

## Supplement || Deposed Pol Pot gives interview in the jungle

---

Source Robert Whyment, The Guardian , 11 December 1979

---

Ousted leader admits that his regime made mistakes but maintains that only several thousand Cambodians died

Robert Whyment

Pol Pot, the deposed prime minister of Cambodia, is alive and well, according to a group of Japanese correspondents who met him at a jungle base close to the country's border with Thailand.

In the first interview since he was driven from Phnom Penh by Vietnamese-led forces in January, Pol Pot said that his resistance movement was fighting to save the Cambodian race, rather than for socialism. He told five Japanese newspaper and television reporters at the week-end that one-quarter of the country still owed allegiance to "democratic Kampuchea," as Cambodia was known during almost four years of rule by the Khmer Rouge.

He said his "government" controlled 50,000 guerrillas opposing a 200,000 strong Vietnamese occupation force backing the Heng Samrin Administration in Phnom Penh. "Vietnam is trying to complete its war of aggression during the present dry season" he said, "but is failing to accomplish its ambitions because of difficulties within Vietnam and fighting by our guerrillas who are spread like the meshes of a net in Kampuchea."

Pol Pot said the guerrillas under his command had kept "enemy troops stationary," and that his regime still had a complete network of contacts linking the whole country under his command. "If a certain place is attacked then we resort to the offensive in another place to keep enemy forces stationary."

Pol Pot said he was the top leader of the deposed regime in charge of political and military affairs, but he also said that he was allowing Khieu Samphan, the former president of Cambodia, and Ieng Sary, the former deputy prime minister to run the administration. He said Vietnam was trying to annihilate Cambodia and its people, and he demanded that Vietnam withdraw its troops as requested by the United Nations.

He was asked by the journalists to comment on reports of mass killings during his period of power. Pol Pot replied: "Our policy was to provide an affluent life for the people. There were mistakes made in carrying it out. Several thousand people may have died." He added that Vietnam had also killed many Cambodians and had then blamed him.

Pol Pot said he was trying to create a national front at home and abroad, and was in contact with non-Communist nationalist groups like the "Khmer Serei " (free Khmer). He said he had also tried to enlist Prince Norodom Sihanouk.

The Japanese reporters who spent Saturday and Sunday at Pot Pot's guerrilla base said Pol Pot appeared to be in good health. Ieng Sary and his wife, Ieng Thirith, the former social affairs minister, were also present.

Britain withdrew recognition last Thursday from the remnants of the Pol Pot regime, though it has not recognised the pro-Hanoi administration in Phnom Penh.

*Though he never faced a proper trial, few would dispute that Pol Pot was [responsible](#) for the deaths of more than one million of his own people through forced labour, disease and systematic executions - as his Khmer Rouge regime tried to turn Cambodia back to the middle ages.*