main persons to serve in this government were not from the top leaders of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, but the three persons who had previously served Sihanouk such as Khieu Samphan, Minister of Defense (later Deputy Premier as well); Hou Youn, Minister of the Interior, Communal Reforms and Cooperatives; and Hou Nim, Minister of Information and Propaganda (Jeldres, 2005). This government had strong support from many people in the countryside.

The reaction to the coup against Sihanouk took place after Sihanouk already called on the people to fight against Lon Nol. Several thousand Cambodian people from Kampong Cham marched to Phnom Penh to express their support for Sihanouk. They met paramilitary forces of Lon Nol who then opened fire on them leaving a hundred dead and wounded. The demonstrations also took place in Takeo and Kampot and also were brutally suppressed (Chandler, 1991). Sihanouk's call and the suppressions by the Lon Nol army added further encouragement for people to join the Khmer Rouge.

#### **2.4.2 Lon Nol Government and Its Act against Vietnamese**

Several days before the coup against Sihanouk, Lon Nol announced his call for the withdrawal of Vietnamese Communist soldiers, Viet Cong, who were based in Cambodian territory by dawn of 15 March. The call did not come to any result at all and the Vietcong did not follow the order (Chandler, 1991). The nationalist sentiment in the form of racism occurred in this new government. Lon Nol's soldiers could not expel Communist Viet Cong out of Cambodia and warfare needed to take place. Citing T.D. Allman, Chandler mentioned the mix of nationalism and the dream for a better economy, with young people going out of school and demonstrating against Prince Sihanouk and the Vietcong. Thousands of young people volunteered for military service in the hope of getting communist Viet Cong out of the country (Chandler, 1991). Between April and June, those thousand inexperienced soldiers were easily killed in battle by the long experienced Vietnamese soldiers. The

nationalist sentiment against Vietnam went up in the city as many young soldiers were killed.

The reaction to the loss of people in battle mentioned above and deep rooted hatred against the Vietnamese led to the brutal killing of Vietnamese civilians. In May 1970, the police and army killed Vietnamese civilians in Phnom Penh and other places (Chandler, 1991). Moreover, Poole claimed that the killing of Vietnamese civilians, stealing and destroying their properties in Phnom Penh were perpetrated by students and other potential dissident Khmer Groups (Poole, April 1974). This claim might be true because those students were no longer students as they had volunteered to be Lon Nol's forces. The massacre was very brutal as women and children were gunned down, strings of corpses floated down the river (Chandler, 1991). A photo exhibition of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung showed a photo of corpses of Vietnamese civilians whose legs were tied with strings in the Mekong River (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2006) while a film entitled "Cambodia: The Bloodiest Domino" showed dozens of dead Vietnamese collected by soldiers. Cited by Sihanouk, U.S Senator Mike Mansfield who called the massacre the ugly genocide, told that those Vietnamese civilians were farmers, fishermen, and tradesmen originally from both North Vietnam and South Vietnam (Sihanouk, October 1970). It was quite clear that the massacres had little relation to ideology, but it was the hatred that Cambodian people had held for a long time. The massacres were not only due to the presence of Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia, but also a rooted hatred of Cambodian people against Vietnamese. The act of killing Vietnamese civilians was very popular among Cambodian people. According to Chandler, this was more popular than the coup against the Prince in March 1970 (Chandler, 2008).

#### **2.4.3 Anti-Vietnamese Sentiment Reflected through Publication**

In this section, some available publications during the Lon Nol regime about nationalism against Vietnam will be reviewed. I strongly believe that the anti-Vietnamese sentiment during the Non Nol regime can also be founded in government publications.

First of all, a magazine of the Salvation Government of Lon Nol named “National Salvation Movement” published in 1970 was mainly about the badness of Sihanouk and a brief background of Vietnam. As the new regime was the first regime without the monarchy, the magazine started with the act of Prince Sihanouk in connection with Vietnam. The article accused Sihanouk of having a Vietnamese wife and selling territory to Youn<sup>5</sup>. It tried to prove that Sihanouk sold Cambodian territory by showing the evidence that Sihanouk allowed the Viet Cong to be based on Cambodian territory in return for the money that he put in foreign bank (Government-document, 1970). The articles then presented a brief historical background of Cambodia-Vietnam relations which related to territorial invasion. It reads:

*Youn is a descendent of Mongol who originally resided in the Southern part of China, Yunnan province. When China extended their territory, Youn moved to the Red River plateau as a buffer state in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Youn swallowed Champa in 15 century and then swallowed part of Cambodian territory (Kampuchea Krom) in 17 century in a number of ways. They sent girls to marry the Cambodian leader (Chay Jetha II in 1620). They brought soldiers to help King who fought against Khmer. They prided corrupt official (District chiefs, provincial governors, immigration officers, and Sihanouk). And now, Youn is injecting communist ideology to dissolve the Cambodian border in order to include Cambodia into “Indochinese Communist Federation” in which Cambodia will disappear into the overwhelming Youn people. (Archive, 1970: 24-25)*

It was the belief and history lesson that most Cambodian people agreed with, especially those who lived in towns and got better education. As mention early in this chapter, Cambodian King Chay Jetha II became the first person who responsible for the loss of Kampuchea Krom as he had Vietnamese wife and allowed the

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<sup>5</sup> During the Lon Nol regime as well as during the Pol Pot regime, they called Vietnamese “Youn”. This term was used to show disrespect or bad term toward Vietnam. See more in Chapter III.

settlement of Vietnamese people in Kampuchea Krom. It is not necessarily true for this part of history, but it is believed by most of Cambodian people which led to the hatred against Vietnamese.

Some other publication during Lon Nol regime also tried to prove that Vietnamese was “an invader”. For example, the author of “Master Kuy: Khmer Kampuchea Krom Hero”, Keo Sovath, wrote in his preface that the purposes of his publication were to present the history of evil kings who led to the loss of Kampuchea Krom, and to remind all Cambodian people of all generations to fight against Youn invaders who always want to conquer our territory in order to defend our national property (Sovath, 1971). This author was arrested and detained for 17 days when he published his book for the first time during Sangkum Reastr Niyum. It was censored because the book seriously criticized the monarchy. He waited until 1971 which he claimed to be the right time to publish his book again. The book started to introduce the reader to the history of Cambodia during King Chay Jetha II in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The king is known to be the first king who was responsible for the loss of Cambodian territory of Kampuchea Krom. This king had a Vietnamese wife, Ang Chov, who later tried to ask many things from the king favoring her native country including the increasing conquest of Kampuchea Krom by sending Vietnamese people to live in that region (Sovath, 1971). Even though this part of history also agreed with other history books, this book seemed to be more provocative by presenting Vietnamese leaders as having bad ways to swallow Cambodian territory. Moreover, this book also tried to generalize that all Vietnamese were bad. While presenting the bad things and the cruelty of the Vietnamese, the book also described a Cambodian hero, Master Kuy, who later was killed by Vietnamese soldiers because of his strong defending Cambodian territory of Preah Trapeang province, one of the 17 provinces in Kampuchea Krom that had been lost to Vietnam (Sovath, 1971).

Bunchan Mol, the author of “Political Prison” also expressed the need for nationalism education for young people in order to wake them up to defend the country which he claimed to be in the danger zone between Thailand and Vietnam. The book is mainly about his life as a prisoner in Phnom Penh, Prey Nokor (Saigon)

and Poulo Condore during French rule claiming to be a political prisoner. However, the purpose of the book was really to wake Cambodian people up to love the nation and defend it from foreign invasion namely “Youn” (Mol, 1971). As Sihanouk had sided with the Khmer Rouge and had Vietnamese military support up to the year of publication in 1971, the author put a question, “Is Sihanouk a Khmer King or Youn King?” He answered it, “He is Khmer King; but why Youn (communist) supported Khmer King and dismissed her own king” (Mol, 1971). Mol concluded that Youn supported Sihanouk in order to conquer the remaining Cambodian territory and destroy the Khmer race. He named Vietnamese as historical enemy since 300 years ago. Again, he called for nationalism to be included in general education (Mol, 1971).

A history lecturer during the Lon Nol regime, Noun Khhoeun, who got a bachelor degree in history in 1968, wrote a well-known book entitled, “Journey to the West and Indochina in the Year 2000”. This book was first published at the end of 1970 when Sihanouk had already been overthrown. This book started with some leading questions in the introduction. One of these questions was “*Will Vietnam become a second Germany or Japan in Southeast Asia in the coming future?*” which he tried to answer in the following sections. In a short answer, he concluded that there were no other people in the world similar to Youn besides German people and Japanese people. “Youn was strong, dear to overcome the difficulty, and struggle for victory.” (Khhoeun, 1971) (p. 49). However, he also believed that Youn posed a danger for Cambodia as Youn conquered Champa and Kampuchea Krom. Noun Khhoeun compared the plan of the Vietnamese to extend its territory to the west (Kampuchea) as water flows from the upper land. Noun Khhoeun estimated the number of the Vietnamese people in Cambodia to be 500,000 before 18 March 1970, but after the coup, about 100,000 Vietnamese people went back to South Vietnam (Khhoeun, 1971). He was so concerned about Vietnamese people in Cambodia that he believed that the presence of those Vietnamese people endangered the nation. As he explained, “*Those Youns are hardly assimilated into other nations. They keep practicing their own culture and always keep their political relations with their native country. According to this reason, we have to regard Youn as a huge danger*

*in our politics today and in the future.*” (Khhoeun, 1971: 62). His suggestion might have had a long consequence for the relations between Cambodia and Vietnam.

Another author who wrote “Pity Khmer Soul”, Sarin Ieth, wrote the book from his diary during his journey through the Khmer Rouge zone for nine months in 1972. He was actually a Lon Nol’s supporter who went to Khmer Rouge territory to find out if it was possible that the Lon Nol government and the Khmer Rouge group could unite. His main concern was that Vietnam might attempt to invade Cambodia. Once he was in the Khmer Rouge controlled area, he also met Vietnamese Communists (Vietcong) that made him angry. He believed that those Vietnamese soldiers were preparing to conquer Cambodian territory (Sarin, 1973). Sarin did not put the blame on the Khmer Rouge as he believed that the Vietnamese turned Cambodia to fight each other and would swallow Cambodia at the end.

Anyway, we can still find many popular songs during the Lon Nol regime in which nationalist sentiments were included. A song, “A knife of my father” sung by the most famous singer during the 1960s and 70s, Sin Sisamot, describes Cambodian history back to the end of the French protectorate. The singer told that his parents were killed by the Viet Minh during that time and he wanted to protect Cambodian territory and take revenge against communist Vietnam with his father’s knife. Another song sung by the same singer criticized Prince Sihanouk who sided with Vietnam and accused him of selling Cambodian territory to communist Vietnam, the Vietcong. The song reads, “[...] (R) in the evening, REY cry on the tree; pity Cambodian territory from our ancestor; king (Sihanouk) sold to Vietcong, (he is) traitor of nation and religion; I commit myself to fight for our victory. [...]” However, we should understand that it was when the Khmer Republic, the Lon Nol regime, was in full scale war against both Communist Vietnam and Communist Khmer Rouge. The song was part of recruitment propaganda to urge more people to serve as soldiers. At the same time, we cannot dismiss the fact that deep-rooted hatred against Vietnamese was also manifested.

It was clear that the anti-Vietnamese sentiment or nationalism against Vietnam was rooted deeply during the Khmer Republic. Apart from military

confrontation, anti-Vietnamese sentiment was found in publications and other media as well as in the killing of Vietnamese civilians.

#### **2.4.4 Khmer Rouge and Communist Vietnam**

At that time Pol Pot still needed Vietnamese military assistance during the early 1970s. Pol Pot also admitted that the Vietnamese at this stage offered him mixed combat commands, five thousand rifles, and international propaganda support. Moreover, most of the fighting against Lon Nol in 1971-1972 was carried out by Vietnamese forces or by Cambodians under Vietnamese command (Chandler, 1992). Therefore, all forms of military assistance were from the Vietnamese. They sent their forces and trainers to fight and train new Khmer Rouge soldiers too. They could also attack Lon Nol soldiers effectively in the early 1970s.

Pol Pot was openly a military partner with Vietnam but later Pol Pot started to break it secretly when his military force was strong enough to defeat Lon Nol. Pol Pot tried to recall the Vietnamese ambition to form a federation of Indochina, the idea that was originally initiated by Ho Chi Minh in 1930. Morris explained that the idea of federation was brought out by the Vietnamese communist leaders during the war for independence against the French. Vietnamese leaders by 1970 still wanted to have the federation in principle. However, the idea of having a federation comprising the countries in Indochina was later down played (Morris, 1999). This was what Pol Pot later claimed again and again that Vietnam wanted to conquer Cambodia according to the federation idea.

According to the *Livre noir*, Pol Pot and his colleagues rejected the Vietnamese requests to honor the cease-fire in 1973 because they believed that they could win the war themselves without Vietnamese military support. The public friendship ended and the secret enmity started at this point. David Chandler pointed out that Pol Pot became a secret enemy of Vietnam. Pol Pot started to get rid of those who had been trained in Vietnam and those who were loyal to Vietnam (Khmer Viet Minh). Many of those people were disarmed quietly and removed from their positions. One of them recalled the changing stand of the Khmer Rouge when study sessions were held to educate those whom they called revisionists. Those

Khmer Viet Minh were deposed from their previous positions; and some of them were sent to grow pepper, or to look after cattle. Some of them fled to Vietnam with Vietnamese units withdrawing from Cambodia in early 1973; and some were killed by the Khmer Rouge (Chandler, 1992). Similarly, Morris also mentioned that Pol Pot's purges of the Khmer Viet Minh during the early 1970s had diminished the prospects of Hanoi directing the Cambodian revolution (Morris, 1999). That was the starting point of secret enmity between Communist Kampuchea and Communist Vietnam.

When Pol Pot had enough military and support to defeat Lon Nol, he proved that his victory over Lon Nol was not with Vietnamese assistance because he could successfully defeat Lon Nol two weeks before North Vietnam liberated South Vietnam. That was what he told Nate Thayer in 1997, that Vietnam asked him to wait for Vietnamese help but he refused. He said, "First of all, it's a historical fact that in 1975, the Vietnamese liberated the South on 30 April. They told us many years ago that they were going to liberate Kampuchea too. They wanted to occupy Kampuchea" (McDonald, 2002). For these reasons, Pol Pot seemed to use Vietnam by pretending to be friends at the beginning of his movement. But his friendship was secretly cut off and he distanced himself from Vietnamese patronage.

As Cambodian intellectuals, the Khmer Rouge leaders probably shared the same hatred against the Vietnamese and believed that Vietnam would try to conquer Cambodia as part of its plan to form a federation. We can see that even though the Lon Nol regime and the Khmer Rouge were enemies and ideologically different, they shared the same belief against Vietnam as the invader.



## Chapter III

### Nationalism during Pol Pot Regime

It has been believed by many of Pol Pot supporters that Pol Pot, a former Prime Minister and secretary of Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) during Democratic Kampuchea is a nationalist person. There are several reasons to answer the question why those supporters regard Pol Pot as a nationalist. Undoubtedly, one of those reasons was Pol Pot's strong nationalist credential against Vietnam which those supporters called "Yuon". However, if we look back to the publications, party documents, and radio broadcasts and other media during Democratic Kampuchea, we will understand more deeply how Democratic Kampuchea's policy and education influenced those supporters. Studying those documents will also tell us how policy and education during Democratic Kampuchea motivated hatred against Vietnam.

In this chapter, I will firstly introduce the nationalism of a leading leader, Pol Pot, during Democratic Kampuchea given by his supporters. The nationalism is given without any elaboration of any theory. Pol Pot supporters regarded Pol Pot as a leading nationalist because of credentials that they believed to be nationalist elements. Secondly, I will look at publications and other media during the Pol Pot regime that stirred up the nationalist sentiment against Vietnam as those publications and media play important role in spreading policy among Democratic Kampuchea cadres (the Khmer Rouge cadres) of all level. The idea of "Yuon Invader" became the main element of nationalism during the Pol Pot regime as it was believed to be the national threat to both self-independence and loss of territory. Additionally, chauvinistic national sentiment and racist behaviour of Democratic Kampuchea against Vietnamese are also presented.

#### 3.1 Pol Pot's Nationalism Credential in the Eyes of His Supporters

It is hard to believe that Pol Pot was a true Cambodian nationalist for most of people in Cambodia who had suffered from the Pol Pot regime. Most of the victims I met mostly talked about the atrocity of the regime as well as Pol Pot as the regime leader. As I mentioned earlier, it is controversial that supporters of the regime name the regime leader as a true nationalist. However, there are some reasons given by

those supporters to support their argument. In this section, I will try to answer the question, “Why do some former Khmer Rouge cadres regard Pol Pot as a real nationalist?” Several opinions of Pol Pot’s supporters, which were shared with me during interviews, contribute to answering this question. The former Khmer Rouge cadres whose opinions are cited here include former bodyguards of Pol Pot, a former cook who later became a secretary general of party affairs at the Cambodian Embassy in China, and other individuals who worked with Pol Pot after his fall from power.

One of the people I interviewed was a former bodyguard who is a member of an ethnic minority from Ratanakiri, in the Northeastern part of Cambodia. He worked as Pol Pot’s bodyguard during the whole period of Pol Pot’s leadership. He is still very positive about Pol Pot. When he talked about Pol Pot’s working, he stated that he admired the way Pol Pot led the country during the Pol Pot regime. He first started to talk about the punctuality of Pol Pot at his working place. He said: *“Pol Pot started work exactly at 7, he worked until 11 and paused for lunch break and started again at 2 to 5 pm. Moreover, he still worked when he was back in his room. I saw Pol Pot sitting on his chair writing probably plans to develop the country”* (13MOT, January 05, 2013). Pol Pot also liked to read books because his bodyguard saw a lot of books on his book shelves. Pol Pot worked hard not only in office but also at the countryside, according to the former bodyguard. He claimed that Pol Pot went to meet local leaders very often to discuss about building the irrigation system. At this point he started to point out how Pol Pot put the nation in front of everything else including his personal desires. He was not a materialistic person; he focused very much on how to get people out of poverty by improving irrigation and rice production.

*“He normally really pleased people and people also loved him because he wanted people to be more prosperous. When people at the construction sites met him, they were happy and congratulated his arrival. They were happy because Uncle Pol Pot made irrigation that allowed people to grow rice 2 or 3 times a*

*year; they got enough rice crop. I think he always cared about people” (13MOT, January 05, 2013).*

Saying that people loved Pol Pot and Pol Pot wanted people to be more prosperous is completely untrue if we look at the result of the Pol Pot regime in which millions of people died partly because of starvation. As Pol Pot is well known as the person who was responsible for the loss of two millions lives of people during his leadership, this former bodyguard saw Pol Pot in a different way. He saw Pol Pot as a very gentle person who had never blamed him for anything. He also mentioned that Pol Pot was a person who did not want to show-off. It is quite true that Pol Pot did not need public recognition since during the war against Lon Nol. The bodyguard tried to compare the way Pol Pot departed from Phnom Penh to other provinces for his work with the way today’s leaders use big motorcade to go anywhere. He said,

*“We went to Siem Reap for about 10 days to meet a regional leader there and talked about a plan to build a dam, and later went there again to see the construction. Normally, we had only one car which was probably a modern car at the time. It was a pick-up. Uncle Pol Pot sat in the front part next to driver and we (about 5 bodyguards) sat behind them in the pickup. We just went there with this one car without any motorcade or special guards along the way like today’s leaders.”<sup>6</sup> (13MOT, January 05, 2013)*

He also said nice things about Pol Pot, whom he thought was a clean person, which means “no corruption.” As a bodyguard, he never saw Pol Pot taking bribes from his followers or other people. When there was a meeting at Pol Pot’s office (K1 Office), some participants were region or zone leaders. Interestingly, those participants did not carry anything except notebooks and pens. They never brought any gift for Uncle Pol Pot or other participants.

As a former bodyguard, he did not see any negative point about Pol Pot during his duty. Most importantly, he was very impressed by Pol Pot’s nationalist

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<sup>6</sup> In contrast to what some authors mentioned that Pol Pot was heavily guarded.

ideas against Vietnam. He said that Pol Pot was working so hard to prevent Cambodia from falling into Vietnamese hands.

Another person who had been with Pol Pot as a cook during the civil war and later became a secretary general of party affairs at the Cambodian Embassy in China gave strong value to Pol Pot as a gentle leader and an independent person. Firstly, she recalled the time when she was a cook for Pol Pot. She made food for Pol Pot for several years but she claimed that Pol Pot never complained to her during that time. When she made soup too salty, Pol Pot would tell her to decrease the salt next time. According to her, Pol Pot had never shown his aggressive attitude towards her and other persons. That's why she considers him as a very gentle person. In this respect, she wants to protect Pol Pot from the eyes of many people who think that Pol Pot is not nationalist because Pol Pot was very cruelly responsible for the loss of millions of Cambodian lives during his leadership.

However, the strong nationalism of Pol Pot is his independence, according to her. She said that Pol Pot was working in his own way. Even China could not tell Pol Pot what to do. She said,

*"I really love him because he is an independent person. He never wanted to be under anyone or country even China. When Pol Pot visited China in late 1977, I was with him to assist him with the visit agenda. Uncle Pol Pot is a warm-hearted person who never gets aggressive with anybody. Once the Chinese leader, Deng Xiaoping, criticized him about the evacuation of people in the city and the starvation of people in Cambodia, he kept smiling and accepted the criticism. In reality, I think he did not follow those criticisms"*  
(13FYM, January 03, 2013).

In her opinion, being an independent leader led the country to be independent too. The case of being independent from China is not the most serious case for her. The most serious case for her was to be independent from Vietnam. That is the most important nationalist idea that Pol Pot had, according to her. She saw Pol Pot as a person who wanted to defend the country from other invasions and

protect the Khmer (Cambodian) from being controlled by the Vietnamese. This anti-Vietnamese policy of Pol Pot was the main advantage of the regime for her. She emphasized that *“Without the regime led by Pol Pot, Cambodia would be a Vietnamese nation”* (13FYM, January 03, 2013).

To connect with her answer about the advantage of Pol Pot’s leadership, I posed another question to her, “Was there any mistake that Pol Pot made during his more than three years leadership?” Her answer was almost exactly the same as what Pol Pot had given to Nate Thayer as his answer in 1997. She said, *“The mistake of the regime is that we had a lot of leaders that did not walk on the same path. The biggest mistake is that we lost to Vietnam. That was because we couldn’t control everything in his hands. That’s why we couldn’t trust each other”* (13FYM, January 03, 2013). This idea was dangerous during the Pol Pot time. Those who did not walk on the same path of revolution would be withdrawn from the party which means being killed.

Giving the same idea, a former secretary general at Ministry of Foreign Affairs also gave the same credential for Pol Pot as a real nationalist because he wanted to be free from Vietnam. Moreover, he thought that Pol Pot did the right thing to build irrigation all over the country by submitting people to hard labor. He said that whatever Pol Pot did during that time was to build prosperity for the nation (12MSB, October 9, 2012). This idea is also supported by a former battalion army chief who was stationed at the Cambodian-Vietnamese border in Kratie province during the Pol Pot regime. He claimed that during the Pol Pot regime, Cambodian territory was fully protected. Given this reason, he thinks that Pol Pot is a nationalist person and regarded him as a personal hero (11MOS, April 10, 2011).

Another person who worked as a soldier in Ratanakiri during Democratic Kampuchea also claimed that Pol Pot and other CPK leaders were absolutely true nationalists. She gave the reason why the Khmer Rouge broke relations with Vietnam in early 1973. She said, “We cooperated with Yuon at first but when uncle Pol Pot knew Yuon planned to take over Cambodia, Uncle got rid of all Yuon soldiers in 1973. It was because Uncle knew that Yuon never abandoned their goal of Indochina

Federation in order to swallow our country.” (14FSK, February 12, 2014). Not different from other supporters, she also admired Democratic Kampuchea leaders for having sacrificed themselves for the nation, and being clean persons. However, she claimed,

“It was too short that he (Pol Pot) led the country only three years. He could not control all of everything within those short years. There was a lot of traitors destroying the nation and led to the fall of the nation. Those traitors did not want to follow Uncle’s discipline. No love affair outside marriage was allowed; No alcohol was allowed. Those who were involved in love affair outside marriage would have short life.” (14FSK, February 12, 2014).

Another former soldier in Kratie province claimed that the Pol Pot regime was not a model one as many people were killed including his relatives. However, he still respected Pol Pot and other leaders of having a strong nationalist idea against Yuon which is the only thing he admire them the most (14MSSH, February 12, 2014).

Therefore, a number of former Khmer Rouge cadres still regard Pol Pot positively even though they know that about two million people were killed during Pol Pot’s leadership. They viewed that those who were killed during the Pol Pot regime were “traitors.” There are many reasons given by former Khmer Rouges as to why they view Pol Pot positively. However, we can see that one common credential of Pol Pot given by his followers is extreme nationalist idea against Vietnam. Theoretically, to defend the country from external threat, and to show commitment to protect the common interest is regarded to be nationalist action. But this kind of nationalism can hide the huge crime committed by Pol Pot from the eyes of those former Khmer Rouge cadres.

### **3.2 Anti-Vietnamese Nationalism**

The above section discussed how Pol Pot’s supporters gave him nationalist credential against Vietnam, that is, a justification for characterizing him as a true nationalist. This section will look back to the regime regarding the anti-Vietnamese

sentiment through the media and publications that played an important role in Democratic Kampuchea's policy. One of those documents was "the Revolutionary Flag" whose function was to educate the Khmer Rouge cadres of all levels. There are two main topics to be discussed in this section. Firstly, the perception towards Vietnam as "Youn Invader" will be presented based on available documents mainly "the Revolutionary Flag" magazine. Secondly, the chauvinistic national sentiment and racist behavior against Vietnamese during of Democratic Kampuchea were also the main reasons leading to the false belief of accusing those associated enemy in East Zone of being "Vietnamese heads, Khmer bodies".

### 3.2.1 Youn Invader

It had been the subject of many publications during the Lon Nol regime to name Vietnam as "Youn Invader". During the Pol Pot regime, a regime whose political system was completely different from the Lon Nol regime, the word "Youn Invader" also appeared in many publications and media. As "Youn Invader" was perceived to be a national threat, it was the kind of sentiment in the Cambodian mind which needed response in order to protect national and collective interests. Additionally, based on Gellner definition, it was also a nationalist sentiment of feeling anger aroused by the belief that Vietnam would violate Cambodia and invade Cambodia.

Using the word "Youn" itself is explained to signify low value or an inferior race. Cited by Ben Kiernan from an internal document, Black Paper, the word "Youn" was explained to be "the name given by Kampuchea's people to the Vietnamese since the epoch of Angkor and it means 'savage'." (Kiernan, 2001). But Kiernan concluded that Youn does not mean 'savage' as the Black Paper mentioned. It was probably the confusion arising from the spelling of the word the Vietnamese use to call themselves "Yueh" (Viets). However, Cambodian people pronounce it "Youn" (Kiernan, 2001: 189). Anyway, a history professor at the Royal University of Phnom, Vong Sotheara, who is a specialist in Cambodian inscription, claimed that "The word Yvan/Yuon យ្វង/យ្វន appeared on Khmer inscriptions from the 9th century in the form of anthroponyms but on the inscription K.105 in the 10th century as an

ethnonym for calling Vietnamese people.” He, however, disagrees with the notion that the word is used in a discriminatory sense by some Khmer people. To some extent during the 1970s, Yuon was perceived as a lower race or the invading race by Cambodian leaders and probably by the majority of people.

Not different from those of the Lon Nol regime, most of the publications of the Pol Pot regime started to talk about Yuon as an invader going back to 17<sup>th</sup> century. An internal document released on 15 June 1977 reads, “In 1620, a traitor king, Chay Jetha II, betrayed Cambodia by marrying a daughter of Anam (Vietnam) king. This incident was the beginning of Yuon’s struggle to take over Cambodia and it was the reason that Cambodia lost Kampuchea Krom.” (Internal-Document, June 15, 1977). The document continued to blame the monarchical regime in which the following kings after Chay Jetha II were also responsible for the loss of Kampuchea Krom.

But the other crucial year that the Khmer Rouge used to color Vietnam as Yuon invader was ‘1930’, the year of the establishment of the Indochinese Communist Party under the leadership of Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh. Regarding the year 1930 as another starting point for Vietnamese ambition to conquer Cambodia and Laos, Pol Pot mentioned in his 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the party speech that the Indochinese Communist Party was actually fully under Vietnamese power rather than for all Indochinese countries. He called the establishment of Indochinese Communist Party as the plan to annex Cambodia and Laos to Vietnam. The speech reads, “It was the plan of Yuon to put Cambodia into the Indochinese federation. Shall we give our Cambodia to the Indochinese federation as another Yuon country? The Indochinese federation is just only fake name, but the real name is Yuon”(Pot, 1977). It seems to show that this belief was rooted in the hearts of cadres much more than in hearts of the ordinary people.

In the Revolutionary Flag, a policy magazine for educating party cadres, the idea to accuse Vietnamese of being ambitious to conquer Cambodia under the name Indochinese Communist Party was also written in several issues of the magazine. For example, the Revolutionary Flag No. 4 issued in April 1978 described a timeline from



1930 to 1978 about the attempted invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam. “Yuon wanted our Cambodia to be their buffer state since the year 1930.” (D21426, April, 1978). On the very first page of another issue of the Revolutionary Flag, the magazine started by naming Yuon as national and historical enemy since long time ago up to today. It reads, “Yuon invader<sup>7</sup> (ឃ្នុងឃ្នួន ឈ្លានពាន វាតទី លេបទីកដី) wants to destroy our Cambodian race from one generation to another generation. Yuon is our national enemy. [...] we are still there today because our ancestors, parents, brothers, sisters and we have all together sacrificed our fresh blood and our lives from one generation to another generation to fight Yuon invader.” (D21429, July 1978) (pp. 01-02).

The Revolutionary Flag was a policy magazine for internal party use during Democratic Kampuchea. It was intended to reach all levels of cadres. A note at the end of the magazine was often found in several numbers of issues. For example, on the end-page of the Revolutionary Flag issued in August 1977 a note reads, “Note: Suggests party cadres of all levels seriously consider and study this issue in order implement it in every own zone effectively.” (D21423, August 1977) (p. 56). It shows that what was written in this magazine is clearly a policy of the party, which needed to be implemented at all levels of the Khmer Rouge administration. A person who worked at Ministry of Propaganda during that time also assumed that the articles for the Revolutionary Flag were written by Pol Pot. The articles were sent to K25<sup>8</sup> for publishing without any editing. He once saw a note from Brother Pol (Pol Pot) wrote, “Publish it quickly” (12MKV, October 08, 2012). Therefore, the Revolutionary Flag became an important document for Democratic Kampuchea’s internal policy for all levels of cadres. Additionally, during that time, the Khmer Rouge cadres became teachers for people through meetings in which the policy of Democratic Kampuchea in the Revolutionary Flag could reach people through those cadres.

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<sup>7</sup> Direct translation from Khmer “ឃ្នុងឃ្នួនពាន វាតទី លេបទីកដី” is “Yuon invader, expansionist, and territorial swallower”.

<sup>8</sup> One of offices under ministry of propaganda that have two groups: writing group and printing group, according to my interview with 12MKV.

Naming Vietnamese as Yuon invader was not found in the early years of Democratic Kampuchea publications. A number of issues of the Revolutionary Flag in 1975 and 1976 were mainly about great victory, building socialism, defending the country, agricultural plans and other topics. Yuon as external enemies were rarely talked about. In April 1977, the Revolutionary Flag mentioned external enemies among whom Yuon enemy was included. Other external enemies were the CIA and KGB. However, the way the magazine wrote about Yuon enemy was in abbreviation as “Y Enemy” (D21427, April 1977) or “Invading Enemy”. Since then Yuon invader became the topic of every issues of the following months. At one point, the magazine told that those who did not hate Yuon were internal enemy. It became a racist behaviour of Democratic Kampuchea. The Revolutionary Flag released in November 1977 emphasized that, “Traitorous cadres at first also hated “Y” like we do, but their vision, their nationalism was weak. They feared “Y” which led them to side with “Y”. So, they became the traitors of own nation and people.” (D21431, October, November 1977) (p.58). It shows that all Khmer Rouge cadres needed to hate Yuon otherwise they would be regarded as enemies. They had to show hatred against Vietnamese even if they did not hate Yuon.

After Cambodia cut off relations with Vietnam at the end of December 1977, the Revolutionary Flag issued in January 1978 stopped using abbreviation “Y” referring to Yuon. Yuon enemy and Yuon invader were fully written. In the first issue of the Revolutionary Flag in 1978, Yuon invader was then also named the East Enemy and was compared to the West Enemy, Thailand. In comparison, the magazine emphasized Yuon as the most dangerous enemy while it named Thailand as the enemy that was straightforward in confrontation. At this point, the writer wanted to show that Yuon used every way to beat Cambodia or to swallow Cambodia while Thailand would make war directly if they wanted to invade Cambodia. With this perception, Democratic Kampuchea believed that it was easy to confront Thailand. As Thailand was less dangerous than Vietnam, the main focus of Democratic Kampuchea was how to deal with Vietnam. Again and again, the magazine accused Vietnam of being invader. Every edition after April 1977, Yuon invader was included and the related topics of Yuon invader occupy most of the

pages in the magazine. To justify that Yuon is invader, the writer reminded readers of the case of Kampuchea Krom, a territory that once was under Cambodian authority. It reads, “The plan of Yuon was to swallow our territory by turning our territory into their territory as we have already lost our Kampuchea Krom.” (D21432, December-January 1977-78) (p.17).

In addition to publication of internal documents such as Revolutionary Flag, the public radio broadcast also tried to convince Cambodian people to picture Vietnam in a negative way. On January 1<sup>st</sup> of 1978, the chief of state, Khieu Samphan, issued a statement condemning Vietnamese invasion after Vietnamese soldiers entered Cambodian territory in November and December 1977. The statement also explained the reasons why Vietnam invaded Cambodia from Cambodian government’s perspective. There were two main reasons: the first reason was because Vietnamese soldiers wanted to rob rice, chickens, ducks, cows, buffaloes from Cambodian people to supply their shortage; the second reason was basically because Vietnam wanted to take Cambodia into the Indochinese federation in which Vietnam can easily swallow Cambodia. Democratic Kampuchea believed that being under the Indochinese federation, Vietnam would send its own people to live in Cambodia from 500,000 to 1 million people each year; and in 40 years, Cambodia would automatically become Vietnam like Kampuchea Krom (ADP\_AU\_002068, January 01, 1978). The statement continued, “Regarding this issue, Vietnam educated their soldiers and people that they need to conquer Cambodia otherwise they could not become a powerful country in Indochina”. Regarding a neighboring country as national enemy is, somehow, not strange as Thongchai Winichakul called role of enemy in Thai Politics to strengthen national security and for uniting different groups in the country (Winichakul, 1994). Democratic Kampuchea named their neighboring countries as east enemy (Vietnam) and west enemy (Thailand). However, to the northern neighboring country, Democratic Kampuchea did not name Laos as north enemy but name this country as victim of the Indochinese Federation and Democratic Kampuchea should not follow the country’s fate.

Not only was Vietnam perceived by the Khmer Rouge as an invader, but also as possessing a cruel personality. In Black Paper, the Khmer Rouge recalled the

famous myth that many people heard called, “Don’t Spill the Master’s Tea”. The myth told, “The Yuons buried alive the Khmer people up to their necks and used the latter’s heads as a stand for a wood stove to boil water for their master’s tea. As they burned and suffered, the victims shook their heads. At that moment, the Yuon torturers said to them: “Be careful not to spill the master’s tea” (Kiernan, 2001: 188). This myth was probably the most influential one for those who tried to portray Vietnam to look bad. All of my interviewees responded that they knew about this myth before Democratic Kampuchea in the case of old people and during Democratic Kampuchea in the case of young people.

Probably almost every single Cambodian was told about “Yuon invader” during Democratic Kampuchea. Therefore, from top leaders down to the people more or less perceived Vietnamese as “Yuon Invader”. This perception became the nationalist sentiment of Cambodian leaders and people as it was spread throughout the country.

Pol Pot, in this context, can be called as paranoia as he was very suspicious about Vietnam. However, this kind of paranoia did not just come without any reasons. There were some suspicious actions of Vietnam on Cambodia that made Cambodian leaders perceived Vietnam as “invader”. There were few historical events that made Cambodian leaders during Democratic Kampuchea suspicious about. Firstly, history of Cambodia-Vietnam relation during the 17<sup>th</sup> century when Vietnamese king sent princes to marry Cambodian king in order to get national benefit, and the Vietnamization program during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century could be justified. Secondly, the establishment of Indochinese Communist Party is arguably suspicious. As the founder of this party, Ho Chi Minh, is Vietnamese, it is easily concluded that Vietnamese would dominate the party and Indochinese country would be under Vietnamese control. This justification became a huge suspicion of Pol Pot as well as other leaders and supporters of Democratic Kampuchea. Finally, the event leading to the victory of the Khmer Rouge over Lon Nol in 1975 also become the suspicious event for Democratic Kampuchea as Vietnam insisted to help the Khmer Rouge to overthrow Lon Nol government. Pol

Pot claimed his suspicion of Vietnam. He told Nate Thayer in 1997 that Vietnam asked him to wait for Vietnamese help but he refused (Mcdonal, 2002).

In conclusion, the perception of Yuon Invader was strongly believed by leaders and supporters during Democratic Kampuchea. Responding to this perception, Pol Pot and his followers made a huge mistake involving mass killing of both Vietnamese civilians and Cambodian people.

### **3.2.2 False Belief**

In this respect, I will present the false belief of Pol Pot and their followers as a whole about Vietnam during Democratic Kampuchea. Even though to portray the external enemy as external threat for the nation and to defend the nation from any attempted invasion is, somehow, necessary for a nation as mentioned above by Thongchai Winichakul. However, the case of Democratic Kampuchea was unacceptable as their chauvinistic national sentiment and racist behaviour against Vietnamese became the justification for mass murders.

#### **3.2.2.1 Chauvinistic National Sentiment**

Pol Pot as the leader of Democratic Kampuchea was always too proud of himself, his people and his soldiers and discredited Vietnam. The chauvinistic national sentiment of Democratic Kampuchea was strongly practiced. First of all the victory over Lon Nol regime in 1975 was praised higher as it actually was. In comparison to Vietnam, the Khmer Rouge leaders claimed their winning. 17 April 1975 was exactly two weeks before Communist Vietnam liberated South Vietnam on 30 April 1975. This great victory became a step ahead of Vietnam. This victory even made Pol Pot over confident in his ability, soldiers and people. He regarded the victory not only as one over Lon Nol but also over American imperialists while there was no American soldiers directly involved in the fight.

This idea still exists among former Khmer Rouge cadres. A former secretary general at Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a nephew of Pol Pot told me, “The greatest achievement of Pol Pot was to defeat imperialist Americans” (12MSB, October 9, 2012). The same idea was also told by Pol Pot’s bodyguard that Pol Pot could defeat

imperialist Americans and made a great victory on 17 April 1975 (13MOT, January 05, 2013). It is not strange for them because they were very close to Pol Pot. They might have similar mind-sets as Pol Pot or were brainwashed by Pol Pot. During Pol Pot's famous five-hour-long speech on 27 September 1977 on the occasion of 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), he posed a long question, "*Why Cambodian people could get victory continuously until they get a great victory over the imperialist Americans who is one of the master mind all over the world...*" (Pot, 1977). This statement shows that Pol Pot thought that he won a victory over imperial America. The same speech also asserted, "*... Americans had vomited blood once when they lost to us. They vomited a lot of blood and cried without tear*". With the great victory, Pol Pot also connected this victory with Vietnam. He continued his speech, "*But Youn also vomited blood. First vomiting blood was when they could not annex Cambodia to the Indochinese Federation. Second vomiting blood was when they wanted to win over South Vietnam before Cambodia in order to swallow Cambodia but they lost to Cambodia because Cambodia won first*" (Pot, 1977). The speech was made two years after the victory when Pol Pot had already shown his confrontation against Vietnam. However, I believe that this idea was rooted in Pol Pot's mind at least since 1973 when he rejected Vietnamese military aid and fought against Lon Nol on his own.

This victory was also described in the national anthem entitled, "The Dazzling Victory of 17 April". At one point, the song says, "Long live the dazzling victory of 17 April! More grandiose, more meaningful than the Angkor era!" (Locard, 2004). It was a long problem resulting from this idea. It had much influence on Pol Pot's decision later. He believed that "If our people could build Angkor Wat, they are capable of doing anything" (Locard, 2004: 32). So, Pol Pot not only claimed that Cambodian revolution during his leadership was as great as Angkor Empire, but also believed to be greater than Angkor era.

After Khmer Rouge and Vietnamese forces were in confrontation prior to the attack in April 1977, Pol Pot compared military strengths between communist Kampuchea and the Vietnamese armed forces. Pol Pot believed that his soldiers could defeat Vietnamese soldiers because he believed that as his soldiers had

already defeated American soldiers during the civil war in the first half of the 1970s. There were two main reasons why Pol Pot believed his soldiers could defeat Vietnam: firstly, “[we] could beat American soldiers; [we] can beat Yuon.” Secondly, the quality Khmer Rouge soldiers and the quality of Vietnamese soldiers were different, he claimed. “Cambodian soldiers were poor and without any military ranks. They undertook revolution for the progress of the country and in doing this they sacrificed themselves for the nation, people, and next generation. In contrast, Vietnamese soldiers were weak due to the mixed classes of those from the North and the South. They are also corrupted when they mixed together” (Pot, 1977). This is what Pol Pot claimed and possibly also what his followers of all level did as well.

To prove that those chauvinistic national sentiments by Pol Pot and his followers was a false belief, some reports from the Revolutionary Flag magazine and the radio broadcasts of Democratic Kampuchea will be discussed. Some reports were exaggerated. The radio report released on 7 January 1978 about the successful battle against Vietnam in different battles in various provinces was actually exaggerated. While the battle was described by scholars that the Vietnamese army easily defeated the Cambodian army, the government report was different. Victory news broadcast by the Democratic Kampuchea Radio congratulated the Democratic Kampuchea army which successfully defeated Vietnamese soldiers. The success of Democratic Kampuchea army was categorized by zone and region. The broadcast reads,

*In Snuol battle, Kratie province, from December 12, 1977 to January 5, 1978, we fought enemies to 600 heads (in a disrespectful way, head was used instead of person) dead and injured. Our soldiers sacrificed their lives with dead 9 persons and 102 persons injured. In Southwest Zone, the reports covered the period from December 11, 1977 to January 5, 1978. In Takeo of Southwest Zone, we fought enemies to 3000 heads dead and injured, destroyed more than 24 tanks. Our soldiers sacrificed their lives with 80 persons dead and 300 persons injured. In Kampot of Southwest Zone, we fought enemies to 2100 heads dead and injured, and destroyed 12 tanks. Our soldiers sacrificed their lives with 60 persons dead and 1800 persons injured.*

*In Basac Koh Thom of Southwest Zone, we fought enemies to 900 heads dead and injured. Our soldiers sacrificed their lives with 12 persons dead and 40 persons injured (ADP-AU-002069, January 7, 1978).*

Similarly, the report continued with the East Zone accomplishment of which the result was even greater than that of the Southwest Zone. In National Road No.7 battle from September 1977 to January 5, 1978, the report claimed that the Democratic Kampuchea army destroyed the enemy to 18000 heads dead and injured while there were only 309 of the Khmer Rouge soldiers dead and 600 injured (ADP-AU-002069, January 7, 1978).

With this exaggerated report, the Democratic Kampuchea under the leadership of Pol Pot gave quality to his soldiers as invincible. The idea of “one Cambodian soldier equals 30 Vietnamese soldiers” was known nationwide.

In the Revolutionary Flag, the writer supposedly Pol Pot, posed a question, “Why did we truly win over Yuon?” The same answers were told. He believed Yuon was not better than the US which he claimed had been defeated by the Cambodian army. Based on the exaggerated report about battle results against Vietnam, the magazine also wrote,

“In Svay Rieng battle, the result of the battle in March was one Cambodian soldier against 90 Yuon soldiers. One Cambodian soldier could kill 90 Yuon soldiers. But in other battles the result was one Cambodian soldier against 5 Yuon soldiers; one against 10; one against 15, and one against 20. All in all, we could use one Cambodian soldier to fight 30 Yuon soldiers nationwide (D21426, April, 1978).

The report must be exaggerated but leaders of Democratic Kampuchea believed in the report and made even worse decisions. The report also made Pol Pot believe that one Cambodia soldier had enough ability to kill 30 Vietnamese soldiers in battle. This belief became a slogan for the Pol Pot regime. Pol Pot tried to explain how 8



million people of Cambodia could defeat 50 million people of Vietnam. The magazine reads,

“Let us calculate the number based on one Cambodian soldier against 30 Yuon soldier. How about 10 Cambodian soldiers? It is 300 Yuon soldiers. If 100 Cambodian soldiers, it is 3,000 Yuon soldiers. If one million Cambodian soldiers, it would be 30 million Yuon soldiers. If one million Cambodian soldiers can defeat 30 million Yuon soldiers, it means 2 million Cambodian soldiers can defeat 60 million Yuon soldiers. Therefore, if we spend only 2 million people we can defeat more than the whole Yuon people today, because Yuon have only 50 million people. So, we don't have to use all 8 million; we use only 2 million to fight against 50 million; and we have 6 million people left.”  
(D21426, April, 1978)

He discredited Vietnamese soldiers who had long experience in battle. He called “Yuon soldier eat rice husks”. It was widely known that ordinary people also believed that Vietnamese soldiers were very weak by comparing them to unused cloth (Kantop) and eat rice husks (Kantok). Several interviewees in Svay Rieng province still remember the saying that its meaning was to give less value for Vietnamese people by comparing Vietnamese people and soldiers to unused cloth and characterizing them as having tail like a wild animal. The saying reads, “Yuon is Kantop (unused cloth); hold Kantin (pot), eat Kantok (rice husks), have Kantoy (tail)” (14MKS, January 06, 2014). This is what Kate Frienson believed that the strong chauvinistic orientation during Democratic Kampuchea was mostly in form of anti-Vietnam in both its foreign policy and its anti-Vietnamese behaviour (Frienson, 1988).

This belief made Pol Pot and his followers stand firmly on the idea that any loss was because of the enemy. It is not wrong at all to believe that one nation has enough ability to defend the country from external threat; in the Cambodian case during Democratic Kampuchea it was a tragedy when this belief came into practice and thousands of Cambodian people were killed because of this belief. Moreover, to keep the great victory alive, Democratic Kampuchea leaders continued to kill those

whom they considered enemies. Then they perceived their action to be nationalism by claiming to protect Cambodian sovereignty and protect Cambodian territory from foreign invasion.

### 3.2.2.2 Racism during Democratic Kampuchea

Tzvetan Todorov defined “racism” as a matter of behaviour that appeared in form of hatred or contempt for individual who have well-defined physical characteristics different from our own; and as a matter of ideology, a doctrine concerning human races (Todorov, 2009). Additionally, Anthony Smith wrote that racism attempts to perfect nature through eugenics, both to breed ‘pure’ ethnic groups, and later to create a racial elite and aims of all racial breeding was the formation of a segregated ‘master-race’ (Smith, 1979). According to these definitions, Racist behaviour against Vietnamese of the Khmer Rouge leaders and cadres during Democratic Kampuchea was notable in the forms of hatred, national security concern, purify race, and master-race.

Even though Cambodia-Vietnam diplomatic relations had been better in the early phase of the Pol Pot regime, Pol Pot still needed to purify his people by sending back Vietnamese people to Vietnam. Then both Pol Pot and his second big brother, Noun Chea, announced at the May 1975 meeting their plans to remove the entire Vietnamese minority from Cambodia. This was the second wave of repatriating Vietnamese civilians during the 1970s and the second wave of deep rooted hatred against Vietnamese civilians.

The first wave had taken place in 1970 when Lon Nol repatriated and killed many Vietnamese civilians. During that time, soon after Lon Nol had successfully staged a coup to overthrow Sihanouk, he called for the Vietnamese communist soldiers who were based inside Cambodian territory to withdraw from Cambodia within 48 hours. But what Lon Nol soldiers could do was to kill hundreds of Vietnamese civilians (Chandler, 2008). The racist repatriation claimed even tens of thousands Vietnamese lives, according to Goshal. He estimated that about 200,000 Vietnamese who survived the racist campaign went to Vietnam (Goshal, 1993).

After April 1975, Vietnamese civilians were repatriated again and the situation of those Vietnamese people was even worse than those repatriated by the Lon Nol regime. The CPK ordered Vietnamese residents who had secretly infiltrated into Kampuchea and who had lived secretly mixing themselves with the population before July 1975 to leave the country. The repatriation was part of the agenda to purify Cambodian race and also was part of the hatred that Cambodian people and Cambodian leaders had held. It was a racist behaviour.

One interviewee in Kampong Chhnang province told Derks that Vietnamese people were gathered and brought to a mountain where they were forced to work hard with little food for four or five months before they were sent to the border (Derks, 1996). However, some Vietnamese people who were sent to the Cambodia-Vietnam border were not accepted by Vietnamese authorities. Peou Hong who had a Khmer father of Vietnamese origin and a Cambodian mother was sent to a border area with his family and other ethnic Vietnamese people. At Ka-am Samna, Leuk Dek district, region 25, Vietnamese authorities came to pick up those Vietnamese people. After being at the place for five days, Vietnamese authorities told those people that they were Khmer; so, they could not enter Vietnamese territory. They were then ordered to go back home (Dany, April 2002). The problem was that those ethnic Vietnamese had been in Cambodia for a long time; the majority of them must have been born in Cambodia, and this was the reason for their being rejected by Vietnamese authorities.

This process of repatriation resulted in hardship suffering for a number of Vietnamese civilians. A number of them died along the way to Vietnam. In 1976, there were petitions from 30 relatives who claimed to have lost 148 family members in Cambodia (Sorya, November 2000). According to Ben Kiernan, following the order from the CPK, by late September, over 150,000 Vietnamese residents in Cambodia had been rounded up and sent to Vietnam. Some of those expelled were massacred on their way to Vietnam (Kiernan, 1997).

Repatriating the Vietnamese was popular among most of the former Khmer Rouge cadres who felt that it was the right thing to do. A female unit chief in

Battambang province said that Democratic Kampuchea is the only regime in which there were no Vietnamese people living (11FSP, October 4, 2011). In her opinion, it was necessary to send those Vietnamese people back because they could be spies of their government. Such an attitude was not different from those of most of my interviewees who also believed sending those Vietnamese back was a preventive measure. They also claimed that even though they had sent those Vietnamese away from the country still there were plenty of Vietnamese and Vietnamese agents inside the country. It was necessary to fight them from within. Therefore, it was not enough for the Khmer Rouge cadres and the Khmer Rouge leaders to only send those Vietnamese back to Vietnam during the early phase of the regime; they needed to hunt the remaining Vietnamese down in later years.

Regarding Khmer people under the leadership of Communist Party as a master race in the region, Pol Pot looked down upon other nationalities especially Vietnamese. Therefore, the extreme forms of chauvinistic national sentiment and racist behaviour during Democratic Kampuchea was strong.

## Chapter IV

### Role of Pol Pot Nationalism in Mass Killing and Genocide

Some main forms of nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea have been described in chapter three of this thesis, in which two main topics are presented. Pol Pot's nationalist credentials given by his supporters, together with forms of nationalism, chauvinistic national sentiment, and racist behaviour against Vietnam during Democratic Kampuchea have been discussed. In this chapter, the consequences of those kinds of nationalism of his regime will be analyzed. The first section of this chapter will demonstrate crimes against Vietnamese civilians which were perpetrated during the repatriation and cleansing of the remaining Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia under Democratic Kampuchea's rule. In the second section, the decision of the Pol Pot regime to attack Vietnam in April 1977 as part of the nationalist motivation of Democratic Kampuchea's leaders to defend their own nation will be presented. It was also the opening of the ground towards full confrontation between Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea. During those exchanges of attacks, crime against humanity was found when the Khmer Rouge soldiers attacked and killed Vietnamese civilians as part of their plan. Finally, the consequences of chauvinistic national sentiment and racism against Vietnam during Democratic Kampuchea will be analyzed. It was the fault belief to associate some Cambodians with the enemy, resulting in thousands of East Zone cadres and soldiers being killed, who were accused of having "Yvon heads".

#### 4.1 Elimination of Vietnamese Civilians in Cambodia

After the repatriation of Vietnamese civilian in Cambodia in 1975, those who remained were Vietnamese men and women married to Khmer spouses or those who had been rejected by Vietnamese authorities during the repatriation in 1975. They lived a normal life with Cambodian people in the early phase of the regime but they were different from Cambodians as they had Vietnamese origin. The Khmer Rouge militiamen and local authorities kept their eyes on those ethnic Vietnamese and those mixed-blood children. The following stories are some accounts of the remaining Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia after the repatriation agenda.

Khun Mon, a Khmer who had an ethnic Vietnamese wife born in Cambodia, was living among Cambodian people from 1975 to 1976. However, shocking events happened to Khun Mon's family after political tensions between Cambodia and Vietnam developed. On October 10, 1977, militiamen carrying an order came and told his wife, his parents in law, sister-in-law, and brother-in-law, all of whom were ethnic Vietnamese, to go to a re-education meeting. His children were not sent to re-education the same day as his wife because his wife brought their three children to his sister to take care of them as she believed she would be back soon after re-education. Next day, the unit chief and two militiamen came to take his children and told his sister, "their mother asked us to bring her children along" (Sorya, 2005) (p.20). They all were killed as they disappeared. Later Khun Mon understood the reasons for killing the ethnic Vietnamese and their children. A neighbor of Khun Mon, Pak Sokhom, shared his opinion regarding the reasons for killing Vietnamese people. His opinion was based on his experiences during Democratic Kampuchea. He said, "In late 1977, Vietnamese – young, old, women, and men – were killed. My cousin had a Vietnamese wife who was killed along with their children. In those days, Vietnamese were targeted to be destroyed. I saw no reasons for the killing. The Khmer Rouge had to kill the enemy of the nation." (Sorya, 2005). His interpretation is reasonable as racist and nationalist sentiment against Vietnam during Democratic Kampuchea was very extreme.

Like the case of Khun Mon, Peou Hong also lost his mother and other relatives during the Khmer Rouge regime. Early in 1977, militiamen in Prek Anteah commune sent his great-grand parents, great-uncle and aunt, and aunt and uncle to attend a re-education course. His mother was not sent on the same day because she had just given birth. Half a month later, the militiamen came to take his mother and his five siblings for re-education. He was later arrested and sent to Prek Koam pagoda, a prison at Prek Anteah where his mother, siblings and other Vietnamese were placed. As a small boy, Hong could escape from the killing. He also managed to escape from the militiamen who chased him for arresting (Dany, April 2002). Hong heard village chiefs, Muon and Sin, talked about what could be a policy of the Khmer Rouge. The two village chiefs said, "If a family has a Khmer husband and

Vietnamese wife, the children and wife will be sent for re-education. If a family has a Vietnamese husband and a Khmer wife, Angkar will need only the husband for re-education.” (Dany, April 2002) (p. 45). It could be the real case of the Khmer Rouge policy as the story of Khun Mon also proved this policy. Khun Mon who was Khmer survived the regime while his Vietnamese wife and three children were sent away for re-education and were killed. There was no logical explanation for the question why children of Vietnamese mother were strongly connected to being Vietnamese, and this led the Khmer Rouge cadres to arrest and kill them as well as their mother, and why children of a Vietnamese father were not. It was probably the assumption that the mother was strongly attached to their children and educated them at home while the father was supposed to work outside. So, the mother was the only person who influenced their children most.

It was proved that the killing of Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia was because of their Vietnamese origin or those who were children of Vietnamese mothers. I believe that it was also part of the false belief of Democratic Kampuchea’s leaders that all enemies needed to be eliminated. In this case Vietnamese civilians or those with Vietnamese origin were Democratic Kampuchea’s enemies. Racist behaviour also played significant role in those mass killing.

Sharing the same fate as that of the Vietnamese, Khmer Krom (Khmer who had been living in South Vietnam) in Rom Lech commune, Pursat province, were also killed. Suong who was married to Khmer Krom wife, Phoeung, in Rom Lech experienced a huge loss for his life when his wife and daughter were sent away and killed. Phoeung, her daughter, sister, brother-in-law, and 18 other Khmer Kroms were assigned to pick corn in the jungle. “To pick corn” was only the fake assignment that the Khmer Rouge used to hide their killing the same way they used the word “reeducation” (Dany, 2005).

This deep-rooted hatred of racism arose mainly from the nationalist idea of Pol Pot and his followers. Nayan Chanda met a former garage mechanic who later told him about the order from the CPK standing committee (Office 870). It was early in April 1977 in Oudong. While waiting for the Khmer Rouge district chief to arrive at

his office to instruct him about cars to be repaired, Saroeun noticed a letter on the desk marked “*Directive from 870*” dated April 1 1977. “*The chilling message of the directive was clear: all ethnic Vietnamese in the district, and all Khmers who spoke Vietnamese or had Vietnamese friends, should be handed over to the state security service*” (Chanda, 1986) (p.86). Saroeun was raised in Phnom Penh by a Vietnamese garage owner and had Vietnamese wife. Luckily, his wife did not look Vietnamese and nobody in the village knew that she was Vietnamese. According to this directive, Vietnamese could be killed at the district or sent to state security office that had only one door to enter but no exit door.

The directive must have been sent to every district or almost every district during that time. As a result of Pol Pot’s policy, the death rate of the Vietnamese remaining in Cambodia after 1975 was virtually 100 per cent. It was different from the death rates of other ethnicities, which were as follows: Cham Muslims was 36 per cent, Lao 40 per cent, and Chinese 50 per cent (Kiernan, 1997).

This was Pol Pot’s nationalist idea of ethnic cleansing to purify his nation such that only the persons who followed the party would be left. During my interview with a former Khmer Rouge, I also posed a question “why was it necessary to eliminate those Vietnamese civilians?” His answer was simply this: “Because they were enemy. If we kept them, they would cause danger. You can see; we lost to VN in 1979 because of the enemy inside” (12MSB, October 9, 2012). So, taking Vietnamese people out of Cambodia had nothing to do with migration law, but it was what Pol Pot wanted to do to save the country. Those Democratic Kampuchea leaders considered these people as national enemies.

#### **4.2 War against Vietnam and Crime against Vietnamese Civilians in Vietnam**

Holding a strong chauvinistic national sentiment, Pol Pot and his followers were too proud of the victory in 17 April 1975. They felt that they could do everything. According to Ben Kiernan, Ta Mok’s son-in-law wanted to liberate Kampuchea Krom (South Vietnam) because he thought it was all Cambodian territory. Ten miles from the border, other commanders announced that “we have to fight Vietnam because there are eighteen of our provinces there, including Prey



Nokor [Saigon]” (Kiernan, 1997: 104). Then the report from Hanoi claims that the next day, after 30 April, the CPK forces attacked across the land border between the two countries, “causing great human and material losses to the border populations” (Kiernan, 1997). Some kinds of invasion already started just weeks after the Khmer Rouge victory. But the situation was better when both countries engaged in diplomatic talks. Then Pol Pot told a Vietnamese delegation, Linh, who travelled to Phnom Penh for diplomatic discussion that the clash had occurred because of ignorance of local geography (Kiernan, 1997).

So, months after the victory relations between Communist Kampuchea and Communist Vietnam were normal. But some soldiers were frustrated that they were not allowed to fight Vietnam. According to Prince Norodom Sihanouk writing in his Chronicle, “in September 1975, he was indeed surprised to hear Khieu Samphan, Son Sen and company said that their soldiers were ‘displeased’ with ‘the Party’, because the latter did not give them the green light to go and take back Kampuchea Krom as well as the border districts of Thailand” (cited by Kiernan, 1997: 108). Those soldiers were purely indoctrinated by Pol Pot, a person who was always over confident in himself, his people and his soldiers.

Pol Pot started to be openly distant from Vietnamese influence in 1976 during the party anniversary. He changed the birth date of party from 1951 to 1960. 30 September 1951 was the founding date of the CPK, which was at that time named “Khmer People’s Revolution Party” (KPRP) The party was founded at the instigation of Vietnam. Anyway, Pol Pot wanted to change the date to 30 September 1960, when a party meeting in Phnom Penh had constituted the party. Thus, from 30 March 1976, the party meeting took 1960 as the birth of the party; they did not use 1951 because they wanted to make a clear break from Vietnam (Chandler, 2000).

Pol Pot accused those who supported the 1951 founding date as a “sickness of the party”. With this change of the founding date of the party, scores of people who opposed this change were eliminated from the party and killed. For example, two prominent members of CPK, Keo Meas and Non Suon were arrested and sent to S-21. Their confessions assert that they were persons who support the 1951 founding

date for CPK, not 1960 (Chandler, 2008). It was partly in accordance with the CPK's motto: "One hand is for production, the other for beating the enemies" (Chandler, 2000: 41). Enemies in this party's motto were both internal enemies (mostly those in the party administration) and external enemies (three main enemies were named: CIA agents, KGB agents, and Yuon agents). However, during the second half of DK, Yuon became the main enemy of the party and the nation if we look at the party's policy magazine, "Revolutionary Flag". Pol Pot believed that to attack Yuon enemy was the solution to defend the country.

As Pol Pot was very much influenced by his victory over what he called the imperialist Americans, he and his military were very confident that they could defeat Vietnam to take Kampuchea Krom back. It was not possible at all during that time to defeat strong Vietnamese soldiers. Stephen Morris started his comparison between the Cambodian army forces and the Vietnamese army forces. He estimated that after the victory in April 1975, the Khmer Rouge army had 230 battalions, mostly under-strength with the main force between 55,000 and 60,000 troops only while Communist Vietnam's army had about 685,000 troops with 3,000-strong naval forces and 12,000-strong air force (Morris, 1999). From this comparison we already understand that the Cambodian armed forces were not comparable to the Vietnamese armed forces. Why did Pol Pot start attacking Vietnam in April 1977 and deny peace negotiations?

Seeing the number of the Vietnamese army and Cambodian army during that time did not prevent Pol Pot from being ambitious to attack Vietnam. Since March 1977, in preparation for attacking Vietnam, army units in Cambodia's East Zone were ordered to change their production duty to be combat-ready. According to an East Zone soldier, before the first attack in April 1977, he was told by his superior to kill Vietnamese. He said,

*"The Khmer Rouge told us, to get our territory back and that's what we were fighting for. I did not really understand but I went to the battle with other soldiers. The plan of Angkar was that each soldier had to kill 30 Vietnamese enemies. Angkar did not care*

*whether they were villagers, children or soldiers. In 1977, we fought the Vietnamese without any declaration of war; we just entered Vietnamese territory and killed people: most of them were innocent and unprepared villagers. But after that, when we reached the village, the people in the next village escaped eastward” (Chheng, 2011).*

This agreed with what I mentioned in chapter three about the false belief that Pol Pot compared one Cambodian soldier to 30 Vietnamese soldiers.

The first attack was carried out during the second anniversary of Communist Vietnam’s victory over South Vietnam. On the night of April 30, 1977, the Khmer Rouge opened attacks on several villages and towns of An Giang province, one of provinces in southern Vietnam that once was under Cambodian rule. The operation claimed scores of Vietnamese civilians’ lives and a number of houses were burned down. According to Nayan Chanda, the attack on Tinh Bien Township alone had caused about one hundred civilian deaths (Chanda, 1986). However, several of my interviewees who were involved in the attack felt that they just fulfilled their duty to attack Vietnam and the territory that they believed should belong to Cambodia. For example, one of East Zone soldiers said that he did not feel guilty to fight those Vietnamese civilians because it was his and his colleagues’ duty to kill the enemy. “We wanted our territory back” (12MYK, October 06, 2012). At this point, they did not regard those civilians as normal people; instead the latter were regarded as the enemy. It was the consequence of hatred which was indoctrinated by the Khmer Rouge policy.

As the policy indoctrinated the Khmer Rouge cadres more than the ordinary people, the hatred against the Vietnamese was probably in the hearts of the Khmer Rouge cadres rather than the ordinary people during Democratic Kampuchea. A battalion army chief based in Kratie province, a province bordering Vietnam, expressed his hatred against the Vietnamese even before the first attack in April 1977. He said that he hated Vietnam since earlier than the 1970s because he believed that Vietnam always wanted to swallow his country. Undoubtedly, he knew

that Vietnam wanted to swallow Cambodian territory because he had learned it from his leaders and history. He was told that Ho Chi Minh wanted to take his country and after Ho died, the Vietnamese leaders who were his followers kept this idea. Moreover, he still perceived the Vietnamese as cruel. At the same time, he also educated hundreds of his followers to have the same perception of Vietnam. The historical myth “Don’t Spill Master’s Tea” was brought to be the topic of the meeting very often in order to burn anger in his followers’ minds. As a result, he sometimes secretly killed those Vietnamese soldiers as early as 1976 when they were driving military cars. With the belief that what he did was to kill the enemy of the nation, he was proud of himself for having done this; he never felt guilty at all (11MOS, April 10, 2011). To show the evidence that the Vietnamese were invaders, he recalled one event that made him very furious at the Vietnamese soldiers. He said,

“Vietnamese soldiers were very bad; they removed the border markers and put them further inside Cambodian territory. Then I put the border markers back to the original place. Again Vietnamese soldiers removed the markers. Finally, I buried the marker with landmine. Once again Vietnamese soldiers removed the marker and mine exploded and killed several of those soldiers.” (11MOS, April 10, 2011)

There is no evidence to prove that it was true that Vietnam attempted to swallow Cambodian territory, but this was what the Cambodian people were suspicious about Vietnamese soldiers along the border. Several of my respondents were also suspicious about Vietnamese soldiers along the border. They thought the Vietnamese kept their westward policy to conquer Cambodia little by little. However, the Khmer Rouge soldiers claimed that during Democratic Kampuchea the territory was fully protected from Vietnamese ambitions up to the end of 1978 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia.

Pol Pot decided to launch another attack before the party’s anniversary and before Pol Pot’s official trip to China. On 24 September 1977, Cambodian East Zone

soldiers aggressively attacked Tay Ninh province causing hundreds of deaths. Anyway, we cannot dismiss the fact that Pol Pot was influenced by Communist China, which was also a rival of Vietnam at the time when the two giant communist countries, China and the Soviet Union, were not getting along well. Nayan Chanda assumed that the attack was a gift for China before Pol Pot's official visit a week later (Chanda, 1986).

A few days later Pol Pot told the public during a five hour speech of 17<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CPK the reason why he attacked Vietnam. He stated his nationalist idea that he had liberated the country and later he needed to defend the country. He called it a very good, very high profile and perfect duty to do. Then he asked a question, "How does this duty become a very good, very high profile and perfect duty?" Then he answered, giving the following reasons:

*"(It is a very good, very high profile and perfect duty) because after liberating the whole country, now (we) need to defend the country successfully; defend the country successfully because Youn wants to take our country every day; we liberated the country; Youn still wants to take our country. [...] All Kapuchea Krom (South Vietnam), Youn took all. Now, East, Southwest, lowland area of our country, Youn invaded. And do not talk (with Youn); cannot get any result. (We) need to fight. [...] This is what I am talking about our duty to defend our country"*(Pot, 1977).

Pol Pot thought that he and his soldiers were doing the right thing to protect the nation by attacking even Vietnamese civilians. In the same speech, he was also so proud that his soldiers could attack Vietnam easily while the reality was that there were only few local Vietnamese guards whom his soldiers were facing. He assaulted Vietnam, with the result that *"Youn did not vomit blood, but their blood was frozen in their chests when they lost the fight against our soldiers at the border"* (Pot, 1977). Therefore, the chauvinism during Democratic Kampuchea turned the leaders and supporters to wrongly define themselves and put blame on Vietnam.

### 4.3 Associate Enemies in East Zone

There are a number of reasons behind the accusation that East Zone administrators and soldiers were associate enemies. This section will present three main reasons involving the mass killing in the East Zone. The three reasons: lost war, enemies gave poor living conditions, and having Vietnamese heads will be presented as a result of nationalism against Vietnamese during Democratic Kampuchea.

#### 4.3.1 Lost War

As the Khmer Rouge attacked Vietnam again and again and the talk was not reached to keep peace, Vietnam fought back. The Vietnamese army led by top commander, Giap, launched its first important military operation against Cambodia in October 1977. The experienced strong Vietnamese army easily entered Cambodian territory as far as 30 kilometers from the border (Chanda, 1986).

In response to this loss, the Khmer Rouge leaders turned their eyes on the East Zone administration and soldiers as they believed that there was no way that Vietnamese army could enter Cambodian territory without the enemies inside. This false belief claimed that as long as the Cambodian people and soldiers were willing to defend the country, there was no reason why Vietnamese soldiers could defeat Cambodian soldiers. He had already been very confident in his soldiers. He had mentioned this in his speech before Vietnam attacked. He believed that his soldiers and people could defend the country because of two main reasons: *“First reason: we can defeat America; we can defeat Youn. Second reason: the quality of Cambodian armed forces and Vietnamese armed forces is different. Cambodian soldiers are from the lower class; working without salary, no status. They joined the revolution for the progress of the nation; do everything for nation [...]”* (Pot, 1977). From this belief, Pol Pot did not accept this defeat.

A writer of Revolutionary Flag often reminded their cadres of all levels of the need to investigate any enemy within the party. The magazine, whose writer was probably Pol Pot, claimed that the party had learned about enemies, especially internal enemies since early 1977. In late 1977, they more clearly knew about

enemies. They also claimed that based on the experiences from the previous year, in early 1978, they continued to fight against the enemy more effectively. “For example, as soon as Yuon enemy fought us from the east, we introduced our cadres to investigate in every place in order to understand what has happened in our administration. [...] When Yuon invaded us, Yuon agents and the CIA agents were found. [...] Yuon can invade us because there are agents in the administration and army ...etc.” (D21425, March 1978) (pp.13-14). Pol Pot believed that even though there are plenty of soldiers with plenty of weapons if the party is not clean or the army is not clean, we cannot successfully defend our country (D21425, March 1978).

According to this policy magazine, the Khmer Rouge believed that Vietnam fought the Khmer Rouge in two ways. First, Vietnam fought the Khmer Rouge from outside of which the attack in December 1977 was an example. Second, Vietnam fought the Khmer Rouge from inside. The magazine reads, “In East Zone, in one regiment, they assigned one battalion to fight us from behind. In one district, they assigned one company to fight us from behind. In Kratie it is also the same. [...] They also used traitors in our administration of the East Zone, for example, Industry sector, social affair, health, and culture. [...]” (D21428, May-June 1978). Elimination was the only solution for Democratic Kampuchea leaders. As the magazine confirmed, “This time we have to eliminate the head of the enemy within us. If the enemy wins, our Cambodian nation will disappear. Our way is to be careful about the enemy from within. [...] Even if we don’t have any evidence, we need to withdraw them first” (D21428, May-June 1978). There was no proper investigation before the elimination of those East Zone cadres from the top down to the commune level. Those who were considered as internal enemies were eliminated even if there was not any evidence.

#### **4.3.2 Enemies Gave Poor Living Conditions**

Another issue that was also involved in the accusation of the Khmer Rouge cadres in East Zone of being the internal enemy (Yuon agent) was poor living conditions of the people. It was true that the majority of people during the Democratic Kampuchea were in a very poor living condition. The people did not

have enough food, clothes, accommodation and medical care. However, not only East Zone people received this living condition, but also almost all people all over the country. Hundreds of books have been published regarding the poor living condition of the people during Democratic Kampuchea in different places in the country. It proved that there were only few cases of the people's living condition not being too bad.

Democratic Kampuchea leaders claimed that the East Zone produced a lot of agricultural output but the people still did not have enough food, clothes, accommodation and medical care. For example, the Revolutionary Flag accused East Zone cadres and soldiers of being the internal enemy siding with Yuon and trying to destroy Democratic Kampuchea. The document took the issue of "East Zone people producing a lot of agricultural output but female population in Prasot, Chantrea, and Kampong Ror districts did not have enough clothes to wear. In Prolong, Chlong, and Kroch Chhmar district, people also did not have enough clothes to wear and food to eat." (D21428, May-June 1978)(pp.20-21). A former soldier in Ratanakiri also agreed with this magazine and accused those administrators who gave less food to people as the enemy and Yuon agents. He said, "No one led the country to kill their own people. They wanted their people to be prosperous. But there were a lot of traitors in the local leadership. They did not follow the command. The radio broadcast that there should be three meals a day and one sweet a week but this instruction was not followed. Those leaders sent almost all rice to the party and told that there was enough rice for people. It was a traitor's act to discredit the party. Actually, Uncle (Pol Pot) said, keep enough for people and give the surplus to the party only." (14FSK, February 12, 2014).

While Pol Pot declared in public that the people must be given enough food, the system encouraged local leaders to focus mainly on surplus. In the speech at the Zone Assembly of Party Organization, Pol Pot said "We must first think of getting enough, and then of getting surplus as well." (Chandler, 1988). Then the speech went on with the detail on how the system of giving rice to people per day. According to the system, the amount of rice per day was based on working ability.



The worker in the No. 1 system (វិស័យ) got three cans (1can=0.25kg) of rice per day; the No. 2 system got two-and-a-half cans; the No. 3 system got two cans; and the No. 4 system got one-and-a-half cans. Additionally, in the Party's Four-Year Plan also mentioned about the living conditions by adding dessert to the people eating system. The plan read that in 1977 there would be two desserts per week and in 1978 there would be one dessert every two days (Chandler, 1988). According to the speech and the Four-Year Plan, if local leaders followed the system, people must get enough to eat. However, the three tons per hectare plan was also a must plan to follow. The speech of Pol Pot reads, "We strive in whatever way necessary to get three tons (of rice per hectare) in the country as a whole. [...] If we get three tons for the Zone as a whole, we will be strong. So the strategy and tactics must be prepared in order to be successful in this attack (fulfill the plan). [...] So the whole country must try hard, to prepare in whatever way is necessary to win the fight (fulfill the plan) (Chandler, 1988).

Additionally, Democratic Kampuchea's policy also encouraged local leaders to send surplus to the party center. Those mostly illiterate local chiefs tried to send more agricultural products (mainly rice) to the party and kept less food supply in stock. At this point, if we look at the command chain of the ministry of agriculture, we will see that it was different from those of the other ministries. While other ministries followed the top-down command chain, the ministry of agriculture let the local level decide how much they could send the surplus to the party. A former district chief told me that the commune chief and collective leaders were the persons who decided how much surplus they should send to the party with or without consultation with the district's committees. She said, "The district chief would ask the commune chief how much they dare to donate rice to Angkar (CPK). Then the commune chief would answer, for example, that they produced 7,000 tons; they can donate 3,000 tons." (13FPY, January 05, 2013).

This is similar to what people in Romeas Hek district and Krasang district in region 23 (Svay Rieng province) recalled about the difference in people's living conditions between the two neighboring districts. While the people in Krasang district

had more food to eat, the people in Romeas Hek district ate porridges. The difference between the two districts was due to local leaders. A collective chief (village chief) in Andong Khnot told me that the people in his village as well as the whole Krasang district enjoyed better living condition compared to the surrounding districts including Romeas Hek district. It was because they (Krasang local leaders) did not try to satisfy the party. They kept rice for the people and sent only the remaining surplus to the party (09MNM, March 15, 2009). On the contrary, local leaders in Romeas Hek district tried to send more rice to the party and kept less for the people. As a result, the people were provided with only porridge for their meals (13FKS, December 2013).

In short, Democratic Kampuchea system seemed to encourage local leaders to send more agricultural products to the party. Sending more agricultural products to the party would be seen as an accomplishment of the local leaders. Those illiterate local leaders wanted to show off their faces (ចង់មានមុខមាត់), and they were encouraged to do so by the party.

It was not reasonable at all to link the living condition of the people to Yuon agents. Southwest Zone, a Zone led by Ta Mok, was regarded as a role model of all Zones as they had never been accused of being an enemy in any systematic way. Moreover, Southwest Zone cadres were sent to replace other zones whose cadres were accused systematically as being the enemy. For example, Northwest zone cadres were removed and replaced by Southwest zone cadres. Similarly, East Zone cadres were also removed and replaced by Southeast Zone. It somehow shows that Southwest Zone cadres assumed a leading role during Democratic Kampuchea. But when I interviewed several people in Trapeang Pring commune, Kampot province (Southwest Zone), they told me of the hardship and food shortage they suffered in the same way as the people in Svay Rieng province (East Zone) did (Group discussion of people in Trapeang Pring commune under the topic “inter-generation dialogue, June 2010). Therefore, the connection between the enemy and the living condition of people was not the real reason as the living condition was similar all over the country during Democratic Kampuchea.

A former mobile unit member in Svay Rieng province was surprised when the new administration from Southwest Zone gave him and his unit members more than enough food. It was the result of the accusation of the previous administration of being enemy. Yet, a month later, the new administrators learned that there was not enough rice for a long supply. Then they reduced the amount of food for the people again (14MKS, January 06, 2014).

As a result of the false belief that living conditions had connection with traitors, the Revolutionary Flag concluded that “If any place doesn’t have enough food for people, the new administration need to be replaced” (D21428, May-June 1978) (p.21). It was quickly applied to the whole East Zone as part of the reasons to eliminate all East Zone cadres and military forces.

#### 4.3.3 Elimination of East Zone

A former East Zone soldier gave a reason why some of East zone soldiers and administrators were arrested. He said that after the Vietnamese attack, Pol Pot had already suspected East Zone soldiers of defecting to the Vietnamese. Pol Pot thought that it was why the Vietnamese soldiers could enter Cambodia. Pol Pot started to eliminate soldiers in the East Zone later in 1978 (Chheng, 2011). This was what was meant by the words Pol Pot used, i.e. “Bos Sam At” (Sweep and clean) to assure the safety of the Party Center and to maintain the revolution’s purity and momentum. As David Chandler wrote, “Racially based nationalism had emerged as the basis of Khmer Rouge propaganda, and the “enemies” brought into S-21 in 1978 were overwhelmingly accused of collusion with Vietnam” (Chandler, 2000: 71).

Branding those East zone soldiers and administrators as enemies resulted from Pol Pot’s suspicion of those people of having “Vietnamese head, Khmer body”. Again and again, Pol Pot accused those people of being enemies who could endanger the nation and people. The man second in command to Pol Pot in CPK, Noun Chea, also answered to Teth Sambath in a documentary film that, “*Those who were killed were enemies of people. [...] The country was in danger of being taken over by Vietnam*” (Thet, 2009). They put the nation in front of them in order to

commit crime. They did not accept that what they had done was wrong because they still believed that killing those people could save the nation.

In October 2013 during the court procedure at Extra-ordinary Chamber in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC), Nuon Chea as an accused of Case 002 told the hearing during the final conclusion of Case 002/01 about Vietnamese agents in Democratic Kampuchea. He still claimed that there were many Vietnamese agents in the Democratic Kampuchea administration. He based this claim on four pieces of evidence: (1) there were reports showing that the people during Democratic Kampuchea did not have enough food and they were forced to work hard; (2) people were killed; (3) local cadres did not report to upper leaders; and (4) the defection of East Zone soldiers to Vietnam. These were what he claimed to be evidence that there were Vietnamese agents inside Cambodia during his leadership (*Final Statement of Nuon Chea in Case 002/01*, October 31, 2013). Therefore, he placed all responsibility for what had happened during Democratic Kampuchea on Vietnam.

The resistance of East Zone soldiers and the defection of those soldiers to Vietnam were due to the elimination policy of Democratic Kampuchea. Administrators from the commune level up to the Zone leader (Sao Pim) were mostly arrested and sent to S-21. A neighbor of a victim who was a commune member during Democratic Kampuchea recalled the day that the commune chief and his deputy were called to attend a meeting at the district office. Because the commune chief felt insecure he also invited commune members to go with him. All the commune leaders attending the meeting that day were packed and transported by trucks to Phnom Penh. Their lives were believed to end at the killing site at Cheung Ek (13MYS, December 24, 2013). Until the elimination reached the commune level, there were many resistance movements in East Zone.

One person who worked in traditional medicine producing unit recalled his resistance in 1978. He and his friends secretly joined the rebellion in the jungle near his village. He said that after East Zone administrators were accused of having Vietnamese heads, new administrators and soldiers replaced the old administrators

and soldiers. Hun who was head of security in three districts of Steung Trang, Krouch Chhma, and Chhlong was told to be a cruel person responsible for arresting and executing a number of people and former cadres. As his group got support from those who ran into the jungle for survival, his group then planned to kill Hun in an effort to save people's lives. With rifles and knives his group successfully killed Hun and a few of Hun followers (13MUSO, December 28, 2013). It was a counter-attack backed by the rebellion.

At first, several East zone soldiers and low level administrators did not believe that the party wanted to kill them. After many people were sent to S-21 and disappeared, they found a way to escape. Duch Kheam, a former East Zone soldier, realized that Pol Pot wanted to kill East zone soldiers after his leaders were called to be educated but never came back. He recalled:

*“On June 1978, my leaders, brother Thol, Ta Tuy, brother Sarom and brother Sarith were called to be educated. They all disappeared. Later, my leaders, Prum Den and brother Venalias Sam At, could escape from the killing. Brother Ven came to meet us and told us, “They take us to be killed, not to be educated. You are a group leader; so, you will also be killed. Please escape now” (11MDK, August 17, 2011).*

After he realized that his leaders were sent away and killed, he tried to find a way to escape. He firstly went to meet his family in Kamchay Mear district. Still he could not convince his brother and father-in-law. Some collective leaders including his father-in-law got a letter from the party calling them to be educated. He went to see them and tried to explain to them. He said, “Brothers and father please do not go to the meeting, because some of my leaders in military forces were killed.” But they still went. His father-in-law who believed in leaflets of the party distributed from the airplanes did not believe that the party killed their own cadres (11MDK, August 17, 2011). As he could not convince his father-in-law and some commune administrators, they all disappeared.

Before the elimination of East Zone leaders and cadres, many prominent party members had already been eliminated, according to the report from Pon to the central committee about the confessions of enemies. The document, dated January 27, 1978, named those Leader traitors in the party who had been arrested and executed, such as: (1) Song Ngoc Minh who died in 1973; (2) Keo Meas arrested on September 25, 1976; (3) Ya, former North Zone secretary arrested on September 20, 1976, (4) Kuy Thuon alias Khuon, former 304 Zone secretary, arrested on January 25, 1977; (5) Non Suon, a former region 25 secretary, arrested on November 01, 1976; (6) Suos Nov alias Chhuok, a former region 24 secretary, arrested on August 28, 1976; (7) Praseth alias Chong, a former deputy secretary of Zone 201, was arrested in 1974; (8) SoeuVasi alias Doeun, a former Zone 304 member, arrested February 16, 1977; (9) Chor Chhan alias Sreng, a former deputy secretary of Central Zone, arrested February 17, 1977; (10) BuoPhatt alias Hang, a former secretary of region 103, arrested in January 1978; (11) Seat Chae alias Tom, a former secretary of region 22, arrested on April 30, 1977; (12) Pa Phal alias Sok, a former secretary of region 106, arrested on February 21, 1977. Besides these people mentioned above, these people also named other persons unconvincingly such as Brother Phim, Brother Nhem, and Brother Sie (D01255, January 27, 1978). It shows that those who were accused of being enemies of the party included not only the East Zone leaders but also other prominent leaders who had been previously eliminated. However, the case of the East Zone was noted for being accused of having connection to Vietnamese agents and Vietnamese enemies. This is what Duch, a former chief of S-21 security office, told Rithy Panh, “The Khmer Rouges were all about elimination. Human Rights did not exist.” (Rithy, 2012).

According to the court document (ECCC) of closing orders in case 002, in March 1978, a massive escalation of purges of East Zone cadres and combatants occurred in Svay Rieng in Region 23. This was followed by even more arrests and executions in May-June 1978 in other parts of the East Zone” (*Closing Orders of Case 002; 002/19-09-2007-ECCC-OCIJ*, 2007). David Chandler also mentioned the same thing: “In April 1978, so many cadres in the East Zone were brought into S-21 (Security Office or Toul Sleng prison) that some of the trucks bearing prisoners had to

be turned away. The prisoners were presumably taken off to be killed without any interrogation (Chandler, 2000). During the whole year of 1978, the numbers of prisoners were more than 5,000 and all were executed. The majority of those prisoners were from the East Zone.

In conclusion, the consequences of the nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea became one of factors contributing to mass killing during that time. Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia were victims of the consequences. Additionally, Cambodian people were also accused of being Vietnamese agents and were executed as a result of Pol Pot nationalism against Vietnam. Giving the blame on Vietnam for any lost or unsuccessful missions became a popular action to do during Democratic Kampuchea as both leaders and supporters held strong racist behaviour and strong anti-Vietnamese nationalism. Pol Pot must be the most extreme one.

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

In addressing Cambodian nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea, we need to look back to the historical background that influenced the regime. Cambodian history during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century could be the strong part of Cambodia-Vietnam relations that influenced Cambodian perception towards Vietnam, particularly, the perception to perceive Vietnam as “Yuon Invader”. Additionally, the modern form of Cambodian nationalism can be drawn back to the time of French rule after the publication of Nagara Vatta newspaper. As the demand for independence from the French was the main goal, still the nationalist sentiment against the Vietnamese can be founded in a number of articles. More or less the anti-Vietnamese idea had been rooted in those intellectuals and shared to the readers. The young king Norodom Sihanouk did not have this kind of feeling against the Vietnamese, but he used the trend that Communist Vietnamese would cooperate with the Khmer Viet Minh to conquer Cambodia to threaten France and other western countries for the return of peaceful independence. At the end of the colonial period, Cambodia led by young king Sihanouk made a proper move to gain independence peacefully. As independence from the French was the main goal, the anti-Vietnamese sentiment seemed less prioritized.

During almost two decades of Sangkum Reastr Niyum led by Sihanouk, Cambodia did not show much confrontational or anti-Vietnamese sentiment as Sihanouk needed to deal with the communist movement and the Khmer Serei movement. He pressured the Khmer Serei severely. As a result, he defined those Khmer Serei members as traitors of the nation. He ordered the execution of a number of them publicly. This was Sihanouk’s way to deal with those Khmer Serei and others who opposed him and named them traitors of the nation. This idea and practice were followed by Pol Pot during Democratic Kampuchea. But Kiernan mentioned the differences in defining traitors during Sangkum Reastr Niyum and during Democratic Kampuchea. While Sihanouk defined Khmer Serei as Khmer traitors, Pol Pot portrayed traitors during Democratic Kampuchea as non-Khmer or “Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds”.



During the first half of the 1970s, strong nationalist sentiment against the Vietnamese can be found in several publications during that time, as well as in history books. As Cambodian intellectuals, the Khmer Rouge leaders probably shared the same hatred against the Vietnamese and believed that Vietnam would try to conquer Cambodia and include it in a Vietnam-dominated federation. We can see that even though the Lon Nol regime and the Khmer Rouge were enemies and ideologically different, they shared the same belief against Vietnam as the invader. This explains how the Khmers viewed the Vietnamese regardless of their ideological differences during the 1970s.

Looking at specific ingredients of nationalism during Democratic Kampuchea, the anti-Vietnamese sentiment was the main factor of Cambodian nationalism. Without any theoretical explanation, Pol Pot's supporters regarded him as a leading nationalist by some criteria that they believed represented the nationalist sentiments. But what they shared with Pot was his nationalism against Vietnam.

The belief that Vietnam intended to invade Cambodia or put Cambodia under the authority of Vietnam was uniformly shared by Khmer Rouge leaders and the majority of their followers. Their designation of Vietnam as "Yuon Invader" became a strong nationalist sentiment which appeared in the publications of Democratic Kampuchea. Studying the publications, party documents, and radio broadcasts and other media during Democratic Kampuchea, we understand more deeply how Democratic Kampuchea's policy and education influenced those supporters. Studying those documents also tells us how the policy and education during Democratic Kampuchea motivated hatred against Vietnam. They played an important role in spreading the policy among Democratic Kampuchea cadres (the Khmer Rouge cadres) of all levels.

The first factor that colored Vietnam as "Yuon invader" is the history during the 17<sup>th</sup> century about the Cambodian King Chay Jetha II who had a Vietnamese wife. It was believed that the Vietnamese ruler sent the princess to marry the Cambodian king in order to curry favor with the king, so that the king allowed him to send Vietnamese people to settle in Kampuchea Krom. The Cambodian king was regarded

as the first king who was responsible for the loss of Kampuchea Krom. Secondly, the year 1930, when the Indochinese Communist Party was established, was regarded as the starting year of the attempt to put all three countries, namely Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, under Vietnamese rule. For these reasons, “Yuon invader” was found in many publications of Democratic Kampuchea. Democratic Kampuchea cadres and Cambodian people in general were introduced to this kind of hatred against the Vietnamese. Probably almost every single Cambodian was told about “Yuon invader” during Democratic Kampuchea, the words that some people had already heard previously during the Lon Nol regime. Therefore, from the top leaders down to the people more or less perceived Vietnamese as “Yuon Invader”. Moreover, the myth called “Don’t Spill the Master’s Tea” was known to almost all people. The myth shows the cruelty of the Vietnamese which is not necessarily true. All of my interviewees responded that they knew about this myth before Democratic Kampuchea if they were old people and during Democratic Kampuchea if they were young people. However, Vietnam also made some suspicious actions that led Cambodian leaders and people to hold this kind of perception.

The false belief of the Democratic Kampuchea leaders can also be found in another form of nationalism. The belief that, in comparison with the Vietnamese forces, the Khmer Rouge forces were strong and unbeatable was strongly shared by the Democratic Kampuchea leaders. This chauvinistic national sentiment was also influenced by the exaggerated news of the Democratic Kampuchea media such as internal policy documents and the national radio. Holding this kind of sentiment made Democratic Kampuchea leaders stand firmly with the idea that any loss was due to the enemy. It is not wrong at all to believe that one nation has enough ability to defend the country from external threats; in the Cambodian case during Democratic Kampuchea it was a tragedy when this belief came into practice which resulted in thousands of Cambodian people being killed.

Several consequences of anti-Vietnamese nationalism included the killing and the cleansing of the remaining Vietnamese civilians, the opening attack and war against Vietnam, and the accusation of the enemies in Cambodia, particularly, the East Zone soldiers and cadres. After the Khmer Rouge came to power in 1975, they

decided to exterminate Vietnamese civilians from Cambodia which the strong racist behaviour played important role for this decision. Crimes against Vietnamese civilians living in Cambodia were committed during the cleansing of the remaining Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia during Democratic Kampuchea. The former Khmer Rouge cadres believed that those Vietnamese civilians could endanger Cambodia. They claimed that those crimes against Vietnamese civilians were for prevention measure. It was also claimed this action as nationalism. The former Khmer Rouge cadres simply believed that those Vietnamese civilians were enemies and to keep them would endanger the nation. Therefore, the Khmer Rouge cadres fully supported the action of the cleansing the remaining Vietnamese civilians in Cambodia.

The attack on Vietnam in April 1977 was part of the nationalist motivation of Democratic Kampuchea leaders to defend their nation. It was also the opening towards full confrontation between Vietnam and Democratic Kampuchea. During those exchanges of attacks, the crime against humanity was found when the Khmer Rouge soldiers attacked and killed Vietnamese civilians as part of their plan. More importantly, the false belief about the Vietnamese during Democratic Kampuchea was associated with the idea of the enemy within, whose consequence was the killing of thousands of East Zone cadres and soldiers. The latter were accused of having “Yvon heads”. The losses in battle and the poor living conditions of the people in East Zone became the major reasons to prove that those East Zone soldiers and cadres betrayed the people, the party and the nation by siding with Vietnam. As a result of the false belief that the living condition had connection with the traitors, the Revolutionary Flag concluded that “If any place doesn’t have enough food for people, the administration needs to be replaced with a new one”. This idea was quickly applied to the whole East Zone as part of the reasons to eliminate all East Zone cadres and military forces.

In early 1979, Vietnamese forces along with a small group of Cambodian forces overthrew Democratic Kampuchea. This action was called invasion by Pol Pot and his supporters. And it proved their belief previously calling Vietnam as “Yvon invader”. The majority of former Khmer Rouge cadres I interviewed took the example of January 7, 1979, when the Vietnamese forces entered Phnom Penh and set up

new government, as a result of Yuon invader. This invasion became the strongest evidence proving that what they claimed during Democratic Kampuchea was true. According to former Khmer Rouge cadres, this invasion proved the idea of the Indochinese Federation, the enemies inside the nation, and the defection of the East Zone soldiers and cadres. However, the reality was the other way round. The false belief itself led to those consequences.



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