

The 5 - January Overpass Inaugurated

(5 January 2016 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)



05 January 2016 — Samdech Techo Hun Sen with people in Phnom Penh at the inauguration of The 5-January Overpass

Today, my wife and I are so happy to join with all of you to put the Techno overpass, which the Phnom Penh Mayor, HE Pa Socheatvong, requested to call the 5-January Overpass. As the year 2015 passed and we are now five days in 2016, please allow me to express my sincere appreciation and wish our people in the whole country as well as those residing abroad with the four Buddhist blessings.

The 5-January Overpass, 40th Wedding Anniversary

I am so pleased that we are inaugurating this achievement altogether ... 5 January is in fact falling on the fortieth anniversary of my marriage. As the mayor of Phnom Penh proposed this name, some presses and spokesperson of political parties have been making silly comments. I came across news in the Phnom Penh Post this morning that the inauguration of the overpass falls on the wedding anniversary of the Prime Minister. I just wanted to ask if 5 January belongs to me alone. If the press is silly, I

wish leader of political party and member of the National Assembly are not. I would not bring this matter up if they name the overpass after the 40th wedding anniversary of Hun Sen. It is just a coincidence. The Municipality of Phnom Penh has its own reason to name it 5-January. At the beginning, we called it the Techno overpass. However, this junction does not belong to (the Cambodian Institute of Technology) alone. It is a junction where stands the Customs and Excise Department, formerly Ambassador Hotel, the Kim Il Sung road and the Russian Federation Boulevard ... Techno is also not a Khmer word. They have decided that since we are inaugurating it today, the overpass may take name after the day – 5 January.

We are putting the overpass of 5-January into official use before schedule. The overpass was constructed with financial management that we called “wrapping palm sugar in palm leaves.” This means that we

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“Samdech Techo Awards” Song Contest Closed

(12 January 2016 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

... Where should I begin? Maybe I should sing a song of Basac. Perhaps I should not. If I were to do so, I wonder if coach Yieng and coach Samit would keep their jobs. If I were to sing a song of Yike, Coach Yan Borin and Coach Prak Vorn would suffer the fate. If I were to sing traditional (rhythm) songs, Coach Eang Sithul and Coach Ouk Sitha would have their jobs to lose. Actors Khat Sokhim and Khat Chamroeun would leave the stage if I were to perform Ayay. Today my wife and I are so happy to be able to participate in the

closing ceremony of the “Cambodian Cultural Heritage – Samdech Techo Awards” Song Contest organized by the General Directorate of Bayon Radio and TV, with cooperation and instruction from the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts.

I am so pleased that our Cambodian cultural heritage have finally mobilized and developed to the present. I remember that about some thirty years ago, everything in those days was in stage of gathering (cultural) capi-

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A Match Made in Heaven - Marriage in War Time

(05 January 2016 — Unofficial Selection and Translation)

5 January 2015 is the fortieth anniversary of the marriage of my wife and I (5 January 1976 – 5 January 2016). In general, marriage life is quite a normal issue but for my wife and me, it is not normal and I sometimes think it is so strange that maybe we are the match made in heaven by deity.

I think I should start at the point where and how did we meet. Many fortunetellers told me that my wife-to-be is someone who lived downstream. As we are living along the Mekong River, downstream means she would be one living anywhere further down the water current. On the contrary, my wife lives in a place in the upper stream. Geographically, the village

of Peam Koh Sna, commune of Peam Koh Sna, district of Stoeng Trang, my native place, and the village of Roka Khnor, commune of Roka Khnor, district of Kroch Chhmar, my wife’s native place, locate on either side of the river. My village is about three or five Kilometers downstream from where her village is.

Let me now talk about a story that happened in the relationship between my wife and me. In early 1973, my (military) unit was sent from the district of Mehmot

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are using fund from Phnom Penh city development for the construction. We did that in the constructions of the new Monivong Bridge, Kbal Thnol overpass, 7-January overpass, Stoeng Meanjei overpass, and now the 5-January overpass. We will have more overpasses and underpasses to build and I will share with you later. I wish to thank the Municipality of Phnom Penh and the company of Cambodian expatriates for their joint efforts in getting things moving from the time of former mayor HE Kep Chuktema to HE Pa Socheatvong, who always came to see me for issues relating to infrastructural development of Phnom Penh.

In like a few months ago I talked about need to find solution for three problems in Phnom Penh – traffic congestion, drainage blocking because of flooding and waste. In 1979, we did not have waste because there was not much to eat. As of now, we have too much to eat and failing to remove waste would create heaps of garbage. From 1979 through to 1980, there was no need for overpass as spending the night for a week in the street would have no traffic accident. There were no cars and traffic. As far as this road is concerned, I used to drag barrel of water along. There was traffic congestion since those days. The schools of Peo Um and Indra Deva are on that side. Students would go from here and at 5pm, they closed traffic to allow passing of train. It was congestion of mostly bicycles because there weren't many cars like these days. From the pagoda of Neakavorn to the area of Toek La Ak, to Kampuchea Kroam road, it was flooded in every rainy season. Phnom Penh was flooded in its older days too.

Ruling Party's Political Framework Offers Chance for Rapid Economic Devel-

opment

Traffic circulation in our country is going to increase because there are more and more cars, motorcycles, and/or tricycles. One may say that it all happens because of the political platform that I set out to eliminate war and to let our people reap from chance to develop the country. As the country, each family, and individual benefits from the chance, they have more incomes with which they purchase means of transport such as cars or motorcycles. Over a long time, we have too many that brings about issue of congestion. Two elderly citizens talked with each other. One asked why we have everything like today. "Because we are making efforts," the other answered. "Under Pol Pot time, we also made efforts, from morning till night, why were we still poor?" said the previous elderly person.

It was true that there needed to have efforts made by each family but those efforts could yield only in the context of correct political platform of the ruling party, in which people could carry out their economic activities. There are two inter-related things here – firstly, correct political platform that provides chance for family to develop and development of national economy; and secondly, people have to make own efforts. Today we are putting into official use of the 5-January overpass and I hope that we will have better traffic circulation. We are blocking road this morning creating a traffic jam but after the ceremony is over, a better situation will prevail.

Overpasses, Underpasses and Express Way in Four More Locations

I have four demands from the Municipality of Phnom Penh to sort out today. I already signed the requests authorizing construction of – (1) three curved overpasses at the Kbal

Thnol in Khan Chamkar Morn; (2) an underpass to improve traffics at the junction road of Russian Federation Boulevard and Monivong Street; (3) an overpass at the junction of Phsar Dey Hoy and Russian Federation Boulevard in Khan Sen Sok. Fourthly, we have an approved project to build expressway over the rail track to evade traffic congestion for people who need to get to the International Airport of Phnom Penh in time. We do not use state fund to build this road. We allow for private investment. Use of the road will require fee paying. I hope that overpasses, underpasses, and expressway in all four locations will be of interest to our people to avoid traffic congestion and accident.

A Marriage in Time of War

... I do not forget to recall that at this time, forty years ago, thirteen couples of men and women were to be married as husband and wives lined up ... women were seated in row of long stool before men ... I posted messages explaining in Facebook about the fact that some people saw my wife and I were in traditional costumes. They asked if in those days those costumes were allowed. I said I would be remorseful if I failed to give explanation on those few photos we took in 1988. At that time, our youngest daughter was already 5 years old. In fact, under the Democratic Kampuchea, they made us wear black dresses. In the wedding, there were no parents, relatives, and/or friends, whatsoever. However, my wife and I felt the love of one another before marriage ... Couples married in fully traditional setting would not survive if they did not love each other. However, no matter how your couple life started, when you love and understand each other, couple's life will last long.

In just days ahead, we will

celebrate the January 7 Liberation Day. If there were no 7 January victory, there would not be 5-January overpass here today. Where would it come from when people already died? People talk of human rights and we must recognize right to life is the most fundamental one. Some people have gone into extreme thought in their heart and mind, 7 January brought them to life. Only they dare not say it out. My life went through very bitter suffering and experience. I would say perhaps there is no leader in the world, whose life suffered what mine did. My child is dead before me but they (Angkar or Pol Pot's organization) did not allow me to give a proper burial. Limit of my patience reached a level that no human being could have endured. I had a mission order to attend. Travelled with me was a cruel commander. As I was the one who rode the motorcycle, I took the chance to visit my wife in hospital. People told me my child was dead. I begged to stay and take care of my wife and child. "Though you stay, your child would not come to life again and your wife would not be better" was what I got as an answer.

If I were to kill that cruel man, I would become a killer and risked of being killed too. There would not be Hun Sen to lead the resistance. With my wife in her five-month pregnancy of the second child, I had to leave her for resistance to liberate the country (from the Democratic Kampuchea). I will write and post more (about events in my life). What kind of feeling a man would have when his own son called him uncle? Hun Manet called me uncle for two months before he accepted the fact that I was his father. Under Pol Pot's regime, they called him son of the traitor. In France, when he visited recently, they called him that again. I would not rebuke but

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allow such virtue-lacking attitude for the public to see the kind of words used by the opposition. If there were not 7-January, there would not be Bun Rany today and Hun Sen would not be here as well as he could have fought and died in battlefields.

New Traffic Law, Right-Hand Drive Vehicle, Vehicles on National Road 4

After verifying things, I may resolve some of the people's requests concerning implementation of the new traffic law. I am calling our people to give the Royal Government some time to see through and draw on experiment. In just three days of law enforcement, we have reactions from numerous sources. It is not that the Royal Government and concerned institutions neglect people's demand but we needed to know where originates the problem. The National Police and Ministry of Interior will conduct meetings to figure out shortcomings of law and realign them. A monk visited my Facebook page and asked whether as Buddhist monk, he also need to put on a helmet? I am asking HE Neth Savoeun to inspect this issue or the Buddhist monks would also be fined. I would let the Minister of Interior to take up the issue.

People who reacted are mostly those who purchased their motorbikes or cars without proper tax papers. I have passed people's requests on to National Police and Interior for consideration and solution.

Concerning right-hand drive vehicles ... HE Pa Socheatvong filed the paper since 30 December ... as I come here, I had asked for the letter, which addressed to Deputy Prime Minister HE Sok An, and approved. Letter of notification from the Council of Ministers will follow. With this regard, firstly, no more right-hand drive vehicles are to be im-

ported. This is an issue as in ASEAN, as traffic in six countries – Thailand, Myanmar, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia carry out on left hand side, and four – Cambodia, Vietnam, Lao and Philippines – on right hand side. Secondly, allow existing right-hand drive vehicles to pay tax and provide them with legal permission to drive, for instance 400 trucks owners must come before law to pay tax. Thirdly, there are demand to change no wheel-drivers of vehicles from right to left hand side as it is not safe. I agreed and approved the request.

For people who own vehicles and reside along the National Road 4, according to the report here, company has granted free-of-charge using roads to trucks carrying workers and others ... It has discovered that there are 23,907 cars belong to people who reside along the National Road 4. Concerned authorities already have their identifications. These vehicles pay toll fee for entry and exit every time they travel. As of 7 January, these vehicles will no longer pay toll fee there. We have to set time as to when exactly, on 7 January, to cease toll fee collection for those vehicles. We also have to call urgent meeting with participations of Ministry of Interior, Transports and Public Works and Economy and Finance, and AZ company to figure out new vehicles our people (there) would buy and those who reside about 300 meters behind both side of the National Road 4 ...

Consideration should also be taken on those who live off the National Road 4 but frequently pass through to visit their farms, etc. They pay for entry and pay for exit. You must consider that matter as well.

Readjustment of Cost for Issuing Driving License

Cost of issuing driving license is a major issue here. Everyone

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ner – Bayon Radio and TV. I would also appeal from here for sponsorship and collaboration from other companies as well. Today, I would like to express my sincere thanks for Lok Chumteav Phoeung Sakona, Minister for Culture and

needs to have his/her driving license. People cannot borrow other's license. They may borrow motorbikes but not licenses. Some have only one motorbike for many in the family. I urge the Ministers of Economy and Finance, Interior and Public Works to figure out readjustment of costs for our people. I have not come to resolving problem for those who drive cars yet. The cost of issuing a driving license for motorbikes of 125CC and below will not pay Riel 60,000 but Riel 25,000 only [...]

I urge the Ministry of Public Works and Transports, which has their representative offices in various places to make efforts in teaching traffic rules to people, not how to drive motorbikes. They could think of spots and hire some TV, cable TV perhaps, to go on air. Before (concerned institutions) issued driving license with permanent rights to drive, which I would say either too much to the right or too much to the left. Now, may I have attention of Minister of Public Works and Transports HE Tram Iv Toek, they have to change for a much shorter driving right period and (the Ministry) allows them so short time to swap for new ones. I hope we have resolved the problems and this will help strengthen respect and implementation of traffic rules in place. I urge that the Ministry will work as a priority to issue driving license for those who do not have ones. Those who already have them and just need to change for new ones, they could wait...■

Fine Arts, for her brilliant idea of inviting some 17 living (cultural) heritages who are senior citizens of arts to join us today that I consider it Cambodian Cultural Gathering Day.

In addition to awards defined by the General Directorate of Bayon Radio and TV, my wife and I offer Riel 5 million for each of the six jury members, Riel 2 million each for eleven musicians, Riel 10 million for dancers of National Cultural Heritage group. We also offer Riel 5 million for the Ayay team of the Khat's family, and Riel 5 million for live broadcast team of Bayon Radio and TV. My wife and I are so grateful for the invitation to join this important event. I hope that there will be ceremony like this for the coming years. Let me wish those who have won the awards and those who have not as well. Those who did not win the awards may also continue with their singing jobs in various tradition teams.

There is one thing I need to say to traffic police. I just received information from the Minister of Culture and Fine Arts that while traffic law came into force, the performance art groups had suspended their performances. Normally these performance art teams travel with their stages, scenes, and performers in a Korean made trucks. Now they could not travel like that because of the enforcement.

I am asking the traffic police everywhere to allow and facilitate their traveling in safety to where they need to go for performances. At this time of year, Cambodia is in season of festivity and performance art plays a major role in it. That is what the country needs...■

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to the district of Tbong Khmom, which is locating along the Mekong River, the communes of Jiro, Boeng Pruol, Peam Jilang, Thmor Pich, Sre Siam, etc. In numerous battles along the National Road 7, between the district of Snuol of Kratie and the district of Krek of Kompong Cham, we fought mostly with invasive South Vietnamese army and at times with the US and South Vietnamese troops together, especially in between 1970 through to late 1971.

At the time, I was in my 21 years of age. My wife was just 19 years old. My wife and I never knew or heard of each other. One evening, it was my turn to cook dinner, a soldier, released recently from a hospital in the district of Kroch Chhmar, came telling me that "Sao" sends me her pray. For people residing along the river, Sao means a sister-in-law (or a woman who is married to your brother). I did not respond and made not query about it. I then asked the soldier to help me peel bananas as we were to have (Cambodian) vegetable soup. The next day, a different soldier came from the same hospital and said the same thing. Not long after, many soldiers and cadres came with words of "Sao sends her greeting and pray." On my wife side, she also received words from soldiers that their commander sent her greeting and pray. Some soldiers even went on to call her Sao or sister-in-law. That made her very angry with me.

It was a dangerous game of matching taking into consideration of military discipline, should we have no understanding from our commanders. Fortunately, I happened to have very kind

commanders, one of them is Sok Saroeun, currently a two-star general and deputy commander of military region 4. He was one of a few people who know about relation between my wife and me. I also know many of his stories. He is a long-time single man who wanted to marry a young wife.

On 23 March 1973, there was a large-scale fighting to commemorate the third anniversary of the foundation of the Cambodian National United Front led by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk. We fought the barracks at Tonle Bet from the northern section, currently the foot side of Kizuna Bridge, under the command of brother Sok Saroeun. We were defeated and fled. Some soldiers died. Those who sustained wounds were sent for treatment at the hospital in Kroch Chhmar, where I had an issue with (someone there). Let me clarify that the fight on 23 March 1973, it was the first time that I fought with Cambodian soldiers (from the other side) due to their policy to Cambodianize war in Cambodia after the American and South Vietnamese soldiers withdrew their troops but continued to attack by air.

Dozens of fight before were with the invasive American troops, especially the South Vietnamese troops, who then stationed along National Road 7, in area of Sa Am, Ampuk Krek, etc. When our military cadres spent their time in hospital for wound or sickness in the hospital at Kroch Chhmar, locating next to the riverbank, as their commander, I had to visit them. While visiting them, I brought with me and gave to every soldier two Ansam Jek (banana wrapped with

sticky rice), no matter from where their units were. Finally, I visited a friend who was wounded in both of his legs. I dragged and carried him from the battle of 23 March 1973.

This friend shared pitiful fate together from our first battle on 1 May 1970 against the American and South Vietnamese troops in a southern part of Kratie's Snuol district. It was the first day that the invasive troops occupied National Road 7. He was a joker. He never complained about his wound. He said to me "Bonal, (Hun Bonal was my name from birth and my nickname was Sen, some people then called me Bonal or Sen) physician Rany is truly pretty. If you do not like her, I will ask her hand for marriage. However, I am so dark and she is white, she would not agree." Hearing her name again, I asked who she is. My friend hastily replied "the one that you love and she will come soon to clean my wound. You can wait for her here." I said to him "what a silly man you are."

Since I left my family three years already, without waiting as he suggested, I hurriedly crossed the river to see my parents and family in the commune of Peam Koh Sna. I did not have to see her anyway as it might cause me trouble. That was the first time that I knew a woman who turned out to be my wife over the past 40 years. I attempted to avoid her. Although, I was wounded in my thigh by artillery shelling in November 1973, I did not go for treatment in the hospital at Kroch Chhmar for fear of meeting her. However, rumors of our relation grew bigger and I suffered shame and faced with disciplinary challenge. On her side, she

had more serious problem than I did. As a woman, if she did not face with disciplinary issue, she would have moral problem, still.

Two people – one man and one woman, both single and never met each other before, but thought of similar action. I requested to my commander, brother Sok Saroeun, to go see her to resolve the matter once and for all in the district of Kroch Chhmar. About two days later, Rany sent words with manager of hospital at the battle that I should hurry to the district of Kroch Chhmar to resolve this misunderstanding. I got the news in the morning and I went to my commander in the afternoon to insist that he accompanied me to the district of Kroch Chhmar on that evening. Understanding mind and heart of junior level officer, who helped him on many works, and perhaps because he also had to probe feeling of a relative and woman whom he loved, brother Sok Saroeun decided to leave (for district of Kroch Chhmar) and thought of returning later at night.

We left at about three in the afternoon from the commune of Boeung Pruol, district of Peam Jilang to the commune and district of Kroch Chhmar by a CL90 Honda motorcycle. Let me clarify that after 1970, the liberated zone in Kompong Cham, eastern part of the Mekong River, was a part of eastern region 203. I lived in zone 21, which is to the northern side of the National Road 7. As for area on the southern side of the road, it was zone 20. The province of Kompong Cham on the western side (of the Mekong River) was region 304, which bordered on region 203 and 304. In

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zone 21, they created two more districts – Toek Jreou and Peam Jilang in 1973. Later they had one more district called Tromoung. From Boeng Pruol commune to Kroch Chhmar, we had to travel about two hours and we reached the hospital before 5pm.

I ran my eyes for nurse Rany but could not figure out who would she be. About half an hour later, leaders of the hospital and district official for social affairs invited us for dinner. As I did not know which one of those women who brought us dinner were Rany, I glanced at every one of them and whispered a query to head of the hospital, which one was Rany? The hospital head shook his head and said she was not there. After dinner, I asked my commander for permission to see my cousin who lived not far from the hospital [End of Part I].

At about 7pm I returned. I climbed the stairs into a house where a woman was sitting with a kerosene lamp with heaps of prescriptions around. As my commander was not there, I asked the woman if she had seen him – “Sister, where had my commander gone.” The woman replied: “He went to the river.” I then asked her another question as to where at this time a woman named Rany could be. “She went to fetch water,” replied her politely. I then stepped down through the stairs with an aim to find my commander. As I touched the ground, I came across another physician that I knew when he was permanent at one of the battlefields I fought. I asked him the same question about where Rany could be at this time. The physician, who was about ten years

older than I was, said the one you asked up there was the one.

After learning that the woman with whom I had misunderstanding dared lie to me, I was so angry. (I did not see her face clearly. She was sitting giving her back to me while writing prescription but I thought) this time, we had to sort out old and new issues tonight. At 8pm, the meeting to resolve the problem came. On her side, there were head and deputy head of the district hospital, Rany and her friend, who was also a single medical assistant. On my side, I had with me my commander and me. The hospital rolled out two weed mats and placed two kerosene lamps. We sat facing each other. I sat with my legs bending under me and my commander sat with crossed legs (in meditative position). As we sat down, the two young women came and sat down. I could not tell which one could be Rany as I did not see her clearly earlier.

Not long after, I knew well who Rany was. I immediately had a feeling of loving her. I was so sorry and thought that if I only knew that she was that beautiful I would not have to come to resolve the problem but asked her hands for marriage instead. I was so sorry that I was mad with the soldiers who tried to set me up with Rany. I was unhappy with her too, especially because each meeting, officers of senior positions who teased me all along. Love at first sight and it was something I never faced in my single life. How did I go about saving the situation? My plan earlier to sort thing out – old and new issues, had been replaced with apology on my soldiers’ and two sisters’ behalves, who

used to call her sister-in-law causing ill reputation for Rany. Since I do not have love relation with any woman, I thought that I must have her as my wife. My concern then was whether Rany would love me back, would she accept me as her husband? Or whether she already had someone in her heart.

That night I became a liar when I told my commander our motorbike did not seem to work well as the battery did not hold power and it would cause us trouble to travel at night. It was about 10 pm already. The commander accepted that we spent the night at the hospital. They hastily arrange the meeting place as our bed for the night. I could not imagine indeed that the house in which we stayed was one that Rany and her friend stayed and worked. Rany brought two blankets to my commander, who later gave me the blue one and he kept the pink one to himself. After marriage, I learnt that the blanket I covered my body with that night was that of my wife, who at that time covered herself with mosquito net. Was it an arrangement made in heaven?

Very early in the morning, even before daybreak, I heard noise of rice pounding. I peeped through the window. I saw Rany and her friend, Khemara, were pounding rice. My commander told me to get the motorcycle ready for early morning journey. I prayed the motorbike broke down so that I could talk to Rany. I did not have the chance. The motorbike started right after a kick. I made two attempts to go up and down the house before I left and said to Rany “Elder sister, goodbye.” It was my habit to call every woman an

elder sister except my real sister, my aunt, grandaunt, and grandmother because I turned to be 22 years of age already in 1974. Let me clarify that the meeting to resolve misunderstanding was in March 1974. The fact that I am in love with Rany was true but whether she loved me in return or not was a fact to find out. Though love came to me for the first time in my life, I never forgot my role and duty.

On 13 April 1974, it was the Khmer New Year. I took a bit of time to visit Rany in the district of Kroch Chhmar under the pretext that I would visit soldiers hospitalized there. I did not see Rany in the hospital and I dared not ask about her. I rode the motorbike hopelessly out of the hospital. We had to continue our journey to the commune of Roka Khnor where my friend would visit his parents in his native place. As I was riding about two Kilometers away from hospital, I met Rany who was biking alone on the road. I stopped my motorcycle and she stood her bike. We exchanged words of greeting for about three minutes and we left each other for different directions. Rany and I did not behave any differently to the first time we met.

In August 1974, I had to probe my superior’s approval and Rany’s side by filing a request to get married with Rany. My commander approved but I had to wait until we liberated the country from the regime of Lon Nol. As for Rany, she delivered answer through a spokesperson that it would depend on her parents. The two answers did a great encouragement for me. About 98% of Cambo-

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dian women used the phrase “it all depends on her parents as a way of saying yes.” In October 1974, it was really a coincidence that I met Rany in the market of Peam Jilang. Unfortunately, my friend was drunk and called her Sao again. She was not angry but she pretended that she did not hear it. I was so embarrassed. I had to ride my friend home that was about 500 meters away from market under a heavy rain. After placing him in comfort, I returned to the market to see Rany. It was to my disappointment that the vehicle already drove medical team away.

Since then, even until I was wounded, I never met Rany, though I sometimes had the chance (to go see her). On 1 January 1975, I was wounded on my right shoulder, the fourth time it was. I thought to myself that I would have a chance that Rany took care of my injury. It was on the contrary. The medical team stationed at the battlefield decided to remove shrapnel and hospitalize me in the commune of Boeng Pruol, district of Peam Jilang. On 16 April 1975, another wound put me in coma until 21 April before I regained my consciousness. When I woke up, my left eye was already gone and my right eye could bring me sight of about ten meters away. I then learned that we had liberated Phnom Penh and the whole country from the US puppet regime. Words that “one loves and cares for something as one’s eyes” meant nothing to me as I already lost mine already.

In just days, the world changed. People were evacuated from cities. They had to travel on empty

stomachs. I became a handicapped. Added to my bitterness was news that Rany already married to a cadre from regional level. I was so angry. I had all the hatred and scornfulness as I could get to. It was my mistake. It was false information. However, I dared not love Rany anymore for two reasons – firstly, I scorned here and secondly I did not want to bring my handicap on her. What was more important was whether Rany would love and marry me, as I was now a handicap and lost what I was naturally.

Battlefield hospital sent me to regional hospital located in the commune of Roka Khnor, which was about 600 meters from Rany’s home in her native place. She moved from the district hospital located in the commune of Kroch Chhmar to be chief of a hospital in the commune of Chhouk in the same district. In July 1975, at about 3pm, it seemed like a daydream that Rany came to the hospital with three chickens in hand to see me. She asked me about my wound and sickness with softness and words of encouragement. When she said goodbye, I walked her to the street and I recollected that Rany was indeed not angry with and disrespected to handicapped person like me.

I needed to make new effort for myself and for Rany since her parents were not obstacle (to our marriage). The real obstacle was “Angkar” or the organization. Rany was forced to marry a different man. She refused. Angkar instructed me to marry another girl. I refused too. I had to bring my proposal to marry Rany once again to head of military region, who then wrote a letter for me to see the

district committee of Kroch Chhmar. It was by October 1975, we had approvals of region, district, and respected persons. All we had to do was waiting for wedding ceremony. Before this time of waiting and at the time of waiting, Rany and I had to face hardships. Refusing the Angkar’s order to marry someone could mean a fatal danger. For me, aside from taking treatment, another major task I was doing was to organize a secret force to bring the fight on the Angkar who had been killing people, though it was not yet massive.

On 2 January 1976, commanding office of the regiment stationed in the village of Koh Thmar, commune of Tonloun in the district of Tromoung, which is Mehmot district now, convened me for a meeting in the regional headquarters located in the district of Dambe for marriage on 3 January. I was in doubt as to how did they go about this wedding ceremony. Arriving at the regional headquarters, Rany was at the district of Kroch Chhmar and was not informed about this marriage yet. The superior leadership was kind enough to prolong the wedding day from 3 January to 5 January and sent for Rany in Kroch Chhmar to come for the wedding in Dambe.

Rany did not send words to her parents and family members and there were no bridesmaid. She was all alone. As for me, I also did not have my parents or any family members with me to attend the wedding. Only we two were there. I was a bit better than Rany was though as my comrades in arms were invited as wedding guests. Rany arrived at Damber district in the evening of 3 January. On 4 January, I hurriedly went to

see her. Rany was with twelve other women and twelve handicapped soldiers. It was to my complete surprise that it would be a group wedding of 13 couples. My couple would be the number 13 one.

On 4 January 1976, we had to leave as a group from the regional office in Dambe district for the village of Jrab of Tbong Khmom district, where the wedding event took place. 5 January 1976, or Monday 4 of waxing moon of Bos month of lunar calendar, dragon year, B.A. 2519, was the day I got married with my wife with twelve other couples. We were couple 13. The wedding event started at 8 am with one presiding superior and one master of ceremony [End of Part II].

All thirteen brides sat in the front row and all thirteen grooms sat in the second row behind their wives-to-be. Chairs on which we sat were those of children sitting in class. To start the ceremony, master of ceremony assigned one person to read biographies of the thirteen women and then those of men, all 26 of us. All I could do was just looking at Rany’s back and neck with pitiful thought that my future wife should not have accepted to marry me the handicapped in absence of her parents and family members. I felt pity on myself too. More I did for other couples with worse handicap condition than I was. As their couples were arranged by Angkar. They were different from my couple. I asked her hands and we had feeling for each other before we were married.

The ceremony started, after reading biographies, the presiding person asked to

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the bride and groom, one couple after the other. The bride had to answer first. All twelve couples had their sessions done. Rany gave very good answer to all two questions. While previous couples answered to only one question, Rany had two questions to answer. I had three questions to answer. One of the questions that I remember well was whether comrade could educate your wife to be a proletarian. (I understood) the question was directed to Rany since she had white complexion, and was born to a well-off family living along the Mekong River. After all 26 persons were asked, the presiding cadre also asked to elderly people whom the person posing questions called witnesses. Two elder people stood up and spoke. One of them was brother Chum Horl (after 1979, he became governor of Preah Sihanoukville until 1993 and passed away in 2014), my former commander. He said it (the marriage) was acceptable and wished us his best blessings.

At about 1400 hours, the ceremony had yet to end. We were so hungry and thirsty but did not dare to say anything. The presiding cadre blessed us with water and blessings, which started from narration of world and regional situation to scolding liberalists, Soviet and Vietnam before brainstorming us with Cambodian situation, which he focused on political work and mind, eradication of exploited class, individual ownership – property and sentiment included, and elimination of internally hidden enemy, etc. Too much curses to remember from what the presiding cadre made over one hour. The coupling event ended at 1530 hours,

after it went on for about seven and a half hours without break.

At about 1600 hours, husbands and wives, and guests all sat having dinner altogether. Rany became my wife officially but I dared not speak to her. Rany got me rice and helped another soldier with amputated arm since his wife was still shy of him. While we were having dinner, a cadre from regional level came telling us which couple should go where for the night. Those with both legs amputated got a house on ground level and those with both feet had to go to upper floor (of stilted houses). After dinner, I told my wife I would take my bag and went to take a rest. She might follow me later. She said yes. We did not use words “dear” with each other yet. It was not a Cambodian tradition that man had to hold bride’s scarf to wedding bed but to look for house to rest after wedding event.

Lady owner of the house where I was told to stay came out and welcomed me. She told me she did not live in the house since 1971 because she was afraid of American bombardment. She made a point though that she cleaned the house a few days already as the village head borrowed the house for newly married couple. I asked: “where would you stay?” She pointed to a small house with a trench next to it. As I was speaking, the twelve couples arrived. “Hem and Vanna, which house are you going to stay?” – I asked. They told me they would stay in this house too. I was so annoyed that two couples would spend their couple night in such a small house. We went up the stair. There was a bed and mosquito net

but there were no curtain. Hem said to me “brother Sen, you may spend the night in bed, I would have a curtain up by the door.” I asked him how could he find a curtain and Hem said Angkar gave when they were at the regional headquarters. Did you not get it? – He asked me. I shook my head and said – “No, I did not.” Hem then found someone and asked for a curtain for me.

I waited for my wife. She did not show up yet because she had a nice chat with a house owner that she spent the night earlier. I took a bath and set the place to rest. I got off my black clothes and placed myself in military uniform. I may stress that in the wedding ceremony, grooms must wear black long-sleeve shirts and trousers, while brides wore long-sleeve skirts and shirts. No dress codes other than this allowed. My wife and I did not have anything except what we had before the wedding. What I had then was Rany and what she had now was I. We also did not want anything else other than those. By nightfall, Rany came with her bag embraced. I went down to help her with the bag and went upstairs together. Rany asked me if I had a scarf. She needed it for a bath. I told I had and it was still wet. I went to fetch it for my beloved wife who for the first time called me “dear,” that I had been waiting for so long.

Angkar’s action that day was another major part that incited me to overthrow this regime of no tradition and religion. They talked about eliminating internally hidden enemy. They were right. I was head of those enemies. Let us now talk about my wife. I took pity

on my wife with deep thought that she should not have shared such fate with the handicapped like me in absence of parents, family members, and friends. The feeling led me to understand clearly that she accepted me with pure heart. After spending the couple night on 5 January 1976, early morning the next day, the regional military headquarters sent for us with a cart tugged and pulled by a motorcycle. We went back to our units. With nothing in our stomach, we started the journey. Travelled with my wife and I were Hem and Vanna, the twelfth couple, Socheat, assistant from the military headquarters, and Sitha, rider and chief of military office.

Not long after we left the village of Jrab, the motorcycle had a flat tire. We pushed the motorcycle and cart all the way to Suong market to mend the puncture. It was ready at about 11 am already. We were not concerned about hunger but about hurrying back to regional military headquarters in Chamkar Daung, the village of Samraong, commune of Dar, district of Mehmot, Kompong Cham province. The National Road 7 was in ruined condition and we could not travel with speed. About ten Kilometers from the Suong market, another tire went flat but we were able to inflate it from time to time. At first, one time inflation allowed us to travel about one Kilometer and we did that until we could not inflate it anymore. I told Sitha and Socheat, former soldiers and my trainees on map, to leave the cart with people’s home and took the motorbike to Chamkar Daung to get a new tire to replace it. They should wait for the

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next day to return if it was too late.

As for the rest of us, we walked further to a village to look for a place to rest. After parking the cart by the levee, Sitha and Soheat hurriedly rode the bike out. The four of us were on foot to the village of Ta Hiev, in the district of Punnhea Krek, which was along the National Road 7.

We entered the village and looked for a place to spend the night. Owners of the house were so hospitable but they could not let us stay until they got permission from their village head. With my pistol invisible by my waist, I told them I was also a military commander. We had to wait until the village head returned from

threshing rice in the field. He returned just by night-fall. He offered four cans of rice to the house owners to cook for us. From very early morning, about 13 hours later, we had rice for meal. From the dinner we had at 4pm on 5 January through to 8pm on 6 January, about 28 hours, it was our first meal. Tear came into my eyes but I did not let her see it.

At night, owners of the house set bed for us separately – men in one place and women in another. I asked the house owners to share bed with my wife and Hem with his but they kindly refused because they could not tell if we were husbands and wives for real or not. We had no choice but accepted what they arranged for us. In the morn-

ing of the next day, the motorbike arrived and took us to regional military headquarters. I had to work from when I arrived through to late at night. Uong Ek, head of regional military region, had very good understanding. It was the third night or 7 January.

On 8 January, the motorcycle of regional military headquarters took us husband and wife to the commanding headquarters of regiment at the village of Koh Thmar, commune of Tunloun, district of Tromung in those days. As we arrived, cadres and soldiers playing game of matching us in 1973 and early 1974 came around blessing and teasing.

As husband and wife, we lived together from 8 Janu-

ary after we married on 5 January and had to spend our night in different places. The pleasure we had is just four days. On 12 January 1976, there was an urgent order for my wife to go to a hospital in the pagoda of Popel in the commune of Popel, Teok Jrov district, which is currently Punnhea Krek. It was then that she later had to work with levee in the village of Khna, Tbong Khmom district. My tear came into my eyes again as they rode her out.

As a husband, I did not have even the rights to see her off. Was this an answer to the question that Angkar asked me “whether comrade could educate your wife to be a proletarian?” The story does not end here and I will continue to write and post my life story on Facebook

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tals conducted under the leadership of Ministers of Culture HE Keo Chenda and Chheng Phon, respectively ...

I thank contestant Heng Sitha, from Phnom Penh, for simulating one of my songs, though he may have mistaken the title ... “Life of a fruit tree farmer, fate of a rice farmer,” which is about my life. *(I do not have a talent for singing or operating music instrument) however, if anyone can coach me to play Tro (the Cambodian music instrument like violin) I would pay him well. I wanted to play Tro to serenade my wife. I would perform a rhythm Phat Popok (push away the cloud) when we are in the mood of bitter life under the time of war and genocidal regime.*

I may not go on but wish to express my sincere thanks and evaluation on efforts made by staff, Masters of

“I Am a Khmer Youth Role Model” – Contest Draft Rules

On 30 January 2016, Samdech Techo Hun Sen informed on his Facebook draft rules of the “I Am a Khmer Youth Role Model” contest requesting audience to participate and comment from today through to Wednesday, 3 February 2016. The contest’s objective and aim is to attract more youth to express their opinions, excel good actions, and act, and participate in making oneself model citizen in society. Candidates could choose freely form of participation such as producing a VDO clip, writing a poem, a song, a picture or an article on any topic they may be familiar with – whether in their fields of expertise/action or any topics that they think may attract the most supports.

Topics could be about abiding by traffic law, helping orphans/poor widows, elderly people or disables, providing active assistance and attention to victims (from traffic, fire and or flood accident) or public sanitation or elimination of drug addiction. There will be one more message on application and registration and about rule of contest soon. The contest will receive the first 100 contestants and will post their contests objects on Samdech Techo Hun Sen’s website for four days. The best top ten objects will be shortlisted and posted in Samdech Techo Facebook for another three days for the public to vote “likes” in order choose the most “like” objects every week. Winner will receive a present and a letter of appreciation from Samdech Techo.

Ceremony, presenters, and program managers of Bayon Radio and TV for their valuable contributions. Though I am not going to say now how much are the

awards, I would say that we have spent about Riel 200 million for the contest program and we will keep going with the contests though there may or may not be

sponsorships.

We have made five tradition music forms our subjects for contesting. We are now working on three and there will be two more subjects coming up – poem and symphony. *As we have more contestants and there are growing supports from people, I would suggest to the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and Bayon Radio and TV to make each time three subjects for contest.* We can add traditional music and song as one more subject. However, I see that Japei (soloist of Cambodian guitar like instrument) and Ayay (singing without written lyrics) would be difficult ones to add to the contest list.

Well that would be an opinion and suggestion. Still, it is up to the committee, especially the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, with cooperation given from the private part-

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