

 A film by Rob Lemkin & Thet Sambath

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**Enemies of the People (ศัตรูประชาชน)**

UK/Cambodia • 2010 • 95 minutes
16:9 • Stereo • Digital
In English and Cambodian with Thai and English subtitles

Thailand Theatrical Release Date: 19 May 2011 (Rate: 18) at SF World cinema, CentralWorld

An OLD STREET FILMS Production (UK)

An EXTRA VIRGIN Release (Thailand)

Directors / Producers / Writers: Rob Lemkin, Thet Sambath

Editors: Stephan Ronowicz

Music: Daniel Pemberton

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**Synopsis**

In 1974, Thet Sambath's father became one of the nearly two million people who were murdered by the Khmer Rouge when he refused to give them his buffalo.

Sambath's mother was forced to marry a Khmer Rouge militiaman and died in childbirth in 1976, while his eldest brother disappeared in 1977. Sambath himself escaped Cambodia at age 10 when the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979.

Fast forward to 1998, and Sambath, now a journalist, got to know the children of some senior Khmer Rouge cadre and gradually earned their trust. Then, for a decade, he spent weekends visiting the home of the most senior surviving leader, Nuon Chea, aka Brother Number Two under Pol Pot.

**Directors’ Biography**

**Rob Lemkin**

Rob Lemkin is the founder and director of Old Street Films. He has produced and directed over 50 documentaries for BBC, Channel 4, ITV, Sky, The History Channel (US) and Arts & Entertainment. He has won numerous awards in Britain and abroad, and his work has appeared in major documentary strands for C4, BBC and ITV. He has made several films about the history and politics of Asia including *The Real Dr Evil* (BBC/Arts & Entertainment 2003), *Who Really Killed Aung San?* (BBC2 1997), *Malaya: The Undeclared War* (BBC2 1998), *China: Handle with Care* (C4 2001) *Bearers of the Sword* (C4 2002). He lives in Oxford with his partner and their four children.

**Thet Sambath**

Thet Sambath is a senior reporter with the Phnom Penh Post, Cambodia's premier English-language newspaper. He is widely regarded as one of Cambodia's best investigative reporters and his stories have been syndicated all over the world. He has worked for the American Refugee Committee as a paramedic on the Thai-Cambodia border; as police interpreter for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC); and as a human rights investigator for LICADHO. Since 1994 he has worked as producer, translator and camera operator for many world broadcasting organizations including BBC, WGBH Frontline, NHK and NBC. In 2002 he travelled to the US on a Jefferson Scholarship. He lives in Phnom Penh with his wife and their two children.

**Directors’ Statements**

**Rob Lemkin**

Ten years ago I made a BBC documentary about a mysterious Malaysian revolutionary called Chin Peng. Chin Peng came to London for the premiere and in a taxi back to the airport told me that in 1975 Chairman Mao had sent him to stay with Pol Pot. He told me the truth about Pol Pot was very different from popular opinion. He said Pol Pot was like rabbit in the headlights and admitted to him he was out of his depth after seizing power. That was why, Chin Peng thought, the killing fields had happened.

This image of a genocide caused by chaos and inexperience stayed with me. In 2006 I visited Phnom Penh and met Sambath. I discovered he and I shared the natural revisionism of the investigative journalist. I also discovered he was on the same road to the heart to the killing fields. Only he was much further along; and for him, it was a matter of life and death.

My personal connection with Cambodia is non-existent. But my connection with genocide is not: many of my father’s family died at the hands of the Nazis and a rather remote relative, Raphael Lemkin, even coined the term ‘genocide’.

I see Sambath as a man trying to make sense of the nightmare of his childhood. When he finally understands the genocide, as he says he does, he is achieving inner peace and coherence by being able to situate his personal loss in the wider sweep of history.

I also see him as a representative of the Second Generation, working to ferret out the truth from the First Generation, in order to convey the meaning of history to the Third Generation. In this sense this story could be from Germany, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Iraq, Sudan.

**Thet Sambath**

My father, a middle income peasant, was killed by the Khmer Rouge in 1974 when he refused to give them his buffalo. My mother, forced to marry a Khmer Rouge militiaman, died in childbirth in 1976. My eldest brother disappeared in 1977 in a party purge in our area, I later found out.

When the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979, I escaped – aged 10 – to a refugee camp on the Thai border. I learnt English from American missionaries and eventually started working as a fixer for media organisations in Phnom Penh in the 1990s.

Throughout that time I never really understood what happened under the Khmer Rouge. I read history books – almost all by Westerners – but it still didn’t make sense to me: why were so many people killed? It could not be just because the Khmer Rouge were ‘bad people’.

In 1998 through my work as a journalist I got to know the children of some senior Khmer Rouge cadres. For the next four years and much to my wife’s annoyance, I spent most weekends visiting the home of the most senior surviving leader, Nuon Chea aka Brother Number Two.

But he never used to say anything different from what he told Western journalists: *‘I was low-ranking’, ‘I knew nothing’, ‘I am not a killer’.*

Then one day he said me *‘Sambath, I trust you, you are the person I would like to tell my story to. Ask me what you want to know.’* For the next five years he told me the truth, as he saw it, including all the details of killing.

Throughout this time I also took pains to create a network of Khmer Rouge killers who would talk to me. There are thousands of people like these in Cambodia but none had ever confessed and finding them is like looking for a needle in the sea.

My last group of sources was the plotters, the people who were trying to overthrow Pol Pot and Nuon Chea. Without them you cannot understand the Killing Fields. But again, none of the survivors had ever talked.

My sources are country people. The Khmer Rouge was all country people. They don’t talk to people from the city, let alone foreigners. I am a country person. I think that’s why, in the end, they talk to me. I am one of them.

In 2005 I started to plan a book. But I worried no-one would believe me. So I began tape-recording all my interviews. Then I worried they still might not believe. So, in 2006, I began videotaping my interviews and meetings.

That same year (2006) I met Rob and we decided to make this documentary film about my work and the secrets of the Khmer Rouge.

Some may say no good can come from talking to killers and dwelling on past horror, but I say these people have sacrificed a lot to tell the truth. In daring to confess they have done good, perhaps the only good thing left. They and all the killers like them must be part of the process of reconciliation if my country is to move forward.

**Background**

In 2006, after decades of international negotiations, the United Nations and the Cambodian government set up a unique hybrid tribunal to try the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge for international crimes. It is called the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, or ECCC for short.

In September 2007, the ECCC ordered the arrest of Nuon Chea. He was charged with crimes against humanity and war crimes. His trial is due to begin soon.

The trials are widely expected to deliver a form of justice but fewer expect the truth finally to come out through this process.

**Latest Developments**

During the course of 2009 the ECCC has processed its first case: the trial of Comrade Duch, the prison chief at Tuol Sleng Detention Centre, who is charged with responsibility for the deaths of over 10,000 prisoners in Phnom Penh. On 26 July 2010, he was convicted and sentenced to 35 years of imprisonment. His appeal hearings before the Supreme Court Chamber is scheduled to be held in late March 2011.

In December 2009, the charge of genocide was added to the indictment sheet against Nuon Chea and three other former senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge: former President and Prime Minister Khieu Samphan, former Minister of Social Action Ieng Thirith and her husband/ former Minister of Foreign Affairs Ieng Sary. The closing order of the investigating judges is expected be completed shortly.

Currently, it is anticipated the public trial of Nuon Chea and the other leaders will start in mid-2011.

Many fear the elderly defendants may not live that long.

**Characters’ Biography**

**NUON CHEA aka “Brother Number Two”** was born in 1925 in Battambang, Cambodia. Studied law at Thammasat University, Bangkok. Joined Khmer resistance in 1949. Led urban underground in Phnom Penh in 1950s. Appointed Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) in 1960. Decided appointment of Pol Pot as Secretary of CPK in 1962. President of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly of Democratic Kampuchea 1976-1979.

Left the Khmer Rouge as it collapsed in 1998.

Arrested in September 2007 by the United Nations-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal and charged with international crimes and crimes against humanity. Charged with genocide in December 2009. In prison in Phnom Penh awaiting trial, expected 2011.

**KHOUN** joined Khmer Rouge military wing in 1970. After Khmer Rouge liberation in 1975 became a military intelligence commissar in the North-West zone. Assigned to investigate co-operatives from 1976 to 1978. Oversaw killing of soldiers from previous regime, suspect ethnic minorities and deportees from Eastern Zone. Admits to managing killing of over 3,500 people during Khmer Rouge rule.

Briefly arrested in 1979 for mass murder but released for lack of evidence. From 1979 has lived as a peasant farmer in north-west Cambodia.

**SUON** joined Khmer Rouge military wing in 1970. In 1975 became militia commander in co-operative in north-west Cambodia. Between 1976 and 1978 admits to killing over 200 Cambodians designated ‘enemies of the people’. Worked in killing units managed by Khoun (above).

Has lived since 1979 as a peasant farmer in north-west Cambodia.

**SISTER ‘EM’** joined Khmer Rouge political wing in 1973. Worked as a District Chief in northwest Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. In that role was responsible for the ordering of many thousands of deaths of suspected enemies of the party.

Now lives and works under another name elsewhere in Cambodia where she is a senior politician in local government.

**Festivals & Awards**

ENEMIES OF THE PEOPLE had its World Premiere at the 2009 International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) and North American Premiere at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival, where it won the Special Jury Prize for World Cinema Documentary.

Since then, the film has been travelling extensively in the international film festivals circuit and won an array of awards including Best Documentary at the 2010 British Independent Film Awards, Outstanding Documentary at the 2010 Hong Kong International Film Festival and Grand Jury Award at the 2010 Full Frame Documentary Festival.

The film has previously been released theatrically in the UK and the USA and the Thai theatrical release in April 2011 will be the first time the film is screened in Southeast Asia apart outside Cambodia.

The filmmakers are currently in the process of shooting the follow-up film.

For more information, please visit: [www.enemiesofthepeoplemovie.com](http://www.enemiesofthepeoplemovie.com)