

INTERNATIONAL
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Mercedes Benz limousine said to belong to late Cambodian tyrant Pol Pot for sale on eBay

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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia: Car collectors with macabre tastes and at least 35,000 British pounds (US\$71,800; €49,900) to spare now have a chance to own a limousine reportedly used by Pol Pot, the late chief of Cambodia's notorious Khmer Rouge.

"For sale — one classic 1973 Mercedes Benz stretch limousine ... previously used by one infamous owner Pol Pot, who led the Khmer Rouge during its genocidal regime in Cambodia from 1975-1979," reads a listing on the online auction site eBay.

The car, reportedly purchased in 2001 by the current owner, who used it "for Sunday drives around Phnom Penh and the outskirts," had attracted one bidder by Sunday afternoon, with bidding due to end Tuesday.

The seller is apparently an expatriate British banker, Paul Freer, who bought the car when he lived in Phnom Penh, but moved to neighboring Laos a year ago. He could not immediately be reached for comment.

Whether the vehicle was actually used by Pol Pot could not be independently confirmed.

Records of virtually everything were lost during the regime of the Khmer Rouge, who abolished private ownership and attempted to turn Cambodia into a primitive agricultural society. The communist group's radical policies also led to the deaths of some 1.7 million people from hunger, diseases, overwork and execution.

"Part of the proceeds of the sale will be given to a Cambodian children's charity," says the car's description on eBay, which added that the vehicle was originally acquired by a foreign journalist who discovered it being used by Cambodian farmers to transport watermelons to market.

The ad claims the car was also used by Hollywood movie star Matt Dillon when he filmed his movie "City of Ghosts" in Cambodia in 2001.

The car, waiting for a new owner, has been on display at the Renakse Hotel opposite the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh for about a year now, Yan Phirun, a hotel worker, said Sunday. He said he is a nephew of Freer's Cambodian wife, Chhea Lina.

"I used to hear my aunt saying that the car used to belong to Pol Pot. She bought it from a previous owner," he said.

Sep Yan, a receptionist at the hotel, said many people have looked at the car and left because the asking price may be too high.

"I don't know the real history of the car because I was not yet born" when the Khmer Rouge were in power, he said.

Youk Chhang, director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, an independent group researching Khmer Rouge crimes, said there were quite a few black Mercedes Benz vehicles used by Khmer Rouge dignitaries.

"There is no way you can confirm which one belonged to Pol Pot," he said.