

Statement of the Communist Party
of Kampuchea to the Communist
Workers' Party of Denmark,
July 1978*

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by
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On behalf of the Communist Party of Kampuchea, I wish to express our deep thanks for your visit to Kampuchea. It is a great honour and a source of encouragement for us to have you here ...

I. On Party-building 1960-67

From the beginning we believed it was necessary to have a party led by the working class and to base ourselves upon the contradictions in Kampuchean society. In that period, that is, in 1960, Kampuchean society was neo-colonial and semi-feudal. The contradiction between the Kampuchean nation and US imperialism was very sharp. That was the external contradiction. As for the internal contradiction, it was between, on the one hand, the working class and the capitalists, and, on the other, the poor peasants and the feudal class. At that time, capitalists and reactionaries together oppressed our people.

On the basis of these contradictions, the party determined its revolutionary tasks: to make the national democratic revolution; to fight US imperialism and the feudal class; to liberate the Kampuchean nation and the poor peasant class. It laid down this strategic line for the national democratic revolution:

- (1) The party leading the revolution had to be a party of the working class. It had to lead the revolution directly and not allow other classes to lead the revolution or the party. The party had to define the forces of the revolution; firstly, the strategic forces in the revolution and secondly, the tactical forces in the revolution.
- (2) Strategic forces are the workers, peasants and some of the petty bourgeoisie. Of these, we see the working class as the basic class while the petty bourgeoisie was something like an allied force. National capitalists were supplementary forces. Moreover, we regarded some high ranking personalities within the ruling class - some big capitalists

and officials in the civil service and government, and some Buddhist monks – as supplementary forces. Those people had to have a patriotic, progressive and national outlook, that is, progressive in relation to the reactionaries.

Based on this classification of forces, we tried to construct a national democratic front for the purpose of struggling against US imperialism and its lackey. We wish to stress to you that all of these forces depended upon the leadership of the working class and the party.

- (3) Our party chose two forms of struggle: political struggle and armed struggle. These are interrelated. The political struggle was promoted through legal struggle and illegal struggle, with the illegal being the basic form of struggle. Now we struggle openly and in secret with secret struggle as the basis of our struggle. We define the forms of struggle in this way as a result of our own experience. Defending, expanding and building our forces required working in this way.
- (4) We took up the struggle in the city as well as in the countryside.
- (5) The struggle in the countryside was the basic one, especially the struggle in the most backward and remote areas. Those were base areas.
- (6) We recognized that we had to conduct people's war, to overcome all obstacles, make any sacrifice, so as resolutely and finally to win victory and to launch a final offensive. We resolved never to put ourselves on the defensive but always to take the offensive.
- (7) Our strategic line took as its premisses: independence; sovereignty; self-reliance. It was based upon the right to choose our own destiny with dignity.
- (8) Our struggle was based on international solidarity with all brotherly parties in the world and with all peoples and countries in the world who oppose revisionism, imperialism, neo-colonialism and colonialism of any kind.

These principles and practices are not new. They have been recognized around the world, but we review them with you because they reflect our own experiences. We have followed these principles in our struggle and we have learned from them. This line was adopted by the first congress of our party on 30 September 1960.

I would like to stress that putting this line into practice was not easy. Especially before 1970. In 1960, we were badly affected by the twentieth party congress in the Soviet Union. Vietnam also opposed our party line, especially the armed struggle, as well as our line of independence, sovereignty and self-reliance. The Vietnamese said we had to make the national democratic revolution on the basis of the documents of the twentieth congress in the Soviet Union. They said it was not clear how the

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classes in Kampuchea had to be divided. They believed the feudal class had a progressive function in Kampuchea and that it would be able to make the revolution with us. Moreover, they thought the revolution could be achieved through the parliament and on the basis of co-operation among different classes. Then and now, they saw and still see our line as putchist and too much to the left. But we defended our party line. Having correctly defined our party line and our party activities, we sent most of our cadres to work in the countryside. We kept only a few in the cities.

Our army was built from scratch, from a small army to a big army. In the beginning, we created some secret self-defence corps. We selected the best youth. Almost all cadres had to do illegal work at that time. Only a few worked legally; some in the parliament, some in the administration, some in the press. The legal work was for the purpose of mobilizing popular forces but the basic work was the work done in the countryside and among the workers; it had to be done illegally and secretly. This meant that our enemies – the US imperialists, their lackey and the reactionary classes – could not find out who was leading our revolution. They knew the names of a few comrades such as Khieu Samphan.¹ They thought those comrades were the real leaders of the revolution. But they did not know the real leaders. And as they could take action against known people only, most of our leaders were able to work safely.

During 1960–67, we organized and consolidated many bases in the countryside. The movement in favour of production and against land-owners was very strong. Peasants pitted their strength against the ruling class. They had nothing but used everything: stones, knives, sticks, axes. Some of the wives of poor peasants participated by taking their children to demonstrate in front of the National Assembly. Revolutionary forces in the rural areas were very strong then. We let our party members from the working class go there to work among the poor and middle peasants.

In the cities, there was a related movement among workers and students. They demanded that the government cut off US aid and kick out the US ambassador. Demonstrators burnt the US flag and the embassy.²

In the countryside, the movement of the people ignited. Those who were hungry rose up against traitors, reactionaries and agents of the administration. The slogan was 'Make the National Democratic Revolution', that is, fight US imperialism. The spirit of patriotism was very high. Everybody felt they had to fight US imperialism. But we divided the struggle into two parts: the national struggle and the democratic struggle. In the latter, we raised slogans demanding rights for students, workers and peasants; higher wages; land to the peasants; better prices for rice, bean curd and meat and better living conditions for the people. The struggle embraced big issues and small and involved all regions and means. The enemy tried to suppress us but failed because we fought legally and secretly, big and little battles at the same time. In this way, we were able to defend and strengthen revolutionary forces step-by-step.

Through struggle, we built up the leadership of the party, recruiting good cadres from among the workers, peasants, civil servants in the

administration, Buddhist monks and women. In struggle we were able to temper cadres from all strata. Thus the contradictions in our society deepened, the contradictions between workers and capitalists, between the peasants and landlords, between workers and government officials. The enemy tried harder to suppress our movement. In this situation, confronting these acute contradictions, we had a Central Committee meeting. We decided we could no longer continue the legal struggle. And that we had to start the uprising. This was in January 1968.

The Soviet ambassador in Phnom Penh opposed us. The Soviets said our party was out of its mind to launch armed struggle. They began to build a new party aimed against us, gathering people who had surrendered to the enemy and who were traitors, opportunists and vagabonds. Vietnam also opposed our armed struggle. Vietnamese cadres took action against us, by sneaking around giving our cadres pamphlets such as Lenin's *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. They said we were too left.

We tell you this in order to point out that Vietnam did not help us! A lot of people misunderstand this. It was at that moment that our party consolidated its position as independent and sovereign. We realized our case was different. We had to take account of the concrete situation in order to resolve our social contradictions. Perhaps it is different in other places, but this is what it was like here. We had to determine our line on the basis of our own contradictions. The situation was favourable for armed struggle. Because our party was united on this principle and this line and our people supported the revolution wholeheartedly, the uprising against the ruling classes began in 17 out of 19 provinces. We had no weapons to speak of and no aid from outside. We had only a few carbines captured from the enemy. Sometimes we had weapons but no ammunition. Sometimes even if we had no ammunition we carried rifles so as to frighten the enemy. Step-by-step we were able to expand our forces because we followed the party line of people's war.

II. The Armed Struggle, 1968-75

The people gave us support by hiding food and by hiding our guerrilla forces and cadres. This taught our cadres to be vigilant in following the party line of combining with the masses and relying upon the masses. Our army was not very big then. It fought with bows and arrows, especially in the north-east base areas. We gained the confidence of the people by showing them that traditional weapons could kill the enemy. The people then believed in the party line and in the revolution. The enemy used all kinds of weapons, especially in the north-east where our Central Committee had its base. But this region was very strong; the enemy could not do a thing to us. However, the Vietnamese revolution was in trouble then because the enemy had built strategic villages in South Vietnam. Having no land to escape to, the Vietnamese asked us for refuge and got it. This led to the 18 March 1970 *coup d'état* of the US.

The US sought to destroy our revolution, but as we were strong, we

began establishing our own state power in the liberated areas. We were successful immediately in 70 per cent of the rural areas; if the US had not invaded, we could have liberated the whole country by June 1970. In 1967-68 many people said we were ultra-leftist; in 1970, everyone agreed we had the correct position. Everyone followed us. Socialist countries and other countries around the world supported us, enabling us to continue our economic, military and international work better than before. But I would like to stress that even with favourable conditions we kept the existence of our party secret and we continued to build upon the secret struggle as a fundamental tactic. We became masters of the situation because we had our bases in the rural areas, and because we had the forces of the united front.³

At first, we did not notice our contradictions with Vietnam. To be frank, we thought the Vietnamese were our friends. But instead of helping us Vietnam came to seize forces, to build up its own forces and to grasp our party as a whole. There were lots of difficulties. We had to fight the US-Thieu forces sent to help Lon Nol, while at the same time they tried to stab us in the back. Our party, of course, decided to resolve the principal contradiction first, that is, to win victory over Lon Nol.

The contradiction between us and Vietnam deepened towards 1973 when Vietnam united with the US at the negotiating table. The US immediately imposed conditions, obliging Vietnam to pressure Kampuchea to come to the negotiating table. They tried but we refused. The Vietnamese then made every effort to undermine our revolution. Meanwhile, as Vietnam and Laos laid down their arms, the US mobilized all its forces to bomb Kampuchea - all its forces in South-East Asia! - for 200 days and 200 nights, to force us to the negotiating table. Our party was resolutely opposed to kneeling to the US. Had we done so the Lon Nol traitors in Phnom Penh would have gained time to build up their forces. We decided to struggle to the end. We were in any case able to resist the US air war, and by defeating the US air war confidence grew in our party line. More and more people were convinced that our line was correct. I must make clear that awareness of the party line did not come overnight or through theoretical studies. It grew as a result of the concrete experiences and suffering of the people and as a result of class hatred. It was only through practice that understanding of the party line deepened.

In 1974, the year after the air war, our party decided to launch the final big offensive, to liberate Phnom Penh and the whole country in the dry season of 1975. Vietnam was naturally informed. The Vietnamese believed the US would not allow us to win. Moreover they were not prepared to allow us to have victory in advance of their victory. Consequently, they refused to transport ammunition being sent from China and other countries, but especially from China. We had to use ammunition captured from the enemy; we received nothing from Vietnam. The Vietnamese opposed our winning because they wanted to liberate Saigon and then send their forces to liberate Phnom Penh, to build up a political apparatus here and to create a new party, thereby eliminating the Com-

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munist Party of Kampuchea and establishing an Indochinese Federation.

In spite of these difficult conditions, our party did its best and liberated Phnom Penh on 17 April 1975, two weeks in advance of the liberation of Saigon. Once we had liberated the whole country and secured our independence and sovereignty, that is in June 1975, the Vietnamese sent their troops to occupy our island, Koh Way. We defended it and forced Vietnam to withdraw. What we want to make clear to you is that, throughout the period of national democratic revolution, there was a hard, complicated struggle involving difficulties with the Soviet Union and Vietnam but we overcame these and won victory.

Question: At the time of the founding of the Communist Party, was there any discussion of the political line for the period leading to communism?

It is written in our party programme that we shall continue our socialist revolution and advance towards communism after the national democratic revolution, but we did not go into details. We worked out our present tasks of socialist construction after liberation.⁴

Our main tasks are to defend our state power and to continue the socialist revolution and socialist construction. We have defended our territory and sovereignty since liberation in a fierce, complicated struggle, especially against Vietnam. We think this struggle will last a long time since Vietnam has enormous ambitions. It wants to force Kampuchea into an Indochinese Federation and will pursue expansionist aims in all of South-east Asia.

As for living conditions, we have basically solved our problems by means of irrigation projects. We are accumulating capital for the development of our country on the basis of independence and self-reliance.

III. On Building the Party Ideologically

Having the right political line was not enough to ensure victory. Our party had to have, in addition, a firm revolutionary standpoint. This is partly because so much of our struggle was illegal. Thus, sometimes, if our cadres were not ideologically committed, they would surrender to the enemy or, once captured, they would tell secrets. To avoid this, we stressed ideological education.

During the struggle, we encountered many difficulties. For example, cadres separated from their families and not ideologically firm would sometimes decide to run back to their families and away from the revolution. And sometimes cadres were working underground within the enemy administration and receiving very high wages. Lacking a firm revolutionary standpoint, they would be bought. Thus our party could see that ideology was the key factor in implementing the political line as well as the organizational line. Ideological party-building was done in two ways: by destroying incorrect ideological standpoints and by building up the correct ideological standpoints of the party. For example, we had to:

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- (1) build up the ideological standpoint of the basic class in the party, the working class consciousness. To do this we had to define the different classes in our society and the contradictions between them. From this base, we armed our cadres ideologically with the viewpoints of the working class. This was done by explaining the spirit of sacrifice for the good of all and the need to abandon private ownership in favour of collective ownership; and by teaching them party discipline, love of party work, methods of self-criticism and ways to unite closely with the masses;
- (2) build up the ideological standpoint of revolutionary patriotism and revolutionary internationalism, the first being the fundamental standpoint. By this we mean striving energetically to make our own revolution, struggling successfully against imperialism and revisionism in our own country. This advances and supports the international struggle. To speak only of internationalism while failing to carry out the revolution in one's own country is meaningless. We have to be concrete in this. We try to teach our people the principle of self-reliance in order to avoid making ourselves a burden for friendly countries. While they might like to help us, they must make their own revolutions and improve the living standard of their own people. Thus, we try as much as possible to avoid outside aid, to overcome all forms of suffering without seeking aid unless it is absolutely necessary. On the one hand, we try to avoid being too nationalistic, and on the other, to avoid being too internationalist;
- (3) build up the ideological standpoint of constantly maintaining revolutionary ardour, especially the desire to be like ordinary people, especially the poor peasants. This is why our party cadres and our men and women in the army do not receive wages; they are told to serve the party and to receive only from the party. In this way, we avoid creating a new ruling class separated from the people;
- (4) build up the concept of the mass outlook and of the mass line, that is, to have full confidence in the masses and to live among the masses, especially the poor peasants. Only by doing this can the revolution win victory and build its forces. We stress this to cadres because there are some who have petty bourgeois class backgrounds, specifically intellectuals who lack real confidence in the masses, especially in the poor peasants. We try to make them understand that these poor people can do everything. They conquered the enemy, do productive work and everything. Because they do everything, we must serve them;
- (5) Cadres are also instructed in revolutionary vigilance, that is, taking care to be on guard against the enemy;
- (6) We arm them with an understanding of dialectical materialism to enable them to analyse things and to understand the ideological standpoints of the party.

All of these ideological standpoints have been propagated in the branches and cells of the party. This was done not by the reading out of documents but by analysing daily activities, determining what was done wrongly and correcting shortcomings.

As for our books, they are only a few pages in length, as brief documents are more suitable for poor peasants. We also have some courses, mostly short ones for small groups – in underground work for two to three people – once or twice a month. There are also other courses held about twice a year in which party members are introduced to revolutionary concepts and educated in our political, ideological and organizational line.

Even now, after liberation, we believe the ideological factor is the determining factor. In cadre education, we place stress on destroying old society ideological standpoints which remain powerful. Among leading cadres, we also stress the defending and building up of working class consciousness. This is to avoid revisionism. When a party becomes revisionist, it is not because the ordinary member becomes revisionist but because the leadership leads the party towards revisionism. Although we say very little about revisionism outside the party, inside the party we have fought a lot against revisionism. It is partly for this reason that we avoid using the documents of others. We rely mostly on our own assessments of class struggle. This is more concrete. Some of our cadres who have lived overseas, and who worked with foreign communist parties, regularly request foreign documents, claiming we neglect the study of Marxism–Leninism. But we tell them that Marxism–Leninism develops by means of the struggle of the people; our experiences are genuine Marxist–Leninist documents.

IV. The Organizational Line of the Party

We build the party ideologically and organizationally by relying on our class analysis, taking the poor peasant and worker classes as the basic classes. Those who joined from the petty bourgeoisie or other classes tried to promote the standpoints of those classes, but they had to renounce their old standpoints and develop working class consciousness. Cadres are evaluated on the basis of their concrete activities. Their spirit has to be clean, uncorrupted and without entangling contacts with the enemy. We investigate life histories and class background both before and after they join the revolution. We do this to prevent infiltration by, for example, CIA, KGB or Vietnamese agents. By adopting these organizational principles, we have unity in the party and can cleanse our party of bad elements.⁵ We have not been 100 per cent successful. The enemy is still attempting to undermine the party. Consequently, we are striving to strengthen political and ideological education and to clean the party.

In summation, we can say that our party is integrated and united through this political, ideological, and organizational work. It has become stronger and stronger. We have learned that, as soon as you have a strong and clean party, you will have a strong revolutionary movement. We still

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have some distance to travel on this path, and the enemy, both the imperialists and the revisionists as well as the Vietnamese, continue to fight us. Thus, the building of the party continues from one generation to the next. We hope to avoid the possibility of the next generation becoming revisionist. If we can guard safely the interests of our country, we will also contribute to the struggle in the whole world. We know about the emergence of revisionism in the Soviet Union and we are saddened by this. And about the destruction of the Indonesian party by the enemy. We have learned from these experiences, and the experiences of other parties. We have tried not to fall by the wayside.

Question: Is there a danger – from outside the country or inside the party – a danger of a new class being created?

To clarify the nature of the struggle inside the party, yes, there are both dangers. Inside the party, there is a contradiction between the standpoints of private ownership and collective ownership. If we do not take care, it may become antagonistic. The other contradiction is external. Vietnam, in particular, is trying to undermine our party by military, political, economic and ideological means. The Vietnamese also try to infiltrate our party. We are not worried about the external, military aggression. We worry most of all about the enemy inside.

Question: Why is illegal work still the fundamental or basic work?

In this period, after liberation, it is *secret* work that is fundamental. We no longer use the terms 'legal' and 'illegal'; we use the terms 'secret' and 'open'. Secret work is fundamental in all that we do. For example, the elections of comrades to leading work are secret. The places where our leaders live are secret. We keep meeting times and places secret, and so on. On the one hand, this is a matter of general principle, and on the other, it is a way to defend ourselves from the danger of enemy infiltration. As long as there is class struggle or imperialism, secret work will remain fundamental. Only through secrecy can we be masters of the situation and win victory over the enemy who cannot find out who is who.

This also applies to foreign affairs. For example, the Soviet Union asked to come to Phnom Penh at liberation. They were preparing to send 200 men to the Embassy. We said we could not possibly receive them and they were furious. We base everything on secrecy. This is in the interests of the working classes.

Question: Why do you not mention the Soviets externally?

Inside the party we struggle resolutely against the Soviet Union, but we have many enemies now – US imperialism, Thailand, Vietnam – and for tactical reasons we must limit our enemies as much as possible. It should be clear that we oppose the Soviet Union and revisionism, but our line has to be different from the line taken in China because we are a small country.

Take another example: our attitude towards 'the three worlds'. We

have the same standpoint, exactly the same, but as for what we do, we have to bear in mind the concrete interests of our country.

Question: Do you have a party programme?

Yes we have one but only in Kampuchean. We still have many tasks; we have not done enough propaganda work internationally. The Vietnamese enemy has been able to make so much international propaganda against us because of shortcomings in our propaganda work in the international arena.

V. On Concrete Work Before and After Liberation

Before liberation, legal activities concerned work undertaken by different organizations such as the students' union, workers' associations, women's association and other organizations. We did everything we were allowed to do under the enemy's laws. There are also sub-categories of non-legal or non-open activities: semi-open and semi-secret forms or semi-legal and semi-illegal forms. Celebrating May 1st, for example, was both legal and illegal. Even though the ruling class might have caught us, we celebrated May 1st. We maintained the tradition once it was established. Perhaps it is different in your place.

The Communist Party of Kampuchea has never before been legal. This is also true of other progressive organizations we created. We developed the tactic of secrecy, firstly, to defend ourselves, secondly, to mobilize more forces, and finally to serve our struggle, for example, in mobilizing intellectuals. We found they would not join us if we used semi-illegal forms, but with legal forms such as celebrations and visiting temples, they joined in. Thus, we made them join us step-by-step. Many semi-secret and semi-illegal and secret activities were organized so as to protect the wholly illegal and secret activities of the party centre. Thus, when the enemy attacked from outside, he struck semi-illegal and semi-secret activities only and we were able to defend our party and its leadership. In the neo-colonial, semi-feudal society, we had to work in complete secrecy, both inside the party and inside other organizations. This also applied to party members working among the masses. Since liberation, we continue secret work because we consider the strategic line to be more important than tactics. We have published the names of only a few of our cadres and members. Not many need to be public. During the war, all of them were secret. In this area, we learned from the blood-stained experience of the Communist Party of Indonesia.⁶

Operating secretly, our organization has the following rules. Three members are required to form a cell, for example in a factory. If there are more than three members, a cell secretary must direct party work. If there are up to six people, we form two separate cells having no contact with each other. Even with five people we organize two separate party cells which work secretly and separately. If the enemy discovers one cell, the other can continue its work. There are no direct contacts among cells. In

each factory, there is one leading cadre. Only he knows this. He can go directly to the leadership. These procedures also apply to other sectors such as students. We form cells having no knowledge of each other and which are unable to contact each other. The same applies to contacts between the designated leading cadre and the leadership. Contacts are arranged through a third person. If the enemy captures the leading cadre, he will not be able to identify the leadership, only the go-between. This is our secret organization.

From our experience, secrecy is only one aspect of building up the organization. Of greater importance is the ideological level of the designated leading cadres. They must display great discipline. We had to be especially careful when work had to be done in the cities. Cadres can be forced to leave in a hurry. They should not live with their families. When they do, things get complicated. It takes them longer to escape. We have had some bitter experience with these things. Afterwards, we decided to observe party discipline more strictly. Permit me to say that we are speaking of concrete experiences and conditions in our country. It is up to you to decide what you can learn from these experiences. We offer these examples out of friendly revolutionary feelings.

Secrecy meant avoiding the law. For example, we had to make our own identity cards so that our names would not appear in the register. If the enemy captured genuine identity cards, photos and work permits, it would have been easier to find us. Also, if revolutionaries did not have any work, the enemy might have noticed us. We opened a bookshop for ourselves, but to avoid letting out any of our names, we took shelter behind a third person and his name. During the war many cadres had to leave their jobs periodically, and we had to protect them. Contacts and meetings were at night; so were political training classes. We locked ourselves up in a room for two or three days until we were finished. Contacts between publicly well-known leaders, such as those who worked in parliament, and secret leaders were arranged through two or three other persons. We employed various tactics to overcome the oppression of the enemy. For meetings in a house, for example, we used signals, such as a scarf in front of the house. If the scarf was in place, it was safe to enter it; if it was not, the enemy was there. In the beginning we lost many people because the enemy knew the secret signals. From this we learned not to go directly into the house but to walk around the neighbourhood, maybe go into a shop, drink something and ask about what was happening in the house. Sometimes good people would tell us in confidence about the enemy. Sometimes the neighbours were not revolutionaries, but they would warn us if spies and agents were there.

We also used couriers for messages, letters, carrying ammunition, etc. Couriers were not allowed to know our real places of residence. Otherwise, captured couriers could be forced to reveal them. We had to use a bridge of two or three other persons. If a messenger failed to show up, we did nothing for two to three days. But after this, we had to move elsewhere. When the enemy learned this, they tortured captured couriers

right away so as to catch us. From bitter experience, we learned to abandon a safe house at once if a messenger was two to three hours late. The enemy came immediately a few times and we had to use arms in order to allow leading cadres to escape. This should give you an idea of our experiences. The tactics and techniques are of secondary importance only; most important is the class standpoint of cadres.

Since liberation, our experience relates to anti-party activities organized inside our party. They usually involve CIA, Vietnamese and KGB agents. Our experiences in this area are very recent, but it appears from what we have been able to learn that CIA, Vietnamese and KGB agents have been working inside the party for a long time. When we observed that something was wrong, we thought it was an internal contradiction and attempted to resolve it by means of persuasion, self-criticism and so on. For example, the party had to give directives to a branch concerning the living conditions of the people. When nothing changed, we realized something was wrong. Where there were deviations to the left or to the right, we looked carefully into the backgrounds of the cadres. We also sought the opinion of the masses. We have thus been able to uncover enemy agents step-by-step. Generally, we discovered they had been engaged in enemy activities for a very long time. Sometimes good comrades had been imprisoned and tortured and afterwards they surrendered to the enemy. Upon release, they served as agents. We welcomed them back, accepted them, without looking at what had happened in prison. We now realize they had become agents of the enemy.

It is more widely known that the USA planned to seize power from us six months after liberation. The plan involved joint action on the part of the USA, the KGB and Vietnam. There was to be combined struggle from inside and outside. But we smashed the plan. Immediately after liberation, we evacuated the cities. The CIA, KGB and Vietnamese agents there left for the countryside and were unable to implement the plan. People who had infiltrated the party could not react immediately, but we discovered them later when they planned *coups d'état*. Their activities were co-ordinated with aggression from outside. These were not powerful people; their intention was to exploit the opportunity provided by Vietnam's attacks to assassinate our leaders and then announce it to the world. However, when the Vietnamese attacked, our army defeated them and we caught the traitors inside the party.

Although we say plans have been crushed, we do not mean the enemy has given up. We have to continue to build and to defend our party, and our leadership, and to apprehend the people who have infiltrated our party. We know the current plan involves not only Vietnamese agents, but has something to do with US imperialism and the KGB. All of them! A similar thing has occurred in Yemen, both North and South. And in Afghanistan. But as these things happen, the face of the Soviets becomes more and more clear.

Question: Is it co-operation between the CIA and KGB or is it rivalry for control of Kampuchea?

Both. On the one hand they co-operate; on the other, they are rivals. For example, Vietnam attacked us last October to December while the US conducted operations near our coastal islands and along the border with Thailand with its CIA agents. They compete for control at the same time. This is an open form of co-operation. As for the secret one, some CIA agents joined up with the Vietnamese in order to come to Kampuchea. Because the US was unable to come into Kampuchea, it had to rely upon Vietnam. The Vietnamese do not discriminate in choosing agents. They accept anybody who fights the Communist Party of Kampuchea. Even CIA agents!

The leadership apparatus must be defended at any price. If we lose members but retain the leadership, we can continue to win victories. Defending the leadership of the party is strategic. As long as the leadership is there, the party will not die. There can be no comparison between losing two to three leading cadres and 200-300 members. Rather the latter than the former. Otherwise the party has no head and cannot lead the struggle. This has been demonstrated by the experience of the Communist Party of Indonesia. Its leadership was 90 per cent destroyed. It has taken them a very long time to re-establish themselves. Thirteen years have passed since 1965 and the party is not yet rebuilt. We do not know how long it will take for them to regain the offensive strength which they had before. To build a good leadership is strategic. It takes 10-20 years to build up a good leading communist. If you lose one, you lose a lot. And party secrecy can be lost.

VI. Building and Leading the Revolutionary Movement

As we have said, from 1960 we regarded the workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and progressive patriotic personalities as strategic forces. The working class is the progressive class while the largest class is the peasantry. The others are secondary, allied forces. The national progressive capitalists were secondary, tactical forces mobilized in particular instances. The next step was setting the strategic line. The rural struggle was the fundamental struggle. We divided our cadres between the towns and the countryside, according to their abilities. Before 1960 there was some confusion about this. We did not have a clear party line. We had developed bases in the countryside but the enemy had destroyed up to 90 per cent of them. Moreover, we were not strong in the cities. We realized in 1959 that we lacked the strategic forces necessary for advancing the revolution.⁷

It was only after 1960 that we could allocate our forces correctly. Most of them went to work among the peasants; slightly fewer worked among the petty bourgeoisie, the students and intellectuals; a very few worked among national capitalists and with high-ranking personalities in the

administration. Once we had this line we could very quickly build our forces. In particular, we built up rural base areas. As the mass movement became stronger and stronger, we were able to build up legal and illegal work. We could even mount mass demonstrations. From 1962 to 1963, in particular, our forces grew stronger and stronger.⁴

The best of our cadres worked among poor peasants building base areas in the most remote regions. They had to transform themselves so as to work among peasants. Initially, there were a lot of problems. Meanwhile in the cities, cadres had to become workers. The conditions in the cities and the countryside were quite different. In rural areas, living conditions were very bad but there were few enemies. In the cities, living conditions were better but there were many enemies. Both places had advantages and disadvantages. Cadres had to be selected accordingly. There was a lot of malaria in the countryside. Some cadres refused to work there, but we had work to do and we had to strengthen their ideological standpoint.

When we look back upon this period, we realize we would not have obtained such a big victory without first overcoming such obstacles. We see two main turning points: if we had not reorganized in 1960, we could not have launched the armed struggle in 1968; if we had not launched the armed struggle in 1968, we would not have been masters of the situation at the time of the 1970 *coup d'état*. The enemy might otherwise have destroyed our forces. To be master of the situation, to rely upon your own forces, to be sovereign – these words have meaning only if we have the forces of the people in our hands. If we do not, they will fall into the hands of the enemy. The most important thing was to grasp the national forces in our country. This was for us a major lesson.

We seek to stress the right thing in gathering forces. This is important in all periods of the revolution. Today, in the period of socialist revolution, our strength is greater than it was during the national democratic revolution. Take, for example, the petty capitalists who were evacuated from the cities. Initially they had difficulties living in the countryside, but gradually they have become proud of the revolution. They see the prospects for their children, that our revolution is clean and that we are independent and sovereign. They know we can defend ourselves from Vietnam, and they have confidence in us. As for the intellectuals who have remained abroad, some support us. In France, an association has expressed solidarity with us against Vietnam. We are stronger now than in the first revolution: 85 per cent of the population belongs to the revolution, as workers and peasants, and 80–90 per cent of the intellectuals belong to it. Only ten per cent are different. We try to educate these people so that they will see that the revolution is good for them and their children. Thus we grow stronger and stronger.

We have gathered forces from different strata in different periods because everyone recognizes the patriotic spirit of the communists. The feudalists said bad things about Vietnam and the USA without doing anything. They were corrupt and let Vietnam come – 100 kilometres, 200 kilometres, half a kilometre – across the border by corrupting the police.

The Vietnamese thus crawled into our country by what they term 'legal' means, especially in Takeo and Svay Rieng. But when power came into the hands of the party, everyone saw that we could hold aloft the banner of independence. They realized communists were clean, that we live as ordinary people live, while in the old days, when people lived in a capitalist way, the society disintegrated. As soon as people understood, they followed the communist way and we could easily mobilize forces.

VII. Forming the National United Front

How did we make Sihanouk join us? We were able to mobilize forces after the *coup d'état* because we had made preparations for a long time. We were masters of the situation. We had an army; we had some weapons. Thus, we were able to form a united front. We even allowed King Sihanouk to become chairman of the front. It meant nothing because we were the masters of the situation. Following the coup, Sihanouk was reduced from everything to nothing while for us it was the opposite – in the cities as well as in the countryside. Forces from the basic levels of society were essential for getting top levels to join us. That is the first lesson.

The second lesson and experience concerns front activities. We did not have an easy time of it. The enemy tried to corrupt Sihanouk – the USA, the French, the Soviet revisionists – and to split him away from the front. Sihanouk did not leave because we won victory after victory at the basic level. Sihanouk would have left us had we not done so, especially in 1973 when Vietnam sat at the negotiating table with the USA. Sihanouk was scared to be alone; he kept asking if we were able to continue the struggle. He wanted to negotiate but we told him we would continue the struggle to the end.

Thirdly, we found we had to struggle inside the front with Sihanouk at the same time that we united with him externally. Sihanouk asked for things; we let him have them as long as this did not contradict our strategic policy. We had to be very flexible towards him. The party slogan was 'Don't push anybody over to the enemy'.

VIII. The Urban Struggle, 1960–73

Our struggle in the cities had two components: the legal struggle and the secret struggle. The urban struggle was not as important as the struggle in the countryside but its impact was felt all over the country and on an international level. Moreover, the struggle had an important effect on the middle level of the ruling class, in spite of the fact that the city was the headquarters of the ruling class and its apparatus of oppression.

Some of the legal work was undertaken in the National Assembly. We did not attempt to obtain seats; we used patriotic personalities for making propaganda. These dignitaries did not act in the name of the party, but the party was in essence behind the propaganda. The work was limited. We just let our people use strategic slogans to arouse the people. At the same

time, we used newspapers, promoted rumours and asked people to follow the deputies whom we had managed to get into the Assembly. In this way, we worked at the top, making people follow us while at the same time we worked at basic levels.

Although we were able to work legally in the National Assembly, our deputies were sometimes subject to repression. We would then try to sneak our ideas into other deputies by telling them, 'If you say this and this, people will follow you and elect you again'. And sometimes they tried it. When our slogans were used before the people, the people applauded. The deputies were pleased. Later they would ask us what to say and we would then sneak more of our slogans into them. Some of our comrades could not understand this and thought that by doing this we might strengthen the influence of the ruling class. But we did not think it did any harm. If we could get some of the essence of our ideas to the people, then we could get some of these people with us. There were difficulties in the struggle with our newspapers.

When the ruling class realized a particular newspaper had been secretly established by the party, it would be closed in less than three months. We would then let comrades write anonymously for newspapers of a more neutral nature. Sometimes the paper would cut out half the words. We did it none the less, to get some ideas out. We also let our people respond to reactionary newspaper articles, by writing letters to the editor asking the paper to stop printing reactionary views. In the case of the most reactionary papers, those that could not be restrained in any other way, we called for mass demonstrations at their offices. In the case of *Phnom Penh Presse*, a CIA newspaper and the most reactionary of them all, we let the people sack the place.⁹ Among our other activities in the cities, we promoted artistic performances among the people and arranged travel to rural areas for festivals, ceremonies, and so on. We were thus able to make our forces stronger and stronger at all levels of the society.

Choosing the right slogan, the slogan that suited the situation – asking not too much, not too little in the situation – was crucial to our work in the cities. We did not use words like 'revolutionary', 'communist', or 'red', for example. Instead we used words everyone would accept such as 'Fight US Imperialism', 'Fight for Sovereignty', etc. People were especially scared of words such as 'communist' and 'revolutionary'. But we made them adopt our party line, in its essence, by putting out the party line. If in this way we could make people adopt the line – people who were otherwise afraid of 'revolution' and 'communism' – then those people, in spite of their fears, were able to hold aloft our party flag.

We even worked within the movement of Buddhist monks, making them follow us by saying we would defend the country and religion. If the country were to become dominated by foreigners, there would no longer be any religion. So monks, too, held aloft our banner even if they did not like communism. We worked not only among the rank-and-file monks – they were not so reactionary, in any case – but also among high ranking

monks who controlled large parts of the country. We used slogans opposing foreign suppression of the culture of Kampuchea. Monks then became patriotic, supporting us without being aware of it.

We also worked with high personalities such as Penn Nouth.¹⁰ Here, we had to be careful. We had to solicit his ideas, not make propositions, not propagate. The high-ranking patriotic personalities were not an important force but we were trying to gather all forces in support of the struggle, especially in the cities. We asked, for example, 'What would your Excellency think if the USA attacked the country?' He would then think about it and we would sneak in ideas about what had to be done. The dignitaries then listened to us and spoke to others under their influence. Thus Penn Nouth did not know that he propagated for the communists.

These were the different forms of legal struggle in the cities. However, we put most stress upon the secret struggle. Without the secret struggle, the legal struggle would not have succeeded. These two forms of struggle interacted and complemented each other, but the secret work was the most important.

We had to educate our cadres all the time about secret as well as legal work. When the situation was easy, cadres wanted to work legally so as to have the chance to gain a title, money, etc. And when the situation was difficult, they preferred instead to work secretly. Consequently they had to be educated continuously, so as to be able to remain firm at their posts even at the risk of their lives. They could not assume new duties on their own, before the party gave authorization. This was ideological work.

Anticipating difficulties, we took precautions. We set up bases in the countryside that would receive people engaged in secret work in the cities. Once secrecy was broken, however, those comrades were not allowed into secret work in the countryside. Once out in the open – always open work. We had to be careful about where people went so that no one knew in advance. If they did, the enemy could find out.

When cadres had trouble, they often asked to be sent to the countryside even when secrecy remained unbroken. Because of this we had to work step-by-step with their ideological standpoint, and we had to keep an eye on those working in the cities – either secretly or legally – observing especially their living conditions and personal circumstances. Those working secretly could not hold jobs as ordinary people did, so we had to assist them in finding jobs to some extent.

In accordance with the party's correct line, we were able to build and to defend our forces. Some were destroyed by the enemy, but for the most part we were able to protect them; especially after the coup in 1970 when we had large liberated areas. The locations of our most important bases were a secret. Even US electronics could not discover them. Although US bombings destroyed a lot, they were not very effective because we stuck to our secret line of struggle. Vietnamese forces in Vietnam were less well hidden and less secret than we were and because of that more of them were destroyed. Even the Vietnamese here were hit more often than we were.

Our people and soldiers called the B-52s 'the blind ones'. When they came, they dropped bombs without looking. They did not care whether they hit anything or not. Our people were not too afraid of the B-52s.

We learned that as long as we preserved our secrecy, our struggle could continue as long as necessary. Even US-made artillery was ineffective when it was not known who or where we were. Within limits. Some of us were hit. But we told our cadres not to be afraid, to keep themselves well hidden and then we would all be able to throw out the US imperialists.

[Nuon Chea concluded his statement at this point as the time allocated for the meeting had elapsed.]

NOTES

* This statement was made orally in two parts on 30-31 July 1978. It was received by Peter Bischoff, leader of the visiting delegation, and at that time a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Workers' Party of Denmark. He is no longer a member of the party. The visit to Kampuchea had been arranged by the Danish party for the purpose of obtaining information about post-war conditions and the ruling party's policies. The Communist Workers' Party of Denmark did not then have (and, as a result of this visit, still does not have) party-to-party relations with the CPK. Nuon Chea spoke to the delegation in *Khmer*, the national language of Kampuchea. His remarks were translated into English by Ngo Pin, official interpreter of Democratic Kampuchea, and recorded verbatim in Danish longhand by Peter Bischoff. The text that follows has been retranslated into English by Peter Bischoff and edited, abridged and annotated by Laura Summers.

1. Khieu Samphan was a left-wing member of the National Assembly from 1962 until 1967 when he went underground. In 1978 he was President of Democratic Kampuchea.
2. Nuon Chea conflates a series of events in 1963-65. US aid was rejected in December 1963. Following public demonstrations against US aerial attacks on Cambodian villages along the South Vietnamese border, diplomatic relations were severed in May 1965.
3. This is a reference to the National United Front of Kampuchea, formed with the deposed Prince Sihanouk in May 1970. The forces of the front included Vietnamese 'volunteer' forces numbering 30,000-60,000 troops in 1970-72 and Sihanoukist forces rapidly armed and trained by the Vietnamese.
4. This means after April 1975. Nuon Chea fails to report conflicts within the party concerning the strategy for the transition, for reasons that become clear later.
5. To 'cleanse' the party means to purge the party. The interpreter has translated Nuon Chea's comment literally.
6. Before October 1965 the PKI strategic line of legal, parliamentary struggle had been commended to the CPK. In 1966 the CPK Central Committee concluded that dependence upon non-revolutionary forces and 'others' would isolate the party. It resolved to 'push harder' for the principle of independence and self-reliance in political struggle.
7. Only three branches of the proto-communist Khmer People's Revolutionary Party were active: one in Phnom Penh, one in the south-west and one in the Central Committee. The party's secretary had defected to Sihanouk in 1959.
8. Pol Pot became Acting Secretary of the CPK in 1962 and was elected Secretary in 1963.
9. *Phnom Penh Presse* offices were sacked in 1967 during demonstrations initially encouraged by the government.
10. Penn Nouth was head of a wealthy and influential family, a trusted adviser to Prince Sihanouk and many times Prime Minister in the government. He was also President of the Cambodian-Chinese Friendship Association which was dissolved in 1967 for sponsoring pro-PRC activities.