



*« You can only let somebody go,  
when you are bound to him. »*

A FILM BY MARINA KEM

# BONNE NUIT PAPA



PRODUCTION BY STERNTAUCHER FILMPRODUKTION IN CO-OPERATION WITH NDR/ARTE

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STERNTAUCHER FILMPRODUKTION

arte

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JUNGER DEUTSCHER FILM

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## TEASER-TRAILER

<http://youtu.be/ecRTBEUoTQ4>

## TRAILER

<http://youtu.be/gmJwBSMngoc>

The film is available in following languages:  
German, English, Khmer



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# BONNE NUIT PAPA

## SHORT SYNOPSIS

*„You can only let somebody go, when you are bound to him.“*

BONNE NUIT PAPA is a film about conciliation, connection and farewell. It documents Marina Kem's search for her father's story. A father who was strange to her in two regards; strange because of his Cambodian origins, strange because of his silence. Dr. Ottara Kem never spoke of his Cambodian background. But on his deathbed he expressed his desire to be buried in his homeland Cambodia. For his daughter Marina Kem it is the beginning of an intense, poetic and conciliate journey. Tracing the footsteps of his life, she immerses herself deeper and deeper into the history of Cambodia's ideological wars and at the end she finds a new family and reconciles herself with her roots.

## LONG SYNOPSIS

In 1965, as a young man, he came from Cambodia to the GDR, where he studied Mechanical Engineering, earned a doctorate, and built up a new life. Living in the GDR saved him from the homicidal Khmer Rouge regime, but being cut off from his family and culture, isolated in exile, made him lonesome. After the German reunification he, like many other engineers in East Germany, lost his job. His marriage also fell apart. Subsequently he withdrew into himself, a little more year after year.

On his deathbed Ottara Kem expressed his desire to be buried in his homeland Cambodia. For his daughters it is the beginning of a journey into the unknown. Slowly they discover their strange, new home. They encounter love, reconciliation, and a deep bond that even overcomes the horror of the Khmer Rouge.

Many members of the Kem family were imprisoned, tortured, and killed during the Khmer Rouge rule. The encounters with the survivors are all the more astonishing and touching as they show that kindness and love, despite all horror, are stronger than hatred and violence.

The film bridges the gap between European Germany and the GDR as well as the past and the current Cambodia. Thereby, it gives the audience two extraordinary double-culture insights: everyday life in the

GDR from the point of view of a Cambodian, fully integrated as a socialist worker and family man. And the intimate, unrestricted look, only reserved for family members, at everyday Cambodian life.

With courage and sensitivity the author investigates the different relationships within her family and traces the life of her father. In doing so, she resurrects her father's romantic and longing memories of Cambodian life before 1965 and also lets contemporary witnesses, letters, „Stasi“ reports, and photographs speak in his stead. She thereby finds her way deeper and deeper into the history of the ideological wars of the past 50 years and learns what impact they had on an individual fate.

With poetic images and highly emotional scenes the director Marina Kem takes the audience on a journey to the never changing questions of mankind: „Where do I come from?“ „What is my purpose in this world?“ „How am I connected with other people?“

The film documents a daughter's search for her father's story. At the end she finds a new family and reconciles herself with her roots.

The *German Film and Media Evaluation* rated the film as „Exceptionally valuable“ and „Documentary of the month“.





## THE NEWCOMERS

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Bretnig, 1981. School entrance.

My father had tried to teach me French.  
Not Khmer. But the strong German  
dominance of mother, neighbor,  
grandparents, nursery school, and  
kindergarden quickly wiped out those  
few words. Only wishing good night  
remained French. „Bonne nuit, Mama!  
Bonne nuit, Papa!”

A fleeting memento of his French-  
speaking past.



# INTERVIEW

Marina Kem

*What was it that moved you to make a film of your father's story?*

I had absolutely no connection to Cambodia as a child and teenager. I knew where to find it on a map, but then I knew that of other countries too. It had nothing to do with my life, and I wasn't curious about it either. I didn't even consider my father a Cambodian, he was simply my father. It wasn't until I grew up that the idea that there could be more first surfaced. Who is my father really? What kind of life did he have? What is the country like, where he came from? Do I have more connections with Cambodian culture than I realise at the moment? Years after the separation of my parents I again showed interest in my father - and thereby also Cambodia. It was a coming-of-age process. Directly after school I did a journalism course and wanted to try out all of the newly learned questioning techniques on him. This remained fruitless as, at that time, my father didn't want to talk about Cambodia - which only increased my curiosity. In 1999 a Cambodian relative of my father's found him in Dresden and wrote him a letter. For the first time I became aware that there were still living relatives in Cambodia! A family! My partner, Oliver Neis, who is also one of the three producers of the film, and I decided to travel to Cambodia as tourists to settle our curiosity. After a few conversations it became clear that my father would accompany us, thereby setting foot in his home country for the first time after 34 years in Germany. At that time I was in my early twenties and studying documentary direction at a film academy. That was when I had the vague idea that something filmic could be made about Cambodia or even about my father, but I didn't yet have a concrete idea. First of all I just wanted to collect some material and see what happened - just as my documentary lecturers had always advised me. So I asked my father if he would allow me to film him with a small hand-held camera both in Germany and in Cambodia for a yet unknown future film. He agreed.

*When the project started, your father was still alive - what were his opinions on your project?*

I am very thankful for my father's great trust in me. He never questioned my motivations for the film.

He was very supportive and let me get on with things. I also think that he was actually pleased to be able to document his first trip back to his home country, and about my interest in his life.

*You spent a total of 14 years working on this project - were there also times when you thought about stopping?*

There were many years during the first 14 years when I had no clear vision for the film. I didn't know which story should be told, why, and what the audience would gain from it. I didn't want to make a film which only caused sadness. In these years the project was suspended until an unknown future date. It could have been that nothing became of it. It wasn't until after the founding of STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion that we were totally sure that we wanted to make the film, despite various objections. After this point we had our own means of continuing with and completing the project, however long it might take. Such a project requires a lot of commitment - not just from one person, but ideally from a lot of people, a 'hard core' in the centre and with support from outside.

*The different layers of the film - your father's personal drama and Cambodia's traumatic history - provide the backdrop for your personal journey which leads to a reconciliation. Do you see the same prospect for your father's land, too?*

I don't know whether it's possible to directly align the development of an individual with a country, a societal entity. Of course, I'm sure there are parallels. Two stories are told in the film. The first, the life story of my father who came to the GDR as a teenager, lived his whole life separated from his family and home land and who could only finally return to his home village through his death. The second is my story of reconciliation with both my father and Cambodia. Both stories are about separation and connection. If one wants to relate these themes to Cambodia, one must consider how war or terror regimes, such as the Khmer Rouge, can exist. I think it starts when one looks for differences in other people, when one begins to view himself separately



and carries this over to whole groups: social classes, cultures, religions, gender or ethnicity. When this separation is defended and exaggerated instead of looking for things which can connect people, then the end products are prejudice, arrogance, racism, hate, paranoia, war and terror. And at the same time amongst individuals loneliness, fear and a feeling of being lost. Insofar I can see a parallel in the way that the film is narrated. It searches for and finds the connection, thereby erasing a separation which had lead to pain and suffering. Not only between father and daughter but also between two different cultures, between two different times and even past the grave. When I think of my relatives in Cambodia who have survived the various wars and the Khmer Rouge, I can only raise my hat in awe. You can see a lot of wisdom in togetherness over there, most likely because Buddhism hasn't been forgotten, but has rather brought stability into society. All in spite of Communism, Socialism and now also Turbo-Capitalism. I have learned a lot from the Cambodians. Above all how they have been able to almost fully heal their souls through conciliation, empathy and charity. At best, my film can reflect that and allow the audience to take part in it.

*Why does your film show so much different material?*

The meandering narrative style is typical for the film. We used many photos and documents but also included a lot of archive material in order to illustrate the different narrative threads and to make the simultaneity of the stories and history clear. That involved a lot a research! We scanned and edited at least 2000 photos and documents, and viewed more than 20,000 clips from around 100 archives worldwide. I would say we've seen everything that has ever been filmed in Cambodia and a great deal of what was filmed in the GDR. We also managed to uncover material from private archives which is now being shown for the first time.

*You worked with anima-doc was that a purely stopgap solution because there wasn't any material for some situations or do these scenes have a particular function?*

The question often arises in documentary films of how to present something when it cannot be filmed, because it took place in the past, for example. There are various ways to still make such scenes vivid for the viewer. The easiest option is that someone talks about the situation. Alternatively, the protagonist is brought to experience a similar situation in the present time or analogies or metaphors are found. In the so called 'docutainment' branch such scenes are often imitated, which I personally don't particularly like. Photos or other documents which show something particular can also be used. Or, one animates the scene. The filmic technique, which currently enjoys the title 'anima-doc', is a fantastic way to retain the comprehensible flow of narration. Additionally, the abstractness of the technique allows for more to be presented than would be possible with a 'normal reality'. We incorporated various anima-doc-scenes above all at times when the content depicts a journey - be it a journey through thoughts or a real journey. The breaking into another world fits perfectly with the change of style in the animated depiction. Throughout, we used different styles and techniques in order to show the atmospheres and contents in the best way. From room-animations, where photos or cards serve as source material, to complex animations of ink drawings. It is always amazing how feelings can be intensified or statements brought to the point through such animated scenes. So if one wants to use the analogy of a filler, then of course our anima-doc scenes are used in places where we didn't have any other material, but one could compare it another way: in the places where we didn't have any bread we put chocolate cake instead.

*The film documents not only the story of your father, but also your increasing familiarity with his life and his culture, which you get to know and accept as part of your identity at the end of the film. Did the film give you a sense of identity and in this respect serve, if you will, a therapeutic function?*

Indeed, the film tells of my path to reconciliation in these two layers: how I found a connection both to my father and also to Cambodia as a part of my



ancestry. If that can be considered meaningful or even therapeutic then I'm glad. The making of the film, however, cannot be said to take on any therapeutic function. Quite the opposite, I think it's only possible to make a film which publicly narrates the relationship to one's own parents, when a certain amount of emotional development has already taken place. The writing and making of a documentary is, on closer inspection, a very surgical affair. One has to be in a stable position and to know oneself, otherwise one won't survive the process. If, as director and author, one is fraught with problems, insecurities or is emotionally unstable, tumbling through space and time, one risks the salvation of the protagonist or the team. That's how I understand the job of the documentary director - one takes on a responsibility for everyone involved and brings them safely through stormy waters.

*Your father passed away while you were still filming, did you regret not asking him much earlier about his past?*

When my father received the diagnosis of lung cancer he became open to, and even initiated, conversations about his possible passing away, although he was undergoing treatment and there was still some hope of recovery. I'm very thankful to him for that. Because of his openness, my sisters and I had almost a year and a half to intensively say our goodbyes. He spoke a lot about his past, childhood and youth, and you could say we got to know him all over again. There was a lot of gravity and love in those conversations. I had tried to get to know him in the past, as a youth and again as a young adult, I had asked him questions to which he gave no, or very little answer. He smiled in response and remained silent. Looking back, I think that for one the element of urgency, which comes when someone is fatally ill, was not there and also that I simply wasn't mature enough to formulate the questions seriously. He probably just waited until I was ready.

To answer your question about regret, I don't feel any regret. Instead I feel thankful for this, though of course very sad, wonderful and fulfilling farewell which my father made possible through his lucidity and love.

*What does the film mean for your family in Germany? Does it have a similarly conciliatory power for your mother and sisters as for you?*

That's difficult for me to answer, of course, only they can answer that. But I think so, yes.

*In order to produce BONNE NUIT PAPA you founded your own company STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion. Were you a team from the beginning or did you come together as work on the film got underway?*

For a while, I tried to present the story to various film companies and it became clear quite quickly that no one was interested. The project simply looked like a lot of work, little money and little chance of success. The consequence of that was to take it on myself. Oliver Neis, the second producer, and I are a couple and at around this time we coincidentally got to know a committed and fiercely determined producer, Stefan Heinen, the third producer of this film. Together we founded STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion. That was in 2010 and BONNE NUIT PAPA was our first big project. In this respect we three got the film on track right from the beginning and produced it together.

*Will there be more documentary film projects after BONNE NUIT PAPA?*

We are certainly planning to produce more documentaries. They should be hand-picked, outstanding projects which appeal to our hearts and souls. At the moment we're in the project development phase of the third cinema documentary from director and author Dario Aguirre 'Welcome, Herr Aguirre'. The documentary is about his long and weary process of finding a cultural identity in Germany. Further projects will follow.



## SHORT BIOGRAPHY MARINA KEM – AUTHOR/DIRECTOR/PRODUCER

... lives as an independent author and director in Hamburg. Additionally, she is a founding partner of STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion. After completing her training and working as a TV reporter, she studied directing at Filmakademie Baden-Wuerttemberg from 1996 to 2001, where she studied under the supervision of Franziska Buch, Thomas Schadt and Volker Koepp. In 1999 she received the „Caligari“ scholarship. She obtained a diploma with excellence in directing. Her diploma film „Der Wind ist aus Luft“, an essayistic film about happiness, was produced within the framework of the promotional programme „Junger Dokumentarfilm“ for screenings at festivals and on Arte. In the year before she had directed „Die Lichtseite des Bewusstseins“ for 3sat about human consciousness and in 2002 she directed the documentary „Aus Asche und Staub“ for the ARD TV series „Menschen und Straßen“. The film was nominated for the German Camera Award. In 2004 she made the documentary „Safari im Reich der Geister“, which was shot in Benin and produced for Arte and the TV series „Länder Menschen Abenteuer“. While studying, Marina Kem also started writing and directing corporate films for, among others, IBM, Bertelsmann Stiftung and Stage Entertainment. Since 2000 she has made more than 200 corporate films for national and international use, in some of them she was presenting in front of the camera. In 2003 she was a jury member of the then newly founded „Deutscher Dokumentarfilmpreis“ (German Documentary Film Award). *BONNE NUIT PAPA* is her first feature length documentary.





## HOME

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What defines home? Is it automatically the place of one's childhood? Or is it the place where one felt the most secure? Does one need to have personally conquered or discovered this place? Or is it important that one was bound to this place through ownership?



## FROM THE JURY STATEMENT OF THE GERMAN FILM AND MEDIA EVALUATION

Marina Kem has succeeded in making *BONNE NUIT PAPA* an incredible multi-layered and nuanced documentary. Not only does she portray a man, whose thoughts and considerations prove his fascinating and unique character. But also, the author takes the audience on a journey to a foreign country with its culture, its people and its harrowing history of decades of political unrest.

Many members of the Kem family were imprisoned, tortured, and killed during the Khmer Rouge rule. The encounters with the survivors are all the more astonishing and touching as they show that kindness and love, despite all horror, are stronger than hatred and violence.

The director links all events with her father and his life. However, she does not express interpretations or assumptions that arise while watching the film. The film is especially moving because of its sensitive handling of a daughter's search for her father's character.

Conversations with family members, friends and colleagues of Ottara Kem create an intimate and social portrait which proves the director's excellent skills of asking the right questions at the right time. She tells the whole story in a sensitive and cautious way, without ever pushing herself into the foreground. The film contains no glorification or su-

perlevation. But in every minute we recognize love, respect and warmth. A strong woman's deeply moving and wonderfully told quest for the story of her father. And her own roots.

Whether cultural differences or personal attitude, social customs or political circumstances, the film does not leave out any of these factors. It remains calm and searching, bringing its audience along on its journey and letting them also share in futile attempts. In the end you are left with a feeling of tenderness and melancholy, appreciation for the search and its failure, though it was still meaningful and always loving.

The director has created a moving portrait of her father and the history that is, despite all inevitable omissions, as broad and complete as possible. She thereby achieves, beyond the personal, a universally valid human dimension, which gives the film its quality.



# PRODUCTION NOTES

## THE CONCEPT

The idea for *BONNE NUIT PAPA* grew over many years. The initial spark came when a surprise letter for Marina Kem's father, Ottara Kem, arrived in 1999. After three centuries of isolation from his Cambodian family a relative had searched him out in Dresden. Through this new connection to her father's home country, the idea grew to fly to Cambodia with her partner, Oliver Neis, and her father, and to document the trip on video camera.

"At first I only had a vague idea of some day making a film about my father or about Cambodia, no concrete vision," says Marina Kem. "At the start it was just important to collect material, to keep hold of the special moments and to see what would happen." The pursuit of a connection was to continue over many years. "With hindsight I would say that I was still so deeply involved in the process of transformation or awakening - or maybe of growing up, myself that I couldn't see the story objectively. I saw everything separately: my father's life, the fate of the Cambodians and my own life, which was by this time settled in the film world. I couldn't see the connections clearly enough." This changed when her father became ill with cancer, it brought a new urgency for Marina to come to terms with him and his past. It was to be a long and conciliatory farewell. "The final conviction to really make a film about the life story of my father was the unbelievably heartfelt encounter with my relatives during the funeral in Cambodia. My sisters, my partner and I brought my father's urn to his home village where it was buried with all the important Buddhist and Brahman rituals. The family welcomed us with such warmth and gave us such a feeling of belonging and connection that I could finally see, feel, and eventually also tell the narrative of the film."

## IT BECAME CONCRETE

The film and its story were increasingly taking shape. It should be about closeness and distance, alienation and connection, and Marina Kem tried to find a production company for the project. However no producer quite trusted himself with the complicated topic. Finally, in 2010, Oliver Neis, originally an advertising-film director, Marina Kem and producer Stefan Heinen founded their own company: STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion. "In the beginning we understood Sterntaucher, above all, to be a tool to make things possible", explains Stefan Heinen. "A film project such as *BONNE NUIT PAPA* is a very fragile affair, it can only be successful with absolute care and devotion, beyond purely financial motivations", adds Oliver Neis. "We were well aware: that is only possible with your own company." Only 3 months after the foundation of the film company the three partners applied for project development funding from the Film Fund Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein. "They took a leap of faith and granted the funding, for which we're still very grateful today", stresses Heinen.

In January 2011 a small team set forth to Cambodia for the first official research trip. In the team were Marina Kem, Oliver Neis and cameraman Notker Mahr who they have both known since their studies at the Baden-Württemberg Film Academy, and with whom they had already worked on various other projects.



“As we landed on Cambodian soil it slowly became clear to me what kind of task this documentary project was going to be”, remembers Notkar Mahr. “I realised that it wasn’t about documenting the events, stories and lives of the Cambodian protagonists in the most unobtrusive way possible. Instead I should develop a relationship to the family which would enable me to take statements from the protagonists without any false sense of shame. I still today feel honoured to have been chosen for this job on these special requirements.”

These filming trips and further research within Germany eventually lead to a concrete vision of the film, including selected protagonists, shooting locations and a clear yet multi-faceted story which was able to convince not only the Film Fund Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein but also the Young German Cinema Board of Trustees to grant production funding. After being granted the funding, Kem, Neis and Heinen presented their project to the editor of Arte, Ulrike Dotzer, and proposed a coproduction. She was very touched by the idea of *BONNE NUIT PAPA* and could imagine it filling an evening in their broadcasting slot ‘great documentaries’. The agreement of NDR/Arte completed the financing with a total budget of 280,000 Euros.

## FILMING

With this, filming began in Autumn 2012. The film crew was completed by sound engineer Max Kielhauser and assistant director Viry Kem, who also filled the roles of protagonist, archive researcher and younger sister. “I really enjoy working with Sterntaucher, particularly with Marina. Her precise vision, forward thinking and decisiveness, combined with having fun on-set and the blind trust afforded to sisters, means Marina is just how I would wish for a director to be, from my position as assistant,” explains Viry Kem. It was no problem for her to be asked by her sister, for all the world to see, about family topics: “As a protagonist I wasn’t ever unsure about talking about personal things in front of the camera as I don’t know any other director who considers her responsibility for her protagonists so consciously and completely. I have noticed this in other projects of Marina’s, I thought to myself: If ever I am to be in front of the camera, then for Marina.” Together the team completed 40 days of filming, 24 of those in Germany (Berlin, Hamburg, Dresden, Leipzig, Neustadt in Sachsen, Cossern, Brettnig, Großröhrsdorf, Gaußig, Weida) and 16 days in Cambodia (Phnom Penh, Svay Rieng, Siem Reap, Angkor, Tonle Sap, Kampong Cham, Sihanoukville, Chantrei, Prey Veng). During this time 30 interviews were conducted, 16 in Khmer and 14 in German. For this to happen the film crew had to overcome cultural and above all climatic differences between Germany and Cambodia - the coldest day of filming was minus 26 degrees Celsius in the Saxon winter of January 2012, just a few weeks before, the film team were sweating in up to 42 degrees Celsius in the humid heat of Cambodia. “An amusing lasting memory for me was our modest lighting equipment in Cambodia and Notkar’s pragmatic and spirited way of solving the issues”, remembers Viry Kem. “For example numerous torches were taped onto the sound tripod, or aluminium folding tables were set out in the sun, or yet another smart phone with a light was ‘set up’ for an interview.”



## POST-PRODUCTION

Due to the fact that the life story of Dr. Ottara Kem was closely bound to contemporary events, much historical visual material was carefully researched: 117 potential sources, amongst them professional archives and private people, were searched for relevant material. That meant 300 hours of archive material to view for the pre-selection, added to this were 2000 documents and photos to be scanned and 160 hours of our own footage. A mammoth task for the post-production, which required particularly diligent logistics and preparation from Sterntaucher. The essence of the material should, after all, find its way into a 100 minute long film with the help of editor Steven Wilhelm: "There was really a lot of material, also archive material, which was perfectly organised. We made our way slowly, piece by piece, and then reshuffled whole blocks again and again. We took our time with this, though, and didn't try to force it into a corset, we approached the story carefully."

After a total of 15 years in production, Marina Kem's first cinema documentary celebrated its premier at the Nordic Film Days in Luebeck. "In my opinion the film is incredibly successful in its picture aesthetic, narrative form and pace. It isn't pushy, it is modest and honest, you have to allow yourself to fall and then it touches you deeply", expresses Steven Wilhelm. "It causes contemplation about your own family story, yourself, world history. I think you can grow from it. The film has turned out to be honest and profound. You have to open yourself to it and then you'll be rewarded."

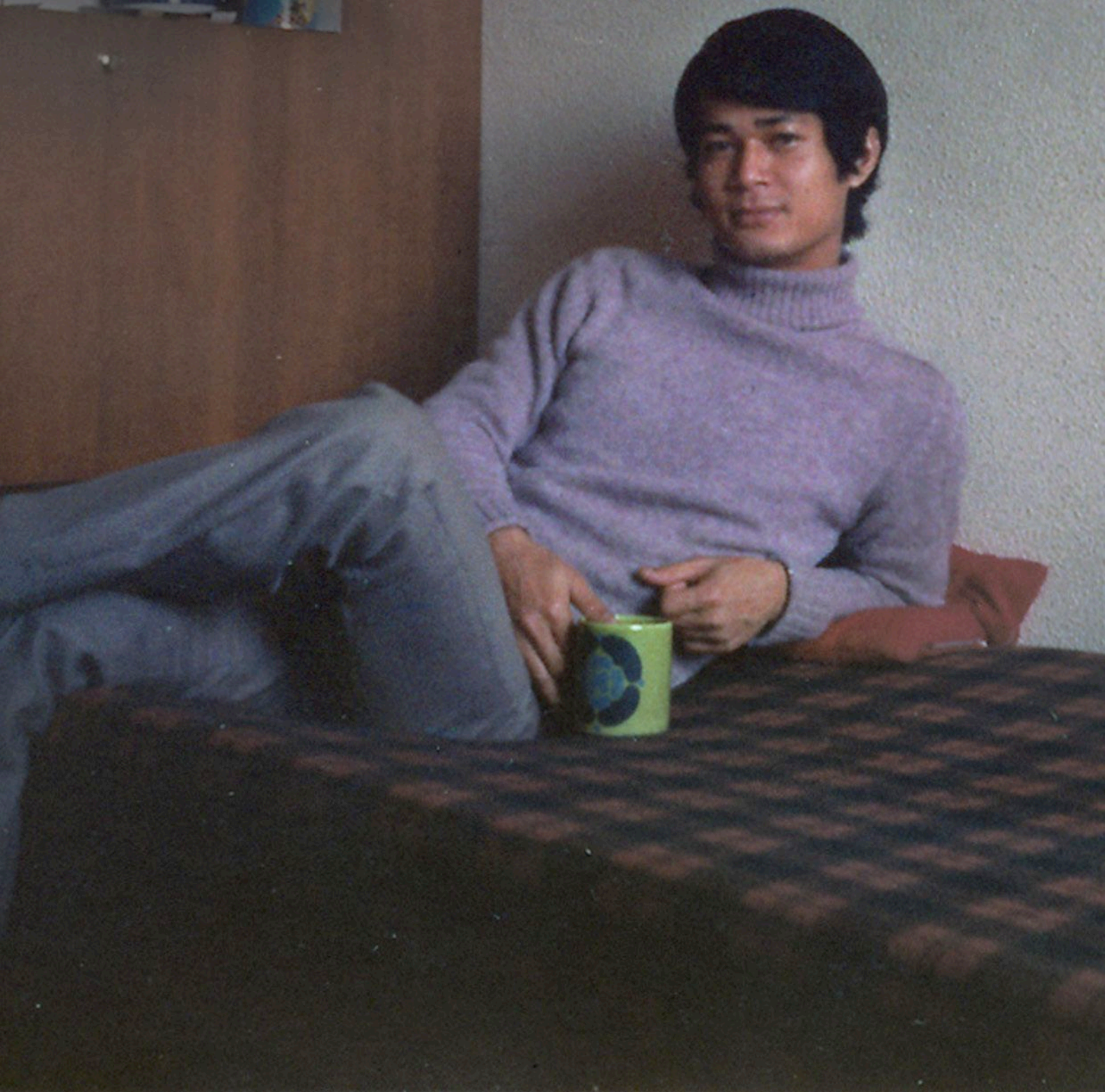


## A STUDENT'S LIFE

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Ottara Kem wrote in his diary:

"If a German girl will go out with you, it's not that she loves you. She's curious about you because you're a foreigner. Girls want to leave their country for somewhere hot."





# BACKGROUND

## History of Cambodia 1945 to today

The story told in „Bonne Nuit Papa“ spans the time from 1945 to today. The film takes place on two continents: in today's Germany, in the GDR, and in Cambodia under various political systems. The most crucial events are summarized here as an introduction into the history of Cambodia.

## History of Cambodia 1945 - 1954

After the Second World War and the Japanese withdrawal, Cambodia fell back to France as part of the colony Indochina. From 1950 on, the young king Sihanouk began to demand more independence from France concerning public finance, the military, and the judicial system. At the same time in Vietnam, the communist Viet Minh fought the “First Indochina War” against France for their independence. Taking advantage of France's weakness during the war, Sihanouk managed to proclaim independence in 1953. In the Spring of 1954, the French army suffered a crushing defeat in the battle of Dien Bien Phu. The conference concerning Indochina in Geneva in July 1954, ended France's colonial grip on all three Indochina countries Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

## History of Cambodia 1954 - 1965

King Norodom Sihanouk, who negotiated Cambodia's independence in 1953, wanted to build up the country. He called for a modernization of agriculture, made advances in transportation and irrigation infrastructure, and improved the education and health sector. The population idolized him like a god-king. Sihanouk wanted to turn Cambodia into a Buddhist, non-aligned society. In the growing conflicts between the world powers, he saw neutrality as Cambodia's only way. A neutrality that the major powers would learn to use to their own purpose.

## History of Cambodia 1965 - 1975

In October 1965 the US military flew its first bombing raids over Cambodia. Still top secret at the time. In 1968 Richard Nixon became president of the US, a man who wanted to win the Vietnam war at all costs. The bombings were increased. In 1970 Cambodia witnessed a coup, probably supported by the US. King Sihanouk was exiled. General Lon Nol became the new head of state. The bombings continued to increase, cost of living also, misery and despair spread. In addition, the Cambodians' natural order “Buddhism, parents, king” began to fall apart. Communist, “patriotic” guerrilla groups formed, who want to free Cambodia from American occupation. Rumors spread that these troops were led by King Sihanouk. More and more Cambodians joined the alleged king's troops, which were, however, backed by China and led by Pol Pot. Moving south from the jungles in the north, they took over the country piece by piece. On April 17th, 1975 the Khmer Rouge captured the capital Phnom Penh. The darkest chapter of Cambodia's history had begun.



### History of Cambodia 1975 - 1979

The Khmer Rouge's terror regime. The Khmer Rouge wanted to re-educate the Cambodian population into a new, invincible people, whose achievements would surpass even those of the Khmer of Angkor times. According to this ideology, all people would need to be made equal. Everyone should become a farmer, without knowledge, belief, property, or personal needs. They tried to implement this idea through inhumane violence, total surveillance, and terror. They "cleansed" the so called „new people“; they killed teachers, doctors, civil servants, scientists, monks, and merchants; educated people in general. More than 2 million people died during this reign of terror. They were brutally murdered, tortured, they starved or died from exhaustion on the "Killing Fields".

### History of Cambodia 1978 - 1991

In November 1978 Vietnam and the Soviet Union signed a treaty of amity which included a mutual military assistance pact. Thereby, in the "fraternal strife" between Soviet and Mao communism, Vietnam let its relationship to China cool down considerably. In December 1978 in Vietnam, the "Kampuchean National Liberation Front" was formed with the goal to overthrow and liquidate the Khmer Rouge, rebuild the Cambodian economy, reestablish peaceful, foreign political relationships, and pardon those Khmer Rouge who "sincerely repent". After the Khmer Rouge repeatedly attacked Vietnamese villages in the border zone in 1977, the Vietnamese Army invaded Cambodia on December 24th, 1978, and within a few days advanced all the way to Phnom Penh. The Khmer Rouge retreated to the west of the country. Under the rule of Heng Samrin the People's Republic of Kampuchea was proclaimed. 225.000 Vietnamese soldiers remained as an occupational force in Kampuchea. The new People's Republic, under strong influence of Vietnam, was only recognized by soviet-friendly Eastern bloc states, though not by China, the US, the ASEAN states, or the UN. These continued to support the Khmer Rouge with military aid and international relief supplies and, thereby, prolonged the civil war by years.

### History of Cambodia 1987 to today

In 1987 Michael Gorbachev initiated new negotiations for the solution of the Cambodian conflict between the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, Prince Sihanouk's exile government, and the government of the People's Republic of Kampuchea. It was decided that Vietnamese troops pull out by 1990. In 1989 the UdSSR, the US, and China could agree that the Khmer Rouge should no longer hold any kind of power in a Cambodian government. In 1989 Vietnam pulled out all remaining troops. In 1993 the first free elections were held under UN supervision. Norodom Sihanouk officially became king again. Pol Pot died in 1998. In 2004 King Sihanouk stepped down and his son Norodom Sihamoni became the new king.





## THE FAMILY PHOTO

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In 1974 Dara (right) sent his little brother Ottara in the GDR a picture of his family. This family photo is the only one remaining since all others were destroyed under Pol Pot's rule. Four decades later I give the photo back to the only survivor Pros (left). After 40 years he sees the faces of his parents and siblings again.



## CAST & CREW

<i>Protagonists</i>	Dr. Ottara Kem Marina Kem Viry Kem Devi Kem Sylvia Brendel Albrecht Brendel Kem Sarapon Mey San Khieu Than Kem Sovandara Dr. Thonevath Pou Monika Bethmann Kem Niputa Dr. Jürgen Fröhlich Günter Warecka Klaus Beyer Kem Socheatta Kem Mealy Tep Tes	<i>Author/Director</i>	Marina Kem
		<i>Cinematography</i>	Notker Mahr Henning Stirner Sebastian Stobbe Oliver Neis
		<i>Editor</i>	Steven Wilhelm
		<i>Composer</i>	Eckart Gadow
		<i>Sound</i>	Max Kielhauser
		<i>Animation</i>	Alex Holthaus Melanie Haas
		<i>Sound Design &amp; Mix</i>	Michael Gerlach
		<i>Commissioning</i>	Ulrike Dotzer
		<i>Editor NDR/arte</i>	
		<i>Head of Production</i>	Stefan Heinen Melanie Clausen, NDR
		<i>Producers</i>	Stefan Heinen Marina Kem Oliver Neis

*Colour Correction:* Bernie Greiner – *Music Supervisor:* Jens Quandt – *Musicians:* Martin Brombacher (Flöte), Eckart Gadow (Klavier), Ortrun Helmich (Violine), Tina Gadow (Violoncello) – *Voice-over Artists (German):* Marina Kem, Philipp Moog, Alexander Brem – *Voice-over Artists (English):* Maria Magdalena Rabl, David Creedon, David Ingram – *Voice-over Artists (Khmer):* Rany Neou, Lina Thach – *First Assistant Director:* Viry Kem – *Camera Assistant Cambodia:* Kem Sovanna, Kem Ponlock – *Runner Cambodia:* Kong Socheatraingsey, Kem Sovanney – *Translation Khmer:* Dr. Samnang Sam – *Translation French:* Marlène Wilhelm-Eberle – *Transcription:* Esther Schindler-Mencke – *Production Assistant Intern :* Philipp Karg – *Production Consultant:* Sönke Held – *Legal Advice:* Christian Füllgraf – *Illustration:* Sylvia Brendel – *Design Webpage:* Wanja Scholz – *Production Assistant:* Jessica Zehme – *Postproduction Producer:* Oliver Neis

A production by **STERNTAUCHER Filmproduktion** in co-production with **NDR** in co-operation with **Arte** supported by **Filmförderung Hamburg Schleswig-Holstein** and **Kuratorium junger deutscher Film**.





A photograph of a blue sky with wispy white clouds. In the upper right corner, a dark tree branch with small green leaves and some brown seed pods hangs down. In the center of the frame, a cylindrical fire balloon is flying upwards, leaving a faint, dark trail behind it. The balloon has a dark, glowing opening at its base.

# THE SOUL

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A fire balloon lit by one of the village elders, flies above Chantrei. It is supposed to help my father's soul rise up.