

cial Zone forces. The road was divided "along the white line." Heng Samrin recalls that on the Special Zone side, women stood guard. "And [if] my troops crossed over the white line to the west—that was their territory. They stopped us. If we insisted they would arrest us." This happened to many of Samrin's subordinates, and he had to work hard to get his men back. Another soldier recalls Southwest Zone forces arresting the "more liberal" Eastern Zone troops.¹⁰¹

Bernard Gaude, a Frenchman, had lived in Cambodia for twenty-six years. Before his expulsion with other Westerners in May 1975, Gaude spent two weeks with the Khmer Rouge in Phnom Penh and its vicinity. He reported that "along a single Phnom Penh street there might be two or three different groups, each controlling its own sector and separated from one another by much more than just military unit distinctions." He added, "There was a certain feeling that all was not right among the various groups, that there was a powder keg that might explode into still further fighting."¹⁰²

Pol Pot did not reach Phnom Penh until 24 April.¹⁰³ Nothing is known of the manner of his arrival. Ieng Sary landed in a Chinese Boeing 707 at Pochentong airport the same day.¹⁰⁴ The brothers-in-law were right on time for a three-day, celebratory "Special National Congress" in the city. Phnom Penh Radio listed those attending as "125 representatives of people's organizations," 112 military delegates, "20 representatives of the Buddhist clergy," and 54 representatives of the National United Front and the Royal Government. On 27 April, Khieu Samphan announced their "unanimous" decisions: that "the important winners are the people," that the country would be "an independent, peaceful, neutral, sovereign, nonaligned Cambodia with territorial integrity," and that Prince Sihanouk "is a great, high-ranking patriotic personality" who would "remain chief of state."¹⁰⁵ But this was only the curtain-raiser for a much more important CPK gathering.

101. Heng Samrin interview, 1991; S. Heder's with Um Samang, Sakeo, 10 March 1980. Samang was describing the situation in Phnom Penh in May 1975.

102. Quoted in Denis Gray, "A Lifestyle of Austerity," *Bangkok Post*, 13 May 1975. Refugee Hav reported that friends who drove trucks to Phnom Penh from the Northwest Zone, apparently as late as 1976 or 1977, confirmed that the city remained "divided": "The Eastern Zone were in charge from the Royal Palace along the Mekong River. The Southwest had from Phnom Penh to the Chinese Hospital. The North had from Kilometer 6." Kem Hong Hav interview, 1979.

103. "Interview of Comrade Pol Pot . . . to the Delegation of Yugoslav Journalists in Visit to Democratic Kampuchea," Phnom Penh: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Democratic Kampuchea, March 1978, p. 22.

104. Nayan Chanda, *Brother Enemy*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986, p. 12.

105. Phnom Penh Radio, 27 April 1975, in FBIS, Asia Pacific, 28 April 1975, p. H1.

Consolidation: The 20 May 1975 Conference

All military and civilian officials of the new regime were summoned to a special meeting on 20 May 1975. "District and region secretaries came from all over the country, and representatives from all armed forces and units and regions, so there were thousands." The assembly was held in the old sports center in the northern part of Phnom Penh.¹⁰⁶ Its purpose was "to receive the plan distributed by the Center" and then return home to "implement the plan." The meeting lasted five days.

This was the Center's first major attempt to run its political writ throughout Cambodia. No documents from the meeting, and very few members of its audience, appear to have survived. But it has been possible to reconstruct some of the event through interviews with three of those present and with two others whose superiors attended and gave them accounts of it. (Later they were arrested; both disappeared.) The accounts are not only rare but modulated, informative despite lapses of memory, and, as we shall see, mutually corroborative without indication of prearrangement.¹⁰⁷

The earliest account dates from mid-1980. It comes from Sin Song, who in 1975 was political commissar of the 3rd Battalion of Chakrey's 1st Eastern Division. Song was stationed in Prey Veng. He did not attend the May assembly, but his immediate superior, Chhouk, the Region 24 CPK secretary, did. On his return, Chhouk told Song that Pol Pot had made eight points:

1. Evacuate people from all towns.
2. Abolish all markets.
3. Abolish Lon Nol regime currency and withhold the revolutionary currency that had been printed.
4. Defrock all Buddhist monks and put them to work growing rice.
5. Execute all leaders of the Lon Nol regime beginning with the top leaders.
6. Establish high-level cooperatives throughout the country, with communal eating.
7. Expel the entire Vietnamese minority population.
8. Dispatch troops to the borders, particularly the Vietnamese border.¹⁰⁸

106. This is Heng Samrin's 1991 account. Chea Sim thought the meeting took place at the Khmero-Soviet University. In 1992, Heng Samrin insisted he was right, saying that he was living in the city at the time.

107. Four of the five sources, it should be noted, were from the Eastern Zone and later rebelled against Pol Pot. They may be treated with caution. Readers can decide cause and effect—whether damning accounts are explained by the rebels' politics, or vice versa.

108. Author's interview with Sin Song, Phnom Penh, 12 August 1980. See Kiernan, "Wild Chickens," in Chandler and Kiernan, eds., *Revolution and Its Aftermath in Kampuchea*, pp. 178–79.

The second source is an officer named Ret, a Center battalion commander from the Northern Zone who attended the meeting. Before his arrest in 1977, he told colleagues in the north of a large meeting in Phnom Penh around 27 May 1975. Ret said that "eleven points" were discussed, but his colleagues, interviewed in 1980, could recall his mentioning only the leadership's orders to "kill Lon Nol soldiers, kill the monks, [and] expel the Vietnamese population" and its opposition to "money, schools, and hospitals."¹⁰⁹

Mat Ly, a CPK district committee member in Region 21, attended the meeting. In 1991 he agreed with Sin Song that there were eight points. He started his list with five of the first six points recalled by Song (1, 2, 3, 4, and 6). He added the following: close schools, close hospitals, and "uproot spies root and branch."¹¹⁰ Chea Sim, CPK secretary of Ponhea Krek district on the Vietnam border and a member of the Region 20 Committee, confirms Sin Song's list.¹¹¹

To get to the meeting, Sim traveled along Highway 7 from the border to Tonle Bet, then took a ferry down the Mekong. He arrived in the capital on 19 May, spending the night with hundreds of other participants at the Phnom Penh Technical School, west of the city center. The next morning the meeting began at 8 A.M. The assembly lasted five days. Nuon Chea spoke on the first day, Pol Pot on the second. Chea Sim recalled some of the details in a 1991 interview.

"Nuon Chea said that building socialism in Kampuchea consisted of two parts, agriculture and industry. He said agriculture would be modernized in ten to fifteen years by scientific methods, by preparing irrigation dams and canals all over the country. And the dams and canals had to be started in the coming year, 1976. Industry would be modernized in a similar period of ten to fifteen years."

"And the second issue: in order to achieve the construction of socialism progressively and advance all together in the set period, we must take care to carefully screen internal agents (*samrit samrainh phley khnong*) in the party, in the armed forces, in the various organizations and ministries, in the government, and among the masses of the people. We have to carefully screen them, Nuon Chea said. He mentioned 'the line of carefully screening internal agents to improve and purify, in order to implement the line of building socialism so that it advances to modernization by new scientific technology.'"

"This was a very important order to kill. Their careful screening was to take all measures so that people were pure (*borisot*). The line laid down must be fol-

109. Author's interview with Kun Chhay, Kompong Svay, 16 October 1980.

110. In an interview with the author on 21 January 1986, Mat Ly had begun with Song's point no. 1: "Expel people from the cities." In an interview with Jeremy Stone and Gregory Stanton on 11 July 1991, Ly recalled the points in a different order from Sin Song (6, 1, 4, 3, 2).

111. Chea Sim interview, 1991.

lowed at all costs. . . . If people could not do it, they would be taken away and killed. This was called the line of 'careful screening.' It came out in concrete specifics in the eight points. . . . These came from the broad lines, the strategic principles. Socialist construction can only succeed under the line of careful screening of internal agents. The words 'carefully screen' were the killing principle . . . and were stated strongly on 20 May. It was to be done." This recalls Mat Ly's description of the slogan, "Uproot spies root and branch."

Heng Samrin, then studying military affairs under Son Sen, was also at the meeting.¹¹² He recalls the use of yet another term: "They did not say 'kill,' they said 'scatter the people of the old government.' Scatter (*komchat*) them away, don't allow them to remain in the framework. It does not mean 'smash' (*komtec*). . . . Smash means 'kill' but they used a general word, 'scatter.' Nuon Chea used this phrase." This appears to be Sin Song's point number 5, though the use of varied euphemisms is an important qualification.

Samrin agrees that "mostly, it was Nuon Chea who did the talking," explaining the new Center policies in detail. Samrin did not recall eight points, but mentioned permanent evacuation of the cities (Sin Song's no. 1); the decisions to withhold the new currency and abolish the circulation of money (no. 3); establishment of "medium-level cooperatives" in the countryside (not quite no. 6); evacuation of the foreign embassies; and the division of the population into two groups: "full rights" citizens (*neak penh sith*, those who had lived in Khmer Rouge zones before 17 April); and "candidates" (*neak triem*) for such status, especially the newly evacuated deportees or "depositees" (*neak phñoe*) from the towns.

Samrin continues: "Nuon Chea talked of wiping out markets, not allowing money. If there were markets and money, there was property. The important, heavy pressure was against property. Where there was money there were markets, and if there were markets there would be people with money and those people would have property. So they wanted to wipe out property, not allow private property to exist." This is Sin Song's point number 2.

"It was Pol Pot who distributed this plan personally," says Samrin, who quoted him as saying, "Don't use money, don't let the people live in the cities." There was, however, "no mention of closing schools or hospitals." Chea Sim agrees. On the other hand, Samrin adds: "Monks, they said, were to be disbanded, put aside as a 'special class,' the most important to fight. They had to be wiped out (*lup bombat*). . . . I heard Pol Pot say this myself. . . . He said no monks were to be allowed, no festivals were to be allowed any more, meaning 'wipe out religion.'" Nuon Chea affirmed this, adding that "wats would not be allowed." This is Song's point number 4.

112. Heng Samrin interview, 1991.

Samrin claims that the two leaders' views were "clearly the same." But their manner was different. I asked Chea Sim if Pol Pot spoke of killing people, or if he ever used the word *kill*. He replied, "It is difficult for us to understand. We saw Pol Pot's behavior and heard his words, and he did not seem to us to be a killer. He seemed kindly. He did not speak very much. He just smiled and smiled. . . . And his words were light, not strong. In general, you would estimate that Pol Pot was a kindly person, simple, with a mass view. But his methods were confrontational; he was just a killer."

On the other hand, Sim continued, "Nuon Chea's behavior was somewhat coarse, different from Pol Pot's. It could be observed. . . . People always say that Nuon Chea is somewhat cruel. His behavior is stronger. And they always praise Pol Pot as the kindest person of all."

Heng Samrin adds, "Nuon Chea was the one who did the consciousness work, the propaganda." Chea elucidated official positions: "Only the very special documents would be introduced by Pol Pot. . . . As a rule Pol Pot spoke little, and about broad general principles: lines, vanguard views, socialism, Great Leaps Forward, great whatevers. . . . While [Nuon Chea] was speaking the two of them were right there together, presiding side by side, but only Nuon Chea spoke about the documents. Pol Pot was the listener. Pol Pot did not offer many personal opinions."

The party secretary did make one strong, specific point. According to Chea Sim, "Pol Pot spoke a lot about the question of Vietnam. He stressed the importance of the issue of evacuating all of the Vietnamese people out of Cambodian territory." Heng Samrin recalls Nuon Chea's adding, "We cannot allow any Vietnamese minority" to live in Cambodia. This is Sin Song's point number 7. Pol Pot also noted that Vietnam's Mekong Delta had been Cambodian territory in the past. But Chea Sim recalls no order sending troops to the borders to attack Vietnam. That came later, he says.

We are now in a position to list the major decisions announced at that 20–24 May 1975 meeting. Chhouk's account, as told through Sin Song, holds up reasonably well. The evacuation of the cities was declared to be permanent. Money, markets, and Buddhism were now prohibited. Song seems to have been right (and Chea Sim less well-informed) about the dispatching of troops to the Vietnamese border. But Song predates the order establishing "high-level cooperatives throughout the country, with communal eating." Communal eating was probably foreshadowed in May 1975, but it was not ordered until 1976. Medium-level cooperatives were now formed. In August 1975, the CPK's monthly internal magazine, *Tung Padevat* (Revolutionary Flags), announced that "the party has decided to upgrade the cooperatives into village-cooperatives." Replacing small groups of fifteen to thirty families in which "the strength of the party members was thinly spread," cooperatives consisting of entire villages now ensured

that "the leadership has a more centralized character." It added, "The party branches have grasped the leadership of the village-cooperatives more firmly than before."¹¹³ The party Center was slowly asserting its power.

Dissent

Contrary to Heng Samrin's account, Hou Yuon did not "disappear forever" after opposing the Center's evacuation plan in February. Monks saw him at their wat in his home district in Kompong Cham province on 8 March.¹¹⁴ An ex-monk also recognized Hou Yuon at Oudong, north of Phnom Penh, on 17 April. Yuon, escorted by soldiers, was traveling in a jeep heading very fast towards the surrendered capital.¹¹⁵ The next month Yuon's wife, Ung Yok Leang, returned to the couple's native village. According to relatives, she came to collect her daughter and take her "to live with her father and mother" now that the war was over.¹¹⁶ It is unlikely she would have done this had Hou Yuon already disappeared or been killed. But he was certainly under a cloud. Hu Nim recorded in his "confession" that "after liberation, when the Party abolished money and wages and evacuated the people, Hou Yuon again boldly took a stand against the Party line."¹¹⁷

Chhouk told Sin Song that at the May meeting Hou Yuon had publicly dissented from some of eight points. According to Song, "There was some disagreement with these points at the Assembly, especially over the creation of high-level cooperatives because three million city people and others were not familiar with revolutionary politics. And also, the country had just emerged from a war, so there were great shortages and a lack of capital and facilities. Communal eating cooperatives throughout the country was not a feasible proposition. Hou Yuon, for one, said that this was just not possible, Chhouk reported to me. . . . After that, Hou Yuon was sacked from the cabinet."¹¹⁸

113. "Another Important Victory of Our Cooperatives and Revolutionary Movement," *Tung Padevat*, August 1975, pp. 71ff.

114. "Khmer Refugee Walks Out from Phnom Penh," Extracts from a Cabled Report from the American Embassy in Bangkok, 5 June 1975 (declassified in June 1978), p. 3.

115. Author's interview with Long, Oudong, 18 September 1980. Long said he was absolutely sure this was Hou Yuon. Long had been a monk for 18 years before the town of Oudong was captured by Mok's forces in March 1974, when he was evacuated along with its other residents. Locals hid him from the CPK.

116. Author's interview with relatives of Hou Yuon, Sambor Meas, 5 August 1980. These relatives included his mother and two of his sisters.

117. *Chamlaiy Hu Nim*, confession in Tuol Sleng prison dated 28 May and 16 June 1977, translated in Chanthou Boua, David P. Chandler, and Ben Kiernan, eds., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976–77*, New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies Monograph No. 33, 1988, p. 304.

118. In June 1975, Hing, the CPK Secretary of Region 5, in the northwest, secretly