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Confession Summary: Mil Sovan, Receptionist in the Royal Palace

By Sophary Noy

Mil Sovan aka Nup was born in Prek Tatun village, Svay Po commune, Sangke district, Battambang province. Sovan entered a pagoda school in Battambang at the age of five. In 1964, he earned a secondary education certificate and then continued studying at the Faculty of Science in Phnom Penh. In 1965, Sovan passed the exam to study at the Faculty of Pedagogy. Three months later, he was awarded a scholarship to study engineering in the Soviet Union.

Study in the Soviet Union

In November 1965, Sovan left Cambodia with twelve other students. When he arrived in the Soviet Union, he was welcomed by other overseas Khmer students including Ieng Seiha, Hakk Seang Lay Ny, Krin Lean, Tann Chhai Heng and Hai Kim Seang. They instructed Sovan to support the Soviet Union's policy of subordinating smaller and weaker countries to its power and ideology. Sovan was then sent to study Marxism and Leninism as part of a secret group. He studied in the same classroom as Krin Lean, one of his closest friends.

In 1966, Krin Lean introduced Sovan to Boris Lapsos, who recruited him to join the KGB. Sovan was assigned to contact Khmer students and convince them to study in the Soviet Union. The goal was to extend the KGB's political influence in the Khmer Students Associations overseas, especially in Eastern Europe.

In 1967, Sovan and Krin Lean traveled to East Germany and Czechoslovakia to make contact with the students there and to obtain information on the situation abroad.

During his 1968 school break, Sovan organized a trip for the students to the Black Sea in an attempt to expand and strengthen connections with all Khmer students living in the Soviet Union. He also launched an investigation into the Cambodian resistance movement, and spoke critically of the monarchy in Cambodia to the students who studied abroad.

After the 1970 coup that toppled King Sihanouk, Sovan worked closely with Boris Lapsos, planning against the Kampuchean revolution. He spied on the National United Front of Kampuchea in Beijing through Hakk Seang Lay Ny and Krin Lean.

During 1971-72, Lam Virey, Uk Sok and Sovan created propaganda that claimed the Soviet Union assisted the Kampuchean revolution using Vietnam and that the Soviet Union supported the resistance movement of Kampuchea.

Activities in Beijing

In April 1973, Sovan left Moscow for Beijing to join the National United Front of Kampuchea (NUFK). There he had three assignments: 1) to break the Front's internal affairs; 2) to separate King Sihanouk from the Front in order to prevent the expansion of the revolutionary organization; and 3) to try to penetrate the revolutionary line.

Sovan was under the control of Hakk Seang Lay Ny, an under-secretary of state of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Committee of the National United Front of Kampuchea in Beijing. Hakk Sean Lay Ny often explained the Front's internal situation to Sovan, such as the resignation of King Sihanouk's Front leader and divisions among the King Sihanouk Group, Pen Nut Group and Group in France. In addition, Hakk Sean Lay Ny introduced Sovan to Chuon Praseth, minister of Coordinating Ministry, and Suong Sikoeun, who was an AKE reporter and member of the Committee of the National United Front of Kampuchea. Sovan's role was to incite people against the revolution; to achieve this goal, Sovan requested that the Angkar give him permission to enter the liberated regions in Cambodia.

Return to Kampuchea

In May 1974, the Angkar allowed Sovan to go to the liberated regions with Hakk Sean Lay Ny, Tun Chotsirin, Suong Sikoeun, and Uk Sok. Before arriving in Cambodia, they stayed in Hanoi, Vietnam, for a period. The Angkar introduced those five people to the CT70 Office, a secret radio station of the National United Front of Kampuchea.

When he arrived in Office CT70, Sovan met Puch Makaborei, Heng Pich, and Sieng Hour Long, who also left the office for the liberated regions in Cambodia. They told Sovan to temper himself and to follow the revolutionary line. Although Sovan did not directly contact Vietnam, he connected with Siv, the office chief, and Chann, the office secretary. Sovan reported to them that King Sihanouk no longer felt confident about the leaders of the resistance movement. At the time, Siv and Chann also encouraged King Sihanouk not to be confident in the movement's leadership and convinced him to join coordinating talks. They then abandoned the office because the Angkar issued a decision to destroy Cambodian bases in the north of Vietnam.

The Job of Receptionists for Foreigners

In May 1975, Sovan arrived in Phnom Penh. He was assigned the task of welcoming Chinese guests at the Ministry of Defense. Later, the Angkar sent him to oversee a house for foreign guests near Independence Monument. Sovan also joined King Sihanouk's delegation on visits to various countries. When he returned, the Angkar assigned Sovan to serve King Sihanouk in the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh.

Sovan was assigned five tasks by the KGB: 1) to join the Angkar and have a firm grip on the Cambodian revolutionary organization's political line and to agitate in the party; 2) to expand forces; 3) to prevent and interrupt the policy of expanding the revolutionary organization on the international stage; 4) to have a firm grip on the Angkar's position and strategies towards King Sihanouk because the Soviet Union and Vietnam wanted to convince King Sihanouk to oppose the revolution of Kampuchea; and 5) to search for the old organizational lines.

While he was serving the Chinese guests, Sovan met Ieng Seiha at a reception for the Chinese. Sovan asked Seiha about his former classmates in the Soviet Union who worked together to support the KGB. Seiha told him that they had been separated and sent to various regions when the Angkar evacuated people from Phnom Penh.

Sovan again met Krin Lean when Krin Lean sent forces to make preparations for warmly welcoming some Chinese technicians who had just arrived. Sovan reported to him on the KGB's line. Through Krin Lean, Sovan learned about some organizations in the B-1 Ministry (Ministry of Foreign Affairs). The Angkar soon demoted Krin Lean from the position of team leader to reception because people were dissatisfied with his leadership.

Later, the Angkar assigned the two men to work elsewhere. Sovan had to greet guests with Heng Pich, Sieng Hour Long and Long Norin. His main activities were to spy on the activities of foreigners who were coming and going (at the time the visitors were Koreans and Vietnamese) and on King Sihanouk's return to Cambodia.

In early September 1975, King Sihanouk came to Cambodia with some members of the Front. Sovan was assigned to serve drinks to the King during his visits. At the end of the month, he traveled with King Sihanouk's delegation to Beijing. The King and some members of the Front then went on to join the UN General Assembly in New York. While there, Sovan met Prum Phoeun and Chea Khan, and described Cambodia's situation after liberation to them.

Sovan then visited Yugoslavia, where he contacted the diplomat Tann Chhai Heng. After describing the situation in Cambodia, Sovan persuaded Tann Chhai Heng and Thach Suong to come back to Cambodia. Sovan also sent a greeting card through Prince Norin Dara Pong to Lam Virey, who was living in the Soviet Union. In the card, Sovan described the Angkar's policy of evacuating people from Phnom Penh, closing the markets, and eliminating money.

At the end of December 1975, Sovan returned to Cambodia with King Sihanouk. Then, he began to spy in various places and work for his network. Sovan knew that some people were sent to live in rural regions while others remained in Phnom Penh. During that time, Sovan could only make contact with Hakk Sean Lay Ny, Heng Pich, and Sieng Hour Long. For reasons of secrecy, Hakk Sean Lay Ny continued their contact via the Vietnamese, Yugoslavian and Romanian embassies.

Having lived in the Royal Palace, Sovan was able to keep track of King Sihanouk's activities from the time when he was head of state until his resignation. Sovan's speech and behavior influenced the Angkar's policy towards King Sihanouk in order to create conflict between them. In the meantime, Sovan tried to go along with the revolutionary line and convince others to expand the new force.

The Arrest and Confession

Sovan was arrested and sent to S-21 Office on January 4, 1977. There Neou Ny interrogated him six times. Sovan began writing his confession on January 9, 1977, and

finished on January 22, 1977. Sovan described his work and traitorous plan, and clarified the activities of other people such as Chuon Praseth, Sarin Chhak and Suong Sikoeun. Sovan was killed on February 18, 1977.

Those Involved Sovan's Network

Prum Phoeun, former student in the Soviet Union

Chea Khan, former student in the Soviet Union

Heng Pich, former student in the Soviet Union, B-1 Ministry, Preparation of State

Buildings

Uk Sok, Ministry of Public Works

Lam Virey, student in the Soviet Union

Puch Makaborei, Ministry of Mines

Ieng Seiha, Ministry of Telecommunication, Railways

Hakk Sean Lay Ny, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Protocol

Krin Lean, Russei Keo Technical School

Boris Lapsos, Soviet

Tann Chhai Heng, Second Secretary of Yugoslavia

Thach Suong, diplomatic staff member in Yugoslavia

Hai Kim Seang, Second Diplomatic Secretary of Cuba

Chuon Praseth, Comrade of Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Suong Sikoeun, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Information

Sieng Hour Long, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Air Attacks

Siv, former chief of CT70 Office in Hanoi

Chann, former secretary of CT70 Office in Hanoi

Pen Thong An, living in the U.S.

Men Moningam

Ly Kim Pakk

Tann Thanh, Khmer-Soviet Technical School

Mean Bun Chhuoy, Tyre Factory, Takeo

Chea Kim Thann, Phnom Penh Electricity

Chum Saukan, Phnom Penh Electricity

Long Norin, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Hakk Pha Deth, 17-April Hospital, Children

Bou Khin, Ministry of Public Affairs

Uok Sakum, Ministry of Industry

Srei Chan Thoeun, former student in the Soviet Union

Mien, Military Cadre

Soeun, Military Cadre

Nai, Cadre of Economics

Yeun, Cadre of Economics

Sarin Chhak, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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