

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឯកសារកម្ពុជា

Genocide Education in Cambodia

The teaching of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)"

Report for Inauguration of Genocide Education Memorial and Khmer Rouge Textbook Distribution Ceremony

Malai High School, Banteay Meanchey province

May 10, 2012

By Mam Sovann

Introduction



Her Excellency Ton Sa Im (wearing a white cotton shirt and purple silk skirt) with honor guests and teachers after inauguration of a Commemoration of the Genocide Education Memorial.

On May 10, 2013, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), in collaboration with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoYES), held a commemoration the Genocide Education Memorial and Khmer Rouge (KR) Textbook Distribution Ceremony at Malai High School, Banteay Meanchey province. Approximately 435 participants attended the ceremony, including five officials from MoYES, five DC-Cam staff members, twenty-five teachers and four hundred

secondary school students. The commemoration involved the distribution of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) history textbook, a booklet Case 002 detailing the biography of the four KR Trial suspects and the crime they committed during the regime, a Trial Observation booklet and a Genocide Education Slogan poster.

The Event was held a half-day in the morning at 8:00 a.m, and it was perished over by Her Excellency Ton Sa Im, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; and Mr. Suong Savon, Deputy Director of Banteay Meanchey Provincial Education Office, who served as the guests of honor for this ceremony.

The program began by the opening speech of Mr. Buoy Seanhouy, director of Malai High School, followed by a speech of Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara, DC-Cam's deputy of director, a speech by Her Excellency Ton Sa Im, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and closed with a presentation by Mr. Dy Khamboly, DC-Cam's history researcher, on the KR history which included a Question-Answer session. The team worked very closely with Mr. Yeu Yoeun, deputy director of Malai High School, to prepare for a commemoration for the Genocide Education Memorial and KR Textbook Distribution Ceremony.

Activities and Comments from Participants

Malai district stands out as a critical site for Cambodia's history and struggle with post-conflict justice, memory, and reconciliation. Malai and together with Palin were a KR stronghold for seventeen years (1979 to 1996). It became one of the KR movement's four headquarters throughout the 1980s and mid-1990s. Backed by four



KR military divisions, Malai and Pailin headquarters were effectively under the control of Ieng Sary, who passed away on March 14, 2013. It was second to Anlong Veng stronghold under Ta Mok, former DK Secretary of the Southwest zone.

The students are raising DC-Cam's publication after Book Distributed to them.

The commemoration ceremony started with Mr. Buoy Seanghouy who warmly welcomed the participants. In his speech, Mr. Buoy gave brief history background of the school to the guests and all attendants. He remarked that Malai High School was

established in 1991 and covered about five hectares of land. The half of land was also covered by mines and forest. The school had a wooded building consisting of few rooms under the control of KR administration. At that time, the school served as an educational place for former KR cadres' children. In 2004, Malai Secondary School became Malai High School.

Following Mr. Buoy's speech, Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara remarked that the commemoration is part of DC-Cam's multi-stage Genocide Education Project which aims to bridge the gap in teaching the history of the Cambodian genocide and community awareness of the KR atrocities that occurred between April 1975 and January 1979. The memorial features two statements that call attention to the horror of the period and the importance of remembrance, education, and peace:

1. Talking about experiences during the Khmer Rouge regime is to promote reconciliation and to educate children about forgiveness and tolerance.
2. Learning about the history of Democratic Kampuchea is to prevent genocide.



The bell of Malai High School marks short breaks and announcement when beaten with a hammer or iron stick.

At the end of the speech, Mr. Vanthan concluded by briefly explaining the meaning of the two carved lines of slogans inscribed on marble or iron. They are displayed in a prominent location in the school compound to draw students', educators', and the community's attention. The

purpose of the statements is not only to remind, but also to inspire younger generation to remember and prevent such tragedy from happening again. Genocide education is as much a project in remembering the past as it is a struggle to re-create a better future that is based on genocide prevention, national reconciliation, tolerance, and forgiveness.

Afterward, Her Excellency Ton Sa Im delivered her speech by saying that she was delighted to see many developments in Malia including infrastructure and educational system. She mentioned that in the past people had to spend several hours traveling from the provincial town of Banteay Meanchey to Malai. Now people

only spend an hour travel to reach Malai. We should thanks to the good road. She added that all the development and communication between people and people begin from peace. As an example: If we do not have peace, we will not have development as well. With negotiation and reconciliation between KR and the Royal Government of Cambodia, Malai became a peaceful area. She continued that during three-year, eight-month and twenty-day period, many Cambodian people suffered from their miserable living condition, starvation and overwork, especially from the loss of loved ones. Therefore we do not want the darkest history of Cambodia reoccurring. Young generations have to understand the meaning of genocide and why we have to prevent genocide. In addition, she recommended the students be a good child, student and citizen, to contribute building the country in the future.

After taking turn of Her Excellency Ton Sa Im, Mr. Dy Khamboly took the floor and gave a presentation on the KR history which included a Question-Answer session. Mr. Dy started his speech by saying that DC-Cam published



Mr. Dy Khamboly is giving a presentation on the KR history to the students.

the DK history textbook in 2007 and distributed Cambodian Secondary School throughout the country. He remarked that the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, approved to integrate the textbook into the secondary school level curriculum for ninth through twelfth grade student. To give more background into KR history to the students, he asked the students when KR regime started and the students answered KR started from 1975 to 1979. He continued with another question if the student had heard about KR or if their parents talk about KR. One brave boy came to the front, holding microphone and answered that he was not born under KR regime, but he have heard what happened at that time from his parents and have read the DK history textbook two times ago. According to his reading, he knew about execution, starvation and overwork. Another boy said he also knew about torture; Especially, KR prohibited in using money.

At the end of his speech, Mr. Dy brief about the KR history consisting of three main points including evacuation Cambodian people from the capital city and town to

countryside to work at rice field and communal living, overwork, and execution under KR policy.

Questions from the Students: Why did not Cambodian appeal to the United Nations? Why did KR purify people? Why did KR allow women working equally like men?

Conclusion

As a part of the Genocide Education Project, the commemoration is created for the purpose of promoting forgiveness, tolerance, education and reconciliation. The commemoration also helps to recall the teachers and students after their learning about the KR history in the classroom.

At the end of the program, DC-Cam staffs and teachers distributed of DC-Cam's publications, the KR history textbook, Trial Observation booklet, Case 002 booklet, and Genocide Education Slogan poster, to mark conclusion.

The memorial is being constructed with financial support from DC-Cam and the contribution from teachers and students of Malai High School.

APPENDIX I:

General Observation of Malai District



Red corn plantation at Malai district, Banteay Meanchey province. Before the negotiation in 1996, the farming land was a former battleground between KR and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Among nine other districts in Banteay Meanchey province, Malai is located in northwest Cambodia and is located 417 kilometers from Phnom Penh along National

Road 5. Also, Malai was named after Malai Mountain. In the past, Malai was the site of thick forests extending along the Cambodian-Thai border from Malai to Pailin province.

After the collapse of the KR in 1979, many KR cadres and soldiers escaped from Cambodian and Vietnamese troops to the Cambodian-Thai border. Malai also served as the KR's shelter at that time. Most of the KR members escaping to Malai were former KR cadre who used to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the DK regime. Among many KR strongholds, Malai was a battleground between KR forces and Cambodian soldiers for seventeen years from 1979 to 1996. Based on other KR strongholds such as Pailin, Kamreang, Sampov Loun, Phnom Proek and Malai, it is assumed that the region extending from Malai and Pailin was a very strong front line of KR movements. The KR strong front line consisted of four military divisions standing by; Division 450 at Malai, Division 320 at Sampov Loun, Kamreang and Phnom Proek, Division 519 at Phnom Chhat and Division 415 at Pailin.

During the civil war, Malai was regarded as the capital city of the KR. This is said because although the DK regime had collapsed, the KR's seat in the United Nations was still legally recognized. Through the wartime, not every country following democracy supported the new Cambodian government, and they even added threat such as economic sanctions toward the government which was illegally supported by Vietnam. Therefore, Malai was the site where the KR leaders brought foreign delegation to visit.

According to interviews with former KR soldiers here, "It was very difficult to live for former KR members, both civilians and armed forces, who escaped here first." Most of the challenges included lack of food and shelter, and sickness. Actually, many former KR members died along the way because of starvation and malaria. When they were so hungry, those KR members dug up manioc to eat and surged into the village to beg for food. In addition, life in the forest was very miserable, especially in the rainy season since nothing besides leaves and little tents were gathered for protection.

Related to how to form resistant forces at Malai, KR forces secretly interacted within their networks, and hid themselves quite effectively in different parts of the forest to form resistant forces against Vietnamese troops. Ke Khorn, a former KR soldier of Division 450, said that in early 1979, right after a serve attached from Cambodian and Vietnamese troops, he led over 100 armed forces from Battambang to the forest at Banteay Meanchey province, where they hid silently. Six months later, Khorn was commanded by a former chief of Sector 3 through radio to gather all forces in Malai. Khorn added Sokh Pheap, who was a former chief of Division 450, and this division was divided into three regiments: Regiment 107, 108 and 109.

Starting from 1983 to 1985, the troop of the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) evicted and purified all the forces at this resistance are along the Cambodian-Thai border. This fighting was called "invading big ants' nest" by the KR. Ngeat Nguon, a former KR soldier, explained that the PRK government's taking action to purify all enemies by invading the big ants' nest was because they did not want those big ants to react back to them. Responding to the phrase "invading the big ants' nest", the government side stated that it was not an invasion of the big ants' nest, but a campaign of "tying a net to kill mosquitoes". Likewise, the government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea implemented the plan K-5 in gathering all youth forces to clear the forest in order to break those KR strongholds. Additionally, Vietnamese troops played a very important role by concealing mines and fighting against KR forces.

There are two causes to the fall of the KR military base in 1985. The first cause was that in order to form any KR stronghold along the Cambodian-Thai border, KR forces used the only weapons that remained, which were old and light. The other reason is that since 1979, KR forces were dramatically decreased, and the food supply was also scarce for them in battle. These are the reasons that the KR was able to be challenged and defeated. KR members, both civilians and armed forces at Malai, escaped to the refugee camp in Aranyaprathet province, Thailand. Meanwhile, civilians escaped to Site H camp, better known as Phnom Kngok camp, while KR forces escaped to Chum Thorng camp, better known as Camp T-85.

At that time, the former KR members were living as refugees in Thai territory and were supported by humanitarian aid from the international community. Without much delay, the KR leader gathered all support from foreigners in order to expand its military forces. By the end of 1989, the KR had taken control over Malai from the Cambodian government while Vietnamese troops withdrew from Cambodia.



The road along the Cambodian-Thai border from Malai to Pailin is completely constructed in mid-2013.

The return of civilians and KR forces created one more challenge to avoid the landmines buried by the Cambodian and Vietnamese troops. Those mines affected the living condition of former KR members at Malai. They became handicapped by losing arms, legs or eyes because of mine

explosions. Hoeun, a former chief of regiment 108, claimed that since mines were buried almost everywhere in Malai by KR forces and Cambodian soldiers, many people who turned back suffered death or dismemberment as a result of the mine. Hoeun estimated that approximately 15 percent of the people in Malai became disabled. Likewise, Khun Em, a former KR soldier in regiment 108, said he suffered from a landmine in 1985 as losing his right leg at that time when he mobilized with his regiment. In 1990, after he came back from the refugee camp, Em lost his left leg when he went to fetch water from a creek that is now recognized as the Cambodian-Thai border. Without paying much attention, Em stepped on another mine.

After a rough negotiation in 1996, Ieng Sary gathered his forces and other civilians in the Malai and Pailin area to integrate into the government. To date, Malai has transformed itself from a battlefield to a farming district, where the population has been working to reconstruct their life and well-being after a long protracted war and uncertain life.

APPENDIX II: Reaction from Participants

Interviewed by Chea Chankosal

Ms. Mom Sotheary, student of Malai High School, expressed that she was happy when she had chance to attend a Commemoration of the Genocide Education Memorial Ceremony. She continued she have also learned about the KR history from teachers in the classroom. Thus, the commemoration makes her believe what occurred during period of time. Finally, she concluded that learning about DK history is to increase awareness about people's living condition under the KR and to educate children about forgiveness and tolerance, because we are Khmer the same.

Mr. Yeu Yeoun, deputy director of Malai High School, said that he felt delighted to organize the Commemoration with DC-Cam in Malai High School. By doing so, he thought the commemoration plays an important role to educate the students about past event and remembrance in order to prevent rancor to each other. Mr. Yeu added that the commemoration is a part of genocide prevention to avoid KR atrocities coming back again.

Photos from the Commemoration:

http://www.d.dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/photos/Inauguration_of_Genocide_Education_Memorial_at_Malai_High_School_May_10_2013/index.html

Malai Memorial Team: Mr. Vanthan Peou Dara, Mr. Dy Khamboly, Mr. Long Dany, Mr. Chea Chankosal and Mr. Mam Sovann

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