



Contacts:

POV Communications: 212-989-7425. Emergency contact: 646-729-4748

Cathy Fisher, [cfisher@pov.org](mailto:cfisher@pov.org), Jillian Ayala, [jayala@pov.org](mailto:jayala@pov.org)

POV online pressroom: [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom)

## **POV's "Enemies of the People," Unprecedented Investigation Into Cambodia's 'Killing Fields,' Premieres Tuesday, July 12, 2011, on PBS**

For the First Time, Those Behind the Slaughter of Close to 2 Million Cambodians Confess  
Their Crimes, and a Top Khmer Rouge Leader Explains Why the Killings Were Ordered

*Produced in Association with American Documentary / POV;  
A Co-presentation With the Center for Asian American Media*

"It may be one of the most important films about Cambodia ever made . . . Thet Sambath succeeds where other journalists and investigators have failed. . . . 'Enemies of the People' works not only as a historical document, but also as a work of art." — Patrick Barta, *The Wall Street Journal*

Some have compared the new documentary **Enemies of the People** to Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary about the Nazi Holocaust, "Shoah." As Lanzmann did in "Shoah," Thet Sambath (who co-directed **Enemies of the People** with British documentarian Rob Lemkin) has undertaken a searing and personal investigation of one of the 20th century's most infamous instances of planned mass murder — the Khmer Rouge "killing fields" of Cambodia. And like Lanzmann, Sambath found that his investigation led him straight to some of the very people responsible, from common foot soldiers who slit throats to the leaders who ordered the killings of almost 2 million people. The result is a riveting account of modern horror, wrapped in the hauntingly beautiful imagery of rural Cambodia.

**Enemies of the People**, winner of more than 20 awards, including a special Sundance Jury Prize, is immediate, intimate and suspenseful. Sambath manages to get not only unprecedented confessions from low-level perpetrators, but also a surprisingly frank admission of why the killings were ordered from the highest surviving Khmer Rouge leader, Nuon Chea, the notorious "Brother No. 2," who was second only to Communist leader Pol Pot. All the while, Sambath, an unassuming yet cunning investigative journalist, hides the fact that his father, mother and brother were among the dead.

**Enemies of the People** has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, July 12, 2011**, at 10 p.m. on PBS during the 24th season of **POV (Point of View)**. POV airs on Tuesdays through Sept. 27 and concludes with fall 2011 and winter/spring 2012 specials. (Check local listings.) American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV has won a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking and an IDA Award for Best Continuing Series.

From 1975 to 1979, approximately one quarter of Cambodia's 8 million citizens were either murdered outright or worked and starved to death under the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror. In the years since, despite many books and films on the subject, most of them told from the point of view of the victims, the true motives and experiences of the perpetrators have remained largely unexplained. Some observers expect the long-stalled United Nations-backed trials of Nuon Chea and three surviving Khmer Rouge leaders — due to begin later this year — to hide more than they will reveal, and they doubt

members of the current government, themselves former Khmer Rouge, will want the whole truth to come out.

In the face of this “gray-out” of the why and how of the killing fields, and even of the details of what took place, Sambath was determined to discover the whole truth. Haunted by the executions of his father and brother and his mother’s forced marriage to a Khmer Rouge cadre and subsequent death during childbirth, Sambath became obsessed with his quest, to the point of neglecting his own family, as he ruefully admits. The depth of the emotional trauma that drives him is revealed when Sambath revisits the very spot where he last saw his brother, who, unbeknownst to Sambath, was then already marked for death by the Khmer Rouge. Sambath remembers that he was disappointed, as a little brother might be, when his older sibling did not bring him the present he had promised — a bitter memory now.

It took Sambath and Lemkin ten years to make **Enemies of the People**, a time during which Sambath, one of Cambodia’s best investigative journalists, sought out and slowly gained the trust of some of the ordinary villagers recruited or forced by the Khmer Rouge to commit extraordinary crimes. He also began visiting — and befriending — Nuon Chea, and little by little encouraged the hard-bitten and guarded ideological leader of the party to open up about the inner councils of the Khmer Rouge.

Hiding the murders of his family members was critical to Sambath’s effort to get at the truth. As he makes clear in **Enemies of the People**, however, his true purpose was not to trick his interlocutors into legally damning confessions. In an extraordinary leap of idealism and compassion for his countrymen, Sambath believes that only the whole truth can serve as a basis for healing a still-traumatized Cambodia. An extraordinary thing begins to happen during the course of the film — amid the chilling confessions, the humanity of the killers starts to show, and Sambath and Nuon Chea even share an astonishing moment of sadness when Sambath at last reveals his family’s fate at the hands of the Khmer Rouge.

The killers, common Khmer Rouge soldiers and local villagers dragooned into the gruesome tasks of killing and disposing of so many people, are at first reticent, ashamed and rightly afraid of being arrested. But once Sambath persuades them that only telling the truth can free them, they begin to unburden themselves with striking candor and in obsessive detail. In a series of unforgettable moments, they reveal what it was like to be trapped in a world turned suddenly chaotic, in which you had to kill or be killed, and orders were passed from hand to hand without anyone really understanding the reason for them. Those picked out for elimination were simply labeled “enemies of the people.” The prominence of female perpetrators illustrates how universally the killing fields took over Cambodian life.

Nuon Chea is the one man who can explain exactly where those orders originated and why they were issued. In contrast to the beaming, energetic images of Nuon Chea and other conquering Khmer Rouge leaders shown in archival films, Sambath finds him a sickly, gray-haired old man living with his wife in a simple thatched house. But Sambath’s gentle probes elicit flashes of the old guerrilla fighter and ideological terrorist. Though Nuon Chea is facing trial, he’s not afraid to insist that he was *not* second to Pol Pot (who died in 1998) but was an equal partner with the man whose name ranks with that of Adolf Hitler in modern history. Nuon Chea also rallies to explain, with surprising earnestness, the original ideals that motivated the Khmer Rouge and the high hopes they held for Cambodia upon seizing power.

When it comes to the killing fields, however, the old man is cagey and vague, insisting that if there were indiscriminate killings, they were perpetrated by local commanders acting outside of orders. Later, in the first admission of its kind for a Khmer Rouge leader, he admits that he and Pol Pot ordered a purge of the party to rid it of a “Vietnamese faction,” people they believed were conspiring with their erstwhile allies to re-establish Vietnam’s traditional dominance of Cambodia. Nuon Chea clings to the notion that the killings were targeted and justified by the external threat posed by the more-powerful

Vietnamese. He remains convinced of the reality — and extreme danger — of this threat and laments that it forced his and Pol Pot’s hands and began the ruin of their great ideals.

The idea that Pol Pot and his right-hand man did not know that the executions under their regime were indiscriminate and genocidal is hardly credible. Provoked, or beguiled, by Sambath’s patient need to know, Nuon Chea ends up admitting how widespread the killings had become by proclaiming just how widespread and deadly he and Pol Pot believed the “Vietnamese conspiracy” had become, not just in the party but throughout the country. In one of the film’s most extraordinary moments, Sambath quietly reveals the fate of his own family at Khmer Rouge hands. Far from being triumphant, he seems a bit abashed to have fooled the old man. And Nuon Chea seems stunned and saddened. In apologizing for the suffering inflicted on Sambath’s family, he seems to concede the brutality he helped rule over. Not long after this conversation in fall 2007, Nuon Chea was spirited to Phnom Penh in a helicopter for his long-awaited trial for crimes against humanity. He remains in jail.

“Some may say no good can come from talking to killers and dwelling on past horror,” says co-director Thet Sambath, “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.”

“We’re very proud that the Cambodian courts are going to make use of our film,” says co-director Lemkin. “It’s always been our hope that this film can be part of a process of reconciliation in Cambodia.”

**Enemies of the People** is a production of Old Street Films and Thet Sambath in association with American Documentary | POV. The film is a co-presentation with the Center for Asian American Media.

#### **About the Filmmakers:**

##### **Thet Sambath (Co-director/Co-producer)**

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 a police interpreter for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC); and as a human rights investigator for the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO). Since 1994 he has worked as a producer, interpreter and camera operator for many worldwide broadcasting organizations, including the BBC, WGBH *Frontline*, NHK and NBC. In 2002 he traveled to the United States on a Jefferson Scholarship.

##### **Rob Lemkin (Co-director/Co-producer)**

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

#### **Credits:**

Writers/Directors/Producers/

Cinematographers:

Executive Producers:

Editor:

Original Music:

Running Time:

Rob Lemkin, Thet Sambath

Mike Wang, Rob Lemkin, Sandra Whipham

Stefan Ronowicz

Daniel Pemberton

86:46

## POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer:	Simon Kilmurry
Co-Executive Producer:	Cynthia López
Director of Production and Programming:	Chris White
Series Producer:	Yance Ford

## Awards and Festivals:

- Short-listed, Best Documentary Feature, Academy Awards® 2011
- World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Prize, Sundance Film Festival 2010
- Best Documentary Award, Social Justice Award, Santa Barbara International Film Festival 2010
- Anne Dellinger Grand Jury Award, Charles E. Guggenheim Emerging Artist Award, Full Frame Documentary Film Festival 2010
- Nestor Almendros Award, Human Rights Watch International Film Festival 2010
- True Life Award, True/False Film Fest 2010
- Best Documentary Award, Moët British Independent Film Awards 2010
- Ostrovsky Family Fund/In the Spirit of Freedom Award for Best Documentary Film, Jerusalem Film Festival 2010
- Outstanding Documentary Award, Hong Kong International Film Festival 2010

(Visit <http://enemiesofthepeoplemovie.com/awards/> for a complete list of awards and festivals.)



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Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 24th season on PBS, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September with primetime specials during the year, POV has brought more than 300 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. Visit [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

### **POV Interactive** ([www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov))

POV's award-winning website extends the life of our films online with interactive features, interviews, updates, video and educational content, as well as listings for broadcasts, community screenings and films available online. The *POV Blog* is a gathering place for documentary fans and filmmakers to discuss their favorite films and get the latest news.

### **POV Community Engagement and Education**

POV films can be seen at more than 450 events across the country every year. Together with schools, organizations and local PBS stations, POV facilitates free community screenings and produces free resources to accompany our films, including discussion guides and curriculum-based lesson plans. With our community partners, we inspire dialogue around the most important social issues today.

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### **American Documentary, Inc.** ([www.amdoc.org](http://www.amdoc.org))

American Documentary, Inc. (AmDoc) is a multimedia company dedicated to creating, identifying and presenting contemporary stories that express opinions and perspectives rarely featured in mainstream media outlets. AmDoc develops collaborative strategic-engagement activities around socially relevant content on television, online and in community settings. These activities are designed to trigger action, from dialogue and feedback to educational opportunities and community participation.



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