

DECEMBER 1975-JANUARY 1976Banners of Revolution (December 1975-January 1976)

This special issue of *Banners of Revolution* was evidently published in connection with the Party Congress convened in January 1976. It probably comprises material presented to the Congress which it was though should be disseminated afterwards through the magazine for study within Communist Party ranks.¹

From National Democratic to Socialist Revolution

The leading article lacks a formal title, but is headed:

1960: The First Congress Stipulates a Strategic
Line of National Democratic Revolution;
1975: The Phenomenal Victory of the National
Democratic Revolution;
1976: Continue By Making Socialist Revolution
and Building Socialism.

As these headings suggest, the article indicates that between the victory of 17 April and the end of 1975, the Cambodian revolution completed one strategic period and entered another by passing over from the national democratic phase to the socialist one. It thus declares that "in late 1975" the "national democratic revolution" had been "completed with complete victory"; and that "starting in 1976, ... we will be waving the combat banner of most powerful and constant storming attacks to make phenomenally great leaps forward in fulfilling the task of continuing with socialist revolution and socialist construction in our democratic Kampuchea."²

The article explains that the national democratic revolution had meant "attacking imperialism and especially American imperialism and its lackeys and attacking the feudalists and reactionary capitalists."³ Democracy itself is defined as "attacking and overthrowing the feudalists/landlords and reactionary capitalists".⁴ This is said to been the function of agricultural production co-operatives set up as the "mainstay⁵ of the poor and lower-middle peasants". Such co-operatives "attack both

¹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976). The copy this issue of the (magazine in the author's possession is unfortunately incomplete.

² *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.2.

³ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.4.

⁴ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.25.

⁵ *bâng-æk*

imperialism and the feudalists/landlords and capitalists" by "attacking the old relations of production and constructing new relations of production".⁶ A "democratic" Kampuchea would therefore appear to be one free from imperialist control in which these domestic classes have been overthrown, particularly through the organization of agricultural production co-operatives.

History as Struggle

The article makes no mention of any revolutionary activities before 1960, when it says the Party's First Congress was held. This seems to reflect the decision in principle announced at the Congress to take 1960 rather than 1951 as the year of the Party's foundation. This at best relegated pre-1960 activities to irrelevance and at worst to a realm of suspicion.

The description of the Party Congress of 1963, at which Pol Pot was confirmed as Party Secretary, emphasizes the importance of this gathering for "aggregating⁷ the Party's internal solidarity and unity" and in establishing its "stance of independence/mastery/self-reliance/control of one's national destiny by one's self".⁸ This seems to equate Pol Pot's rise to the notion of party unity, while also reiterating the essential elements of this unity.

Class Struggle and Purge Within the Party

The article stresses that class struggle has been on-going within the ranks of the Party's history during all periods under review. It identifies three ways of conducting such struggle: ideological education, suspension of Party recruitment and purge of Party members.

With regard to the period 1960-67, it declares that "class contradictions were seen ever more clearly every month and every year", and that "clear, severe and life-and-death class combat was seen even in the ranks of the Party".⁹ This combat is said to have been brought to a successful conclusion "organizationally" by the conduct of a purge. Thus, "the Party purged a number of those who were half-baked¹⁰ or had capitulated to the enemy," noting that this went "hand-in-hand with a lot of strengthening and expansion of the ranks of both new and old cadre." The article suggests that such purges had been particularly important in "strengthening" the Party's

⁶ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.51.

⁷ *châng-krâng*.

⁸ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.7.

⁹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.14.

¹⁰ *st__k-stoe*

"stance of "independence/mastery/self-reliance/control of one's national destiny by one's self".¹¹ Given the implicit connection between this and Pol Pot's leadership in the Party, this appears to have been a justification for more purges under his direction to achieve the same purpose.

Turning to the 1970-75 period, the article asserts that it had been necessary to adopt "an ideology of absolute, never half-baked, never co-existing, never-compromising combat vis-à-vis ideological error". It describes this period as one of "constant combat between revolutionary and non-revolutionary ideology, between an ideology of absolute struggle and of compromise." It says as of 1970 the Party was in ideological turmoil because of the existence within it of ideologies of "frivolity"¹² and "individual and personal propertyism in material terms and in terms of power", as well as other "non-proletarian" ideologies. At a Party Conference in 1972, according to the article, the Party had declared an ideological state of emergency within its ranks, which it had combatted "essentially" with "education documents on the problems of class, class struggle, the proletarian dictatorship of the Party, dialectical materialism and historical materialism". A follow-up Party Conference in 1973 assessed the results of this "class struggle within the Party", and concluded that despite these educational measures, "non-proletarian ideologies of the feudalists and capitalists and of other non-revolutionary classes were still manifest in various phenomenon in the Party, state power, army, guerillas, etc." Moreover, despite subsequent additional education effort based on "studying the movement", "leftist and rightist shortcomings" continued, and "still no proper proletarian ideology had been built up". Therefore, in mid-1974, the Party adopted another "organizational measures". This was "suspending for the time being expansion of the Party and its secret organs".¹³ Presumably the purpose of this suspension was to prevent further spread within the Party of bad ideology by elements that had not responded to educational measures and not yet been subjected to purge. It appears this suspension remained in effect as of early 1976.

Summing up the lessons learned from this earlier period of class struggle, the article concludes that because "ideology is in constant flux, we must conduct constant ideological work". It asserts that the current situation is actually worse than in the past because although "we previously did this work to some extent, there has been backsliding". Thus, ideological education "must always be conducted constantly".¹⁴ Moreover, the increasing level of

¹¹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.15-16.

¹² *phloet-phloen*

¹³ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.34-36.

¹⁴ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.37.

demands placed on the Party by its seizure of power and its move into the phase of socialist revolution and socialist construction had added to the seriousness of the situation: "the work of national defense and national construction continues to be extremely onerous and requires further and ever more powerful Party-building ... in this new phase."¹⁵

Success in ideological education work is portrayed as a necessary but far from sufficient condition for success in "building up the strength of the Party organizationally". This requires in addition "making methodical arrangements for all appointments to be made properly within the Party, the army, the people, the state power and various offices, etc. The organizational line for making such appointments "is predicated fundamentally upon a class line". This "means two things in terms of practice", one of which has to do with ideological education, the other with recruitment practices. The first relates may be used to improve those of problematic class background who all already in the Party. Thus, "with regard to those already in our ranks, it is imperative to indoctrinate them with a proletarian stance so that it is ensured that they will serve the Party properly." Then, whenever new recruitment is allowed: "in selecting the new, it is imperative to rely on the basic classes." This basic class line is essential "to to thwart opportunist elements and prevent the activities of enemies boring from within to the greatest extent possible". In addition to the above, appointments are to be made on the basis of several principles. Those appointed should, first, "come out of the revolutionary movement and have been repeatedly tested in the revolutionary movement on many occasions." Second, they should have a "good class background". Third, they should have "good revolutionary morals, both in terms of how they live and politically".¹⁶

The article declares that there are two aspects to the "organizational situation" of the Party. On the positive side, it has "enjoyed growth and development that has led to its being beefed up." On the other hand, there is "impurity" among those holding appointments in "the Party, the army, mass organizations and in ministries and various administrative offices". This organizational "shortcoming" must now be dealt with "to thwart the activities of the imperialist enemy, of the enemy remnants of the feudal and capitalist classes and of other wreckers of the revolution". It strongly implies that this may require a large-scale purge at many levels involving large-scale new recruiting to fill the gaps created. Thus, it asserts that "certain experiences have demonstrated to us that ... in order to strengthen things and expand them organizationally and to do so well and cleanly, it is imperative to rely on the mass movement." In practice, this points to the notion of a mass purge, because as the article admonishes, this meant not to "conduct recruitment, purge,

¹⁵ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.41.

¹⁶ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.38-39.

strengthening or expansion within a narrow context or at any single level." Moreover, this process should be never-ending. Thus, "in order to strengthen and expand organs set up by the Party and the revolutionary ranks as a whole, it is imperative to move up by implementing the Party's organizational line again and again Don't just do this once and for one time only and then go back to doing nothing."¹⁷

The article calls for special attention to be paid in particular to "opportunists, accidental [revolutionaries], those not directly involved in the movement, and those with systematically unclear biographical portraits." With them, "maximum vigilance" is required. They must be "gradually tested" and in no case "have any major work handed over to them". Indeed, "the experience with such elements is that they are incapable of serving the movement and indeed pose a threat to the revolution." It suggests that this is because they may link up with "internal and external enemies of all sorts" who have and will have "strategic plans to destroy us for generations to come".¹⁸

The article speaks of "an espionage war on the part of American imperialism and its lackeys and of a variety of other sources aimed at boring deeply from within and intended to attack and destroy our army and revolution and bring us under their rule." It stresses that since the victory of the revolution, these forces have been trying "to make the revolution change its colours", but that the Party has repeated "eliminated them such that they have been scattered in every direction".¹⁹

Straight-Line Short-Cut

The article asserts that as long as the Party "does not depart from the revolutionary stance of the proletariat", it will "certainly move fast, because we are taking a straight-line short-cut with no dithering"²⁰.²¹

The Class Struggle within the State Power and the Party Dictatorship

The article relates that battles took place between the line of independence/mastery/self-reliance and what it calls "the line of aggression against ... Kampuchea" took place in

¹⁷ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.39-40.

¹⁸ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.40-41.

¹⁹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.56. Unfortunately, the rest of this section is missing from copy in the author's possession.

²⁰ *krângoek-krângâk*

²¹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.54.

the realm of political administration before 1975. Battles were fought against "the feudalists/landlords, the rich paddy farmers and the capitalists" who "wanted to grasp state power". Within the Party, battles were fought between those who are said to have upheld the its line on the establishment of a revolutionary state power and a vareity of opportunists who came in to control state power in the circumstances of the time." Finally, battles were also fought against "the desire to return to power of bad elements within the upper strata who were within the ranks of the Front." The Party's objective was "to smash the old state power and construct a new, revolutionary state power". The Party had "captured it again and again" and "tried hard to strengthen and expand" its political administration. "However, at the same time, enemies and adversaries had tried hard to capture" the emerging political administration. This apparently refers in particular to the Vietnamese Communists. The article says they had sometimes set up their own political administrations "directly", but had also used the "indirect method of infiltrating into the state power in the villages and sub-districts human beings belonging to them and with whom they had been able to establish liaison". Another indirect method said to have been used to capture state power from the Party was to work "through our cadre with them they had been able to establish liaison, including grass-roots, military and economic cadre." These enemies and adversaries had ultimately been able to "capture state power inside the Party again and again by setting up their own leadership forces via their henchmen and groups of opportunist elements."²²

The battles for control of state power had taken place in two phases. First, "back in 1970, a lot of opportunist groups had been able to infiltrate and function as seedbeds for the conduct of enemy infiltration and interference activities in opposition to the revolution." The "bad elements in the upper levels of the Front had intended to maintain their old authority via this, hoping to strengthen and expand their state power through the new regime". At the same time, "American and French imperialism" had their hopes of doing this in order to be able to re-establish liaison with these groups." However, they had been "repeatedly purged".²³

A second "contest for state power between us and a variety of exploiting classes" had taken place "in each base area in 1972-73". These exploiters, too, had "wanted to enjoy authority in the new regime". Their activities had been pre-empted by ideological measures. They had been unable to take control of the political administration because the Party had never stopped conducting "indoctrination and strengthening of its proletarian class stance".²⁴

²² *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.44-46.

²³ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.46-47.

²⁴ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.46.

Overall, the plans of "enemies and adversaries" to capture state power had been "repeatedly attacked and dispersed" because the Party "possessed a correct point of view with regard to the essential reality and aggressive goals" of such elements. The Party itself, the people and the army had been indoctrinated with such views, and had therefore been able to remain on top of the situation. Battles against untoward attempts to seize state power had taken place repeatedly, "and blood had flowed".²⁵

The Need for On-Going Purification Under the New Constitution

The article suggests that the promulgation of Democratic Kampuchea constitution, which took place in January 1976, aimed at ideologically codifying the Party's line on building state power and crowning its victory over its enemies up to this point. Thus, "we had been able to seize victory because we had correctly specified the essential reality of a revolutionary state power, ultimately promulgating a **New Constitution**".²⁶ However, the class struggle inside the existing state power would continue. The Party must therefore continue "to concentrate on grasping, strengthening and expanding further the revolutionary state power", while making sure that it is also "purified further". This effort is said to be necessary because "although the feudalists and capitalists have been overthrown, American imperialism and its lackeys defeated, and other enemies and adversaries split up and scattered hither and yon, they are continuing their activities." All these elements are said to be "seeking methods by which to recapture state power from us again". These methods include "producing splits, putting on a pedestal and diverting the line", as well as "making longer-term preparations, especially as regards morality".²⁷

The article stresses that "internal political, ideological and organizational unity within the Party, among the people, and within the army" is "crucial" to thwarting these elements.²⁸

Administrative Organization

The article stresses the importance of having a unified and unvariegated structure of political administration throughout the country. This argument appears to provide another underpinning for the evacuation, which homogenized the national administrative structure. There is no mention of any intra-Party disagreement about this concept.

²⁵ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.46.

²⁶ Emphasis in the original.

²⁷ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.47.

²⁸ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.47.

The article recalls that the "extensive liberated zones" that came under Party control after the coup d'état of 1970 were initially "divided into old reliable base areas and newly-liberated ones". It asserts that if the Party had maintained the distinctiveness of the old reliable base areas, it "would not have been able to fulfil its revolutionary duties". "Therefore, the Party had decided to consider the liberated zones throughout the country as reliable base areas," each with a solid army and political administration and an "absolute grip on the people". This policy had proved successful and demonstrated the necessity of building such reliable base areas throughout the country, such that "every place is a reliable base area". This formula would appear to preclude attempting to administer urban areas in which it would be impossible to have an sufficiently absolute grip on the population.²⁹

Struggle Over the Military Line

The article also reports an intra-Party struggle during the 1970-75 period about how to "build up the revolutionary armed forces" and about the "stance of independence/mastery/self-reliance" with regard to the "seeting up of the army, cadre-building, the line on the use of weaponry, the combat line, etc." It says this stance requires "the involvement of the whole people in a people's war". The people not only join the army but also engage in transportation and production activities to support the armed forces. Moreover, a people's war policy requires "evaporating the people from the enemy", that is, "withdrawing the people from every battlefield on which we fight" in order to "prevent the enemy from taking the people". The army itself must have a proletarian class essence, which means that the "absolutely majority" of the troops must be "poor and lower-middle peasants", and they must be under the "absolute leadership of the Party". Finally, the army's "combat line" should combine "guerilla and regular³⁰ fighting", with "the guerillas sometimes being the basis, and the regulars sometimes being taken as crucial". The article reveals that "a stance of opposition" to at least some of these notions "emerged from enemies and adversaries" within the Party. It does not specify who these enemies and adversaries were or what line they took. However, it does say that because of their opposition "there were severe battles of a life-and-death nature" over military policy, the outcome of which it asserts had "meant victory or defeat in the war". These formulations is suggests that purges took place within the armed forces, just as within the Party and the political administration.³¹

²⁹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.54-55.

³⁰ *sâmbaur-băp*

³¹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.48-51.

Vietnamese and Chinese Objections

The article juxtaposes what it describes as "objective world conditions" to the "subjective factor" of internal Party unity. Apparently referring to Vietnamese and Chinese objections to the Party's efforts at armed struggle in the late 1960s, it declares that "objective international conditions were unfavourable to us". However, it asserts, in any situation, "subjective factors are basically the decisive ones", and indicates that the revolution can always weather and overcome opposition from "the world" through internal unity at the leadership level. Specifically, this means the "good subjective factor" of unity "as one bloc" between "the cadre of the Party Centre" and "all the zones".³² The article thus lays down justifications both for opposing any scepticism and criticism about the path of the Cambodian revolution from any foreign source and for eliminating any cadre of the Party Centre or leading the zones who share such scepticism or agree with such criticisms.

The point is reiterated in connection with the 1970-75 period, during which there was "battle after battle in terms of political outlook and over political line between our Party and objective world powers". This "contention" was "very severe, tough and profound". In particular, "external forces put a lot of pressure" on the Party's stance of independence/mastery/self-reliance", arguing that "we are small and incapable of independence/mastery/self-reliance, and must therefore be internationally dependent." Moreover, "inside the Party, there was a few in opposition who had been influenced from abroad." This opposition was dealt with not only ideologically, but also with more purges. Thus, "the Party Centre was able to grasp this problem and proselytized nation-wide to isolate these oppositionists to such an extent that they came out into open opposition and bare-facedly revealed their treason." A "small number" of other elements, "mostly those not directly involved in the movement who didn't understand it and had no experience of their own" also displayed "inappropriate attitudes vis-à-vis the Party line".

These elements were supposedly characterized by "a high level of individualism".³³

Negative Legacy of the National Democratic Phase and the Need for Organizational Measures

The article confesses that the original popular participation in the national democratic revolution left much to be desired. Although "the people got involved in the fray of the national liberation war, at first [their involvement] was not yet powerful." Moreover, "politically they understood only that they were joining together to attack imperialism and the contemptible Lon Nol traitors.

³² *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.17-18.

³³ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.32-33.

Conceptually and in terms of stance, they were not yet profoundly revolutionary." To overcome their backwardness, "the Party adopted organizational measures as the key link", beginning with sweeping measures and moving on to tie up the loose ends by "first grasping the major problems and then advancing to grasping other problems". During the war, these organizational measures included "abolishing markets to prevent the capitalists from being able to grasp and make use of them" and "setting up new relations of production by attacking and eliminating the old relations of production and building up new ones", notably by setting up co-operatives.³⁴

Using Organizational Measures to Make the People Clients of the Revolution

In a key and unself-conscious admission, the article explains that "through such organizational measures, the people became of necessity dependent on the revolution, and the revolution was thus able to govern them." This in turn made it possible to "gather forces" with which to "push forward the movement to attack the feudalists/landlords and the capitalists". This would not have been possible through "mere propaganda and education", which would have "provided us with no strength". Similarly, it could not have been achieved without violence. As the article admonishes: in "taking measures vis-à-vis the feudal and capitalist classes, absolutely do not compete with them by peaceful means."³⁵ Thus, in the national democratic phase, violent organizational measures" made possible the practice of democracy. Presumably, such measures would also make possible the making of socialist revolution and the construction of socialism. The evacuation of urban areas appears to have been one such measure. The article may be making an indirect reference to the possibilities it created when it says that "after the whole country was liberated, we whipped up a production movement throughout the country. In this movement, we have been building up a new point of view, a new stance and new technology for our people."³⁶

Uselessness of the Middle and Upper Strata

The article contrasts the ability of the "base people" to "withstand hardship and misery" with the inability of "the upper and middle strata of the people" to do so.³⁷ This characterization clearly suggested that the latter would be of

³⁴ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.42-43.

³⁵ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.43.

³⁶ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.44.

³⁷ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.20.

little use in the arduous effort required during the initial and most difficult stages of socialist revolution and socialist construction. At the same time, it recognizes the historical support of at least some of the latter for the revolution. Thus, as of 1973, the middle strata were "on our side".³⁸ Moreover, in early 1975, "popular struggle movements" presumably involving at least some such elements were "growing every stronger" in urban centres like Phnom Penh and Batdambang.³⁹

February 1975 Turning Point

February 1975 is identified as the point at which "the overall perspective was that the enemy was breaking up more and more".⁴⁰

Denying Reality

In attempting to justify continued adherence to a stance of independence/mastery/self-reliance, the article declares that its viability has been demonstrated "in the concrete experience of our mass movement and the concrete experience of the world."⁴¹ At the same time, the account given denies the reality of the experience of the Cambodian revolution so far by failing even to mention the aid and assistance it had enjoyed from Vietnamese and Chinese sources.

Abolition of Money

In discussing "the Party's construction of the economy and finances", the article refers to the importance of agricultural production co-operatives and the "non-spending of money". With regard to the latter, it notes that "this measure was initiated back in 1973," and explains that was "meaningful for both the national and democratic [aspects] of the revolution" then being conducted. It was "democratic" because it was "one means by which to eliminate private property both in material terms and in terms of ideological stance". The article asserts that the abolition of money had been a cause of "very major strength in the conduct of the national-democratic revolution" without which the Party would have been "powerless economically and financially".⁴²

³⁸ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.27.

³⁹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.30.

⁴⁰ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.29.

⁴¹ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.33.

⁴² *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), pp.50-52.

The article does not mention any intra-Party struggle over this or other aspects of its wartime economic and financial policies.

Foreign Affairs

The article asserts that the Party's "foreign affairs work does not play a decisive role" in its revolutionary endeavours. It says that the conduct of foreign affairs "is contingent most importantly on subjective factors". These include "the strenght of one's revolution" and its "domestic victories". In this connection, it warns Party members of the need to "heighten revolutionary vigilance ... in every realm".⁴³ There is no mention of opposition or purge in connection with foriegn affairs.

⁴³ *Banners of Revolution* (Special Issue, December 1975-January 1976), p.55.