



...all of victims arriving every day. They were killed by being hit on the back of the neck with a stick and then stuck in the stomach with a bayonet. He said that the Khmer Rouge used the bayonet also if any of the victims tried to fight back and that the small children were killed by being thrown up into the air and then hit with a stick into the pit or caught on the end of a bayonet... They brought whole families to be killed."

Painstakingly, CGP is assembling an elaborate family of computerised databases which will be of invaluable use to scholars and researchers as well as crucial in establishing a case against the Khmer Rouge. The project's interim report emphasises the importance of this: "Because these databases did not previously exist, policymakers could not precisely identify victims and perpetrators, nor could they establish empirical links between the two on a national scale... When the databases are complete, an investigator using them could, for example, identify individual victims and perpetrators of a particular atrocity, perhaps with photographs and biographies of the individuals in question." Later on in the report, the full importance of this is spelt out: "Collecting and compiling data on Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge will be one of the most significant contributions of the CGP for both historical and legal reasons.

Organising this mass of new information into a structured whole will enable citizens to fully comprehend the nightmare of what happened in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. It will allow historians to compile a more compelling and accurate picture of the past. It will allow policymakers to fashion a case for the necessity of accountability for the Cambodian genocide. And it will provide prosecutors with critical information on crimes committed by specific individuals."

Youk Chhang has his own personal reasons for wanting to see the Khmer Rouge leaders brought to justice. He was fourteen when the Khmer Rouge came to power and was forced to witness their atrocities at first hand. "I was put to hard labour in the fields and forced to see the killing and the tortures... Let me tell you one short story. One day they called the whole team in the field to a meeting. So we sat on the ground and waited to see what would happen. Suddenly they called one man and one woman to the middle of the meeting. Then one of the Khmer Rouge chiefs asked the crowd, 'Is it right or wrong when people fall in love with one another without permission from the top leader?' This lady was one of the base people from a liberated zone and the man was one of the new people who had been evacuated from the city. So these two were not supposed to fall in love with each other. Because of that they were regarded as criminal. So after the people said it was the wrong thing to do, one of the young Khmer Rouge guards took a bamboo stick and hit him on his neck. Blood was coming out from his nose and his ears and then they unblindfolded the woman so that she could

see it. She didn't cry but she looked so pale. Then the young guard hit her and they buried both of them alive... both of them. And then they told us to go back to work.

"My sister was pregnant and she had no food. You won't believe me if I tell you that we had no food for three months. So people picked up leaves from the jungle, leeches, snakes, they ate rats, things like that. My sister was pregnant and she had had no food for three months and I felt sorry for her. So I went to the forest to pick up some leaves and then I got arrested. To the Khmer Rouge it was wrong to pick up leaves to eat to survive, it was the wrong thing to do. So they put me in prison and they tortured me and they beat me up. I still have the scars on my leg. I was lucky that they did not kill me but they sent me home. But I saw all the prisoners in the prison, how they tortured them, how they beat them. It's still with me."

By the time he had escaped through Thailand and settled in the States, Youk Chhang had already committed himself to the Cambodian cause and was determined to tell the world what had happened. "For me it is very important that these things are heard, that these things are taught everywhere in the world. This is not about Cambodia, this is about human beings that were mistreated by their fellow human beings and we have to understand why this happened - why he killed his own brother and sister, why your mum doesn't want to give food to you, why your village chief wants to kill you when you didn't do anything. This case has everything in it - politics, culture, race, law, power. It has everything in it. And this has to be taught, has to be learned, has to be studied in schools."

I asked him if he thought there would be a trial. "I personally seek for justice. I hope to see a trial that brings the top leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime to court. Pol Pot and Ta Mok, people on the standing committee who were responsible for policy making, who were responsible for what happened in their regime. I don't know about the trial. We are a research team. The trial is up to the government. But for