

Diary of a Cambodian Student in France (author unknown)

The Documentation Center of Cambodia has brought to light more than 400 notebooks and personal diaries written during the Khmer Rouge period. They belonged to both Khmer Rouge cadres and Khmer Rouge victims. Those written by Khmer Rouge cadre mostly depict personal matters relating to the daily work of Angkar, discussions held at livelihood meetings or political education sessions, and military strategies from the central level. In contrast, the personal diaries of victims generally recount their life stories from the heart. Both types of notebooks and personal diaries help illustrate for us the fact that expressions of feelings may not be curbed even in circumstances of hardship, misery, and vicious suppression. Documentation Center of Cambodia would like to publish a diary on the following. *Youk Chhang*

Paris, January 17, 1975

This is the day the Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh. I seemed to be so happy with a hope that I will have a chance to reunite with my family after more than one year of separation. It seems to me regrettable that I had to depart only two days before the occurrence of historical events...

Paris, April 17, 1975

Oh! When I heard the war break out again in Kampuchea, I seemed...to be glad with a hope to...meet my parents...in a short time. Oh! respected daddy and mummy, what are you doing now. My sole and beloved mummy, I am, your child is waiting to hear your voice and your good advice. I always win people heart and receive sincere and warm attachment no matter where I am. This is the result of your good deeds to me. When I hear that war ends, I imagine I have met you all. My mind is preoccupied with returning as quickly as possible so that I can talk by telephone with you and recount my nostalgic feelings of separation.

Oh! my mummy, once I work for French I always imagine of working at our home, our country, where it would be more useful. Then I want to stop working immediately.

How have you been doing mummy and daddy? How many days will I receive your information...? I am so worried and miss you, my beloved ones, so much. I can find no time of release.

The war is over, yet I am still far away from...mummy. I am always preoccupied with mummy everyday, as you are getting older. Mummy and daddy, I wonder when I can meet you again.

June 1, 1975

I come to Banlieur (Rueil Malmaison), a huge and pleasant house. I always felt home sick. I was so touched by the calm landscape of a river there that I missed my village.

Nothing is everlasting. Separation will interfere over time. Today I am happy, but tomorrow will bring sadness. I don't know what my life will be? Am I useful for the nation?

Paris, June 10, 1975

Catching this notebook reminds me of its owner who, in my imagination, seems to be smiling at me. I got to know him/her for a short period of time. I don't know when we can meet each other again. We were so close albeit we had just got to know each other. It was nice to meet and talk with the friend. I knew the sadness of the friend clearly, but I still cannot work it out at his request. It's really hard to read the human mind. Nothing can be used to measure it. Mind also changes beyond our expectation although it is one of [our] old friends. This life I almost pledge an allegiance that I am scared of being human.

In just nearly two months of my acquaintance, I seem to have an unforgettable friendship. The red notebook I am holding will be with me forever. I first held this notebook in April, when there was an occurrence of the revolution implementing such red theory as this notebook. When can I meet

you again? Once we will meet again, the notebook will be fraught with my crazy theory. Then you will find it ridiculous.

It's too dark now. No sound was heard, except the one of wind. It's was a bit hot at day time but when the night comes it turns to be cooler. Calmness makes me so occupied with my friend who is now so far that I cannot call. Well, it's time to go now. See you all next time.

June 10, 1975.

Paris, June 14, 1975

Tonight I dreamed that I met you, beloved mummy. I ran to you and hugged and kissed you with a real emotion. Then I cried out. I saw you are in as good health conditions as before. So, I felt so happy to see you. Unfortunately, when I wake up I tried to find you by touch and found it was just a dream. If my dream came true, I would not so worry. I really want to meet you.

Paris, June 15, 1975

This life I am committed to loving only one person. Actually I love many people, but the one I love the best is only one. Choosing the right person is not easy. I ask myself why I have chosen such a person whose is considered as having much disadvantages. The answer is I want to draw experience. It has been said that love is sorrow. It is very true. For this matter, if I know that [he] doesn't love me, I will be really convinced that remorse will not take place and I will regard it as my fate. Actually, to arrange a family is tantamount to luring [ourselves] into trouble. It is considered just as a sweet of life. To me, it would better to die in such young age than to live in the world of reappearance.

I may not be seized with pain albeit my love which has been offered is not accepted. Yet, it will be a real reflection of our quality.

[My] love can be offered only once. If it is on the wrong track, I will be alone throughout my life. It doesn't mean that I will be faithful to you, but rather I may try to win my heart. I will live by the way I have planned for my life with purity until the end of the world, just like a raft which is floating by the water current until it becomes stuck. I will try to live so that I can overcome my life and improve my living conditions with dignity. I live a life of trial in almost places. How about other people's? Are their's the same as mine? Is it a game of life!

On June 17, 1975, I arrived in Morgat.

Mortgat, June 20, 1975

Today I take a tour along the Plage in Mortgat, and the port of Morgat where the sea rushes to solid shore. It makes me miss my home town as well as my relatives and friends. I wish we would have met each other. It reminds me of the remembrance of March 9, 1975 in Phnom Penh where I met a lot of friends yet felt disconsolate on receipt of words of game worth suffering which affected my good deeds. On that day I seemed to prefer swearing not to make good deeds with people in order to avoid confusion with other people. Frankly speaking, I have done a heart-to-heart deed without any contamination. That's why I will never dare to do such thing again. Today two French people ask me to take a boat to see Côte Bretagne. They are François and Jean Pierre. I usually consider people I have met as ordinary people joining with our journey. I always try to limit myself to neutrality.

Mortgat, June 21, 1975

Today I take a bath at the Plage. The water in France is a bit cool, but it's okay with me. It's interesting. The water is as transparent as mirror, but unfortunately it cannot be drunk. The landscape of Mortgat is very nice with interesting houses and city. However, to me, there can be no comparison between the sea and other things in France and the ones in Khmer country, such as fruits and fish.

Morgat, June 30, 1975

15 days have passed. The climate in Morgat has been so nice that it seems to help reduce my worries. I am very impressed now by the forests, sea, landscape of the mountain foot and the vast sea side. They seem to fondle me to have continual hope for life, which can be compared to a sea, the color of the sky and the sky with no cloud. Yet, I am still preoccupied with the stories in the past and in the future.

Witnessing people with their families makes me feel lonely from my family, beloved and respected parents. I wonder when I can meet them again. I am really moved and want to return to my homeland as soon as I can at the thought of these things. Viewing their country's scenery makes me miss my homeland, homestead, my crops, my work, and remembrance since my childhood. On June 25, 1975 I went to visit Brest for the first time. It can be compared to Kampong Cham provincial town. The night was covered by shiny moon light over the calm Morgat Mount. It was quite cool. The moonlight here is not as nice as the one [I used to have] in Sambo Meas along river tributary where it projected over the coconut trees and sapodilla trees while water was running in rows as weaving threads. These are unforgettable remembrances I used to have in my hometown. I have to make a return, no matter how poor and difficult my life will face. I have to bring my little knowledge to help Khmer younger generation. My hands which have been offered by Khmer must in turn help Khmer.

Morgat, June 30, 1975

Sunday, February 10: ate lunch at mummy house

Monday, February 11, 1975: had a enjoyable dinner at house yx

Sunday, March 9, 1975: had a bleak lunch at house yx. It is unforgettable remembrance.

When tomorrow came I collected and burned my letters and photos. Accidentally, there were two letters left. What kind of omen is it? It is how the fate bans us from being together. So, I tried not to panic and committed myself to taking a neutral position forever.

Morgat, 19 August 1975

Chu Y, sometimes I have missed you. The day I really missed you was when I took a lonely sightseeing tour in Quimper along the Oldef River, imagining how much pleasure we would have if we had been together. Where are you now? How are you doing? What have you been doing? I cannot predict or guess. As often as not, I am preoccupied with thinking about you. How about you? Do you have the same feelings? My love remains the same. You are the only person I think of and love, even though I have no hope of meeting you. What causes me to have these feelings? I regret that we had not said goodbye to each other the time we separated. Is it true? The moment I heard that the war ended, I wanted to return to our hometown immediately; I do not want to live in France. I haven't heard anything about you. Where are you now? Can you tell me? My God, why do such things happen?

Morgat, 7 September 1975

Oh my homeland! When will I have a chance to see you? When will I have a chance to live with my family again? Where are you now, my beloved mother? I miss you so much. I want to return to get a genuine picture of your lives and contribute to the reconstruction of Cambodia. I was born in Cambodia and am interested in serving the Khmer people. My strength is nurtured by our beloved Cambodia, and I am grateful to it. My hands, my physical strength, and my intelligence must be used to assist the country. My commitment to return to Cambodia does not mean that I only want to see Chu Y to reinforce my love. Rather, it is my patriotism that does not allow me to be in this country [France] any longer, as living here is not useful. The longer I stay, the greater the loss. I have to return to Cambodia to witness the events happening there. How much can I contribute to our tiny nation?

Morgat, 11 September 1975

The blue sea rushes to the shore and hits against the rocks, making a natural sweet melody. Ocean waves, are you angry at anyone? In the sunlight, the cool September breeze gives me hope that one day I will have a chance to enjoy such beautiful weather again. I really love the ocean. Its beauty makes me homesick and makes me miss one of my friends who lived nearby who said, "Scooping up water to wash your face will help you forget your sorrows." I have tried, but not succeeded. Oh, my life encounters endless sorrow and separation just like the waves, overlapping one on top of the other. Oh the sea! If you can hear, I will divulge my anguish so that I can obtain relief. On the face of it, there are hundreds of matters on my mind, namely the nation, my family, living, personal education, work, and so on - oh, tens of thousands of issues. On the one hand, I want to return to serve the nation and on the other, I wish to find my beloved parents. I become bewildered by these alternatives. I don't know how to make a decision. Everyone says that I shouldn't return. To me there is no point in staying here, only to be hired by the French. This is

the problem. I am a Cambodian. Thus, I must serve the Cambodian nation, because Cambodia is the source of my wealth. I must meet my respected and beloved mommy and daddy. This has motivated me to make the decision that I must return no matter what hardships I encounter. Somehow, hardship is better than worry, and my life would be better there than here, where there is no end to my grief. As a matter of fact, I have enough to eat and have time to travel, but mentally, I feel so uneasy that I must return home. Convey what I have said to all my friends there: that I will come back at any cost.

Morgat 15 September 1975

Today the weather is very nice. The wind is blowing hard, while the sea is rushing to the shore, making sparks of waves. Although it's a bit cool, the sun is still shining. I am sitting in a room, watching the waves. The colors of the sea change from time to time due to the sunlight. The freezing wind in September makes me feel homesick. I wonder if there is some spell that is making me miss Cambodia, although its new administration is being criticized.

I still believe that this regime is not bad. My decision to return home to my country is not for a political reason. Rather, it is my own feelings that push me to serve Cambodia, even though it is so poor and there will be so many difficulties for me. It doesn't matter [what happens]. My main point is whether my strength contributes to the reconstruction of the nation. In reality, life in a country of "materialism" is enjoyable. However, we are the slaves of "things." I love nature; thus, I must return to the national community - the one I love and gave birth to me.

Life here [France] is different from the one in Cambodia. So, what's the point of living here? It would be better to live in Cambodia than to live here in conditions of slavery. Moreover, I have to return home as I am eager to see my family; we have been separated for quite a long time. What's the point of enjoying a lonely life, while my beloved mother is full of sorrow each day because she misses me? Without mental calm and being full of sorrow, how can [I] enjoy [my life here]? I would rather face physical difficulties than be worried. This seems to push me to decide to return home. It doesn't matter what hardships I will face. I would be happy to suffer rather than be worried.

Morgat 16 August 1975

Today is not a sunny day. It's so cool that I'm not well. The sea is steady. There is fog and we cannot see far. I stay alone in my room, preparing luggage for my return to Paris. I feel one day I will be back here. Here there is lovely, attractive scenery. However, as for the people surrounding [me], some are good, some are bad. [We] cannot read their hearts. Oh human hearts! No one is happy to see the happiness of others. Oh my life always meets obstacles. I have never been contented. Oh the sea! Why you don't move like you did yesterday? And why are you not so charming? Are you worried? Why does your charm change? You seem to know what I feel. Only scenery can rid me of my discontent. Without you I would be much more frustrated.

Now it's nine p.m. Tonight the moon is shining, accompanied by glittering stars. The moon is not full yet. The sea is steady. One can see a battleship, decorated with glittering items. The weather is also very cool. The weather here seems to be different from that in my country, where people sit happily under the moonlight, looking everywhere. However, they may not do the same thing here as it is so cool. Oh, I really miss such circumstances in my home country. The charm of the Mekong River under the moonlight can be compared to the charm here. When can I see my home village again?

It has been six years that I've lived far away from my home, and two years that I've lived apart from my beloved and respected family. [I] remember every event. I left you dad and mom with sad feelings. At this moment I miss my parents, I remember their advice, and my mother's merits are beyond comparison. Mom and dad are poor, but they made every effort to overcome all impediments, to say nothing of their good understanding of national or political concepts. If every woman had the same heart as my mom, perhaps there would be much progress in Cambodia. When seeing other families gathering, I really miss you, mom. You might feel I miss you, right? You don't know how far my life is roaming. I do miss you, mom and dad. I always remember your advice: "I leave you, but my feeling is with you at all times, daughter." I will try my best to overcome any obstacle and hope that I will have a chance to meet you in the near future so that I can contribute to the renewal of Cambodia.

Morgat, 17 September 1975

Today it's a bit cool. There is sunlight and less fog. Without this weather, I would have been in Paris. Now the schedule is changed. Oh Morgat, it's very cool once the wind is blowing. Either visit here by next year or return home? The moment I remember the day to return home, the moment I become happy with an infusion of sorrows. On the one hand, I am happy because I hope I will meet my family and friends. On the other hand, I become so worried because I am not sure whether my country is independent and self-reliant or not. National issues always haunt me. However, I have to go in order to witness the events happening in the country no matter what hardships I face. Throughout my life, I have experienced hardship, sorrow, and happiness.

I have seen the cultures of other developing and developed countries. From them, I can make good judgments on my own country. I can further realize the value of my country. For this reason, I am still preoccupied with the traditional customs, charm and resources of my country, which is still considered an underdeveloped country. I think that I can put some ideas gained from various countries into real practice in my country in order to upgrade the living conditions of the poor. If my return faces any obstacles, I will still be satisfied because the decision has come from my genuine, thorough consideration.

I myself will not be one to seek political asylum. I used to live in a poor family. I will not be completely absorbed in the wealth and charm of other countries. Although I can enjoy my life there at any time, I am not happy to live there, because I am a Khmer. Being a Khmer I have to help Cambodia, which brought me up. To me, the evacuation of the people in Phnom Penh is correct. Its aim was to bring equality for every individual. This does not have anything to do with revenge. Rather, it is that the old regime is corrupt, and those who used their power to oppress others have been swept out - they are individuals with minions who do not know hardship. For this reason I think this activity is right. As for those who never experienced hardship or knew the rice seedling, they will undoubtedly think it is a hell. Thus, I made a decision to return home so I can witness what is happening.

Morgat, 18 September 1975

This is the last night for me to stay in Morgat. Tonight it is drizzling. Nothing is visible, except fog. I don't know whether I will have a chance to come here again. Oh, nature! You seem to be as worried as I am about leaving. Tonight I feel I am flying far away without real direction. I think of what needs to be done when I arrive in Paris. Who will I meet? How are my friends in Cambodia? There is no information [about them]. When can we have a relationship again? I miss them all. I don't know what makes me so worried about this. Can we meet each other again in this life? Where are you now honey? Do you miss me? I decided to return home to lead my life with my family again. However, I do not know how much you have changed. But I miss you every day, my heart is never broken. In thinking about you, I pity you so much. But, at the thought of you boasting, I really hate you and seem to be happy with the revolution in our country.

From this experience you will realize hardship and give up your bad points. Your family, famous for its wealth and that used to look down on others is now in the same position as others. There is no "classness" like before. It's the end of your luxurious life. And elegance, cars and wealth also vanish. What do you think about the revolution? How do you feel? You have lived a happy, luxurious life since birth. This is a kind of hardship people suffered for the sake of your family's happiness. Now no one will become your servant. I am sure you realize the hardship and difficulties in earning money for your living. Before, when you were far away from earning wealth, you even destroyed it. Now you understand, do you? If you understand this concept clearly and love me as I love you, we will be hand in hand for initiating a new family life in the new regime, moving towards prosperity and happiness, okay? My writing is a heart-to-heart dedication to you - my beloved and missed one.

Rueil, 8 November 1975

Time is moving quickly. Now it has been nearly a year since I arrived in Paris the second time. The spring of the year has passed by. Autumn is coming. Oh, nature! After sadness, you can recover. On the other hand, human beings cannot do the same thing. Their lives cannot move backward. Oh, the yellow leaves together can make attractive natural carpets. The leaves, you seem to be withered, but picturesque. The night has come. It's really quiet. The door is firmly closed. The darkness in the room reminds me of thoughts I have had before, mixed with

happiness and sorrow, hatred and crying. This is what it is commonly known as the “suffering of life.” In childhood, [I] never knew hardship. [My] mom took good care of [me] all the time. But, since adolescence came, I have never known happiness. Why? What were my sins in my former life? However, it doesn’t matter if I have a chance to meet my family. Otherwise I will live separately from them again. Oh life! Are there people suffering as I am?

Rueil, 11 November 1975

Today I watched a movie called “West Side Story,” which is very interesting. It covers general concepts on the roots of life-and-death love. However, in the end the lovers could not meet and live together.

Rueil 4 December 1975

Why is my life never the way I want it to be? I have only one love, but I don’t have hope that it will be satisfactory. I knew that it would be so; why do I try to shape it? Oh my love, I have promised to love only you. If we fail, I won’t feel regret. I will love no one but you; even though I have no hope of meeting you, I still love you. I love you because I feel pity and because you have troubles in your family and want to resolve them, even though you feel that they won’t be worked out easily. You alone make me so worried. My heart, which is filled with sympathy and the desire to help, is on the brink of being broken. Is my love moving on the wrong track? Although it’s like this, it’s still my love and my decision. Can we meet? Do you love me as I am? After my decision [to be with you], another engagement, even if it has a thousand times more value, would not be acceptable to me. I love only you; that’s all. If we cannot meet, I will not be worried, even though my love is so great. Oh, I love with less hope because we are so far away from each other. I don’t know how you are or whether you have changed your heart. As for me, my heart remains the same. Oh, my love.

Rueil 10 December 1975

It’s cool here. I almost fell down during my return from school. It’s so cool, and I haven’t worn enough clothes. Cool weather always brings about a broken life. Old stories seem to be with me; I cannot think of anything else. Only you make me feel constantly distressed. What the hell! Now I choose to return home in order to make a new life, no matter how hard it will be. I need to meet my respected mother and father. After such a long separation, I really miss you. My life is full of risks - separation from my beloved parents, the new dawn of love, and a loss of education. Oh my life is different from others’. Will it change tomorrow - will I be happy or worried or dead? Who knows what tomorrow will bring? But despair remains. I don’t know when I can cross over this bridge of sadness. Even if the sun is shining and life goes on, the sadness cannot dissipate. Oh, meaningless life, you are like a tree without leaves in the winter.

Rueil 24 December 1975

Today is Wednesday, December 24, the last Christmas day I will have in Paris. Tonight I will go to sleep at 2 a.m., which helps me understand the life of Frenchmen called “tycoons.” Tonight I cannot really be happy because I am so tired.

Rueil 25 December 1975

This afternoon, I watched a film called *Le 3 Jours de Codois*, which shows the lives and goals of CIA agents, which is nothing more than killing in the interest of their organization. I went alone. This was the first time I had seen such a film. Then I visited Chek Sun Huon, where we chatted about issues related to our country.

Rueil 26 December 1975

I have had bleak reminiscences again. One occurred on Saturday 22 November 1975 after I met Peou, with whom I had dinner. After dinner I watched a film called *Flut Euconbi*. On 21 November 1975 (Friday), I had a chat with Bopha about my beloved brother. On 24 November 1975 (Monday), my brother called and scolded me, making me cry that night. On 6 December 1975, I went with Rith to my brother’s house, hoping we could resolve our conflict. However, it was worse than I expected. This made me decide not to go there again so that he can forget me and not be worried for me. Then I decided to return home as quickly as possible, without considering anyone’s feelings or seeking anyone’s consent. My brother, whose behavior I never considered and whom I usually follow, now makes me feel resentful. If what I’m doing is wrong, I must accept it so he can justify [his exasperation].

It has now been more than a year since I've met Bopha - the only friend whose mind I can read. In this life, I probably could not find a person whose heart is like mine. No, I cannot. Oh, life's troubles cause me sadness, irritation, and pain.

Sunday 28 December 1975

Oh, life! Today I watched a movie entitled Lime Light: Les Feuse des Sampes. It was produced in 1914 in London, England. It is about the living conditions of a dancer and a comedian. The main idea of this film is that in order to overcome hardship, one must be brave, committed, and patient. It also illustrates a love stemming from gratitude and sweet sentiment. The lovers have done many good deeds for each other. But the love cannot bloom because the actor thinks he is too old, even though the actress has fallen in love with him. A man can give advice to another person, he but will find it hard to respect and follow the advice he has given.

Rueil 4 January 1976

Oh, I miss you mother and father. How are you? I will always miss you, but at the same time I have decided to return home as soon as possible so that I can see you and contribute to building my country. I am so worried about you two. Now the plan for my two-year visit has come to an end, and I'm happy to be returning home. I always remember your advice although I am far away from you. I always think and hope that one day I will be home. Oh, my beloved mommy! Your words are so correct. Brother Muoy is the one who has been making me so angry. I have to return.

Ru Eil, 12 February 1976

On 8 February 1976 I helped organize a constitutional ceremony, in which I talked in front of more than 1,000 people. It was the first time I had given a speech in front of such a large crowd. I felt a little nervous at the beginning, which made my voice tremble for a short time. But after a while, I was in full control. I did not do this for my own advantage; rather I did it for the sake of the entire nation. I try to support the organization as much as I can.

Rueil, 17 February 1976

Yesterday, while seeing Dany off to Germany, I saw a male friend. After only a short acquaintance, I could read his mind easily. After knowing each other such a short while, he tried to turn our relationship into a love affair. Oh, is this the meaning of friendship between a man and a woman? I had never thought about such matters. I suppose our relationship is just a normal one, rather than love. I have already made my decision. I swore to love only one man, who will be my first and last lover. I would never change my mind, even if I met a man with better looks, better characteristics, or better education. I will express what I have in my heart to this male friend so that he will not be broken hearted. I must keep my promise and never change my heart, for I have considered this matter seriously before making up my mind. If my decision is wrong, I will accept all the consequences. I pray to God to change the mind of my friend and not fall in love with me, as I will only be one man's lover.

Rueil, 19 February 1976

Oh, peaceful nature in the freezing nights of winter, you make my mind wander and keep me thinking about when I was accused of telling other people about the weakness of my brother. Oh, God. It's true that no one likes to have his or her mistakes leaked to other people. He or she would be worried or angry, but actually, everything he or she does can be criticized. I don't mean to make other people hate you; nor do I look down on you. What I try to do is let those who are your intimate friends remind you and help you correct your shortcomings. Is this my unforgivable mistake, which causes your embarrassment? I feel very bored with you, no matter to what degree you love me. Moreover, I never hope to gain your admiration for my merits. Conversely, it would be fine if you revealed your shortcomings to your most intimate friends. I don't mind.

My dear brother! You've made me so worried; you treated me so horribly. Even though you did this unintentionally, it really hurts me. I've tried to explain to you, but you understood nothing about my feelings, causing me to be unable to study properly. I've never thought at all that I am an emotionally weak person. I can't stand your anger time and time again, which makes me lose my confidence in continuing to learn about you. Also, a new argument begins just as soon as the old one has subsided.

I decided to return to my hometown, no matter how difficult it is, to be as far away as I can. And I pretend that I'm the only child in the family - no brothers or sisters. And I try my best to serve my

country with my small knowledge, without thinking about anything else. I also continue studying to forget him and keep thinking that I am alone and independent. I have my parents, and my good and bad friends. Oh, is it my beloved elder brother? This stems from too much love, which in turn becomes jealousy. [He] doesn't want to have me loved more than him. This is [the nature of] my brother. Oh my sinful life, when will it come to an end? Why is my life turning out to be the same as my mother's life?

Rueil, 1 March 1976

Today is the day that my friend Kanol told me that he loves me and begged me with tears in his eyes to love him. What a problem! I've firmly decided that I love only one person. I have only said the word "love" to one person, and have used it no more than twice. Thus, I strongly reject all proposals from other men. I don't feel a bit of excitement to hear someone confess his or her love for me.

Oh, my friend, please forgive me. Y, my great friend, I will marry because of duty, not out of love or sympathy. Y! Where are you now? When we meet each other again, how shall we behave? Or will we never see each other again?

Oh, love, love of duty, love by force, love with no way out, love required by duty. Is this the existence I deserve?

15 January 1977

How can I be happy about the marriage? I man whose mind I've never known was forced to marry me and is to set up house with me. Oh my God! It is so terrible. All of the reasons I used in arguing with my mother I could not use with the organization [Khmer Rouge]. The only choice is death. But to die because of a marriage is too cowardly. What should I do? I cannot marry him with no love at all. What a disgusting love. The period of my youth is ending on 17 January 1977. My wish to be a virgin for the rest of my life is being destroyed. What about the groom? Is he marrying me for the sake of duty or what? Does he love me? I have nothing left but despair. If I can escape, I'll go at once. Oh my lovely and respectful mother, what should I say when I meet you? You are not going to be present at this wedding. I feel so sad, mother, I don't know how to solve this problem. Probably my life is over.

7 September 1977: The Red Earth of the Northern Region

Time seems to be moving uncontrollably fast. We have been living here for seven months. This seven months has left constant memories under the roof of this small cottage where we began our family life. We cooperatively built a true family here. What a revolutionary family! We met each other because of this revolution and we love each other through the organization. The red earth of this region makes trees flourish. Water flows endlessly down the rivers along the valleys, mixing with the joyful sounds of birds singing. In another direction are the farmers' rice paddies, which constantly change colors, while our plantations are also continually transforming. The small paths that divide the farms also divide each field into smaller plots that are drawn like checkerboards with amazing beauty. Plateaus of different elevations provide magnificent scenery, especially at dawn and dusk. We will never forget this place. With the natural beauty of the red earth, our lives seem to be cheerful and we have nothing to worry about. A happiness that seemed impossible has now occurred. Although we were not in love with each other in the beginning, through our efforts it grew gradually, day by day, and now

I've found true happiness in this new society. Even though I haven't fulfilled my earlier wishes, at the moment I'm satisfied with my life. We always feel happy, no worries or tensions on our minds, although we work hard physically. Love and tenderness, which never happened in the past, have now evolved to a sentimental attraction between us. Red earth creates happiness and harmony in our family, just like its natural splendor. The memory of our newly built family in this area will never be forgotten. Also, this place has given me some new experiences with nature and the people around me in the revolution. Oh, red earth; I wish my family were as red as your color.

17 January 1978

A year has passed and I've gone through many obstacles in my life. I have understood extensively the people around me, my own feelings, and the difficulties and benefits of revolutionary life. I was struck by diseases, but have resisted. While I was hospitalized, I got to know several individuals. There can be no comparison between the conscious struggle against a social

environment with narrow-minded people and the struggle to overcome all kinds of hardship. I prefer the latter over the former. I always completed my duties happily and successfully. But the emotional struggle at the red earth makes me feel bitter and sad, and I've had to calm myself down many times. Sometimes, I have felt angry with myself, and have wept shamefully over my destiny. The organization's line is perfect, pure, and just; it's just the practitioners who are unwise, impure, and tricky.

(Note: the Documentation Center of Cambodia has not yet found the family of the woman who wrote this notebook)