

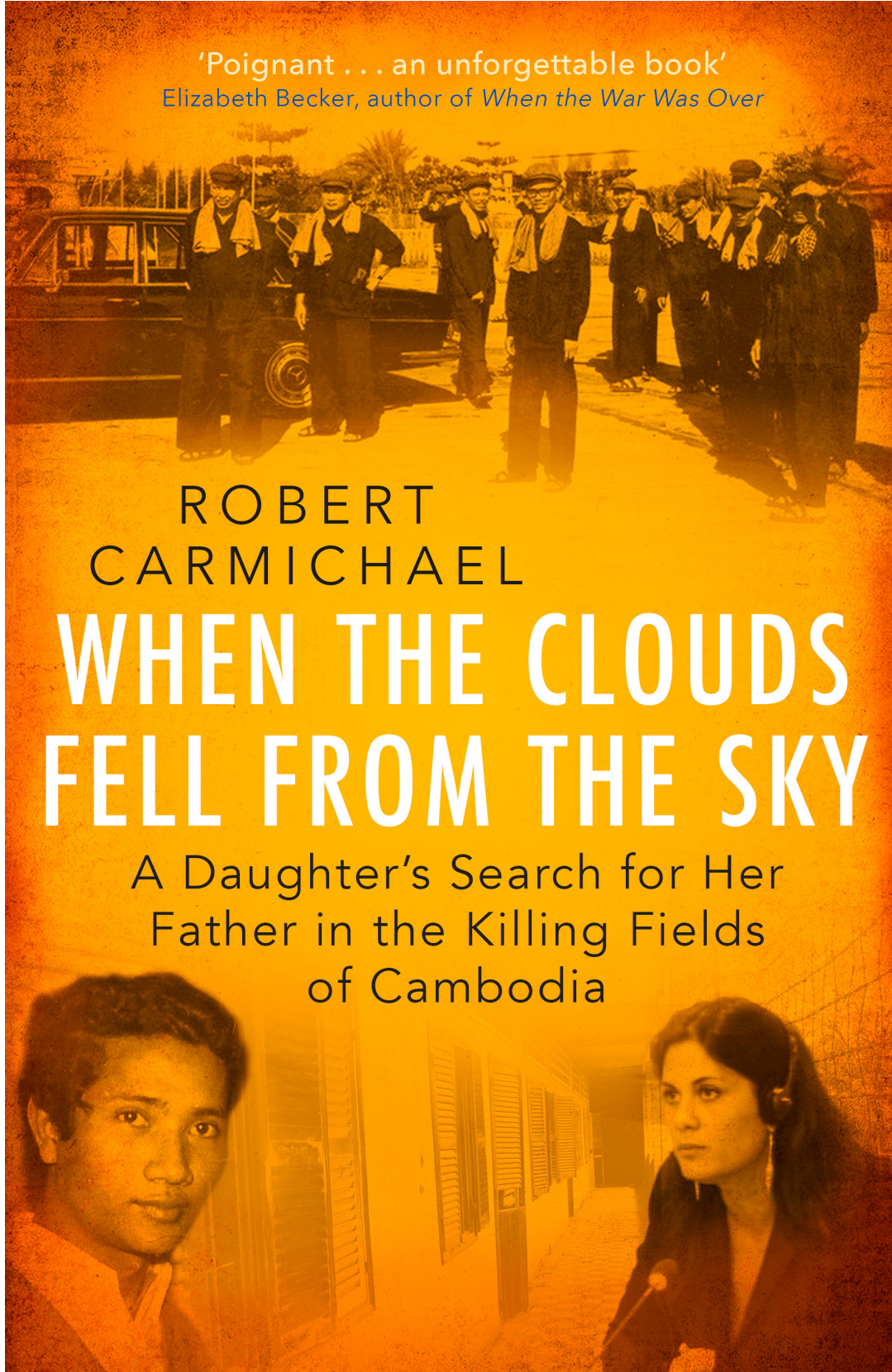
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‘An outstanding book of astonishing power . . .
One finishes it with an ache in the heart’

Jon Swain, writer and foreign correspondent, author of
River of Time

‘Poignant . . . an unforgettable book’

Elizabeth Becker, author of *When the War Was Over*



ROBERT
CARMICHAEL

WHEN THE CLOUDS FELL FROM THE SKY

A Daughter's Search for Her
Father in the Killing Fields
of Cambodia

MEDIA KIT

ROBERT CARMICHAEL BIOGRAPHY



IMAGE: ANNA-CLARE SPELMAN

Robert spent a total of a decade as a foreign correspondent in Cambodia, leaving in 2017.

From 2001-03, he was the managing editor of *The Phnom Penh Post*, the country's first English-language newspaper.

He returned in 2009 to cover the trial of Comrade Duch, the Khmer Rouge's head of security. Duch was jailed for life in 2012 by the UN-backed war crimes tribunal, and died in 2020.

During Robert's second stint in Cambodia, he worked as the country correspondent for the German Press Agency dpa, and also reported for Radio Australia, Voice of America radio, BBC radio and Deutsche Welle, among others.

His writing appeared regularly through these outlets and others in Europe, Australasia and the Americas.

For his book, Robert travelled around Cambodia interviewing people about the Khmer Rouge period, the impact of the tribunal and the thorny issue of reconciliation, which as a South African, was of particular personal interest.

For two years, he was the president of the Overseas Press Club of Cambodia, and in that capacity established strong links with the region's leading journalists.

He left Cambodia in 2017. He lives in Hungary with his wife and son, and is working on a screenplay of his book, and on material for a new book.

His website www.robertcarmichael.net contains many of his articles.

WHEN THE CLOUDS FELL FROM THE SKY

A Daughter's Search for Her Father in the Killing Fields of Cambodia

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US List Price: US\$28.99 (Hardback)
Canada List Price: C\$34.99/C\$26.99
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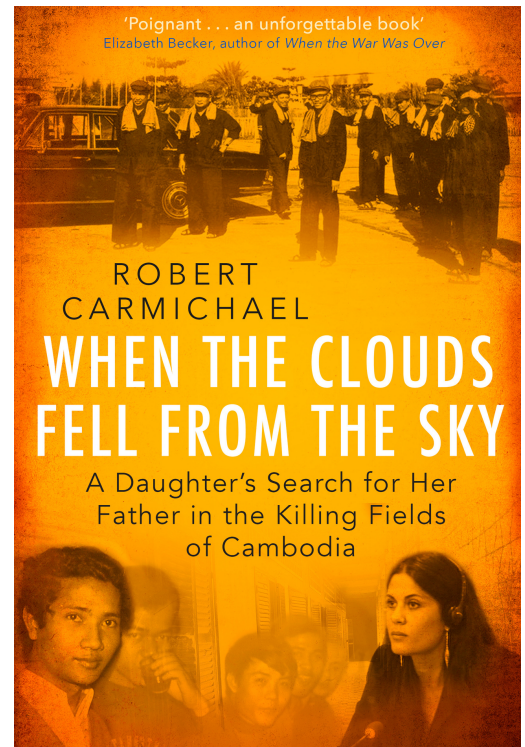
When the Clouds Fell from the Sky: A Daughter's Search for Her Father in the Killing Fields of Cambodia will be published on March 02, 2021 in the U.S. and Canada by the Hachette Book Group.

During the Khmer Rouge's catastrophic four-year reign of terror, two million Cambodians died – one in four of the population – from execution, starvation, illness or overwork.

In describing one family's quest to learn their husband and father's fate, and the war crimes trial of Comrade Duch, who ran the notorious S-21 prison in Phnom Penh, *When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* illuminates the tragedy of a nation.

Background

In 1975, the Khmer Rouge took control of Cambodia after a lengthy civil war. They closed its borders, drove everyone into rural gulags, and sought to turn the clock back to Year Zero. They outlawed religion, markets, money, education – even the concept of family.



But the revolution soon imploded, driven to destruction by the incompetence and paranoia of the leadership. Like hundreds of others, when he returned in 1977, Ouk Ket was utterly unaware of the terrors being wrought in the revolution's name.

Carmichael has woven together the stories of five people whose lives intersected to traumatic effect: Duch; Ket's daughter, Neary, who was just two when her father disappeared; Ouk Ket himself; Ket's French wife, Martine; and Ket's cousin, Sady, who never left Cambodia and still lives there.

Through these personal stories and months spent following Duch's trial, Carmichael extrapolates from the experience of one man – Ouk Ket – to tell the story of a nation. In doing so, he reaffirms the value of the individual, countering the Khmer Rouge's nihilistic maxim that: 'To keep you is no benefit, to destroy you is no loss.'

REVIEWS

'Like Auschwitz, like Stalin's purges, the mass murders of the Khmer Rouge are one of those extraordinary events that make us wonder about the human capacity for evil. Through a profoundly moving tale that weaves together the connected stories of a victim, his surviving family, and members of the regime, Robert Carmichael brings us into the heart of the darkness that took over Cambodia, bringing it alive in the way no mere statistics can. I've not seen a comparable book about these horrors.'

- **Adam Hochschild, award-winning author of *King Leopold's Ghost***

'An outstanding book of astonishing power, one of the most important and valuable to emerge from the horrors of the Pol Pot regime... a direct and vivid account of the cruelty and destruction of the country's darkest era... Carmichael relates a family's intensely painful private story with great sensitivity, weaving it into his overall narrative of the genocide... this and his sincerity make his book unforgettable. One finishes it with an ache in the heart.'

- **Jon Swain, writer and foreign correspondent, author of *River of Time***

'What does it mean to say two million people lost their lives during the years of Khmer Rouge rule? The true answer can only be told in microcosm, as Robert Carmichael has done in this intimate and heart-breaking story of the disappearance of one man, and the decades of suffering that followed as his family searched for answers.'

- **Seth Mydans, former Southeast Asia correspondent for *The New York Times***

'As moving as it is well researched. Robert Carmichael's sharp prose and depth of knowledge of Cambodia's history transforms a daughter's search for her missing father into a nation's journey to find peace and reconciliation with its brutal history of genocide.'

- **Loung Ung, author of *First They Killed My Father***

'Few journalists have studied the Khmer Rouge tribunal as closely as Carmichael, whose book reveals the complex, often contradictory nature of international justice. What justice can be had when weighed against such crimes? It is an issue victims and observers alike have struggled with from the start... The book is like tracing paper, layering Ket's life over Cambodia's sad history. Threading it together are Martine and Ket's daughter Neary, whose early chance encounter with Carmichael yielded this extraordinary story.'

- ***History Today***

'In this brilliant and vivid book, Robert Carmichael skilfully weaves personal accounts with history and reflective analysis, giving essential context to the violence. It is a powerful and compelling story that avoids casting the perpetrators as 'monsters'; instead, showing them to be terrifyingly ordinary. And throughout, Martine and Neary's anguished quest for answers brings home the true scope of the suffering that reached far beyond the walls of S-21.'

- **Nic Dunlop, author of *The Lost Executioner***

'*When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* is a standout. Carmichael chronicles the rise and fall of the Khmer Rouge through the interconnected stories of five different people... Several impressive books have been written on the subject. But *When the Clouds Fell from The Sky* both humanizes the story and brings new insights into the causes of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror.'

- ***Christian Science Monitor***

'This is both the poignant story of a young woman seeking the truth about her father's disappearance at the hands of the Khmer Rouge regime, and an unflinching portrait of the executioner who oversaw the torture chamber where he was imprisoned. An unforgettable book.'

- **Elizabeth Becker, journalist and author of *When the War Was Over: Cambodia and The Khmer Rouge Revolution***

REVIEWS (CONT'D)

'Crisply written, elegantly constructed and thoroughly researched, *When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* is a perceptive, often heart-breaking book.'

- **David Chandler, emeritus professor and author of *Voices from S-21: Terror and History in Pol Pot's Secret Prison***

'A beautifully written book that does a masterful job weaving the history of the Khmer Rouge tribunal with a more personal story of human tragedy and redemption. This extremely thoughtful work is the product of its author's deep understanding of Cambodia. Anyone trying to make sense of the Khmer Rouge war crimes court should read this timely book.'

- **Peter Maguire, author of *Law and War, Facing Death in Cambodia and Thai Stick***

'A Cold War history lesson that's worth re-telling. Carmichael writes intelligently about a complicated subject that continues to haunt the survivors, be they Cambodians or anybody else from the myriad of foreign powers that dabbled in this country's tragic history at their peril.'

- ***The Diplomat***

'Combining extensive historical research and analysis with colourful narrative, *When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* is arguably the most vivid and terrifying literary portrait of the prison to date.'

- ***The Phnom Penh Post***

'*When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* recounts the poignant and painful story of Neary Ouk and the atrocities committed by the barbarous Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. Neary's courageous search led to the appalling discovery that her father had been tortured and put to death in the accursed prison S-21. Much later, she found herself facing the murderer in court - an unbearable task. There are no words to describe such crimes.'

- **Denise Affonço, author of *To the End of Hell: One Woman's Struggle to Survive Cambodia's Khmer Rouge***

'A love story that rises - so beautifully - above, and in stark contrast to, the absurd and criminal insanity of the Khmer Rouge. Meticulous and carefully documented, *When the Clouds Fell from the Sky* explores a wide range of Cambodia's issues while testifying in a deeply movingly way about one of humanity's worst tragedies.'

- **Bruno Carette, documentary-maker *Khmers Rouges Amers/Bitter Khmer Rouge***

'A telling portrayal of the Khmer Rouge's murderous regime.'

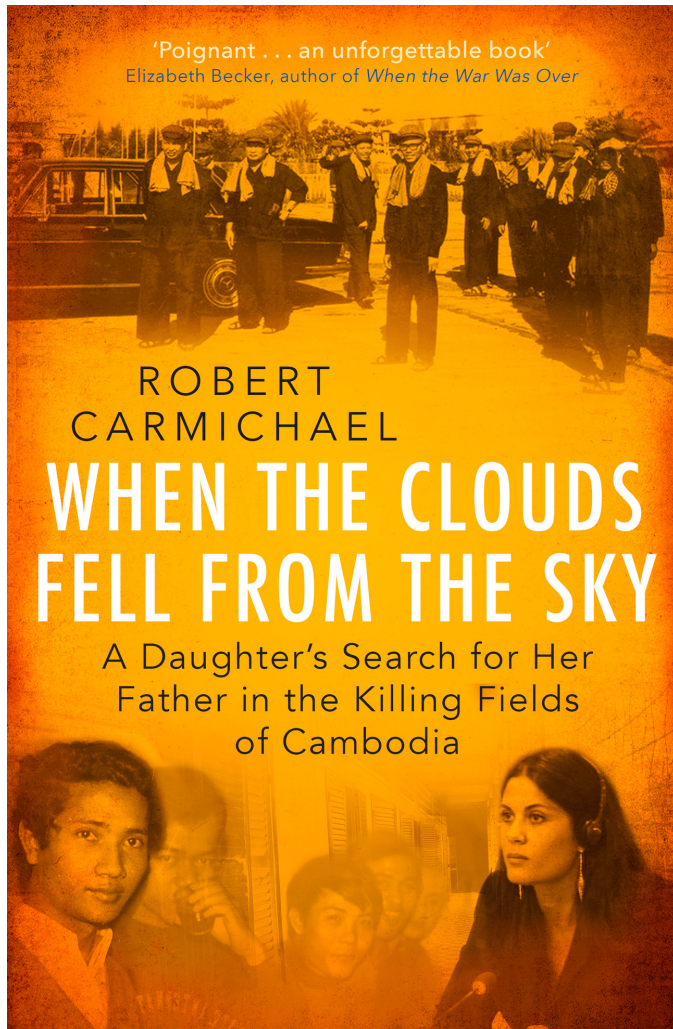
- ***Fah Thai* magazine**

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWERS

1. You spent two years in Cambodia from 2001-03, then left - only to return in 2009 for a further eight years. What is it that drew you back?
2. For listeners/viewers who don't know much about Cambodia - what is the historical backstory to the events of your book?
3. The event you returned to cover as a journalist was the trial of a man called Comrade Duch (*pronounced "Doik"*). Tell us about him.
4. Duch is a crucial character in your book, but he's not the key character. That person is Neary, a Frenchwoman whom you met in 2009 in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh (*pronounced "P'nom Pen"*) just before Duch's trial started. Who is Neary, and how does she fit into this story?
5. Your book weaves the stories of five people whose lives intersected to traumatic effect in order to tell the story of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, and the damage that echoes down the generations. Why did you focus on these five, given that two million people died?
6. The book's title is *When the Clouds Fell from the Sky*. Tell us about that?
7. Duch was tried at a UN-backed war crimes tribunal, and his trial takes up a large part of the book's second half. How is the tribunal significant in Cambodia's context, and what happened to the movement's leader, Pol Pot, whom many listeners will have heard of?
8. You saw Duch on trial on many occasions at the tribunal. How did he come across - sincere, apologetic, devious, truthful?
9. Neary and her mother, Martine, both testified against Duch about the effect that the disappearance of Ouk Ket - Neary's father and Martine's husband - had on their lives. How do their lives intersect with that of Duch?
10. Duch was jailed for life by the tribunal, and died in September 2020. What did Neary and Martine feel about the verdict, and do people in Cambodia feel the tribunal delivered justice?
11. Has Cambodia reconciled with its past?
12. You're a South African, born in 1969 and who therefore came of age in the country's final apartheid years. South Africa tried to tackle its appalling past through a truth and reconciliation commission, whereas Cambodia pursued a judicial route. Is one better than the other?
13. Your book deals with some of the darkest aspects of the human condition - torture, execution, starvation, despair. Were there any uplifting moments?
14. What drove you to write this book - was it a bid to ensure more people understand what happened in Cambodia, or was it more personal?
15. Are you still in touch with Neary or Martine? What do they think of the book?

WHEN THE CLOUDS FELL FROM THE SKY BOOK COVER

ROBERT CARMICHAEL



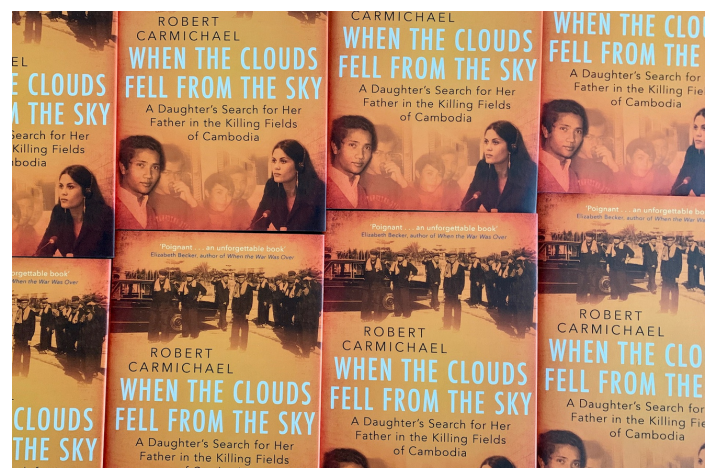
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