

KAMPUCHEA- CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS

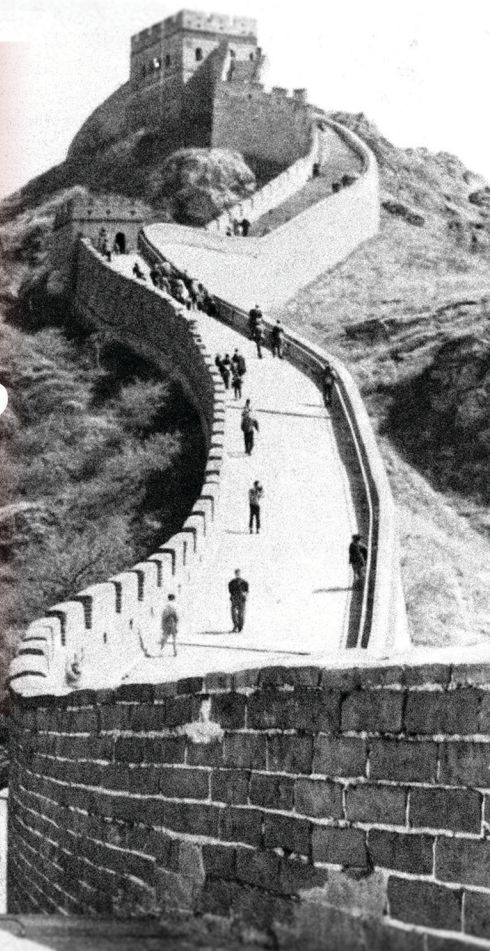
AS INDICATED BY
OFFICIAL DEMOCRATIC
KAMPUCHEA RECORDS
IN DOCUMENTATION
CENTER OF CAMBODIA
ARCHIVES AND BY OTHER
OFFICIAL DEMOCRATIC
KAMPUCHEA SOURCES

1975

1979

Introduction and Part One 1975

Stephen Heder with Sopheak Pheana
SOAS University of London
Johns Hopkins SAIS and
Documentation Center of Cambodia



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Kampuchea-China Economic Relations as Indicated by Official Democratic Kampuchea Records in Documentation Center of Cambodia Archives and by Other Official Democratic Kampuchea Sources Introduction and Part One 1975

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SOPHEAK PHEANA

Cambodia—History—Commerce—1975-1979

Cambodia—Politics and Government—1975-1979

Cambodia—Economics—1975-1979

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CONTENTS

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	6
INTRODUCTION.....	8
PART ONE: 1975	14
APRIL to MAY 1975 (and beyond)	14
JUNE to JULY 1975.....	29
AUGUST to SEPTEMBER 1975.....	48
OCTOBER to NOVEMBER 1975.....	85
DECEMBER 1975	102

PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been my pleasure, honor, and great fortune to have repeatedly worked over the years with the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), its indefatigable Executive Director Youk Chhang, and its highly professional and always fantastically helpful staff. Originally, this collaborative effort focused on collating and analyzing evidence from its ever-growing multifaceted archives in order to prepare for and then support judicial prosecution of the international and domestic crimes perpetrated during the 1975-1979 rule of Cambodia by the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), the hard core of the broader movement dubbed “Khmer Rouge.”

This work resulted in the book *Seven Candidates for Prosecution* (2001/2004,) jointly authored by me and the lawyer Brian Tittamore, and in the putting together of additional packages of material for submission to the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, which was set up in 2006 and finished its work in 2022. In the meantime, my interests have gravitated towards the history of the 1970-1975 war by which the CPK came to power and in which foreign actors, most importantly the United States, Vietnam, and China played crucial roles in supporting and opposing the warring parties.

For researching this understudied but crucial period, DC-Cam’s archives have proved a treasure trove not only of CPK sources but also those of the Khmer Republic, the regime it defeated. While this project proceeded, Executive Director Youk asked me whether I was also interested in working on the many documents in DC-Cam’s collections related to the aid, trade, and financial relations between China and the CPK after it took nation-wide power, a subject of intrinsic interest but also with potential implications for China’s place in Southeast Asia today.

The below text is the first fruit of this project, covering developments in 1975. It has only been made possible because of the huge assistance I have received from DC-Cam, especially from Youk Chhang himself, Center Deputy Director Farina So, Chinese Research and Mass Communications Director Sopheak Pheana, Archives Director Ros Sampeou, and staffer Ly Kokchhay. Finally, in preparing the manuscript for publication, I have had the great good fortune of benefitting from the brilliant editorial assistance of Sinologist Avital Avina, Ph.D., whose close attention to matters of both substance and style resulted in countless improvements in the text.

Steve Heder

Phnom Penh, December 2025

INTRODUCTION

What follows immediately below is the first of four parts of an intended longer report presenting a mostly chronological picture of aid, trade, and other economic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK). The CPK covertly governed the country beneath the façade of the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (GRUNK) from 17 April 1975 to 4 January 1976 and later the Government of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) from 5 January 1976¹ to late September 1977, when the CPK finally emerged from clandestinity.² This first part primarily covers the period from 17 April to 31 December 1975, albeit with some references to 1976. The second part then covers 1976, the third, 1977, and the fourth discusses the period from 1 January 1978 to 7 January 1979. The pictures drawn in each part are embedded in a year-by-year review of official CPK economic policies, including most importantly those regarding agricultural production and plans to finance imports by export of rice and other locally produced items. The underlying assumption of the report is that combining an account of the CPK's economic policies with one of its economic interactions with the PRC is a necessary, if incomplete, part of an overall assessment and understanding of Sino-Kampuchean³ relations during the period of CPK rule.

The report is largely based on two types of data. These include, first, surviving internal documents of the GRUNK/DK Ministry of Commerce/CPK Commerce Committee held in the archives of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DCCam).⁴ Many of the documents also have a catalog mark from the National Archives of Cambodia,⁵ indicating they may also be available there.

¹ "Press Communique Proclaims New Cambodian Constitution," Radio Phnom Penh, 5 January 1976, as translated by Foreign Broadcasts Information Service. (On this source, see Note 6, below.)

² "'Communist Party Secretary' Pol Pot to Go to PRC," Radio Phnom Penh, 24 September 1977.

³ When the CPK authorities governing the country as a whole were officially either GRUNK or DK officials, I refer to the country as Kampuchea. When the context is more generic, I use Cambodia. I also use Cambodia when it appears in an English-language text I am quoting.

⁴ DCCam documents are identified using its filing system, which consists of the letter D followed by a number, taking the form Dxxxx. All translations from DCCam and other Khmer-language originals, and also from Vietnamese- and Chinese-language documents cited in this report, are mine unless otherwise noted.

⁵ "ANC" plus a number.

Chief among these materials are mostly Khmer-language written records of:

- 1** face-to-face negotiations in Phnom Penh and Beijing between Kampuchean and PRC authorities, the latter including Kampuchea-resident PRC diplomats and visiting PRC delegation members;

- 2** gratis PRC aid to Kampuchea;

- 3** Kampuchean commercial imports from and exports to the PRC, including ledgers giving their values and indicating the condition of Kampuchea's finances vis-à-vis the PRC;

- 4** the arrival and departure of PRC and other ships transporting imports and exports, often with specification of the cargo in terms of weight and value;

- 5** the operations of the CPK-front Ren Fung trading company in Hong Kong, which included making purchases and sales on the Hong Kong market and hiring ships to transport goods to and from Kampuchea;

- 6** (occasionally) DK imports from and exports to the Democratic People's Republic of [North] Korea (DPRK), Yugoslavia, and non-Communist countries, again including ledgers giving their values and indicating the condition of Kampuchean finances vis-à-vis these trading partners.

All these documents were strictly secret at the time they were produced. It can be assumed that the CPK never intended or imagined they would be circulated beyond the authorities who produced them and to whom they were addressed, much less made public. As such, it can be hypothesized that they may generally be accurate with regard to the particulars they state, but must be evaluated by comparing them with other sources, as discussed below. Furthermore, the extent to which those held in DCCam archives may contain gaps will eventually have to be discussed in the final conclusion to this report.

In addition to the occasional use of a DCCam interview, the DCCam-held CPK Commerce documents have been examined here in combination with the second main set of sources for this report: external and internal GRUNK/DK/CPK materials that were either publicly disseminated, or secretly circulated only within

CPK membership organizations, or even more restrictedly only at high-ranking CPK cadres' meetings. The key public sources are policy pronouncements and various reports broadcast over the CPK-controlled radio or transmitted by its wire-service media, both mostly in Khmer although occasionally in French. These are sources that were then translated and published by the United States Government's Foreign Broadcasts Information Service (FBIS) monitoring operations. Also utilized are FBIS-monitored materials related to Kampuchea originating from official PRC, DPRK, and other official foreign Communist sources, as well as from non-Communist international media outlets.⁶

As a whole, it can be hypothesized that public Kampuchean Communist materials should be considered as declaratory policy or "propaganda," reflecting either what those authoring them wanted to in fact be or to become the case, or what they wanted others, including Kampuchean and foreign audiences, to credulously believe the CPK wanted to be or to become the case. The same can also be largely said of much of the content both of the Khmer-language CPK economic planning documents presented at closed meetings of select leading Party cadres and issues of the CPK magazines *Revolutionary Flag[s]* and *Revolutionary Youth*. The former was restricted to members of the Party and the latter to its associated Youth League. This characterization can also be assumed in the cases of a number of formally non-Party glossy Khmer- and English-language magazines that nevertheless did not reach a general readership.⁷

As we shall see, *Revolutionary Flag[s]* and *Revolutionary Youth* were sometimes more forthright about problems, shortcomings, and real or alleged disputes than the cheerleading, but generally more anodyne Radio Phnom Penh. This situation denied ordinary Kampucheans the possibility of getting a better understanding of CPK policies and practices and of using the passages in *Flag[s]* and *Youth* that were directly or indirectly critical of them and of cadres' misbehavior to question or protest them. Similarly, neither the Party and Youth

⁶ <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/262.html>. The FBIS dating system used Universal Coordinated Time (UCT) and consistently translated Radio Phnom Penh programs broadcast starting at 2300 UCT, which would be seven hours later in Kampuchea, that is at 0600 the next day there, which means broadcasts were heard in Kampuchea a day later than FBIS's date for their transmission. For consistency and ease of search in FBIS archives, I have mostly used the titles for broadcasts created by FBIS, not those of Radio Phnom Penh and other official Kampuchean sources, which in any case are not always present in FBIS. I have also used FBIS titles for materials from PRC/DPRK and miscellaneous other sources.

⁷ The Party and Youth League magazines are identified by the filing system of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), which also consists of one or another letter followed by a number and which I identify as "ECCC Document," with "[KH]" indicating a Khmer-language original. The number of red flags on the Party magazine was originally five, but later changed to one. It should be noted that the available sets of these two magazines and of the non-Party glossies are incomplete. Some of the glossy magazines are also identified by the ECCC filing system, but others come from the author's private collection.

League magazines nor the glossy non-Party publications revealed the kinds of details about aid, trade, and the economy contained in the DCCam-held Commerce document archives, which were kept secret not only from the public, but also the mass of Party and Youth League members. They were all thus equally denied the opportunity to become aware of crucial facts about Kampuchea's domestic and international economic situations. Among other things, this hid from all these domestic audiences (as well as foreign observers) general data and specific details about the true scope of CPK reliance on PRC aid and trade, leaving the CPK in a position to exaggerate the extent to which it was successfully practicing its self-proclaimed policy of economic self-sufficiency and self-reliance in pursuit of “independence/mastery” or “independence/autonomy” for Kampuchea and its people.⁸

This report also makes use of Vietnamese-language documentation purporting to be translations from Khmer of CPK materials on Kampuchea's relations with China; however, PRC materials are very little covered. As indicated above, the exceptions include a few FBIS reproductions or translations of PRC media (in English or Chinese, respectively). However, the report does include the following set of published PRC statistics on Sino-Kampuchean trade in 1975-1979, in which trade values are expressed in US dollars.⁹ The figures are:

Year	Total Trade	Chinese Exports	Kampuchean Exports	Kampuchean Annual Balance/Cumulative
1975	32,020,000	25,540,000	6,480,000	-19,060,000
1976	36,030,000	31,880,000	4,150,000	-27,730,000/-46,790,000
1977	79,790,000	67,460,000	12,330,000	-55,130,000/-101,920,000
1978	83,363,000	61,600,000	22,030,000	-39,570,000/-141,490,000
1979	8,000	4,000	4,000	0/-141,490,000
ALL YEARS	231,211,000	186,484,000	44,994,000	-141,490,000

⁸ In my view, the Khmer term “mchaskar” (ម្ចាស់កិរិយា), the CPK rendering of the Sino-Vietnamese Communist usage of the term 自主/ tự chủ can be translated as “mastery” or “autonomy,” depending on context. When translating from Khmer, I choose which I think is appropriate. Other translated sources, including for example FBIS, almost always use “mastery,” regardless of context.

⁹ 《中国对外经济贸易年鉴 (1984) 》, 北京: 中国对外经济贸易出版社1984年版, p.IV-16). This document was found by Dr. Chen Jian and provided to an intermediary who passed it on to me. I have not yet been able to locate a breakdown by items imported/exported.

Most or all of the PRC export figures for 1975, and part of those for subsequent years, may include the value of gratis PRC aid to Kampuchea if, as in recent times, PRC aid to foreign countries back in the 1970s was included in bilateral trade figures.¹⁰ The fit, or lack thereof, between these numbers and those that can be calculated from internal and external CPK data is another matter to be discussed in the conclusion. However, at first glance it is obvious that these records indicate Kampuchea was constantly in trade deficit, always earning less from exports to the PRC than the value of its imports from it.

Hopefully, the sources utilized here will eventually be juxtaposed with full utilization of counterpart Chinese-language PRC documents lodged in DCCam/ANC and other archives, including those that may be accessible in the PRC itself, as well as a review of academic writings in Chinese, English, Khmer, or other languages relevant to Chinese-Kampuchea aid, trade, and economic relations in the April 1975 to January 1979 period. The author looks forward to already possible critical and other comments and future revelations from researchers using such sources and authors of such publications.

It must be further stressed that also lacking from this report is an effort to relate what is found in the various sources it covers to the wide variety of accounts by ordinary Cambodians and by some former GRUNK/DK/CPK and PRC authorities about matters related to 1975-1979 PRC-Kampuchean aid, trade, and other economic relations. These accounts include the vast body of interviews carried out by DCCam researchers and by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), the latter particularly in the form of responses to questions posed by ECCC judicial police during field investigations, to judicial officials during court investigations, and by all parties during court hearings. They also include the many interviews done by academics and journalists over the years since the 1970s. Another source not addressed by this report are the files of the People's Revolutionary Tribunal held in Phnom Penh in August 1979 under the official authority of the post-DK People's Republic of Kampuchea to try "the Genocide Crime of the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary Clique." These files include what are identified as official "clique" and PRC documents, as well as Kampuchean witness submissions and testimony. Such material can be found in Howard J. De Nike, John Quigley, and Kenneth J. Robertson, eds., with the assistance of Helen Jarvis and Nerida Cross, *Genocide in Cambodia: Documents from the Trial of Pol Pot and Ieng Sary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

¹⁰ National Bureau of Statistics of China, 20 May 2002, "17. Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation," http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/ClassificationsMethods/Definitions/200205/t20020517_72378.html.

Only once all these additional sources are examined as part of a process of looking at other relevant evidence, weighing them against the materials discussed in this report and against each other, will it become more fully possible to assess the import of what is set forth below. This will not only elucidate the topic with regard to the statistics presented, but also to assertions made about the PRC's role in Kampuchea under CPK rule, including as they may relate to interpretations put on the CPK's declaratory policies and claims.

As much of what follows relates to the production in Cambodia of paddy, its consumption there, and its export as rice, an introductory note on Cambodian agriculture is apropos. During Cambodia's agricultural year, regardless of the kind of paddy grown in its six different rice ecosystems, almost all cultivation activities have traditionally been carried out between February and December, especially during the monsoon-driven rainy season months from May to October. According to this calendar, most harvesting was historically done in the August to February period, with the result that paddy cultivated in one calendar year overwhelmingly becomes available – once milled into rice¹¹ – for consumption and export in the next calendar year. This has been particularly true of the all-important main lowland rainy season paddy crop.¹² Although the CPK tried to alter this pattern, especially by expanding acreages farmed, vastly enlarging irrigation, and increasing multiple-cropping (planting two or more successive crops on the same land), this did not completely supersede the historical pattern.

¹¹ Khmer differentiates between paddy (ផ្លូវ), kernels of the grain that are in their natural, unprocessed state, and rice (អង្ករ), the result of processing that puts the grain into its normally edible state. Whenever using Khmer-language sources, I use this differentiation in my translation. English-language sources, unfortunately including FBIS translations, can be ambiguous, using only rice. When context makes it appear rice certainly or probably means paddy, I change the English accordingly. Where what is meant is unclear, I leave rice as in the English source, which may mean it is paddy to which reference is being made, although it should be noted it is unusual for paddy to be exported because its heavy weight means greater shipment costs. Figures in CPK documents generally put the expected weight of rice milled from paddy at 60 percent of the unprocessed grain. Although I do not necessarily accept this was accurate for processing during CPK rule, I do not have sufficient evidence to warrant using a specific different figure. However, it is likely the true figure under CPK rule was significantly lower than 60 percent. For a brief generic discussion, see: Food and Agricultural Organization, "Grain losses in rice processing," <https://www.fao.org/3/X5427E/x5427e0h.htm>, which suggests 50 percent could be more accurate. This lower figure would have negative implications for the amounts of rice available for consumption and export, implications that I have not drawn.

¹² JICA, "Cambodia Rice Cultivation Calendar," Figure 1: Rice cropping pattern in each ecosystem, p.A-3; Rob Cramb, et al., "The Commercialisation of Rice Farming in Cambodia," in Rob Cramb, ed, *White Gold: The Commercialisation of Rice Farming in the Lower Mekong Delta* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), p.229; <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/country/cambodia/climate-data-historical>.

PART ONE: 1975

APRIL to MAY 1975 (and beyond)

The CPK de facto governed the whole of Kampuchea from 17 April 1975, having on that date defeated the anti-Communist Khmer Republic in a five-year war and when it began a forced transfer “evacuating” virtually all people from cities, towns, and surrounding or other areas in which they had been living under Republican administration and moving them into the CPK’s “liberated zones.” (For a map of the boundaries of the administrative zones and sectors into which the CPK divided post-17 April Kampuchea, see <https://www.dccam.org/justice/map/map-of-democratic-kampuchea/>).¹³

A Radio Phnom Penh broadcast would later give an economic rationale for, and claim economically positive results from, this CPK action. It would recall that this large-scale population relocation was enforced “right in the rainy season – a time when our people are usually busy with the production offensive,” and when the people in the previously liberated zones “had just emerged from a war,” were lacking “everything,” and then had to “shoulder the burden of supporting those who had just been liberated.” It described the veterans of liberation zone life as having “a staunch ideological, political, and organizational stand toward the revolution” while claiming that the evacuees were “happy” because they were “returning to their birthplaces.” It said they were there “reunited with their kith and kin” and plunged into agricultural work “without reserve,” becoming “a new important additional force adding vigor to the production movement.” They were depicted as having thus joined with liberated zone veterans to create “an immense force” enabling an agricultural “production drive to be launched early”¹⁴ in the rainy season. The radio would eventually suggest that no matter how many people the CPK would at various times say it removed into its old liberated zones,

¹³ Notice that when speaking of CPK subnational administrative units, I use the term Zone to refer to the largest of these and Sector to refer to the next largest, translating the Khmer terms *phumipheak* and *tamban*, respectively. This follows the conventions generally adopted by the ECCC.

¹⁴ “1975 Production Prospects Termed ‘Excellent,’” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 October 1975.

most of them must have been among the more than 95 percent of Kampuchea's pre-war population whom the Party maintained should be categorized in class origin terms as "poor and lower-middle peasants."¹⁵

As will be recounted below, the CPK proudly insisted that this massive population relocation was essential to making post-17 April 1975 Kampuchea economically self-reliant and prosperous—objectives sometimes endorsed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk while he formally remained the country's figurehead Chief of State until early April 1976.¹⁶ Although CPK assertions of these goals were very occasionally tempered by the kinds of indirect or at most vague public or internal admissions of receipt of the PRC material and subsequently financial aid described in this report, no details about either were ever given to the public or to the general Party and Youth League memberships via the CPK's broadcast media or its internal publications. Such details are however present in the DC-Cam archives. I rely on them here in Part One to demonstrate that throughout 1975 and into 1976, significant amounts and a wide variety of Chinese material assistance were provided. Contrary to what the CPK wanted general Kampuchean and foreign audiences to believe, the import quantities recorded in the reviewed documents reveal a significant reliance on early PRC assistance. In particular, despite various impressions given by the CPK that post-liberation Kampuchea never relied on foreign food assistance, the aid package included rice.

Thus, it appears that by the end of April 1975, Kampuchean and Chinese authorities had agreed on a secret contract¹⁷ according to which the PRC would begin to carry out a "plan of material aid" to Kampuchea.¹⁸ The contents and quantities of said aid appear to have evolved over time, including as a result of secret June-July and public August 1975 meetings in Beijing between top Chinese and Kampuchean Communist leaders. This material assistance, both economic and military, seems evidently to have been given gratis, as none of the relevant documents indicate that a payment was ever made. Its provision appears to have lasted into April 1976, except perhaps for the delivery of a last tranche of medications in July, as will be noted below.¹⁹ The DCCam paper trail includes evidence that the Kampuchean authorities put forward requests for materials

¹⁵ "Role of Peasants in National Construction Acclaimed," Radio Phnom Penh, 20 January 1976.

¹⁶ "Reportage on Sihanouk's Request for Retirement," Radio Phnom Penh, 4 April 1976.

¹⁷ D22343, "The Situation of Provision of Chinese Friends' Goods Aid, Early February 1976, According to the Record in the Chinese Friends' List," which refers to the signing of a contract.

¹⁸ D21937, "Material Aid Plans of Chinese Friends: Summary of Materials in Every Department Received as of December 1975."

¹⁹ D23517, "Goods Received by the Ministry of Commerce from the Ship Da Tong: Goods Imported from China," 20 July 1976.

to repair trucks and US-made tractors²⁰ and to begin recommissioning of the Kirirom hydroelectric dam.²¹ Some of the aid items mentioned below may have been in fulfilment of such wishes. For example, Radio Phnom Penh mentioned trucks and tractors in broadcasts about the reconstruction of Kampuchea's Kampong Saom seaport and about the country's agricultural production efforts in May 1975 and November 1975, respectively,²² and Sihanouk spoke in August 1975 of the importance of Kirirom.²³

It is certain that rice was part of the aid package, first in the amount of 30,000 tons, later increased to a little more than 60,000 tons. According to various documents, either 60,526,²⁴ 60,560,²⁵ or 60,567²⁶ tons were delivered. The last shipment reportedly arrived on 31 October 1975,²⁷ more or less coinciding with claims by Radio Phnom Penh that preparations were at that time being made to begin harvesting main rainy season rice crops²⁸ that were supposedly going to be "good everywhere" and with an output that would "be greater than ever before."²⁹ Meanwhile, according to a 2003 DCCam interview with former CPK regime cadre Van Rit, whose post-17 April responsibilities included handling foreign trade matters for its commerce authorities, he apparently at some point in 1975 visited Vietnam in connection with the latter's provision of "some rice aid" to Kampuchea,³⁰ assistance that was kept entirely secret.

A series of similarly kept confidential Kampuchean documents on PRC aid, sometimes using differing designations for the materials provided, and again sometimes citing slightly contradictory figures for amounts delivered, report that

²⁰ D21939, "Plan to Request Materials for Means of Transportation by Truck and Massey Tractors." No cost for these items is indicated.

²¹ D21939, "Kirirom Hydroelectric Dam Worksite, Cabling Department: List of Requested Cables and Equipment." No cost for these items is indicated.

²² "Repairing Sihanoukville Port," Radio Phnom Penh, 8 May 1975; "Tractor Repair Shops," Radio Phnom Penh, 11 November 1975.

²³ "Sihanouk Speaks Prior to Screening Cambodian Films in DPRK," Pyongyang, KCNA, 6 August 1975.

²⁴ D21939, "Summary List of Materials Imported from China for 1975 Received by the Ministry of Commerce Calculated from 30 April 1975 to 30 December 1975."

²⁵ D20596, "State Commerce: 1. Rice," 29 April 1976.

²⁶ D20596, "List Settling Accounts for Aid Materials Received from Chinese Friends from June 1975 to February 1976;" D21937, "Material Aid Plans of Chinese Friends: Summary of Materials in Every Department Received as of December 1975;" D21938, "Summary of Materials in Every Department Received from Chinese Friends as of December 1975."

²⁷ D20596, "State Commerce: 1. Rice," 29 April 1976.

²⁸ "Phnom Penh Reports Rice Production Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 6 October 1975.

²⁹ "Progress in Metal Work Handicrafts Praised," Radio Phnom Penh, 23 October 1975.

³⁰ DCCam Document [KH], "Interview with Van Rit, Former Chairman of the Democratic Kampuchea Commerce Office, at Khpop Village, Khpop Commune, S'ang District, Kandal Province, 10 February 2003, Interview by Youk Chhang and Huy Vannak," p.30.

between 30 April 1975 and mid-February 1976, additional materials received included:

- 3,063 tons of military supplies
- 299 Chinese trucks
- either 202 or 2,020 tons of salt
- either 240 or 301 tons of medications
- 10,000 injection needle sets
- 1,000 thermometers
- an unspecified number of surgical gowns and other medical equipment
- 500 tons of insecticide, including 270 tons of DDT
- 5,000 insecticide spraying devices
- 1,400 tons of jute
- 20 tons of jute seeds
- 18,560 reels of jute string
- 157 tons of cotton seeds
- 2,000,000 hoes
- 200,000 shovels
- 15 plowshare sets
- 2,887 tons or 27,545,500 meters of cloth
- 2,000 tons of thread or yarn
- either 200 or 351 sewing machines
- 68,000 machine sewing needles
- eight crates of hand sewing needles
- 226 crates of scissors
- 17 crates of shaving knives
- 140,000 shirt buttons
- two tons of cigarette lighter flints
- 2,000 bicycles
- 3,998 crates of bicycle parts
- 3,200 tons of construction steel
- 100 tons of potash
- 1,000 sets of vehicle tires and inner tubes
- four crates of diesel engines
- 67,262 tons of fuels and lubricants, including diesel, gasoline, kerosene, and machine oils
- 600 tons of dyes

- nails and screws
- motion picture-making cameras, equipment, and projectors
- either 3,646 or 11,707 tons of railway equipment
- some 300 tractors, ten transplanting machines, and other agricultural implements
- two tons of cement factory equipment
- 35 tons of cement
- two fishing boats and fishing equipment.³¹

It seems that some parts of consignments of Chinese materials that arrived at Kampong Saom in January-February 1976 may have included the additional gratis PRC aid agreed at some point during June-August 1975. Various documents, across which there is apparent duplication, indicate that some 14,019,528 tons coming from the Chinese ports of Tianjin, Shanghai, or Dalian were delivered along with an apparently separate total of 99 items consigned to the State Railways, a State cement factory, a State rubber tire factory, and the State Radio. Among them were some of the types of items already mentioned in aid plan documents, namely: cloth, thread, buttons, rubber tires, inner tubes, steelware (various items manufactured from steel), and insecticide. However, there were also items in categories that had not been so mentioned, such as various industrial, mechanical, and technological items designated for use in the restoration of the railways, the aforementioned factories, and Radio Phnom Penh,³² all pre-1970s facilities³³ presumably in need of repair.

³¹ D21939, "List Summing Up the Materials Coming in from China in 1975 that Were Received by the Ministry of Commerce Calculated from 30 April 1975 to 30 December 1975" and "Detailed List of Materials of All Kinds in Each Ship: In Total There Were 21 Ships;" D21938, "Summary of Materials in Every Department Received from Chinese Friends as of December 1975;" D21937, "Material Aid Plans of Chinese Friends: Summary of Materials in Every Department Received as of December 1975;" D20596, "List Settling Accounts for Aid Materials Received from Chinese Friends from June 1975 to February 1976;" D22343, "The Situation of Provision of Chinese Friends' Goods Aid, Early February 1976, According to the Record in the Chinese Friends' List[s];" D20598, "List Settling Accounts for Aid Materials Received from Chinese Friends Received from June 1975 to 21 April 1976;" D23517, "Goods That the Ministry of Commerce Received from the Ship Ta Thong: Goods Imported from China," 20 July 1976.

³² D22338, "State Commerce at Kampong Saom, Number 002/PR/76: Materials Imported from China and Transported on the Ship Yan Sin, Docked at Kampong Saom, 20 January 1976;" D22336, "State Commerce: Materials Imported from China, Ship San Yin on 29 January 1976," 14 February 1976, signed "For State Commerce Committee;" D22345, "Materials Imported from China on the Ship San Yin," 14 February 1976, signed "For State Commerce Committee;" D22341, "State Commerce: Materials Imported from China on the Ship San Yin on 19 January 1976."

³³ "The XVth Anniversary of National Independence," Kambuja, 15 October 1968, np.

Another document, describing the situation as of the end of February 1976, suggests that still not all planned aid had been delivered by this time. What apparently remained due included 2,454,500 meters of cloth, 2,200 tons of thread, as many as seven tons of jute seeds, 157 tons of fuel and lubricants, three barges, 27 earth-moving machines, three steamrollers, 23 trucks, 10,000 workshop tools, 35 sets of digging tools, 600 tons of construction steel, and 9,985 sets of bicycle parts.³⁴ It is not clear when (or if) these materials eventually arrived. However, the delivery of what may have been aid medications evidently did continue for longer, with 27 tons arriving in July 1976.³⁵

The aid items that were definitely delivered during 1975 included those that came on 22 PRC vessels that docked at Kampong Saom at an average of around 2.5 arrivals per month, starting on 30 April with the first cargo of rice, salt, medications, and cloth. All 1975 deliveries seem to have been consigned to Kampuchean Commerce authorities, except the military supplies, which came off a vessel that was in port in June or July 1975 at the same time as food and other supplies destined for the PRC Embassy in Phnom Penh.³⁶

It is not clear where the aid rice went. However, the documents suggest it did not go to the ordinary population, but was used to feed CPK state institutions and forces, leaving the people to fend “self-reliantly” for themselves. A record of distribution by the branch of State Commerce in Kampong Saom notes that as of the end of 1975, it had come into possession of almost five tons of aid rice, of which it had distributed a little more than half during 1 to 15 March 1976, leaving the other half in stock. One ton went to Phnom Penh, a little more than half a ton to the Kampong Saom Municipal [State] Market, and the remainder to Koh Kong province.³⁷ A second document reports that in April 1976, this same unit had been in receipt of 1.7 tons of aid rice, of which a little more than half had been distributed that month to Kampong Saom logistics and the Kampong Saom Municipal market.³⁸ A third document, dated late May 1976, reports that the amount of aid rice Kampong Saom Commerce had received was 8.4 tons, of which 40 percent was distributed by the end of the month to Kampot province,

³⁴ D22343, “The Situation of Provision of Chinese Friends’ Goods Aid, Early February 1976, According to the Record in the Chinese Friends’ List.”

³⁵ D23517, “Goods Received by the Ministry of Commerce from the Ship Da Tong: Goods Imported from China,” 20 July 1976.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ D20468, “33: Rice Aid, Round 1.3,” 15 March 1976, signed “State Commerce Committee.”

³⁸ D20469, “State Commerce, Kampong Saom, 33: Aid Rice, Second Round, April 1976,” 30 April 1976.

Logistics, Warehouses, and the Municipal Market.³⁹ There is also a Ministry of Commerce document reporting that in June 1976, “the State” provided Office 870, the designation for the CPK administrative office at the level of the Party Centre,⁴⁰ with one ton of rice, 30 bags of cement, and 689 meters of cloth, which may have been PRC aid, plus sticky rice, rice bran, green beans, wood oil, and charcoal,⁴¹ which were probably produced locally.

A further Ministry of Commerce document details the distribution from 1 to 14 August 1976 of what may have been previously delivered PRC aid medications, which appear also probably to have gone to state institutions and forces, again leaving the people to their own devices. The document noted that almost 38 million capsules had remained in stock from July, of which almost 37 million had been distributed during those two weeks to the East, Southwest, Northwest, new Northeast, and West Zones, the Siem Reap and Preah Vihear Sectors, and to the armed forces General Staff. It indicates that the specific quantities to be sent were stipulated by Office K1 (that is, the CPK Central Committee Secretary Pol Pot’s office⁴²). The statistics seem to suggest that these medications were now virtually exhausted.⁴³ Whether or not that was the case, a November 1976 “Municipal Commerce” document, in this case likely meaning Commerce for Phnom Penh, enumerates 473 different types of medicines that could have been PRC aid and were or had been in its stocks.⁴⁴

Whatever the case, in this instance, the main fact is that for all practical purposes, the total silence in official public media and internal Party and Youth League magazines regarding the types and quantities of PRC (and Vietnamese) aid made false their claims in 1975 and thereafter about the economic viability, productivity, and general success of the CPK’s line of rebuilding and advancing Kampuchea via a path of self-reliance, one that would from the beginning above all feed its people and finance progress with exports above all of rice, but would on this basis also resurrect rubber production, achieve reconstruction of industry and lines of communication, restore and improve the population’s health, and

³⁹ D20470, “State Commerce, Kampong Saom, 33: Aid Rice, Second Round, May 1976,” 31 May 1976, signed State Commerce Committee.

⁴⁰ For a discussion of the various characterizations of this entity, see ECCC Document E465 [E], “Case 002/02 Judgement,” pp.192-195.

⁴¹ D20578, “Ministry of Commerce: State Provided to Offices and Ministries from 1 to 30 June 1976.” The items are valued in riels, with the price of rice, for example, set at one riel per kilogram.

⁴² ECCC Document E465 [E], *op. cit.*, p.197.

⁴³ D20473, “Ministry of Commerce: Medications From 1 to 14 August 1976.” The statistical table is headed “Chinese Medications.”

⁴⁴ D20474, “Municipal Commerce Number PK: List of Medications, Part 4,” 7 November 1976.

so on. Thus, hiding specifics behind a wall of vagueness, a Radio Phnom Penh broadcast heard back on 11 May 1975 had declared that although Kampuchea was “not a satellite of any foreign nation; it accepts aid from all foreign friends as long as such aid is unconditional and is not meant to interfere in, subvert or aggress upon our country.” It did not, however, disclose who these foreign friends might be nor how much of or what kinds of aid were being welcomed from them and used for what purposes.⁴⁵ Instead, it explained and vowed that the new Kampuchea’s fundamental:

position is to remain independent and self-reliant under all circumstances. During the revolutionary war before 17 April 1975 as well as at the present, we are depending [on] and building Cambodia. We have thus depended basically upon the strength of our nation and people and on our own force. Because our country and population are small, because our country is still developing, and moreover because the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys has destroyed almost everything in our country, our people, male and female combatants, cadres, and organizations of all echelons have firmly upheld the spirit of economy and initiative. Our people have now become liberated. In order to prevent the repetition of historical events, each one of our brother countrymen, male and female combatants, and cadres is constantly maintaining the spirit of being masters of the country and the revolution. The spirit of economy, initiative, and self-reliance has therefore always remained in our minds ...⁴⁶

Meanwhile, at a secret meeting, also in May 1975, the CPK Central Committee stipulated that Kampuchea “must be built, and that socialism must be built, as rapidly as possible.” The stated goal was to take the country “from a backward agriculture to a modern one in five to ten years” (in 1980 to 1985), “from an agricultural base to an industrial one in between 15 and 20 years” (between 1990 and 1995), and to start this transformation in 1977,⁴⁷ implicitly following an

⁴⁵ “People’s Spirit of Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ David P. Chandler, trans., “Document IV: Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary, Translation,” in David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua, eds. and trans., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series 33, 1988), pp.124-125; “First Year National Reconstruction Effort Examined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 20 May 1978; “Pol Pot 24 Aug TV Interview with Swedish Friendship Delegation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 8 October 1978.

intervening two-year transitional period in 1975-76. As will be seen below, already at the beginning of this two-year preparatory phase, modern agriculture would be authoritatively defined as that in areas producing six tons of paddy per hectare,⁴⁸ and later the definition would be eight or more tons per hectare.⁴⁹

For its part, Radio Phnom Penh made a series of broadcasts in May 1975 about paddy production and exporting rice, as part of an ambition to use exports to purchase materials for the eventual industrialization of the country, promising that henceforth Kampuchea would have no problems with famine or a balance of payments deficit.⁵⁰ However, these programs said nothing to the public about to whom the rice and other Kampuchean produce would go or from whence the materials would come, matters about which the radio would remain quite mum in its reporting on Kampuchea under CPK rule. On this occasion, it simply told listeners that for now the revolution was going to rely entirely on the rural areas, where cooperative agricultural production structures were already in place, into which evacuees had gone, and where the revolution thus now had “everything,” including labor forces, farm animals, soil, forests, crops, knives, axes, plows, harrows, fish paste, clothing, hoes, salt, seeds, buttons, needles, and thread. Although the last six items were among those in the eventual PRC aid package deliveries, the radio proclaimed it could only be “thanks to the spirit of economy and initiative” that the population would “certainly be able to succeed in a short while in our work of building a new and radiant Cambodia in accordance with the path of independence and self-reliance.”⁵¹ This position to which the station would always stick, and in which was always backed by *Revolutionary Flag[s]* and *Revolutionary Youth*. In line with this stance, the radio announced the immediate launching of a manual labor campaign to raise “the level of dam water in order to double or triple the harvest of the rainy season rice crop compared to the harvest” during the war.⁵² This was at a time when the previous crop year’s dry season paddy was being harvested and work had begun to till and harrow the land and to sow and transplant rainy season paddy⁵³ as part of the launching of “an offensive to grow the [1975] rainy season rice crop” throughout the country.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ ECCC Document E3/760 [KH], “Extracts from the Instructions of the Comrade Representing the Party Organization in a Zone Conference,” *Revolutionary Flags Number 6*, June 1976, pp.47-48.

⁴⁹ “First Year National Reconstruction Effort Examined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 20 May 1978; “Nation-Building, Defense Tasks Outlined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 30 June 1978; “Conclusion of Pol Pot Speech at 27 Sep Phnom Penh Speech,” Radio Phnom Penh, 29 September 1978.

⁵⁰ “Radio Phnom Penh Discusses New Economic Situation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 9 May 1975.

⁵¹ “People’s Spirit of Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975.

⁵² “Radio Commentaries Stresses [sic] Determination to Build the Country,” Radio Phnom Penh, 2 May 1975.

⁵³ “Cites Agricultural, Industrial Progress,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 May 1975.

⁵⁴ “Work to Increase Livestock, Fowl Production Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 15 May 1975; “Kampong Speu Province Farming,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 May 1975.

Painting an optimistic picture of the future based on claims of past successes, the radio asserted that during the war, it had been possible to grow enough rice to feed the settled population in the Communists' liberated zones, their "liberation army" and the "refugees" it said had fled from areas under rival Khmer Republic administration to those ruled by the revolution.⁵⁵ It declared that because the wartime liberated zones had already achieved "complete self-sufficiency" as a result of becoming well-developed through construction of waterworks, the country was now in a position to feed "sufficiently and even abundantly" what it three times during May enumerated as Kampuchea's total population of seven million people. Thus, they should now be confident that this population had "the great potential of launching an offensive in the current rainy season to grow rice and to reap abundant crops."⁵⁶

As further evidence in favor of its confidence in the future, the radio recalled that before 1970, Kampuchea had exported rice.⁵⁷ It would also subsequently endorse claims, starting in 1974, by then GRUNK Deputy Prime Minister Khieu Samphan and other Kampuchean officials that, during the war, it had exported some 50,000 tons of "rice" (unclear whether paddy or milled rice) to Vietnam and Laos.⁵⁸ It would say that 20,000 to 30,000 tons had been sold to Vietnam via official channels, while alleging the Vietnamese had "unofficially" bought an additional 30,000-40,000 tons for transfer to Vietnam, and adding the further contention that 40,000 tons had supposedly been consumed by Vietnamese forces operating inside Kampuchea before April 1975.⁵⁹

At the end of May, the radio emphasized the prospect that Kampuchea would be able not only to "produce sufficient rice" to feed its people and armed forces, but also to continue to export a surplus, specifying that "[t]he larger the quantity of rice we can export, the greater will be the possibility of importing machine tools, various engines, and other necessary equipment for Cambodia's economic development."⁶⁰ It foresaw that everybody, "including those who were liberated before and after 17 April," would not only have food, but also "hospitals

⁵⁵ "Commentary Lauds Rainy Season Rice-Growing Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁵⁶ "People's Spirit of Economy," Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975; "Strength of National Solidarity," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 May 1975; "Commentary Lauds Rainy Season Rice-Growing Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁵⁷ "Commentary Lauds Rainy Season Rice-Growing Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁵⁸ Gareth Porter and George C. Hildebrand, *Cambodia: Starvation and Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), p.77.

⁵⁹ "Hunger Said Widespread," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 August 1978. It is again unclear whether these figures refer to paddy or milled rice.

⁶⁰ "Commentary Lauds Rainy Season Rice-Growing Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

and plenty of medicine,” and children would have schools. The revolution would “absolutely and certainly achieve these successes.”⁶¹ Specifically, the radio assured listeners that Kampuchea had the “great potential to double or triple” rice production, a goal to which all abilities must be applied and the result of which would be an economy capable of exporting it “in the near future”⁶² in order to purchase materials for the industrialization of the country.⁶³ It remarked that, in particular, rice grown in what the CPK designated Kampuchea’s Northwest Zone (comprising Battambang and Posat provinces) had historically been sold abroad,⁶⁴ later mentioning Mong Russei district in Battambang as a key source of exports.⁶⁵ The radio also featured Southwest Zone Kampot province as a location that had harvested a last year’s dry season crop in May that had been better “than ever before” and where the preliminaries for cultivating the 1975 rainy season paddy had already begun.⁶⁶ In general terms, it hailed the use of “barnyard manure” as fertilizer for paddy fields, implicitly suggesting that would help avoid costly imports.⁶⁷ This was one of many practices that would increasingly be presented as promising “to improve conditions for all our people, including those liberated before and after 17 April.”⁶⁸

In other broadcasts in May and subsequent months, rice cultivation was described as part of a larger goal of doubling or tripling overall production both of it and “other strategic crops,” including bananas, potatoes, cotton, and mulberries, at least some of which could also soon be exported in exchange for the means of industrialization,⁶⁹ as could coconuts.⁷⁰ Other transmissions even more greatly emphasized efforts to restore rubber plantations. They reported the clearing of land for rubber trees in Mondulkiri Sector,⁷¹ the removal of undergrowth, and tapping for latex in rubber plantations in the East and North Zones, saying the objective was to supply local factories with latex and export it to earn foreign exchange. Rubber workers were also supposed to grow their own food,⁷² as were army units, so that rice grown by the people would soon no longer have to be diverted to provision troops, but could be exported instead.⁷³

⁶¹ “Work to Increase Livestock, Fowl Production Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 15 May 1975.

⁶² “Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Growing Strategic Crops,” Radio Phnom Penh, 31 May 1975.

⁶³ “Radio Phnom Penh Views Forest Conservation Measures,” Radio Phnom Penh, 22 May 1975.

⁶⁴ “Railway Repairs,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁶⁵ “Efforts in Battambang District,” Radio Phnom Penh, 1 June 1975.

⁶⁶ “Kampot Province Production Work,” Radio Phnom Penh, 17 May 1975.

⁶⁷ “Radio Phnom Penh Extols Merits of Natural Fertilizer,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 May 1975.

⁶⁸ “Radio Commentary on Need to Persist in Struggle,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 May 1975.

⁶⁹ “Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Growing Strategic Crops,” 31 May 1975.

⁷⁰ “Briefs,” Radio Phnom Penh, 8 July 1975.

⁷¹ “Cultivation of Rubber Plantations Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁷² “Cultivation of Rubber Plantations Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

⁷³ “Phnom Penh Production, Clean-Up Campaign Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 9 June 1975.

The radio meanwhile spoke positively about various other aspects of Kampuchea's post-war domestic economy and their future good prospects. Recalling that during the war years, a cotton-growing campaign had been launched⁷⁴ during which the population had "strengthened and expanded the craftsmanship movement of weaving [and] spinning," including by setting up manual and semiautomatic looms to produce clothing.⁷⁵ It began stressing the importance of continuing to promote "domestic weaving" as a handicraft endeavor, while also "gradually developing" Kampuchea's "fundamental industrial base."⁷⁶ It featured the role of post-war local movements to spin and weave cloth, including the clearing of land to grow cotton to supply these activities and the construction on the spot of mechanical and manual looms. These were said to be combined with rural handicraft manufacturing of paper, shoes, soap, fish sauce, bean noodles, knives, jars, dishes, pots, pans, kettles, spoons, and farming tools.⁷⁷ It was explained that elderly villagers, especially women, were assigned to ginning cotton, weaving and spinning thread, and making clothing, scarves, and blankets from locally-grown cotton,⁷⁸ plus making silk garments,⁷⁹ thereby restoring "the traditional textile industry."⁸⁰ It concluded, for the handicraft industries that were "beginning to flourish," cotton was one of the most important crops.⁸¹ Nothing was aired at this time or later about PRC cloth, thread, sewing materials, or cottonseed aid, and nor would internal CPK media ever report anything about it.

Discussing light industries, the radio reported that work began in May 1975 to restore operations at textile, nail, paper, rubber, and food-processing factories in Phnom Penh and other towns,⁸² such as the textile mill and gunny sack factory in the old provincial seat of Battambang.⁸³ It claimed that the water and electricity plants were running in Phnom Penh, along with some textile mills and dry cell battery factories.⁸⁴ It further reported that work on restoring the water supply and power station was in motion in Kampong Cham town, adding

⁷⁴ "Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Growing Strategic Crops," Radio Phnom Penh, 31 May 1975.

⁷⁵ "Self-Reliant Production Hailed," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 May 1975.

⁷⁶ "Radio Commentaries Stresses [sic] Determination to Build the Country," Radio Phnom Penh, 2 May 1975.

⁷⁷ "Cites Agricultural, Industrial Progress," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 May 1975.

⁷⁸ "Mountain Villager's Weaving Industry Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 June 9, 1975.

⁷⁹ "Commentary Urges Promotion of Handicraft Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 20 June 1975.

⁸⁰ "Radio Phnom Penh Looks at Traditions of Cambodian Culture," Radio Phnom Penh; see also "Combatants, Workers Strive to Rebuild Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 8 May 1975.

⁸¹ "Radio Phnom Penh Discusses New Economic Situation," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 May 1975; see also "Continuing Efforts to Repair Route 10 Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 29 May 1975.

⁸² "Combatants, Workers Strive to Rebuild Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 8 May 1975.

⁸³ "Clean-Up Efforts Reported Underway in Battambang," Radio Phnom Penh, 13 May 1975.

⁸⁴ "Efforts to Restore Factories in Phnom Penh Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 15 May 1975.

that there were plans to repair the textile mill on the outskirts of this historical provincial capital, all this despite a lack of equipment.⁸⁵ Water and electricity services were also said to be up and running in Kampong Saom.⁸⁶ Of course, neither now nor later would radio programming or internal CPK articles about industry ever report anything about the delivery of Chinese yarn, thread, dye, sewing machinery, and other supplies that could be used in textile production, the jute needed in manufacturing gunny sacks, or the nails, construction steel, screws, cement, diesel engines, fuel, and lubricants that were very possibly contributing to getting factories in general and water and electricity supplies in particular back in operation.

Radio broadcasts reported in a similarly incomplete manner about lines of communication. As early as the beginning of May 1975, the radio said efforts had begun to try to repair roads and railways,⁸⁷ the former including National Routes 2, 4, 5, and 6, plus provincial Route 10 from Battambang to Pailin, and the latter including both the Phnom Penh-Kampong Saom and Phnom Penh-Battambang tracks.⁸⁸ In these and subsequent such references to this work, the role of the army was highlighted, and it was stressed that, in principle, railways were eventually to play the key role in moving rice and other goods inside the country. At the end of May, the National Route roadways 3 and 4 were described as passable, while work on Routes 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 and the two rail lines was said to be continuing.⁸⁹ Yet again, there would be total silence in CPK-controlled media about any contribution made over time to such work by the Chinese trucks and railway equipment that were definitely in the aid package, as well as the additional Chinese assistance in the form of earth-moving machines, steamrollers, and digging tools that may also have eventually been delivered.

Turning to medicine, the radio reiterated the general contention that wartime achievements were now being developed further. One May 1975 broadcast claimed that during the war, the revolution had “solved the problems of medicine” by producing “pills by the traditional method to heal virtually all kinds of diseases” while also making “modern, effective medicines of very good

⁸⁵ “Radio Reports Repair Activities in Kampong Cham,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 May 1975.

⁸⁶ “Radio Reports on Reconstruction of Sihanoukville,” Radio Phnom Penh, 21 May 1975.

⁸⁷ “Radio Phnom Penh Reports Efforts to Clean Up Countryside,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 May 1975.

⁸⁸ “Radio Reports Repair Work on Communication Lines,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 May 1975; “Radio Reports Repairs to Transportation Facilities,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975; “Continuing Efforts to Repair Route 10 Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 29 May 1975.

⁸⁹ Radio Reports on Transportation Line Repair Work,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 May 1975; “Railway Repairs,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

quality.”⁹⁰ Another asserted that the development of pharmaceuticals during the war via the use of traditional medicines had been “combined with the occasional use of modern ones.” It said such practices were now spreading, including to Phnom Penh, by further “combining traditional medical practice and the customs of our people with modern science and by exploring and exploiting the resources of our country, which is so rich in medicinal plants, roots, barks, fruits, and a great variety of tree leaves.” As a result, medicines were being produced that purportedly included “pills to treat malaria, tonics, various kinds of vitamins, antiseptics for wounds, and other medicines to cure headaches, stomachaches, tuberculosis, dysentery, diarrhea, women’s complaints, liver troubles, and so on.”⁹¹ It reported that medicines were already being transported from the capital to the countryside for distribution there.⁹² As on other fronts, the radio and internal CPK media would remain stum about the PRC’s multiform medical materials provided in its 1975 aid package, including medications, injection needles, and surgical gowns.

For his part, Prince Norodom Sihanouk spoke in May, in his then still official capacity as Kampuchea’s Chief of State, about his anticipation that the country was “once more becoming an exporter of cereals, fruit, and livestock,” and that he was looking forward to the modernization of its agriculture and development of its industry, specifying that its “revolutionary people” would be able to achieve this goal because they had already proved themselves capable of overcoming “the worst adversity,” an allusion to the 1970-1975 war. He proclaimed during a trip to Algeria that Kampuchea preferred to dress the resulting wounds of war, “no matter how serious they may be,” by itself, and was therefore in particular uninterested in any “reparations” from the US for population deaths and general destruction resulting from its air operations affecting his country.⁹³ Nevertheless, later that month, PRC media indicated a Chinese interest in Kampuchean efforts to rehabilitate what was then still called the Sihanoukville port at Kampong Saom, because this would “contribute greatly” to reopening Kampuchean international trade with “friendly countries.”⁹⁴ However, it provided no specifics about how this interest would be effected or what Kampuchea would be trading with such countries.

⁹⁰ “Past Struggle Viewed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 May 1975.

⁹¹ “Radio Reports Resurgence of Traditional Medicine,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975.

⁹² “Phnom Penh Port Repaired; Traffic Reported Operating Normally,” Radio Phnom Penh; see also “Phnom Penh Port Repair Work, Activities Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 16 June 1975.

⁹³ “Sihanouk: War Reparations ‘Devalue’ Cambodia’s Victory,” Algiers El Moudjahid, 8 May 1975.

⁹⁴ “NCNA Cites NUFCA Radio on Rehabilitation of Sihanoukville,” Peking NCNA, 24 May 1975.

Meanwhile, Radio Phnom Penh promoted what would become a persistent propaganda campaign, maintaining that although eschewing foreign aid would entail hardship, doing so was an absolute necessity to safeguard and increase Kampuchea's independence. Thus, while holding out the prospect of coming economic accomplishments, the station conceded that in the short run making the supposedly necessary first steps toward them would not be easy. A May 1975 program reviewing the war period emphasized that victory in battle had been achieved via "a stand of resolute struggle, undergoing all sufferings and grief, encountering all sorts of obstacles," which had been necessary in order to avoid foreign "enslavement." This, it forewarned, would continue to be "the path of our revolution" and would in the immediate future still require being resolved to endure upcoming "sufferings and difficulties."⁹⁵

⁹⁵ "Radio Phnom Penh Hails People's Struggle Spirit," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 May 1975; "Radio Commentary on Need to Persist in Struggle," Radio Phnom Penh, 23 May 1975.

JUNE to JULY 1975

It was therefore only behind the scenes that existing arrangements and possibilities for eventual development of PRC-Kampuchean aid, trade, and economic relations were furthered. During a June-July 1975 secret CPK leadership visit to China, a series of non-public meetings with ranking Chinese interlocuters were held to discuss such issues. The first of these took place on 21 June between Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Chairperson Mao Zedong and CPK Central Committee Secretary Pol Pot. Also attending were the CPK Central Committee Standing Committee member responsible for foreign affairs Ieng Sary and two CPK Central Committee members with military responsibilities: Men San [rendered as Ming Shan in Chinese] and Tum (rendered Du Mu in Chinese).⁹⁶ Men San (called Ya) had been appointed GRUNK Minister of Armaments and Military Equipment in November 1974,⁹⁷ and for a while after 17 April 1975 he and Tum (born Seat Chhe) were members of the Kampuchean military General Staff.⁹⁸

The available record of this meeting with Mao does not mention aid, trade, or economic matters. However, they are touched upon in a Vietnamese translation of what appear to be excerpts from CPK notes on discussions that Secretary Pol and some (unnamed) additional members of the CPK delegation had with Chinese interlocutors (also unnamed)⁹⁹ during what seems to have been four follow-up meetings that started on the same day as the 21 June audience with Mao and then ended some time in July.¹⁰⁰

The 21 June follow-up apparently dealt only in general terms with building up the Kampuchean army and the country itself. Then, during the second meeting, that on 27 June, the CPK put forward rather detailed requests for PRC help in the restoration of, and effecting the initial steps in, the development of the Kampuchean economy. The evidence suggests that these may have eventuated

⁹⁶ “Conversation Record of Chairman Mao Zedong’s Meeting with Pol Pot, Secretary of the Central Committee of The Communist Party of Kampuchea, 21 June 1975” at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/122052>.

⁹⁷ “Sihanouk Names New RGNUC Ministers,” Cambodian Information Agency, 15 January 1975; ECCC Document E3/17 [EN], “Written Record of Charged Person,” 29 November 2007, *passim*.

⁹⁸ ECCC Document E1/55.1 [EN], “Transcript of Trial Proceedings Public Case File No 002/19-09-2007-ECCC/TC, 28 March 2012,” p.29.

⁹⁹ ECCC Document E/10686 [VN]. The original Khmer-language document may have been captured by Vietnamese forces that entered Phnom Penh in January 1979. The version held in ECCC archives is in the form of a handwritten text copied from a document in Vietnamese archives.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

in at least some of the publicly unacknowledged types and quantities of items that had already been included in, or would be added to, the previously contracted PRC gratis aid package. These items would be put to use in the projects that were being and would be praised by Radio Phnom Penh, *Revolutionary Flag[s]*, and Revolutionary Youth as being carried out on the basis of self-reliance. The CPK delegation specified that the most important thing for it was restoration of lines of communication and a number of factories manufacturing everyday goods and materials for handicrafts and for rubber production, logging, and fishing. Urgent assistance was needed for the existing railway networks, including the line between Phnom Penh and Kampong Saom, manufacturing equipment, the making of tools, the Chup rubber processing factory in the East Zone, necessary items for the timber handicrafts industry like those for cutting and transporting timber and making plywood, handicraft equipment for maritime fishing (catches of which were to be sold to Singapore and Thailand), several fishing boats, and three agricultural tractors.¹⁰¹ According to the above-mentioned DCCam interview with Kampuchean Commerce cadre Van Rit, he heard that during Pol's meeting with Mao, the CPK chief turned down his Chinese counterpart's offer of what could at that time possibly have been additional rice and salt aid beyond that indicated in the above aid package figures. Van Rit reported Pol asked instead only for 2,000,000 hoes that Pol said the Kampuchean people could use to produce their own food self-reliantly,¹⁰² this being the exact number included in the package.

In making its requests to the Chinese, the CPK side told them it was taking into account the fact that much of the foreign development aid Kampuchea had received before the revolution was beyond repair, but some could be put back into action. This meant that a number of old factories and vehicles could still be used, pending new ones being built and manufactured, respectively.¹⁰³ It also presented its requests as in service of the CPK policy of making rice-growing the foremost part of its vision and relying on agriculture as the key to Kampuchea's development, along with rubber, timber, and fish and other maritime goods, all in order to improve the livelihood of the now wholly rural population, including evacuees. The CPK assured the Chinese that 95 to 96 percent of the latter had been happy to be relocated to the countryside,¹⁰⁴ telling them the same thing that Radio Phnom Penh had been trying to get its Kampuchean audience to believe.

¹⁰¹ ECCC Document E/10686 [VN], p.7.

¹⁰² DCCam Document [KH], "Interview with Van Rit, Former Chairman of the Democratic Kampuchea Commerce Office, at Khpop Village, Khpop Commune, S'ang District, Kandal Province, 10 February 2003, Interview by Youk Chhang and Huy Vannak," p.62.

¹⁰³ ECCC Document E/10686 [VN], p.6.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

Another discussion in June revolved around Kampuchea's coastal waters. The CPK delegates described the country's seafront geography and gave their views on maritime disputes with Thailand and Vietnam. They said the former were about fishing, but the latter, those with Vietnam, constituted a "strategic contradiction over political, military, and economic matters, especially oil."¹⁰⁵

This set the scene for the July meeting, which was attended by Pol and was on the CPK's need for "military aid," which the Kampucheans said had three important components. These were help with making use of captured Khmer Republic weaponry, particular other aid for which the CPK had an "indispensable" need, plus further aid to be given in accordance with CPK requests. There was discussion of maintenance of four types of captured Republican naval vessels (submarine chasers, escort ships, missile attack boats, and amphibious landing craft) and of captured Republican aircraft, as well as repair of the Phnom Penh and Siem Reap airports. In addition, the CPK wanted eventually to receive fully adequate PRC equipment for seven air force regiments and PRC help in forming, as part of Kampuchea's ground forces, two to three artillery regiments, one tank regiment, and one engineer river-crossing battalion.¹⁰⁶ This Chinese-aided build up was to be done in line with the CPK policy of making preparations to gradually form such specialty army forces.¹⁰⁷ The CPK side indicated this would be in the context of a near future situation in which Kampuchea's officially-claimed military strength would be reduced from a wartime 80,000 troops to a postwar complement of 50,000, and during which time there would be enough PRC weapons left over from the war to arm 70-80 percent of the main forces among these.¹⁰⁸

The notes on these June-July 1975 meetings do not make clear the extent to which the PRC actually agreed to provide the types and quantities of military aid discussed or the extent to which Kampuchea would pay for them. However, the above-described documents on file at DCCam provide evidence that delivery of some gratis military aid followed very quickly in 1975. Other sections of the Vietnamese translated document contain information that agreement on provision of more assistance was not reached until February 1976, and that this was also provided on a gratis, non-reimbursable basis.¹⁰⁹ During his interview with DCCam, Van Rit similarly said that, to his knowledge, PRC military assistance came as grant aid and thus did not have to be purchased using Kampuchean funds.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp.5-6.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p.10.

¹⁰⁹ See below.

¹¹⁰ DCCam Document [KH], "Interview with Van Rit, Former Chairman of the Democratic Kampuchea

While the talks with the PRC about help from it were going on, Radio Phnom Penh again recalled that the 1970-1975 war had been won via a “willingness to endure all hardships and overcome all obstacles” to make Kampuchea “completely independent” and reiterated that to now strengthen the country’s independence required continuing to follow this revolutionary tradition of enduring such difficulties. This, it said, meant it was necessary to “redouble our struggle efforts ten or a hundred fold” in recognition of the immediate need “to work hard to improve living conditions in general.”¹¹¹ In early July, this theme was pushed by telling the people that “they must work ten to 20 times harder” to build the country economically, again “voluntarily” enduring “all sorts of hardships.”¹¹² They were told they must do so in a situation in which the radio would soon admit “it is true that we still lack everything,”¹¹³ thus as always failing to acknowledge what the PRC was doing to overcome shortages, at least in certain crucial areas.

Meanwhile, the radio aired programs apparently aimed at establishing some pre-revolution baseline economic specifics in the public mind. It began with one program correctly stating in general terms that historically rice and rubber had been Kampuchea’s most important agricultural products, then declaring that the revolution’s general objective was now to increase their production, along with that of meat, fish, and unspecified forest products. However, for whatever reason, it misleadingly cited almost only 1960-1961 crop-year figures according to which the country had at that time planted 1,423,000 hectares of land to rice and gotten a little less than 1.1 ton per hectare to produce 1,554,000 tons of paddy and export 391,000 tons of these (234,600 tons of rice). It added that as of 1964, the total acreage of rice-growing land had gone up to 2,535,400 hectares, but was not clear how much of this had in practice been planted. On rubber, this broadcast said that in that same year it had been grown on 45,990 hectares, producing 45,760 tons of latex, and that 30,313 tons of all kinds of rubber had been exported in the first quarter of 1965. It argued that given the new regime’s “complete control of all factors of production,” such rice and rubber production figures would be surpassed.¹¹⁴

Commerce Office, at Khpop Village, Khpop Commune, S’ang District, Kandal province, 10 February 2003, Interview by Youk Chhang and Huy Vannak,” p.64.

¹¹¹ “Commentary on Three Required Revolutionary Characteristics,” Radio Phnom Penh, 25 June 1975.

¹¹² “Radio Phnom Penh Hails Country’s Victory, Production Movement,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 July 1975; “Radio Commentary Hails Economy, Production Drive,” Radio Phnom Penh, 5 July 1975; “Radio Phnom Penh Extols Cambodians’ Work Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 July 1975.

¹¹³ “Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Building Industry,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 August 1975.

¹¹⁴ “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

A broadcast two days later again cited more or less the same 1960-1961 statistics, even if it added some details. These included that of the 1,554,000 tons of paddy produced in that cultivation year, 1,000,000 (or 600,000 tons of rice) were consumed locally by 5,000,000 people, which gives an annual average of 120 kilograms of rice per person. Its numbers also said that of the total paddy harvest, 110,000 tons had been set aside as “surplus,” without explaining what this meant. The 1960-1961 production results were also broken down by province. This showed that Battambang and Posat, the two provinces making up the CPK’s Northwest Zone, had cultivated 375,000 hectares that produced 471,000 tons of paddy (282,600 tons of rice), still not much more than a ton of paddy per hectare, but a figure significantly more on its own than the entire national quantity exported from that crop year. The other addition was a statement that as of 1969, the year before the outbreak of nation-wide war, the country’s rice-growing area covered 3,000,000 million hectares, but again not specifying whether all of these were planted.¹¹⁵ This program’s implication was perhaps that such a much expanded cultivation acreage could now be achieved or even outperformed. Five months later, Radio Phnom Penh asserted that before the revolution, the maximum amount ever in fact farmed was only 2,000,000 hectares,¹¹⁶ making this the baseline from which the CPK was starting.

The problem is that it appears the rice economy statistics in these broadcasts largely and misleadingly ignored the true numbers about its development through to the end of the 1960s, at least presuming that various foreign academic publications relying on contemporaneous official data describe them more accurately. One gives the area already cultivated back in 1950 as 1,660,000 hectares, and the then paddy yield per hectare at around one ton, which would mean 1,660,000 tons of paddy. It puts the 1965 paddy production up to 2,750,000 tons on fields with an average paddy yield of around 1.1 ton per hectare (implying 2,500,000 hectares were cultivated) and reports 500,000 tons of the resulting crop (300,000 tons of rice) were exported. It characterizes 1969 as a record year, with an early 1970 paddy harvest of 3,800,000 tons (2,280,000 tons of rice),¹¹⁷ an already more than one-million-ton increase of output over 1965. Another study states that in the previous 1968-1969 crop year, 2,427,000 hectares were farmed with an average yield of 1.3 tons per hectares,¹¹⁸ making

¹¹⁵ “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

¹¹⁶ “Prospects for Greater Rice Yields Viewed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975.

¹¹⁷ Rob Cramb, et al., op. cit., pp.230-231.

¹¹⁸ Margaret Slocomb, *An Economic History of Cambodia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2010), p.205.

for 3,155,100 tons of paddy (1,893,060 tons of rice), less than in early 1970, but almost twice the figure Radio Phnom Penh was giving for 1960-1961. A third academic account notes that during the 1960s, the acreage of land devoted to rice production rose to 2,200,000 hectares and specifies that “milled rice exports reached levels in the range of 250,000-400,000 t[ons] [per] y[ear].”¹¹⁹ The lower end of this was more than the radio’s number for the first crop year of the decade, the upper end much more so. If the academic accounts are a truer baseline than the those put out by Radio Phnom Penh, this would mean that the pre-war rice economy starting point that the revolution was presenting itself as aiming to surpass would not be as difficult for it and the population to reach as eventual CPK production targets would imply, but also that any success in doing so would not be as great a credit to the Kampuchean revolution and its people.

In any case, further broadcasts reminded listeners that in the historical economy, rubber had been second only to rice, and maintained that already during the war, liberated zone workers had begun planting new trees. It said this effort was continuing post-war,¹²⁰ along with striving to extract a maximum amount of latex from mature trees while also gathering up old tools and making new ones with a view to expanding processing.¹²¹ The radio also cited old society statistics about annual exports of 25,000 tons of timber, noting it had been the third or fourth most important export after rice, rubber, and pepper, now adding the detail that other forest products exported included resin, ratan, liana, nux vomica, wood oil, tree bark, cardamom, and honey. It called for the preservation of forests and continuation of exports from them, but did not at this point suggest there would be increases over historical levels.¹²² On the other hand, amidst recapitulation of statistics on historical raising of farm animals,¹²³ resumption of exports of chickens, ducks, cows, and buffaloes in greater quantities than before 1970 was envisaged,¹²⁴ along with sale abroad of live cattle,¹²⁵ plus that of beef and buffalo meat once there were sufficient numbers of these animals and domestic needs were met, which was foreseen as happening soon.¹²⁶

¹¹⁹ H.J. Nesbit, ed., *Rice Production in Cambodia* (Cambodia-IRRI-Australia 1997), pp.11-12.

¹²⁰ “Rubber Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 June 1975.

¹²¹ “Phnom Penh Notes Efforts to Develop Natural Rubber Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 June 1975.

¹²² “Forest Preservation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 15 June 1975.

¹²³ “Radio Reports Efforts to Develop Animal Husbandry,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975; “Phnom Penh Reports Efforts to Boost Pig, Poultry Production,” 14 June 1975.

¹²⁴ “Solidarity Teams Boost Animal Raising Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 June 1975.

¹²⁵ “Radio Reports Takeo Village’s Success in Cattle Raising,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

¹²⁶ “Radio Phnom Penh Sees Need for More Cattle,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 July 1975.

A similar scenario was laid out for fish: that once Kampuchea was able to “produce enough fish paste, dried fish, and smoked fish for distribution throughout the country,” thereby having gradually improved the population’s nutrition, fresh and saltwater fish could then be exported in greater quantities than the historical figure of 35,000 tons per year, helping to make it possible to buy engines and motors.¹²⁷ One June program predicted that it “might” be possible to export saltwater fish “in the very near future.” Another described fish, both fresh and saltwater, as having great export prospects. It reiterated that once there were enough fish and fish products for internal distribution, such that the popular standard of living was going up, exports of them could be boosted and would bring in money with which to purchase factory equipment for building the economy by “leaps and bounds.”¹²⁸ A July radio program looked forward to exporting 20,000-30,000 tons of saltwater fish and a quantity of freshwater fish, and a later broadcast repeated assurances that this would be done while also meeting local consumption needs.¹²⁹

Turning to trying to convince listeners that future agriculture could and would be made more prosperous than that before 1970, the radio claimed in June that “[r]ice production in the liberated zone gradually increased from 1970 to mid-1973, and from then on rice production increased by leaps and bounds.” Using the then-public euphemism “solidarity group,” which was later said to refer to the lower of two levels of agricultural production cooperatives,¹³⁰ this broadcast attributed such supposed war-time productivity advances to the empowerment of poor and lower-middle peasants via the establishment of such collectively organized farming under their control, including the launching of joint labor projects to build dams, reservoirs, and other irrigation works. These achievements were presented as having laid the foundation for further and

¹²⁷ “Fish Industry, Resources,” Radio Phnom Penh, 16 June 1975.

¹²⁸ “Phnom Penh Reports Coastal Fishing Development,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 June 1975; “Fishing Industry, Resources,” Radio Phnom Penh, 16 June 1975.

¹²⁹ “Fishing, Other Activities in Kep Area Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 August 1975.

¹³⁰ On the reality, see ECCC Document E3/5 [KH], “Cadres, Party Members, the People and the Revolutionary Army Must Be in Unity with the Party in Assessment and Evaluation of the Situation” and “Another Important Step in the Success of the Cooperatives and of Our Revolutionary Movement,” in *Revolutionary Flags Number 8*, August 1975, pp.13-14 and pp.71, respectively; ECCC Document E3/729 [KH], “Kampuchean Youth Must Forge and Re-Fashion Themselves in the Movement to Strengthen and Expand Production Cooperatives,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 10*, October 1975, pp.2-3; and ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “Strengthen and Expand the Party’s Production Cooperatives to Make Them Even More Strong and Daring in Order that They Become the Core Force for Achieving Three Tons Per Hectare in 1976,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, p.58, wherein it is explained that even if something is called a solidarity group, it has the characteristics of a cooperative. For Radio Phnom Penh’s eventual dropping of the euphemism, see “Founding of Peasants’ Cooperatives Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 May 1976.

greater increases in post-liberation rice production.¹³¹ A follow-up program called upon the population to wage a battle to expand the acreage planted and increase yields, mentioning the possibility of reaching more than six tons of paddy per hectare in some areas. However, the more general potential was said to be three to 3.5 tons of paddy.¹³² The radio did not on this occasion specify what land could attain six tons or how, but highlighted hopes that in Battambang the current production offensive would double the previous agricultural output.¹³³ It insisted that with the rural labor force now increased by evacuees from the towns and with everyone also now being organized for group production and campaigns to construct reservoirs and irrigation canals, to expand cultivation acreage, and to apply fertilizer, it had become possible via potential improvements in yields to “boost production to the maximum.”¹³⁴

A broadcast in mid-July declared that in Kampuchea in general, “there are many possibilities for securing two or three rice crops a year, and we are very much able to increase rice [paddy] yields from one to three to four tons per hectare” per crop. However, it still did not say either how these possibilities would be distributed across land sown to rice or how soon they might be realized. Another program that month provided additional numbers, but again without either clarifying matters of land allocation proportions or offering a clear timeline. However, while promoting the overall goal of making Kampuchea into “a modern agricultural and industrialized nation,” the broadcast stipulated this would require quantitatively increasing and qualitatively improving all production. It further specified on agriculture “if we had two or three million hectares of rice land in the past, now and in the future, we must expand it to cover at least four or five million hectares.” On yields, it also now explained:

¹³¹ “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

¹³² “Phnom Penh Examines Demands of Economy, Creativity,” Radio Phnom Penh, 1 July 1975.

¹³³ “Radio Phnom Penh Notes Restoration Efforts in Battambang,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

¹³⁴ “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

On one hectare of land, we usually reap one ton of grain [paddy]. With efforts to enrich it with fertilizers, the same one hectare could yield two or three tons of rice [paddy]. ... Now we must strive to irrigate and fertilize the same plot so that it can be sown to rice at least two or three times a year. ... This is in order to increase production by increasing the yield. From the same acreage, we try to reap as much as three, four, five, or even six times more per year. Therefore, it is necessary for us to solve the water conservancy problem by multiplying the number of dams, reservoirs, ponds, and ditches. When we master irrigation, we will be able to grow rice at least twice a year. Our goal is to have three crops a year.¹³⁵

This push for yield increase was in order to produce high-quality rice for export,¹³⁶ part of a future that the radio again promised would be one in which Kampuchea would never have to worry about a budget deficit or any other kind of economic crisis again.¹³⁷

Echoing these remarks, another program repeated the theme that the objective of this was to transform Kampuchea “from a backward agricultural country into a modern agricultural one and then into a modern industrialized one by leaps and bounds and on a stand of independence and mastership.” It reaffirmed that the idea was to produce both enough rice to feed the population and a surplus for export to make it possible soon to mechanize agriculture and expand industry by importing the necessary equipment and machinery. It further insisted that achieving the surplus in the first instance required having the population construct irrigation works of all kinds.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ “Radio Phnom Penh on Production Qualitative, Quantitative Gains,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 July 1975.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ “Phnom Penh Judges Development Under Imperialists, Revolution,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 July 1975.

¹³⁸ “Radio Commentary Stresses Importance of Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 22 July 1975.

It gave this account of the plan for fantastic national progress through rice production:

If we have rice, we have everything; our people can eat their fill, and we can export it for hard currency. The more rice we produce, the greater potential we have for export. The more we export, the better we can afford to buy equipment, machines, and other instruments necessary for building our industry, communication lines, and for rapidly changing our agriculture. Even if we have a great quantity of rice, we do not have to worry about finding a market. Many foreign countries need to import rice. No matter how much rice we have we will be able to sell it all.¹³⁹

It also provided urgent and detailed instructions on cultivation of the current rainy season crop, telling the combined veteran and new people rural labor forces to carry on with:

... efforts to till, plow, sow, and transplant rice. Wherever we have already sown the seed we should take good care of the seedlings. Where we have not yet sown and have just enough water, we should immediately sow. ... In some places, there is much rainwater, and in others, the rainfall is scanty. In the wet areas we should carry on the struggle to take care of the transplanted stalks and to maintain the dams and dikes. If there is too much water, we should enlarge the ditches to drain the water quickly so it will not submerge our rice stalks and kill them. If our seedlings or transplanted stalks die, we should replace them immediately. We should not relax in guarding ... our dams. Wherever there is not enough rain, we should mobilize our forces to plunge into the battle to dig ponds, reservoirs, and build embankments and dams to conserve water.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

It added reassuringly that “if we miss the current rainy season rice crop, we will be able to plant the coming dry season crop at once because we have all the dams and ditches ready.” Thus, in general terms, “if we fully master the water conservancy problem, our rice crops will be plentiful, and we will be able to make our country progress rapidly.”¹⁴¹

Two days later, the radio reaffirmed, while totally avoiding specifics, that Kampuchea’s new regime was going to have:

many possibilities of trading with foreign countries. No matter how much we have in terms of agricultural products, we can always sell them abroad, for countries friendly to us are always ready to import from us.¹⁴²

It continued to insist that the objective factors in Kampuchea were very favorable to achieving economic success as long as the requisite effort was made, and as long as that effort was properly led politically. It said Kampuchea:

is endowed with considerable natural resources ... Most of our lands are rich and fertile. We have plenty of water for agriculture, transportation, and industry. We have plenty of forests which are rich with precious wood and many other secondary products. We have a sea which abounds in fish and has the potential for petroleum extraction. We also possess a great variety of crops and plantations which can be developed to the maximum. Our handicrafts are growing steadily and are being expanded so that one day they will be changed into industrial enterprises.¹⁴³

It specified that Kampuchea’s rich and fertile land included “red earth in which we plant rubber trees in large plantations – which can be limitlessly expanded and developed” and soil along lakes and rivers that could be “sown to all kinds of crops” and upon which cultivation of them could similarly be expanded.¹⁴⁴ It also hailed the possibilities for producing hydroelectric power from dams that could be built on watercourses in multiple mountainous areas.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

The emphasis on irrigation was reflected in June 1975 radio reports on various districts, which said they had been able to start cultivation of rainy-season rice early because water management systems had already been put in place during the war.¹⁴⁶ Broadcasts also commended what they described as arduous rainy season planting offensives, carried out with day and night work,¹⁴⁷ hailing efforts relying on irrigated fields in Kampong Thom as an example.¹⁴⁸

Also highlighted were other locations where plowing and harrowing were taking place and transplanting had begun¹⁴⁹ or where this had been half-completed by mid-June.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, new campaigns to construct dikes, ditches, and dams were said to be on-going,¹⁵¹ continuing into July.¹⁵² On the other hand, in various locations, transplanting was reportedly still being carried out as of late June¹⁵³ and was still happening¹⁵⁴ and thus incomplete as of July.¹⁵⁵ That month, the radio voiced some specific concerns about the state of the paddy production campaign. It called for:

trying harder to provide still better care for our rice seedlings and the newly transplanted rice stalks, to preserve the dikes, irrigation canals, ponds, and water reservoirs that we have built. Without proper care, these facilities may deteriorate, and the seedlings and newly transplanted rice stalks can be spoiled, thus causing a loss of seed, wasting our labor and time, and hampering our drive to increase production. ... Various farming implements, including plows, hoes, plowshares, spades, scythes, and axes, must be carefully preserved.¹⁵⁶

¹⁴⁶ "Snuol District," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 June 1975; "Koh Sotin District," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 June 1975;

"Kampong Cham District's Irrigation, Planting Efforts Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 1975.

¹⁴⁷ "Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Nation's Economy," Radio Phnom Penh, 17 June 1975.

¹⁴⁸ "Phnom Penh Reports Progress in Kampong Thom Irrigation Work," Radio Phnom Penh, 2 June 1975.

¹⁴⁹ "Kampong Ro District," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 June 1975.

¹⁵⁰ "Radio Phnom Penh Views Krakor District's Production Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 June 1975.

¹⁵¹ "Water Conservancy Efforts, Rainfall Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 20 June 1975; "Kampong Thom Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 1975; "Kampong Cham District's Irrigation, Planting Efforts Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 1975; "Peam Prous District Farming," Radio Phnom Penh, 28 June 1975; "Figures Given for Siem Reap Province Dams, Ditches," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 July 1975; "Tuk Chreou Water Conservation Facilities Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 July 1975; "Combatants Help Build Country While Defending It," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 August 1975.

¹⁵² "District Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 July 7, 1975.

¹⁵³ "District in Oddar Meanchey," Radio Phnom Penh, 22 June 1975; "Kampong Cham District's Irrigation, Planting Efforts Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 26, 1975; "Siem Reap Strategic Crops," Radio Phnom Penh, 30 June 1975.

¹⁵⁴ "Sisophon District Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 July 1975; "Daun Toan Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 July 1975; "Figures Given for Siem Reap Province Dams, Ditches," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 July 1975; "Sereikar District Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 23 July 1975.

¹⁵⁵ Koh Kralor Rice Growing," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 August 1975; "Rice Cultivation Campaign," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 August 1975.

¹⁵⁶ "Phnom Penh Examines Demands of Economy, Creativity," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 July 1975.

It made a renewed call for the use of natural fertilizers, predicting that doing so could raise yields from the ordinary 1.0-1.5 tons to 3.0-3.5 tons per hectare,¹⁵⁷ presumably referring to a single crop.

During June and July, the radio aired a series of programs claiming greater or lesser economic progress had been made or was taking place on a wide variety of non-agricultural fronts, all of course without a single hint of any of the PRC assistance that might already have contributed to the claimed advances or would be doing so, whether as part of the original secret aid contract or of the equally confidential discussions then going on in Beijing.

On the industrial front, the radio said that the first order of business was still to repair and put back into production pre-war factories, after which their productivity was to be increased beyond historical norms.¹⁵⁸ It reported that by early June, water and electricity services were up and running in Svay Rieng provincial town, along with rice mills and workshops.¹⁵⁹ It also said that the waterworks and power plant in Battambang town were “gradually resuming operations” along with many rice mills and railway and other workshops, and that while the gunny sack factory in the province was still undergoing repairs, a textile mill there was purportedly already producing cloth.¹⁶⁰

Other June 1975 programs asserted that in Phnom Penh, a huge labor force it said comprised a hundred thousand army combatants and workers had “gradually returned to production” all the major textile mills and dry cell battery factories, tire and lighter production sites, paper mills, and soy sauce and pickled bean processing plants, along with several repair shops and turneries producing spare parts and various equipment for agriculture and industry, plus soap factories. They said efforts were at the same time being made to repair factories producing pharmaceutical products and medical equipment and were otherwise giving importance to factories producing “farming equipment such as saws, hammers, anvils, chisels, hand drills, hoes, knives, axes, lighters, plates, spoons, and teaching equipment.” They also mentioned the “normal operation” of the capital’s electricity and water works and maintained that output from its textile factories was already being distributed to workers and peasants. A late month story on Battambang elaborated on earlier claims, saying that rice mills, textile mills, the gunny sack

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ “Radio Phnom Penh on Production Qualitative, Quantitative Gains,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 July 1975.

¹⁵⁹ “Continuing Efforts to Clean Cities Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 June 1975.

¹⁶⁰ “Radio Phnom Penh Notes Restoration Efforts in Battambang,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

factory, and a number of turneries were back in operation. It also noted that attempts were being made to get a factory in Kampot back into production.¹⁶¹

One follow-up program in July featured a textile mill in Pochentong west of Phnom Penh, where ongoing repairs by workers and army combatants were said to promise an expansion of output, which, for the time being, was concentrating on producing black cloth for military uniforms.¹⁶² Others reported that the Chak Angre textile factory on the southern outskirts of Phnom Penh was also back in operation,¹⁶³ as was the tire factory in Ta Khmao town of Kandal province, with army combatants and workers cooperating to produce automobile and bicycle tires using newly produced local rubber, and also by melting down old tires to manufacture new ones.¹⁶⁴ There was a July radio call to accelerate the repair of factories and to strive to increase and improve the quality of their output once repaired, such as at textile mills and dry cell battery plants, by working harder and exerting greater efforts.¹⁶⁵

On health matters, there were June radio claims that work was being done to reactivate facilities in Phnom Penh for the future manufacture of pharmaceutical products and medical equipment,¹⁶⁶ as part of a stated aspiration to “completely eradicate various diseases.”¹⁶⁷ It said that with the reopening of roads, medicines were being delivered to faraway Mondulhiri province.¹⁶⁸ It also provided one account of how people in a subdistrict in Kampong Chhnang province were, “independently and of their own initiative,” turning out “tonics, analgesics, laxatives, anticholera medicines, medicines to cure leprosy, and medicines to cure skin diseases in general;”¹⁶⁹ a second account elaborated on how those in a district in Battambang province were similarly “producing a variety of medicines from locally made materials;”¹⁷⁰ and a third described how “a medical technical team” in a district of Kampong Chhnang was making “encouraging progress” in using such ingredients to formulate medicines to fight headaches, cough, colds,

¹⁶¹ “Radio Phnom Penh Views Joint Efforts to Restore Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 24 June 1975; “Factories, Utilities in Phnom Penh Reported Working Again,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 June 1975; “Radio Hails Achievements of Chak Angre Battery Factories,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 June 1975; “Phnom Penh Soap Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 29 June 1975; “Radio Views Restoration of Phnom Penh’s Textile Mills,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 June 1975.

¹⁶² “Radio Phnom Penh Views Pochentong Textile Mill’s Operation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 July 1975.

¹⁶³ “Workers Praise Radio’s Achievements,” Radio Phnom Penh, 31 July 1975.

¹⁶⁴ “Tire Factory Production Gains Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 July 1975.

¹⁶⁵ Radio Phnom Penh on Production Qualitative, Quantitative Gains,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 July 1975.

¹⁶⁶ “Radio Phnom Penh Views Joint Efforts to Restore Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 24 June 1975.

¹⁶⁷ “Commentary on Three Required Revolutionary Characteristics,” Radio Phnom Penh, 25 June 1975.

¹⁶⁸ “Phnom Penh Reports Progress in Repairing Route 14,” Radio Phnom Penh, 25 June 1975.

¹⁶⁹ “Health, Social Welfare Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 June 1975.

¹⁷⁰ “Battambang District Stresses All-Round Development,” Radio Phnom Penh, 30 June 1975.

malaria, cholera, hemorrhoids, and mange and turn out medicines for women who have just given birth, plus vitamins C, B1, and B12, while also practicing acupuncture.¹⁷¹

In July 1975, there was a radio feature about the operation of a reopened hospital in Kampong Cham town, where it was said the medical staff was treating patients with locally prepared and modern medicines.¹⁷² In addition, there were accounts of how people were benefiting from locally concocted medicines in Kien Svay district of Kandal province¹⁷³ and in Pailin¹⁷⁴ and Mong Russei districts,¹⁷⁵ both of Battambang province. Meanwhile, from July and into August, the radio stressed the need to gather up modern medicines discovered in Phnom Penh and other towns and to put them into storage, where they must be taken care of in order to be kept in good condition so that they could be used over a long period of time to help improve popular living conditions.¹⁷⁶

Regarding lines of communication, the radio declared in June that one stretch of the track from Battambang toward Phnom Penh was operational.¹⁷⁷ It explained that, in principle, putting trains back into service was a higher priority than reopening roads for trucks, because the latter would consume more fuel and should be used only as a stopgap measure. Nevertheless, in the meantime, roads needed to be quickly repaired. Thus, the radio was pleased to announce that most National Route repairs were nearly completed, even if so far only some stretches of the two rail lines were.¹⁷⁸ A major remaining challenge was rebuilding key rail bridges, and in July, rail line work required mobilizing huge numbers of civilians to assist the army, while internal goods movement was still carried out by trucks.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷¹ "District Medicine Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 29 June 1975.

¹⁷² "Tuol Sbauv Hospital," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 July 1975.

¹⁷³ "Koki Thom Sanitation," Radio Phnom Penh, 27 July 1975.

¹⁷⁴ "Radio Phnom Penh Extols Pailin District's Production Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 23 July 1975.

¹⁷⁵ "Koui Chik Dei Reconstruction," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 July 1975.

¹⁷⁶ "Radio Phnom Penh Extols Cambodians' Work Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 13 July 1975; see also "Combatants Help Build Country While Defending It," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 August 1975.

¹⁷⁷ "Phnom Penh Reports Repair of Battambang-Pursat Railway Line," Radio Phnom Penh, 14 June 1975.

¹⁷⁸ "Waterways, Railroads Hailed as Key to Transport Plan," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 June 1975; "Phnom Penh Notes Repair of Sihanoukville-Veal Renh Railway," Radio Phnom Penh, 24 June 1975; "Phnom Penh Examines Demand of Economy, Creativity," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 July 1975.

¹⁷⁹ "Radio Phnom Penh Views Progress in Restoring Economy," Radio Phnom Penh, 14 July 1975; "Worker Notes Repair Work on Takeo-Kampot Railroad," Radio Phnom Penh, 15 July 1975; "Army's Drive to Clean Up, Produce Praised," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 July 1975.

An end of the month radio round-up hailed ongoing efforts by army combatants to fix the railway line linking Phnom Penh with Kampong Saom seaport, a subject of special mention in the aid talks in Beijing. The broadcast reported that work on the railway from Kampong Saom via nearby Veal Renh to Kampot was, except for reconstruction of two bridges, basically completed. It further declared that the stretch from Kampot to the rail line way station of Pong Tuk was also completed or nearly completed, as was that from Phnom Penh into Takeo province, although that on the Prateas Lang bridge was not yet completed. Construction was ongoing on the line from Takeo town to Pong Tuk, at which 10,000 workers and combatants were said to be engaged.¹⁸⁰

As for rubber, in June the radio indicated, somewhat contrary to earlier claims, that because of wartime destruction and the current shortage of necessary “means and tools,” for the time being it was still a matter of “trying step-by-step to restore rubber production.”¹⁸¹ Although new tree planting had reportedly been initiated in 1973-1974, and the condition of rubber plantations in both the East and North Zones was characterized as relatively good, overall, 100,000 hectares of old trees still had to be replanted.¹⁸² A major broadcast in early July elaborated on the importance of rubber, “second only to rice,” for the domestic economy and for export. Domestically, it was the raw material for local automobile, motorcycle, and bicycle tire factories, which, once it was available for large-quantity production, would improve and develop transport capacity serving increasing domestic production generally. It was “even more important on the foreign market,” because when it could be exported in large amounts, rubber would help rice to finance the purchase of all sorts of machinery needed in particular to build up Kampuchean industry. Citing a somewhat larger figure than it had used in June, the radio now recalled that before liberation, 40,000 tons of rubber had been exported annually and advised it was now necessary to cut down unproductive trees and replace them with new ones, mentioning stands in the East, North, and Northeast Zones, the Kratie Sector, and areas around Kampong Saom, saying the new trees were necessary to realizing these plantations’ great potential for development.¹⁸³ It then described the Chup plantation in the East, which had also come up in particular

¹⁸⁰ “Radio Phnom Penh Views Progress in Restoring Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 July 1975; “Workers Praise Radio’s Achievements,” Radio Phnom Penh, 31 July 1975.

¹⁸¹ “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

¹⁸² “Radio Phnom Penh on National Resources, Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 June 1975.

¹⁸³ “Radio Stresses Importance of Rubber Industry,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 July 1975. The earlier broadcast had said that 30,313 tons of all kinds of rubber were exported in the first quarter of 1965. See “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

in Beijing, as the largest plantation and rubber supply center, one where workers were determined to produce more and better rubber.¹⁸⁴

Turning to cotton-based handicrafts, one June broadcast admitted that in one locality, only 20 percent of the population's cloth and scarf needs were being met, but another claimed that weaving and spinning were going on in almost every village. Many examples of grassroots cultivation and processing of cotton were provided,¹⁸⁵ presented as resulting from the clearing of more land on which to cultivate it.¹⁸⁶ More reports of cotton-growing and local weaving and spinning in places throughout the country were broadcast in July.¹⁸⁷ A mid-month program characterized cotton as one of the "basic crops" for Kampuchea, explaining that it was:

... a strategic crop for handicrafts and industry. Our weaving and spinning handicraft industry is expanding, and more textile factories have resumed operations. Therefore, we need more cotton thread, and this requires increasing our cotton production. We are developing both textile handicrafts and industry to increase cloth production, both quantitatively and qualitatively, thereby improving the living standards of our people so that they have enough rice to eat and enough clothing, mosquito nets, blankets, and scarves for their needs. If we cannot produce enough cotton our factories will lack raw materials. We must therefore increase cotton production.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ "Rubber Plantation Workers Fulfill Tasks," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 July 1975.

¹⁸⁵ "Battambang District Stresses All-Round Development," Radio Phnom Penh, 30 June 1975; see also "Snuol District," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 June 1975; "Koh Sotin District," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 June 1975; "Kampong Ro District," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 June 1975; "Solidarity Teams Boost Animal Raising Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 6 June 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh Views Krakor District's Production Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 June 1975; "Water Conservancy Efforts, Rainfall Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 20 June 1975; "District in Oddar Meanchey," Radio Phnom Penh, 22 June 1975; "Kampong Thom Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 1975; "Kampong Cham District's Irrigation, Planting Efforts Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 June 1975; "Peam Prous District Farming," Radio Phnom Penh, 28 June 1975; and "Siem Reap Strategic Crops," Radio Phnom Penh, 30 June 1975.

¹⁸⁶ "Kampong Speu Province Farming," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 May 1975.

¹⁸⁷ "Sisophon District Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 July 1975; "District Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 July 1975; "District Handicraft Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 8 July 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh Cites Progress in Province's Dam Building," Radio Phnom Penh, 8 July 1975; "Daun Toan Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 July 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh on Production Qualitative, Quantitative Gains," Radio Phnom Penh, 11 July 1975; "Koui Chik Dei Reconstruction," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 July 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh Hails Village's Crop-Growing Progress," Radio Phnom Penh, 15 July 1975; "Production Efforts in Rovieng," Radio Phnom Penh, 17 July 1975; "Figures Given for Siem Reap Province Dams, Ditches," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 July 1975; "Sereikar District Production Drive," Radio Phnom Penh, 23 July 1975; "Tuk Chreou Water Conservation Facilities Reported," Radio Phnom Penh, 26 July 1975.

¹⁸⁸ "Phnom Penh on Economic Importance of Secondary Crops," Radio Phnom Penh, 15 July 1975.

A few days later, the radio waxed lyrical about Kampuchea's overall economic future, foreseeing that by pursuing an "increase in production in all aspects – agriculture, handicrafts and industry," its economy would advance "in step with the progress of science," and the people "would enjoy the comfort of abundant clothing, food, shelter, schools, and hospitals." Thus, "even in the most remote areas we will all have factories, electricity, happiness, and comfort."¹⁸⁹ Further explaining the rationale for making such advances in the way being prescribed, airwave reportage during July began highlighting the political argument that the "duties of national defense and construction are interrelated." Suggesting a direct relationship between economic success and military prowess, the radio said this meant that "only if we are able to make our country prosperous and strong will we be able to defend it."¹⁹⁰

At the same time, echoing the warning about the need for arduousness to achieve this combination, the radio declared that "in order to attain this strategic goal, we should make all-out efforts to restore the economy, plunging into a seething offensive to build dams and ditches, increase production, restore factories, and repair railroads in order to rapidly turn our backward and underdeveloped agrarian country into a modern agricultural country and then into a modern industrialized one," while admitting achieving this would be an "enormous" task.¹⁹¹

The July 1975 issue of the internal magazine for members of the secret CPK Youth League, *Revolutionary Youth*, insisted that their most important task was to participate alongside the population in the movement to increase agricultural production so that Kampuchea could "escape agricultural backwardness and ensure its rapid advance toward the status of being a modern agricultural and industrialized country."¹⁹² It reassured them that despite the wartime damage, the country had "enough capital in terms of agricultural means of production" to successfully carry out this movement on its own, as long as the problem of the provision of water was quickly resolved.¹⁹³ This meant proceeding with a "one hundred fold increase" in audaciousness to conduct agricultural production self-reliantly using domestic labor and in particular without

¹⁸⁹ "People Urged to Build New Nation by Developing Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 18 July 1975.

¹⁹⁰ "Commentary Says Natural Resources Must Be Exploited," Radio Phnom Penh, 24 July 1975; for a repeat of this perspective, see "Radio Hails Revolutionary Spirit, Line in Building the Country," Radio Phnom Penh, 7 August 1975.

¹⁹¹ "Commentary Notes Main Tasks of Defending, Building Country," Radio Phnom Penh, 25 July 1975.

¹⁹² ECCC Document E169/4/1.1.1 [KH], "Revolutionary Youth Are Determined to Go Down into the Fray of Productive Labor in Order to Forge and Strengthen Their Revolutionary Stance and Actively to Defend and Build Up the Nation," *Revolutionary Youth Number 7*, July 1975, p.3.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

“significant” foreign aid or for now imports of machinery and the fuel needed to run it.¹⁹⁴ It said that as long as the current production drive was carried out via “storming attacks,” enough paddy, fish, timber, rubber, and corn would become available to improve popular livelihoods and to export for sale abroad and thereby to purchase factory machinery, weaponry, and other goods needed to proceed to modernize agriculture and industrialize the country. Thus, Youth League members were misleadingly told that there was no need to “lie around waiting to beg” for foreign aid in 1975, while conversely not being informed when it would become possible to purchase the predicted imports.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., pp.12-14.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp.14-16.

AUGUST to SEPTEMBER 1975

The lead article in the August 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Youth* highlighted the need for evacuated former university and other students to do manual agricultural labor in order to contribute directly to agricultural production while transforming themselves into working peasants.¹⁹⁶ It did so while repeating many of the main themes of its July issue, but strikingly now also in conjunction with severe warnings about threats to the revolution by foreign imperialist and domestic feudal and bourgeois attempts to overthrow it or at least retard its progress. These included the economic advances the success of which Radio Phnom Penh had recently suggested was a condition for being able to defend the nation. It not only blamed these foes for having historically prevented Kampuchea from developing and prospering,¹⁹⁷ it also contradicted what had been repeatedly said over the radio and during the CPK's discussions with PRC authorities to the effect that urban and other evacuees were almost universally pleased to have been relocated and enthusiastic about joining in arduous agricultural work. Instead, it admitted that there were "reactionary" feudal and bourgeois elements among them who were incensed at the revolution for subjecting them to what it characterized as the same hardships as the peasantry and were therefore scheming to overthrow in order to return themselves to power.¹⁹⁸ The magazine warned they had the potential at least to take advantage of the fact that the now dispossessed members of these two abolished classes were generally in contradiction with the revolution, being so whether they wanted to be or not and to lesser or greater degrees, depending on the extent to which they were still clinging to feudal and bourgeois ideas and longing to go back to pre-revolution days.¹⁹⁹

The magazine asserted that, even more insidiously, there were covert but outright imperialist agents hidden not only among the people but even within the revolutionary ranks themselves, enemies who were aiming to wreck everything by stirring up divisions between the people and the Party and within the revolution itself. It warned that both evacuees and members of the revolutionary ranks were susceptible to these agents' subversion, the former

¹⁹⁶ ECCC Document E3/749 [KH], "University and Other Students Who Want to Serve the Nation Must Join Together with the Workers-Peasants," *Revolutionary Youth* Number 8, August 1975, pp.17, 23-25, 28-29.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.6-7.

because of their historically class-based proclivities and longings, the latter because of the influence of the former²⁰⁰ and the temptation among the latter to run after material things, thus ceasing to be “proletarian materially.”²⁰¹ This could be manifest in their “not thinking of the hardships and sufferings of the people in general,” and instead thinking only of their own interests, comfort, and happiness.²⁰²

Revolutionary Youth declared that if the activities of such foreign agents and domestic enemies of the revolution were not checked, they would be able to prevent the revolution from building the nation quickly, as CPK policy required, and ultimately to smash the revolution and regain power.²⁰³ It explained that, to prevent this, it was imperative to track down and ferret out such elements pre-emptively and “smash” (kill) them.²⁰⁴ On the other hand, it admonished cadres “not to do anything that adversely affects the influence of the revolution,” and in particular “not to do anything that adversely affects the interests of our veteran people in the grassroots or of the new people who have recently been evacuated.” This meant that if nothing more than “complications” arose, cadres should differentiate clearly between the people and the enemy and rely on political education and propaganda to resolve things and not apply harsher “organizational measures,”²⁰⁵ an apparent euphemism here for those including execution.

In rosier 12 August 1975 comments broadcast by Radio Phnom Penh, Khieu Samphan, still officially speaking as GRUNK Deputy Prime Minister, insisted that in the three months since liberation, the new authorities and the people had “fundamentally” succeeded in solving the “thousand and one complicated problems” they had faced at that time. Most importantly, he affirmed, they had “managed to supply food to both the previously liberated and newly liberated people,” the latter numbering an unspecified “several million.” He maintained that even if food was “not abundant,” it was “enough ... to allow our people to live and carry out their economic restoration efforts with seething enthusiasm” in the context of the revolution having organized “with soaring ardor” popular labor forces “to increase production throughout the country in order to solve the day-to-day as well as future livelihood problems.” Currently, Samphan said, they were planting both early and late rice and, because their

²⁰⁰ Ibid., pp.5, 7-8

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp.14-15

²⁰² Ibid., p.8.

²⁰³ Ibid., p.6.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.13-14.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

livelihood problems had been fundamentally resolved, were doing so “in an atmosphere of broad national solidarity.” All this professedly made for an “excellent” political situation, because the internal security situation was “consequently also excellent,”²⁰⁶ presumably because of the popular support generated by agricultural successes.

On industry, he similarly said that “we have returned the majority of our factories and workshops” to “normal operation, even though they had been badly damaged,” and “are giving special attention to those factories and workshops that serve the people’s immediate needs.” He added that not only hospitals, but supposedly even schools had “opened their doors one after another.”²⁰⁷ Samphan also asserted that the repair of Routes 1 through 7 and some other “major highways” had been completed and that repair of medium roads was “generally being taken care of.”²⁰⁸ Although Radio Phnom Penh was saying at this time that the army was “still carrying on work to complete railroad repairs,”²⁰⁹ Samphan maintained that “mastership” had been gained over the railroads “to an important degree,”²¹⁰ thus contributing to a situation in which the revolution had already “fundamentally solved the problem of transport of rice, salt, cloth, and various agricultural tools to be distributed to the people despite the fact that we still need the means of transportation.”²¹¹

Looking forward, Samphan declared:

At this rate, I dare to believe that in one or two more years we will surely have a sufficient guarantee in the economic field and especially in the supply of foodstuffs, rice, and other grains. We will certainly have a 100 percent guarantee and will even be able to export some of our products. Thus, our people’s livelihood will gradually be improved.²¹²

²⁰⁶ “Deputy Premier Khieu Samphan Grants Interview to AKI,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 August 1975.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ “Successes in Reconstruction Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 August 1975.

²¹⁰ “Deputy Premier Khieu Samphan Grants Interview to AKI,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 August 1975.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

Samphan's remarks, although ambiguous, seemed to suggest that by the latter part of 1976 or at least at the start of 1977, Kampuchea would not only be self-sufficient in rice but in addition to have "some" for export. A separate broadcast around this time added wood to the list of "exportable products" upon which Kampuchea could rely at some future date to buy machines and other equipment to develop industry, using light industry as the base.²¹³

Meanwhile, during the first half of August, there were radio reports that in some places dry season rice sown earlier in the year was being harvested²¹⁴ while transplanting of the main rainy season rice was still going on,²¹⁵ and that parts of Kampong Trabek district of Prey Veng province were on track to grow three rice crops planted during 1975.²¹⁶ This was accompanied by more accounts of cotton-growing and local weaving and spinning in various places.²¹⁷

In a broadcast summing up the situation of industry in Phnom Penh also as of the first part of August, the radio recalled that of the more than 70 small and medium-sized factories Kampuchea had possessed in pre-revolutionary times, 50 were in the capital, 13 of which were textile mills spread out in Pochentong, Chak Angre, Stung Meanchey, and Russei Keo, some linked to nearby spinning and tailoring plants. It told listeners that Phnom Penh's clothes manufacturing facilities and sites for producing blankets, mosquito and other netting; for processing rubber and making new and retreaded automobile, motorbike, and bicycle tires; and for producing dry cell batteries, fibrocement, paint, glassware, oxygen, paper, soft drinks, milk, soy sauce, tobacco, alcohol, and processed wood were all being "gradually put into operation" by "nearly 10,000" male and female army combatants and civilian workers, but provided no output statistics. It also said that many workshops in the capital, "such as those for repairing cars, motorbikes, boats, ships, and railroad cars" were "being successively restored to normal operation."²¹⁸ These radio broadcasts of course again failed to mention

²¹³ "Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Building Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 10 August 1975.

²¹⁴ "Rice Cultivation Campaign," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 August 1975.

²¹⁵ Koh Kralor Rice Growing," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 August 1975; "Rice Cultivation Campaign," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 August 1975.

²¹⁶ "Kampong Trabek District Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 August 1975.

²¹⁷ "Combatants Help Build Country While Defending It," Radio Phnom Penh, 1 August 1975; "Koh Kralor Rice Growing," Radio Phnom Penh, 3 August 1975; "Kampong Trabek District Production," Radio Phnom Penh, 9 August 1975; "Anlong Romiet Village's Progress Reviewed," Radio Phnom Penh, 15 August 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Building Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 10 August 1975; "Production Progress," Radio Phnom Penh, 11 August 1975; "Rice Cultivation Campaign," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 August 1975.

²¹⁸ "Workers' Creativity, Product Quality Hailed," Radio Phnom Penh, 30 August 1975; "Radio Phnom Penh Commentary on Building Industry," Radio Phnom Penh, 10 August 1975.

the many kinds of PRC aid that may well have been or would be contributing to the claimed successes, which, to recall, included cloth, thread or yarn, sewing machines, machine and hand sewing needles, scissors, construction steel, vehicle tires and inner tubes, construction steel, diesel engines, fuels and lubricants, dyes, nails and screws, and cement.

Khieu Samphan's optimistic comments and the radio's self-congratulatory reports coincided with Chinese and Kampuchean public announcements that an officially GRUNK delegation would be travelling to Beijing on 15 August 1975 to begin a "friendly visit" to the PRC.²¹⁹ The delegation was formally led by Samphan as leader in his newly enhanced official public capacity as GRUNK Deputy Prime Minister For General Affairs,²²⁰ with Ieng Sary supposedly as deputy delegation leader in his just promoted government post as GRUNK Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs,²²¹ and included as a member Sary's spouse Ieng Thirith (then officially GRUNK Minister of Popular Education and Youth, but who in October 1975 would be put in charge of the Ministry of Social Action²²²). The visit finally resulted in the first public admission to Chinese, but not Kampuchean audiences, of past and ongoing PRC gratis aid to Kampuchea, apparently ensuing from, and perhaps now further adding to, what had been on the original late April 1975 "contract" to provide such assistance.

A *People's Daily* editorial marking the Kampuchean's arrival characterized the April 1975 victory of the still secret CPK as supposedly "a brilliant example of a weak nation defeating a strong and a small nation defeating a big."²²³ Echoing Khieu Samphan's 12 August tour d'horizon, which Chinese media also published,²²⁴ the newspaper said that since liberation, the Kampuchean revolution had "in a matter of a few months," made remarkable achievements in "restoring communications lines, developing industrial production, building water conservancy works, reclaiming wasteland, raising agricultural production and improving people's livelihood,"²²⁵ at this initial point making no mention

²¹⁹ "Cambodia's Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary to Arrive in Peking 15 August," Peking NCNA, 13 August 1975; "Khieu Samphan Delegation Leaves for PRC," Radio Phnom Penh, 14 August 1975.

²²⁰ "Khieu Samphan Delegation Leaves for PRC," Radio Phnom Penh, 14 August 1975.

²²¹ "Deputy Premiers for Defense, Foreign Affairs Named," Radio Phnom Penh, 12 August 1975.

²²² ECCC Document E3/178 [KH] "Written Record of Meeting on Social Action and Health Work," 10 June 1976, p.1, where she is identified by her revolutionary name "Phea." This appointment to a government ministry was in line with her having been given responsibilities within the Party for social action, cultural matters, and foreign affairs. ECCC Document E3/14 [KH], "Meeting of the Standing Committee, 9 October 1975," p.2.

²²³ "Cambodian Delegation Led by Khieu Samphan Arrives in Peking," Peking NCNA, 14 August 1975.

²²⁴ "Voice of NUFC Carried Khieu Samphan AKI Interview," Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

²²⁵ "Cambodian Delegation Led by Khieu Samphan Arrives in Peking," Peking NCNA, 14 August 1975.

of PRC aid. Parroting Radio Phnom Penh, the official PRC *New China News Agency* also did not yet refer to it when it published even more elaborate congratulations, praising Kampuchea's workers and army combatants for having restored to operation over 70 factories, repaired seven major and whole provincial highways and key sections of railway, reopened Kampong Saom port and made possible use of the Mekong River, all by working day and night without fearing hardships or fatigue. It discreetly failed to say whether or not Kampuchea enjoyed food sufficiency. Instead, it applauded the country's poor and lower middle peasants for having "enthusiastically" built many more water conservancy works than had existed before 17 April, then extravagantly reporting they had already attained increases in paddy yield from 1.5 tons per hectare to 3.4, 3.5, or even 6.5 tons "in many places,"²²⁶ an achievement that even CPK-controlled media was not putting in the present, but as an aspiration in its hoped-for future.

The Kampuchean delegation was welcomed at the airport by then PRC State Council First Deputy Premier and CPC Vice Chairperson Deng Xiaoping, then Deputy Premiers Hua Guofeng and Li Xiannian, Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, Minister of Economic Relations with Foreign Countries (in charge of foreign aid) Fang Yi, and Head of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee Geng Biao, among others.²²⁷ It immediately held talks with Deng Xiaoping, Hua Guofeng and Fang Yi, with Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Han Nianlong, and with a vice-minister of foreign trade, some departmental directors of the foreign ministry, and a deputy head of the International Liaison Department of the CPC Central Committee.²²⁸

On the evening of the 15th, Deng Xiaoping, acting on behalf of hospitalized PRC Premier Zhou Enlai, hosted a banquet for the Kampucheans, which was also attended by Qiao Guanhua, Fang Yi, and Geng Biao.²²⁹ Deng Xiaoping and Samphan spoke. Deng reiterated the orthodoxy that Kampuchea, by its victory over US imperialism, had "set to all the oppressed peoples and nations of the world a brilliant example showing that a small nation can defeat a big and weak nation can defeat a strong," affirming that this had been possible because the Kampucheans had purportedly "adhered to the principles of independence, initiative and self-reliance." Himself saying nothing about PRC aid, he lauded

²²⁶ "Cambodia's Remarkable Economic Success Reported," Peking NCNA, 14 August 1975.

²²⁷ "Arrival in Peking," Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975; "Expanded Report on Arrival, Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

²²⁸ "Khieu Samphan Meets Chinese Leaders," Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

²²⁹ "Teng Hsiao-ping Hosts Banquet," Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

them for having continued post-liberation “to adhere to the line of independence, initiative and self-reliance” and having led the Kampuchean people to throw “themselves with roaring enthusiasm and boundless vigor into [a] surging movement to rehabilitate and promote production,” declaring they had already achieved “very remarkable successes in ... rehabilitating and developing industrial and agricultural production, restoring lines of communication and in other endeavors.” He evinced optimism that Kampuchea would be built “into a prosperous and strong country.”²³⁰ In a reply reported by Chinese but not evidently not Kampuchean media, Samphan finally now publicly revealed that Kampuchean successes were not only the result of its own “line of independence, initiative and self-reliance,” but were in fact also “inseparable from” what he described as “the tremendous support and assistance rendered to us” by China,²³¹ albeit still without making clear concretely what kind of help was meant.

On 16 August, Samphan, Sary, and Thirith met with Zhou Enlai in the hospital, with Deng Xiaoping, Hua Guofeng, and Han Nianlong present.²³² Samphan and Sary, at least, then attended a soiree with a vice-minister of foreign trade and a deputy director of the General Political Department of the People’s Liberation Army.²³³ Accompanied by Hua Guofeng, the two also visited a timber mill in Beijing producing plywood.²³⁴ This was the beginning of a set of tours of industrial sites that continued on 17 August with a trip to the heavily industrialized province of Liaoning, northeast of Beijing, accompanied by Han Nianlong.²³⁵ The two first went to a railway rolling stock plant in the provincial capital, Luta, then, on the 18th, to the port and manufacturing center, Dalian, where they inspected a steel mill and a glassware factory, after which they returned to Beijing.²³⁶ The posts of the Chinese who attended the soiree and the fact that these visits to non-agricultural sites were evidently the only economic ones to which the Kampuchean went during their visit perhaps suggests that what the CPK wanted from China out of this trip was help with development of Kampuchea’s armed forces and industry, not with farming, which would have been in line with the idea that the latter should and could be developed by massed agricultural labor.

²³⁰ “Teng Hsiao-ping’s Speech,” Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

²³¹ “Khieu Samphan’s Speech,” Peking NCNA, 15 August 1975.

²³² “Meeting with Chou En-lai,” Peking NCNA, 16 August 1975.

²³³ “Attends Peking Soiree 16 Aug,” Peking NCNA, 16 August 1975.

²³⁴ “Delegation Visits Factory,” Peking NCNA, 16 August 1975.

²³⁵ “Visiting Liaoning Province,” Peking NCNA, 17 August 1975.

²³⁶ “Returns to Peking from Luta,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975.

According to a series of Chinese media reports about which Kampuchean outlets evidently said nothing, once back in Beijing, Samphan signed with Deng Xiaoping “an agreement on economic and technical cooperation.” Present on the PRC side were Li Xiannian, Hua Guofeng, Geng Biao, Qiao Guanhua, Fang Yi, and Han Nianlong, plus a Vice-Minister of National Defense, naval admiral Xiao Jingguang, and some other PRC officials.²³⁷ According to the Chinese only reportage, Samphan described the agreement as “an expression of the mutual assistance and support between brothers and comrades-in-arms based on equality and mutual respect.” This time, it added Samphan’s declaration that Kampuchea was “very glad that China renders Cambodia unconditional and gratis aid,”²³⁸ a comment perhaps signaling that the agreement somehow dealt with continuing such assistance, economic and military, but disclosing nothing more.

A joint communique issued after the signing, and seemingly again reported only by the Chinese side, similarly provided no further information on its content, merely describing it as a “vivid manifestation of the friendship and unity between the Chinese and Cambodian peoples.” The communique was instead an opportunity for the two sides to characterize the 17 April victory once more as what was once more touted as “a shining example that a weak nation can defeat a strong and a small nation can defeat a big,” to jointly endorse the CPK’s post-liberation persistence in pursuit of a “line of independence, initiative and self-reliance,” to praise its “remarkable successes in ... rehabilitating the economy,” and to attribute all these supposed accomplishments to Kampuchea’s “high political enthusiasm and rousing revolutionary zeal.”²³⁹ Finally, a PRC media editorial quoted a Kampuchean broadcast welcoming the general principle that the PRC stance was to “give unconditional support to the revolutionary line and stand of Cambodia, especially the line of independence, self-reliance, and taking their destiny into their own hands,”²⁴⁰ a generically political formulation that on the face of it did not clearly indicate material support and could even be understood as denying its existence.

According again to exclusively Chinese accounts, at a banquet following the signing of the agreement and at which Deng Xiaoping was present along with Li Xiannian, Hua Guofeng, Geng Biao, Qiao Guanhua, Fang Yi, and Ieng

²³⁷ “PRC-Cambodia Pact Signed,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975.

²³⁸ “Khieu Samphan’s Speech,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975; “Teng Hsiao-Ping’s Speech,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975.

²³⁹ “Joint Communique Issued,” Peking NCNA, 19 August 1975.

²⁴⁰ “NUFC Radio Editorial on Cambodia-PRC Friendship,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975.

Sary, Samphan gave a speech in which he said the talks between the two sides had “reached a consensus of views on further consolidating and developing the friendly relations and cooperation between” them. He described the agreement signed as “an expression of the mutual assistance and support” between China and Kampuchea, reiterating thanks to the PRC for providing “unconditional and gratis aid,” but still without elaborating further.²⁴¹ In the end, no text of the agreement appears to have been made public by either side, and unfortunately, none seems to exist in DCCam files.

On 19 August 1975, Samphan left China for the DPRK,²⁴² seen off by Ieng Sary, who departed later the same day to attend first a conference in Peru of foreign ministers of non-aligned countries,²⁴³ then a United Nations General Assembly special session in New York, after which he paid visits to Cuba, Mexico, and France. In Pyongyang, Samphan joined Chief of State Sihanouk, who had been staying in Korea. The two left Korea to go back to China on 22 August.²⁴⁴

They arrived in Beijing the next day, welcomed there by Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, and Han Nianlong.²⁴⁵ On 26 August, the still hospitalized Zhou Enlai received Sihanouk, Khieu Samphan, and Ieng Thirith.²⁴⁶ The following day, the three had an audience with Mao, who was accompanied by Deng and Wang Hairong, Mao’s grand-niece and a Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs.²⁴⁷ A PRC media account of the visitation said that Mao “warmly praised the Cambodian people for daring to fight and win and achieving complete victory in their national war for liberation in a little more than five years.” It mentioned no substantive discussions or agreements.²⁴⁸

²⁴¹ “Khieu Samphan’s Speech,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975; “Cambodian Delegation Hosts Banquet, Departs for DPRK,” Peking NCNA, 18 August 1975.

²⁴² “Delegation Departs PRC for DPRK,” Peking, NCNA, 19 August 1975.

²⁴³ “Ieng Sary to Head Team to Lima Conference,” AFP, 18 August 1975; “Ieng Sary, Delegation Depart for Lima,” AFP, 19 August 1975.

²⁴⁴ “Cambodian Delegation Arrives in Pyongyang,” Peking NCNA, 19 August 1975; “Sihanouk, Samphan, Kim Il-Song Meeting Described,” Radio Phnom Penh, 20 August 1975; “Khieu Samphan Speech,” Radio Pyongyang, 21 August 1975; “Sihanouk Hosts Banquet 20 Aug,” Radio Pyongyang, 21 August 1975; “Sihanouk Hosts Banquet in Pyongyang for Kim Il-Song,” Pyongyang KCNA, 21 August 1975; “Sihanouk Speech,” Pyongyang KCNA, 21 August 1975; “Further Reportage on Activities of Cambodian Delegation,” Pyongyang KCNA, 22 August 1975; “Sihanouk, Khieu Samphan Depart DPRK, Arrive in Peking,” Peking NCNA, 22 August 1975; “22 Aug Joint Communique with Cambodia Reported,” Pyongyang KCNA, 23 August 1975.

²⁴⁵ “23 Aug Arrival in Peking,” Peking NCNA, 23 August 1975.

²⁴⁶ “Chou En-lai Meets Sihanouk 26 Aug in Hospital,” Peking NCNA, 26 August 1975.

²⁴⁷ “Canton TV: Mao, Cambodians Meet,” Canton Domestic Television Station, 30 August 1975.

²⁴⁸ “Chairman Mao Meets with Sihanouk,” Peking NCNA, 27 August 1975.

As preparations were being made for Sihanouk's return to Kampuchea, the Prince, Samphan, and Ieng Thirith left Beijing for Hanoi on 30 August to attend celebrations there marking the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. They were seen off by Deng Xiaoping, Li Xiannian, and Han Nianlong.²⁴⁹ On 6 September, after the delegation's return, Sihanouk and Samphan had a "friendly meeting" with Premier Deng Xiaoping and the PRC's Chief of State Zhu De, plus First Deputy Premier Zhang Chunqiao, other key Cultural Revolution figures Jiang Qing and Yao Wenyuan, and other relative radicals such as Wang Dongxing and Chen Yonggui.²⁵⁰

That evening, Deng Xiaoping feted them at a banquet attended by these and 20 other senior Chinese Party and State leaders as part of the beginning of their sendoff to return to Kampuchea.²⁵¹ In his speech, Deng now fulsomely described the 17 April CPK victory as "one of the greatest historic events since World War II," and one which "will doubtless have a far-reaching impact on the anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist and anti-hegemonic struggle of the people of the whole world." He lauded Kampuchea's "remarkable successes" in "actively rehabilitating and developing production," thereby advancing in "big strides along the road of revolution and building a new life."²⁵² On 8 September, Sihanouk hosted a banquet of his own, this on the eve of his departure for Phnom Penh. Once more Deng spoke, heralding the Kampuchean "people's revolutionary war" that triumphed on 17 April as "a victory for the line of independence and self-reliance" and yet again as a "brilliant example" of how a small and weak nation could defeat the aggression of a big one that had paved the way for such a nation "to build a truly democratic new Cambodia." He promised that in the struggles ahead, China was "determined to unite still more closely with the fraternal Cambodian people in mutual support."²⁵³

Sihanouk, Samphan, and Ieng Thirith (along with a number of non-Communist GRUNK and FUNK figures who had been resident in China) boarded the plane for Phnom Penh on 9 September, with Deng Xiaoping in attendance and given pride of place in the PRC report on their departure. Second in the protocol ranking was Zhang Chunqiao.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁹ "Cambodian Delegation Leaves Peking for Hanoi," Peking NCNA, 30 August 1975.

²⁵⁰ "Activities of Cambodian Delegation Reported," Peking NCNA, 6 September 1975.

²⁵¹ "Teng Hsiao-ping Hosts Banquet," Peking NCNA, 6 September 1975.

²⁵² "Teng's Speech," Peking NCNA, 6 September 1975.

²⁵³ "Teng Hsiao-ping's Speech," Peking NCNA, 8 September 1975.

²⁵⁴ "Expanded Departure Report," Peking NCNA, 9 September 1975.

The next day, the first known Chinese broadcast media report on the delivery of Chinese goods to Kampuchea finally appeared, describing retrospectively the arrival of the first Chinese freighter to do so and recalling that it had been welcomed and boarded at Kampong Saom port by Ieng Sary. It said this vessel was now being reloaded at a southern Chinese port to make another delivery.²⁵⁵

Twelve days later, Sary appeared in Peru for the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers' conference, which lasted until 29 August.²⁵⁶ In the debate, Sary trumpeted Kampuchea's "political line" of maintaining "an independent and sovereign position, mastering one's own destiny [and] relying on one's own strength to overcome all sorts of difficulties" as the way in which it and other non-aligned countries would be able to achieve their aims.²⁵⁷ Upon arrival in New York on 30 August, Sary issued a statement attempting to explain why the CPK had relocated urban populations to the countryside. He provided a figure of "nearly three million" for the total number of such city/town-resident persons who he said had been dependent on monthly foreign aid deliveries to the Khmer Republic of 30,000 to 40,000 tons of foodstuffs, insisting that if they had stayed in urban areas they would have starved, and that it had been impossible to bring in rice from the countryside to feed them. Concealing the fact that the PRC was shipping in 60,000 tons of aid rice and despite the possibility that perhaps in June Mao Zedong may have secretly offered more, he insisted there had been no choice except to move evacuees to where food had been prepared for them, and where he said they had received "what is indispensable to live." Thus, he both misleadingly maintained that his government had solved all food problems "without receiving foreign aid," but that its people had also on this self-sufficient basis already successfully "built a wide irrigation net to be able to obtain two harvests instead of one," reiterating the kind of claim that seemed to promise that there would be no food shortages in the future. Leaving the standard impression that Kampuchea was also otherwise self-reliant, he added that:

A great part of the factories has started to work. All national highways have been repaired. ... The international airport ... is reopened to traffic.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ "Peking Correspondent Views Sino-Cambodian Relations," Radio Peking, 10 September 1975.

²⁵⁶ "Lima Nonaligned Meeting Hailed, Delegations Due," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 August 1975; "NCNA Reports on Lima Conference of Nonaligned Countries," Peking NCNA, 23 August 1975.

²⁵⁷ "Lima Nonaligned Debate on 26, 27 Aug 75," Peking NCNA, 28 August 1975.

²⁵⁸ "Ieng Sary Statement," Peking NCNA, 31 August 1975.

He did also say that “[t]he port of Sihanoukville is in the capacity of receiving ships,” but failed to mention what PRC media had reported about Chinese vessels making deliveries there, including the fact that he had been present on the first such occasion.

By the 10th of September, Sary was in Cuba.²⁵⁹ On the 13th, he was in Mexico,²⁶⁰ and on the 16th in France.²⁶¹ On 18 September, he arrived back in Beijing, where he was greeted at the airport by Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Han Nianlong.²⁶² The next day, he held talks with a junior deputy premier.²⁶³ While still in China, he met with Vietnamese Communist leader Le Duan and other senior Vietnamese officials,²⁶⁴ before flying back to Phnom Penh on 26 September.²⁶⁵

Meanwhile, on 13 September, after Khieu Samphan had accompanied Sihanouk back to Phnom Penh and Ieng Sary had left China for Latin America, New York, and France, a French wire service article datelined Beijing cited an unnamed diplomatic source there as reporting that China was according Kampuchea a US\$1 billion “loan” (“prêt”) covering a five-year period (for an annual average of US\$200,000,000), plus an immediate US\$20 million outright grant.²⁶⁶ Although the story does not refer to the Kampuchean’s August discussions with the Chinese or to, for that matter, the economic and technical cooperation agreement with them on the 18th of that month, its publication date suggests that such a loan and grant could have resulted from or otherwise been related to them.

However, as will be seen in detail in Part Two on 1976, while there is corroboration in DCCam materials that the PRC would in due course secretly provide DK with a sum of US\$20 million, but as a loan not a grant, there is nothing in DCCam or other sources so far reviewed about a one-billion-dollar loan. Instead, DCCam-held documents described in Part Two show there would

²⁵⁹ “Meets With Flavi, Bravo,” Radio Havana, 10 September 1975; “Delegation Visits PCC, Departs,” Radio Havana, 13 September 1975; “Ieng Sary Outlines Problems, Future,” Radio Havana, 17 September 1975.

²⁶⁰ “Mexican President Receives Ieng Sary,” Peking NCNA, 14 September 1975.

²⁶¹ “Chief of NUFC Mission in France Holds Reception,” Peking NCNA, 17 September 1975.

²⁶² “Cambodia’s Ieng Sary Arrives in Peking 18 Sep,” Peking NCNA, 18 September 1975.

²⁶³ “Chi Teng-Kuei Meets Ieng Sary,” Peking NCNA, 19 September 1975.

²⁶⁴ “Meets RGNUCS Ieng Sary,” Hanoi VNA, 24 September 1975; “Farewell to Ieng Sary,” Hanoi VNA.

²⁶⁵ “Ieng Sary Leaves Peking for Cambodia,” Peking NCNA, 26 September 1975.

²⁶⁶ “La Chine aurait accordé au Cambodge un prêt de 1 milliard de dollars,” *Le Monde*, 13 September 1975. The formulation “aurait accordé” reflects a French journalistic headline phrasing that is comparable to using “reportedly” in an English headline.

eventually be secret provision of a very much smaller “credit” (“ឥណទាន”)²⁶⁷ of 140 million PRC Yuan (RMB, Renminbi). This was approximately US\$72 million at the official rate used in DK-PRC transactions on the international market as of January 1976.²⁶⁸ As we shall see, reliance on these two types of internally well-documented Chinese largess to finance imports crucial to the CPK’s program of economic reconstruction and development from 1976 through to the collapse of DK in early 1979 would never be publicly acknowledged by either Kampuchean or Chinese authorities.

Back while at first Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, and Ieng Thirith together and then later Ieng Sary on his own had been travelling abroad, Radio Phnom Penh was reporting that as part of the effort to make a success of current and future agricultural production drives, mobilization of labor to construct irrigation works had continued²⁶⁹ and that harvesting of early rice crops was happening “everywhere.”²⁷⁰ A radio commentary heard in Kampuchea on 19 August maintained that rice seedlings had been growing well in the East, Northeast, and Northwest Zones, in the Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Sectors, and in some districts of the North Zone, but lamented that the rains had been poor in the Southwest and West. It nevertheless exuded a firm belief that despite such local vagaries of the weather, Kampuchea had great potential for doubling or tripling production and vowed that the regime’s main economic aims remained to improve popular living standards and expand exports in order to purchase materials and machinery, although it did not repeat Khieu Samphan’s apparent prediction that rice exports could begin with either 1976 or 1977 crops.²⁷¹

Indeed, while a late August radio round-up of the current situation accentuated the positive, it also alluded to problems. The program averred that most zones and sectors had “cultivated rice in time” and intimated that in

²⁶⁷ In English and French, the difference between a loan and a credit is that a loan is a debt of real money put in the possession of the borrower that must be repaid in full according to fixed time conditions stipulated in advance, whereas a credit is an advance of funds with an upper limit upon which the recipient may draw some or all of the amount over what can be an indefinite period of time. See <https://www.bancosantander.es/en/faqs/particulares/prestamos/diferencias-prestamo-credito> and <https://www.simulationpret.be/articles/emprunt-et-credit-quel-est-la-difference>; <https://www.soluco.fr/pret-credit/>. In effect, such a credit would allow DK to make purchases in the present, the cost of which need only be covered at some point in the future.

²⁶⁸ <https://fxtop.com/en/historical-currency-converter.php>.

²⁶⁹ “Crop Production for Export Stressed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 August 1975; “Route 6 Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 September 1975.

²⁷⁰ “People’s Unity, Construction Efforts Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 September 1975; see, for example, “Route 6 Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 September 1975 and Preah Vihear Agriculture,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

²⁷¹ “Crop Production for Export Stressed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 August 1975.

“many places,” the food situation was largely under control. On the other hand, it admitted that “a number” of sectors had been hit for a while by drought and had had to plant supplementary food crops while engaging “in the battle to solve the water conservancy problem and carry on the production campaign” with a view to overcoming problems in places where transplanting was only half finished or had not even begun. However, it reiterated the arguments that one of “the many favorable conditions” for increasing agricultural production and solving “all problems of our people’s livelihood” was that “our production force is now more than two million people larger than before liberation” (implying a significantly lower figure than Ieng Sary’s in New York for the number for evacuees moved to the countryside), and that because the revolution had been able to defeat US imperialism, it would certainly triumph in production efforts. It thus suggested it was not only necessary but possible to “further multiply our efforts and launch the offensive to increase production with the greatest ardor.”²⁷² It also explained this was important and imperative because “we use agriculture to serve industry” and “to help strengthen and expand agriculture itself” so as “to provide for a better and more bountiful livelihood of the people,” a feat that would “serve national defense efforts.” Thus, it said that by “vigorously” plunging into production, those carrying it out would not only be meeting their own needs, but also thereby producing agricultural goods necessary for the country’s defense.²⁷³

However, an early September broadcast still sounded less than entirely sanguine about the current situation when it declared that “the overall prospects for production throughout the country” were only “fairly promising.” While sticking to the contention that the food situation was “far better” than it had been before liberation, the station now endorsed the figure of a full three million for the number of “newly liberated” people resettled in the countryside, and described them as mouths having to be fed, failing on this occasion to speak of them in terms of being a useful labor force. It promised only that the country would be self-sufficient in food after the harvest of the 1975 crops, both rainy and dry, which by omission hinted that there might be no surplus for export. It repeated the concern that rainfall had been “scanty” in parts of the Southwest and West Zones. It said that in the Northwest, North, and East Zones and the Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear and Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey Sectors, transplanting had been “basically” completed only in “most areas,” and only in “some parts” of

²⁷² “Crop Production for Export Stressed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 August 1975.

²⁷³ Ibid.

the Northeast and Southwest Zones and of the Kratie Sector. However, it assured its audience that labor was still being deployed to build more irrigation works, either to support current cultivation or to prepare conditions for an upcoming dry season crop. It singled out the Northwest as the Zone in which the most extensive efforts were being carried out, describing the construction there of “long, high field embankments which stretch as far as the eye can see” and of “a dense network of irrigation canals linking one stream to the next.” Nevertheless, unlike Khieu Samphan two weeks earlier, it did not make even vague suggestions about when exportation of rice could begin.²⁷⁴ Similarly, although a broadcast the next day reaffirmed that the general economic goal remained “to increase production in all fields on the basis of self-reliance” and in particular to produce more agricultural products than needed for local consumption in order to be able to export the surplus and in the meantime to build industry back up in preparation for the time when the exports would finance imports for further industrialization, it did not say when export earnings would start to come in.²⁷⁵

The following day, the radio cited the highest figure yet – that of “more than three million” – for the number of evacuees removed to the countryside after 17 April and needed to be fed, doing so in a broadcast that also differentiated them from those “who had been liberated before the great victory.” It said the latter veteran liberated zone residents possessed:

... all the qualities of revolutionaries. They fully grasp the political and economic production lines of the Organization [the CPK]. They have a lofty revolutionary position – particularly that of being the owners of the country and the revolution, or resolute struggle and self-reliance.²⁷⁶

While not describing the newly liberated people in these same politically positive terms, it did continue to assert that the majority of them were peasants who allegedly had been forcibly removed to towns by the Khmer Republic authorities. It repeated the insistence that all of them were “extremely happy” because they had “received a warm welcome” from already revolutionized countryfolk with whom they were now “united body and soul” and supposedly “without any discrimination.” The radio also again welcomed those whom it put

²⁷⁴ “Construction Detailed, Airport Open,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 September 1975.

²⁷⁵ “Kissinger UN Economic Proposals Scored,” Radio Phnom Penh, 5 September 1975.

²⁷⁶ “People’s Unity, Construction Efforts Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 September 1975.

into the category of returning peasants as “additional labor forces” who together with those liberated before 17 April constituted “a tremendously great constructive force of unity” all of whom it maintained were equally determined to rebuild Kampuchea “on the basis of total independence and self-reliance” and thus were a guarantee that 1975 agricultural work would be “most efficient.”²⁷⁷ This, however, begged the question of the status of evacuees who were not of peasant origin.

A broadcast heard on 8 September 1975 inclined towards a relatively upbeat view of the economic situation, asserting that historically unprecedented increases in production were being achieved. It reported improved weather, saying that “[p]resently, there is abundant rainfall everywhere,” and that those areas where there had been only light rainfall at the beginning of the year now enjoyed plentiful amounts of water. It maintained that this would mean that what it described as an already well-developed “movement to build dikes, dig ditches and to sow and transplant rice” should begin to pay off, yielding greater paddy production than in 1974. It stated that good results were being recorded in the Northwest, North, and East Zones and in the Mondulakiri, Preah Vihear, and Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey Sectors, and that there were fair results in the Northeast Zone and in the Kratie Sector as well as in Kampot and Veal Renh in the Southwest and West Zones, respectively. It said, despite a relative lack of rainwater in the West Zone, “the brothers there have managed to solve their water supply problems and have gradually transplanted their rice seedlings. With the present abundant rainfall they are striving to continue to plow, harrow, sow, and transplant the young rice.”²⁷⁸ It also claimed that because it had now proved possible to “tackle the problems of living standards among” what it now reverted to saying were “three million newly liberated people,” they were able to participate in the rice production drive, adding once again that they were “very satisfied with Kampuchea’s “complete liberation ... from slavery” and happy to join in efforts alongside those liberated before them to increase production in collective units that had proved capable of solving the problems of their livelihood. This transmission further argued that, because of the restoration of land lines of communication, food could be distributed within the country and exported abroad, but no date for starting the latter was given.²⁷⁹ A few days later, it proclaimed that Kampuchea’s agriculture was “being developed to a degree unknown before.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ “Excellent’ Domestic Situation Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ “Editorial Praises Various Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 September 1975.

During mid-September, the radio argued that the harnessing of the large and dynamic labor force created by including evacuees in it would compensate for Kampuchea's relatively small population because it would constitute "a great and perennial source of energy for building the country," one that was now doing so "with the utmost enthusiasm" and turning it "into a vast building site which is progressing by leaps and bounds in all aspects."²⁸¹ For its part, it enthused in a passage clearly telling listeners to believe that a major expansion of acreage was going on:

This year, the brothers have cultivated all the existing fields and farms, leaving not even an inch of land unfurrowed. Moreover, they have reclaimed much wasteland and opened vast expanses of new rice fields. The old existing dams, ditches, reservoirs, and ponds have been reinforced, and new ones have been built. . . . Everywhere, the people have plunged into harvesting the golden early rice crop. Meanwhile, the late rice crop is growing greener in all paddy fields which stretch as far as the eye can see. Simultaneously, the brothers have launched a vigorous offensive to raise all kinds of strategic crops such as bananas, potatoes, corn, cotton, mulberries, and jute.²⁸²

On the other hand, a program heard on 18 September echoed the themes voiced by the radio in earlier months about the farming population having to persevere in the face of hardship, just as it had done during the war period, particularly during the heavy 1973 US aerial bombardment campaign, thereby at least hinting at the possibility of fatalities. It made the point that in those days, the people had proved able to "harden themselves everywhere" as part of a policy that every zone was supposed to produce to support itself. It restated previous radio claims that during the war the people had "managed to independently increase production" and even have "some surplus food for export," implying there should be no reason why they should not now also be able to do so.²⁸³

It specified that wartime production had made the Southwest, East, North, and Northwest Zones (but thus not the West and Northeast Zones) self-sufficient via the organization of what it at this time continued euphemistically to call "solidarity groups for production," which it said had since 17 April provided food

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ "Editorial Praises Farm Policy," Radio Phnom Penh, 17 September 1975.

for evacuees who had become part of an enlarging and improving cultivation system in which already:

Former forests and wastelands have become vast rice fields. Former single-crop areas now are sown to two and even three crops. Use of fertilizer has expanded, thus gradually raising the per hectare yield from one year to the next. Small rice fields have been transformed into vast rice lands surrounded by straight, high, large embankments with irrigation gates.²⁸⁴

It thus hammered away at the notion that the (this time vaguely enumerated) “millions” of people who had been evacuated from the towns were “an important source of additional labor force” whose arrival in the countryside and integration into units of production the existing members of which were already “steadfast in their revolutionary convictions” and experienced in seed selection, fertilizer use, and insect control made the conditions for increasing production “even more favorable” than during the war.²⁸⁵ It further expressed confidence that this would be true regardless of any episodes of bad weather, such as those about which it had earlier voiced concern. It pledged that such phenomena would not stand in the way of success because:

Our people have ... mastered natural calamities such as drought and flood to a great extent. The small, medium, and large dams and dikes and the networks of short and long ditches and canals – the achievements of production teams – have greatly changed the outlook of the countryside. It is those dams and ditches which guarantee good irrigation both during drought and flood.²⁸⁶

As for what was happening now and would be happening in 1976 and beyond, it appeared to endorse the more optimistic of the two timetables for rice sufficiency and export that Khieu Samphan had seemed to put forward on 12 August (that is, that exports could begin during the latter part of 1976 and expand thereafter). It said:

²⁸⁴ Ibid

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

This year our crop is generally good in all Zones. Some areas are harvesting early rice. In other areas they are completing late rice transplanting, while in some places the 'kanlas' rice is promisingly ripening and almost ready for harvest. ... This year we are self-sufficient; next year we will have a rice surplus for export, and in the years to come our exports will grow steadily, thus making our agriculture the true base for industry.²⁸⁷

It concluded that when all this came to pass, it would prove "the great success" of the CPK's agricultural production policy.²⁸⁸

A broadcast heard on 20 September similarly expressed certainty that great agricultural accomplishments were in the offing because of the "excellent results" of the work done since 17 April.²⁸⁹ It again highlighted the Northwest Zone as having the greatest potential to fulfill the regime's aspirations. The Zone was given pride of place as the example of how Kampuchea was "favored by nature" via endowment with "good, rich land and plenty of water, forests and fish." Specifically, it had "plains with extremely fertile soil and equally vast areas on the bank of the Tonle Sap Lake," thus being able to grow both ordinary and floating rice, while in addition being blessed with "mountain areas which are also good for production and constitute a rich source of hydroelectric power," possibly looking forward to a time when rice production would benefit from electricity driven machinery. It claimed that now in the Zone, with a total land area of 3,173,600 hectares (of which 375,000 had been planted to rice at the beginning of the 1960s, according to the radio back in June), the population augmented there by 17 April evacuees was already farming 400,000 hectares of land – the area's "best ever" acreage – on which they would be producing two tons per hectare. If this were to be believed, they would thus be harvesting 800,000 tons of 1975 paddy (480,000 tons of rice). Moreover, the radio envisioned that because the Zone had it said a total of almost 1,200,000 hectares of tillable lowlands alone, the paddy growing a creage could easily be expanded to 680,000 hectares which, if the available cultivating population fully applied fertilizer, could be at least one part of Kampuchea where a harvest six tons per hectare could be attained (presumably via double-cropping). This imagined a potential paddy harvest of 4,080,000 tons (2,448,000 tons of rice),²⁹⁰ an apparently extraordinary amount, in that it was more than two and a half times greater than what the radio had in June given

²⁸⁷ Ibid; NB: 'kanlas' rice literally means "half-rice," a quick growing variety.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ "Efforts to Modernize Agriculture Detailed," Radio Phnom Penh, 19 September 1975.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

to understand the whole country had historically produced,²⁹¹ although only 168,0000 tons more rice than the early 1970 nationwide harvest given in the above-cited academic work.²⁹²

The North and East Zones and the Siem Reap-Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, and Mondulkiri Sectors were once more rated as having a level of potential only surpassed by the Northwest. In them, according to the radio, rice production could be expanded “several more times” beyond their current levels. At the bottom of possibilities were the Southwest and West Zones, which were said to be in a position only to “develop the production of other crops,” such as copra (dried coconut meat).²⁹³

Such different potentialities aside, the overall aspiration remained to “achieve an abundance of rice” based on the principle that “the more we produce for export, the more capital we will earn” to “develop our industry and modernize our agriculture.” Export of other crops would also contribute to this.²⁹⁴ Echoing the premise previously promoted again and again by both Kampuchean and Chinese authorities that 17 April 1975 had established Kampuchea as a model for what a small nation could achieve militarily, this broadcast now declared that fulfilling the CPK’s economic aspirations would replicate its function as a world-class model by making Kampuchea “a brilliant example” of how “a small nation can build its country independently.”²⁹⁵

On non-agricultural fronts, the radio during September upped its claim about industrial resurrection in Phnom Penh, saying that “more than 50 state-owned factories are resuming operations with good results,”²⁹⁶ continuing to suggest by omission that all this was being done without foreign help. It specified that nine textile mills in Phnom Penh were restarting normal operations and “producing a large quantity of good quality clothes, which can meet the people’s needs.”²⁹⁷ Textile factory Number One in Pochentong was highlighted in a story according to which it was turning out 13,000 meters of fabric daily.²⁹⁸ It was toured by Sihanouk on 17 September.²⁹⁹ Another broadcast recounted the return to

²⁹¹ “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975.

²⁹² Rob Cramb, et al., *op. cit.*, pp.230-231.

²⁹³ “Efforts to Modernize Agriculture Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 September 1975.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ “‘Excellent’ Domestic Situation Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

²⁹⁷ “Textile Mills Resume Operations,” Radio Phnom Penh, 14 September 1975.

²⁹⁸ “Sihanouk Visits Textile Mill,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 September 1975.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

operation of a blanket-making factory in Stung Meanchey, the result of intensive repairs begun in late August and completed in September, and claimed it was able to produce 150 blankets a day.³⁰⁰ On the other hand, the radio reported that a cotton thread factory was still only gradually resuming operations and was so far producing thread of only “fair quality.”³⁰¹

In conjunction, reports of local cotton-growing, weaving, and spinning in places throughout the country meanwhile had continued to be broadcast in the second half of August and during September.³⁰² In early September, the radio predicted that if “handicrafts continue to develop and the situation becomes better, we will not have to worry about a lack of clothing,”³⁰³ a prospect it further envisioned at mid-month when it said that handicrafts in general had already been “raised to an unprecedented level,”³⁰⁴ implicitly by local effort alone. The week before, the radio had announced that “various hospitals in Phnom Penh” had been reopened and were admitting patients for treatment, saying that the “revolutionary medical corps” were preparing medicines being administered to them,³⁰⁵ so still saying nothing about Chinese pharmaceuticals.

The radio also still divulged nothing about assistance for the restoration of lines of communication. It simply said Sihanouk’s return to Phnom Penh on 9 September had been made possible by the reopening of Pochentong airport, reported the previous day,³⁰⁶ in fact quite probably as a result of at least some PRC help. While it admitted that the repair of the Phnom Penh-Kampong Saom railway was in fact still not fully completed, it gave assurances, making no mention of the likely PRC assistance to this project, that “soon, imported and exported goods” would be transported by rail instead of by the current means of 400 trucks.³⁰⁷ Despite whatever the PRC may have been providing, this remained the case in mid-September,³⁰⁸ when line renovation was described as “nearly completed,” but this meant that, until it was, serious haulage remained dependent

³⁰⁰ “Inventive Workers Put Factories Back into Operation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 22 November 1975.

³⁰¹ “Cotton Thread Factory Operations,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

³⁰² “Crop Production for Export Stressed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 August 1975; “Preah Vihear Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 25 August 1975; “Route 6 Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 September 1975; “Preah Vihear Agriculture,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975; “Srok Thbeng Rehabilitation Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 20 September 1975.

³⁰³ “Excellent’ Domestic Situation Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

³⁰⁴ “Editorial Praises Various Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 September 1975.

³⁰⁵ “Hospitals Cleaned Up; Now Serve People,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 September 1975.

³⁰⁶ “Construction Detailed, Airport Open,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 September 1975; “Excellent’ Domestic Situation Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁸ “Editorial Praises Various Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 September 1975.

on “heavy-duty trucks.”³⁰⁹ In that regard, a claim was made that “normal traffic” had resumed on the seven national highway routes,³¹⁰ although it was also conceded in late September that their rehabilitation was ongoing.³¹¹

At the end of September 1975, after Ieng Sary’s return to Kampuchea on the 26th, a secret de facto enlarged meeting of the Standing Committee of the CPK Central Committee was convened that he attended along with Pol Pot, Nuon Chea, Sao Phim, Vorn Vet, Son Sen, Ruos Nheum, Koy Thuon, Khieu Samphan, and a number of other cadres. According to what Sary would later tell this author, at the meeting it was “stipulated that it was imperative to go all out to carry out a really fast communization” of Kampuchea in order to make a Vietnamese takeover of the country impossible, and that a key requirement for advancing so quickly was irrigation of agriculture.³¹² This gathering may have coincided with a CPK Party Center conference³¹³ and an annual Party study session,³¹⁴ both equally secret and probably at best with only somewhat wider participation and certainly not by the general Party and Youth League membership, much less the public at large.

An internal CPK document dated September, and quite possibly presented to one or more of these three closed gatherings, elaborated on the Party’s “political line on restoring the economy and making arrangements for the construction of the country in every aspect.” With more authority than the various radio and magazine sources cited above, it both summed up and dealt in sometimes considerably greater depth with current and future agricultural, industrial, financial, cultural, and social action policies, including where relevant foreign aid and commercial exports and imports,³¹⁵ revealing a few details about the aid to those now allowed to know them, as described below. The document

³⁰⁹ “Army Reconstruction Efforts Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 15 September 1975.

³¹⁰ “Excellent Domestic Situation Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 7 September 1975.

³¹¹ “Spirit, Deeds of Revolutionary Heroes Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 24 September 1975.

³¹² ECCC Document E3/106 [KH], “Documentation Center of Cambodia: Steve Heder Interview with Ieng Sary, 17 December 1996,” pp.2-6.

³¹³ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “What Is the Significance of Three Tons Per Hectare,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, p.26.

³¹⁴ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], “The Party’s Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization),” *Revolutionary Flags Number 11*, November 1976, p.4. From the formulation describing the presenter, it seems the speaker was Pol Pot, even though he had been on “temporary leave” (purportedly “to take care of his health”) from his post as DK prime minister since 27 September, with Nuon Chea taking on the role of acting prime minister (according to Radio Phnom Penh, 26 September 1976). For further explanation, see Part Two on 1976.)

³¹⁵ ECCC Document E3/1756 [KH], “Assessing the Grasp on and Implementation of the Political Line on Restoring the Economy and Making Arrangements for the Construction of the Country in Every Aspect,” [illegible day] September 1975, p.1.

confirmed that the basic line on agriculture was to push it “to make it progress by maximum leaps and bounds” because “in order to build the country rapidly, agriculture must be taken as the basis,” making it the foundation for economic reconstruction.³¹⁶ It reformulated the May 1975 CPK Central Committee demand that the speed must be to advance from backward to modern agriculture in five to ten years and from an agricultural to an industrial base in between 15 to 20 years.³¹⁷ It now made the requirement to be to reform Kampuchea’s backward agriculture to make it modern in ten to 15 years (1985-1990), which would demand achieving 70 to 80 percent mastery over water, having 70 to 80 percent mechanization, reaching 70 or more percent application of fertilizer and agrochemicals (pesticides), putting in place 60 to 70 percent electrification, and making use of petroleum-based fuels, plus doing experimentation in agricultural technology and science.³¹⁸ The document conceded this still meant going a very long way in a very short time, saying this was why everybody had to “proceed boldly via the most active tempo of systematic storming attacks” while ensuring all forces of production (above all labor) were properly arranged.³¹⁹

The document stuck to the argument that doing what it laid out would be objectively possible because of Kampuchea’s existing natural endowments in terms of fertile land, abundant sources of water, and multiple ingredients for making fertilizers. It moreover insisted that the reality was that Kampuchea possessed greater potential in all these regards than Communist China, Korea, and Vietnam—potential that could be realized so long as Kampuchea’s revolution was being correctly led by its Communist Party into collectivist agriculture.³²⁰ It singled out Korea for having declared that Kampuchea would be able to become “immensely wealthy” in just five years, while indicating that Kampuchea’s cooperatives had since 1974 already begun doing things like re-diking paddy fields, which the text seemed to hint that an implicitly somewhat laggard PRC had yet to do despite having been liberated a quarter of a century ago.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

³¹⁷ David P. Chandler, trans., “Document IV: Preliminary Explanation Before Reading the Plan, by the Party Secretary, Translation,” *op. cit.*, pp.124-125; “First Year National Reconstruction Effort Examined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 20 May 1978; “Pol Pot 24 Aug TV Interview with Swedish Friendship Delegation,” Radio Phnom Penh, 8 October 1978.

³¹⁸ ECCC Document E3/1756 [KH], *op. cit.*, pp.1-2.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

Assessing the “movement of the masses” engaged in agricultural production during the four to five months since 17 April, the document characterized it as stronger than before 1975. It insisted it had proved strong during this still short post-war period despite what it admitted had been a “situation of shortages of each and every type in terms of livelihood, among which were shortages of materials for increasing production, oxen, water buffalo, hoes, and so on,” and which were especially affecting “those who were evacuated from Phnom Penh and surrounding areas.” It maintained that these deficiencies (despite 2,000,000 unacknowledged Chinese hoes) were temporary and were already in part being overcome as a result of the mass production drive carried out since May 1975, with people who were veterans of life in CPK liberated zones and newly transferred people concentrated to work together day and night (15 hours total), unhesitatingly launching storming attacks, regardless of rain or wind, to increase production, despite any adverse impact on their health. It said that notwithstanding such ill effects, the revolution would succeed in feeding former urbanites and lifelong rural folk alike in the following year (1976), even as they were all being transformed into workers like those in factories as part of a system in which they were already being successfully mobilized for work and had begun preparations to do agriculture in new and “modern” ways, at least in some places.³²¹ It declared that “this exuberant movement has shown us that next year we would be able to sort out the people’s standard of living,” given that already in 1975, the revolution had professedly achieved much and done so well,³²² formulations that again promised food sufficiency for 1976 production efforts, but did not however mention exports.

Of a total Kampuchean population that, back in May, the radio had put at 7,000,000, the document reported that the current active labor force was 5,000,000 people, of whom 4,000,000 were engaged in paddy production, 700,000 in other agricultural pursuits such as rubber or sugarcane production, and the rest in various other activities. It said these 4,000,000 people could currently at most farm on what it now, like the radio had in June,³²³ put as Kampuchea’s previously maximum available 3,000,000 hectares of paddy fields, but proclaimed this could be expanded to 4,000,000 hectares, so that there would be an average of one person farming one hectare. However, the document said, achieving this goal would only be possible if there was mechanization to assist cultivators, because

³²¹ *Ibid.*, pp.1-2, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 32.

³²² *Ibid.*, pp.4-6.

³²³ “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

there was not sufficient human labor power to farm such a large increase in acreage, so the necessary mechanization for doing so must be put in place by 1980,³²⁴ the original year by which agricultural was to begin to be modern.

The document maintained that current in progress factors in favor of proceeding to such eventual accomplishments included using new paddy dike systems to control water together with the digging of canals connected to rivers and lakes to feed water into the fields when needed, followed by the construction of dams. It declared now it was time to push forward with re-diking lowland paddy fields, maintaining that re-diking was work that could be done by “anyone,” either by hand or with machines. This was described as an essential task that would transform the countryside into an environment with high, straight, and level embankments laid out in a checkerboard pattern and creating conditions for relatively quickly producing rice for export and thus to purchase machinery and petroleum-based fuels for it which together would further accelerate the development of agriculture. A first goal was to have water supply everywhere in the lowland sectors of Battambang province in the Northwest Zone during 1976. This was to be followed during 1977 by combining control and supply of water with use of fertilizers and other technologies to increase yields per hectare. By 1978, such conditions must be created on 100 percent of lowland paddy fields nationwide, thus attaining 50 percent water control on an area of 500,000 hectares, and in the Northwest, 80 percent of all paddy fields must benefit from such mastery in terms of water.³²⁵ At the start, fertilizers were to be made from natural ingredients: animal and human waste, various plant matter, fish parts, and silt from rivers and lakes. This was touted as an easier option than buying fertilizers from overseas or relying on the limited existing capacity to produce phosphate products.³²⁶

The document stressed that agricultural production must be carried out in a planned manner, beginning with the most favorable locations, which meant assembling the population where the soil was most fertile in order to achieve quick crop production and quick harvests as a result of implementation of Party directives to carry out what were being consistently called storming attacks. It said plan specifics must be formulated at the zone, sector, district, and grassroots

³²⁴ ECCC Document E3/1765 [KH], op. cit., pp.1-2, 4-11, 15-16, 27, 32. On the 7,000,000 population figure, see “People’s Spirit of Economy,” Radio Phnom Penh, 10 May 1975; “Strength of National Solidarity,” Radio Phnom Penh, 12 May 1975; and “Commentary Lauds Rainy Season Rice-Growing Drive,” Radio Phnom Penh, 27 May 1975.

³²⁵ ECCC Document E3/1756 [KH], op. cit., pp.5-9.

³²⁶ Ibid., pp.12-13.

levels and stressed that efforts to increase agricultural production must be combined with transforming not only urban evacuees, but also veteran peasant people into persons with a modern working-class nature, otherwise things could not proceed as planned.³²⁷

Having thus spoken of the supposed virtues of massing veteran and new peasant labor and of focusing it on working the potentially most productive land in storming attacks in a planned manner, and while referring to the food and other shortages the people had hitherto been experiencing,³²⁸ the document laid down plans for a second massive relocation of population, presented as a corrective to that of 17 April. It presented this follow-up forced transfer not only as the way to better serve production requirements, but also to solve the problems of the parts of the population who it said were suffering the greatest shortages: those who had been evacuated from Phnom Penh and its environs, especially those sent to the nearby Sector 15 of the West Zone and nearby Sector 25 of the Southwest.³²⁹

Saying that, so far, food had had to be shifted at least to Sector 15 to solve this problem, the document declared this could only be a transitional solution for people in a location where they would never be able to feed themselves. Moreover, this was characterized as part of the much larger temporary situation of misallocation of labor that must be ended by repositioning it in a manner that was appropriate to production needs, so there was neither too much nor too little labor for any given location, and so that it would no longer be chaotically moving back and forth from one place to another. It called for a permanent solution along these lines to be implemented beginning in November 1975.³³⁰

Thus, the stated justification for relocations was to move people out of places like Sector 15, where the expectable paddy yield was only one ton per hectare, to places like the Northwest Zone, which was said to promise yields of three to four tons, the North Zone, which was said to be able also to achieve this same level, and the East Zone, which was said to be able to get three or more tons, all apparently soon. It did not at this point talk about potentially larger yields per hectare further into the future; instead, it spoke only in terms of prospects for setting single crop paddy yield targets, ranging from as little as two to as much as 4.5 tons per hectare, at least for now. In any case, the document implied that

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.5-7.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5,7.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

population movement made less sense to places where yield prospects were rated as less good than in the favorable Northwest, North, and East. It said that this was the case in the Southwest Zone (although it had some good land in places such as south of Route 3, south of Kampot town, and in the Choam Sangke area in the north part of the Zone), and that the situation was even worse in the West Zone. It indicated relocation could work better to Siem Reap and the Northeast Zone, although in the latter, the existing population was not accustomed to paddy farming.³³¹ It implied that getting population relocation right would make it possible to get the desired large paddy harvests by 1977,³³² presumably meaning big exports in 1978. The discussion of various current and future acreage yields was accompanied at another point in the document by the declaration that it was imperative to continue attaining an overall average paddy yield of three tons per hectare from 1977 crops.³³³

terms of numbers, the population re-evacuation plan put forward included moving 500,000 people to the Northwest. Preah Vihear had reportedly requested 50,000 people, but to begin with, only 20,000 would be sent to this area with a relatively sparse veteran people population of 70,000, presumably to avoid politically overwhelming the latter. The North Zone was said to need people for Kampong Thom province, and the East Zone was said to need them for sectors with population shortages, but no figures were given for these locations. Whatever the numbers, the document instructed each of these zones to make proper arrangements for the distribution and settling-in of relocated persons, and eventually even to set up tile-roofed housing for them.³³⁴

Elaborating on its contention that the movement plans were necessary as part of a larger requirement to improve utilization and assignment of labor forces, it maintained this was needed because hitherto only some locations had been doing such things well. The document said it had previously been correct to concentrate forces to work vigorously in locations with a good water supply, but there had been confusion, particularly with poor task assignment. It admonished that work forces must be organized into orderly teams with leaders operating according to plans and thus functioning scientifically and creating an atmosphere of solidarity making it possible for evacuees from Phnom Penh to join in the work,³³⁵ and that

³³¹ *Ibid.*, p.16.

³³² *Ibid.*, p.15.

³³³ *Ibid.*, p.8.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.30.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.15.

attention must also be paid to the timing of various phases of paddy cultivation work, about which some locations had not been giving sufficient thought.³³⁶

Within this context, the document called on the zones, sectors, and districts to make plans for offensives to control water in the very same way they had made plans for military operations during the war, focusing for the moment on re-diking the paddy fields in preparation for upcoming agricultural campaigns and in particular to achieve the stated target of re-diking on all the 500,000 hectares of lowland paddy fields selected for improved water control thus ensuring very large paddy harvests by 1978. It reprised the prospect that, as a result of all this, exported rice would be the capital with which machinery would be obtained to further accelerate the development of agriculture. At one point, without specifying a particular crop year, but seemingly laying out hopes for 1975 production, the document said that if 3,000,000 tons of paddy (1,800,000 tons of rice) were to be produced, then 1,800,000 tons of this paddy (1,080,000 tons of rice) would be destined for routine local consumption and an additional 400,000 tons of paddy (240,000 tons of rice) would be set aside to support local “social action” projects, which included those dedicated to hygiene, medical care, and looking after infants, children, disabled veterans, and families of combatants (for a total of 2,200,000 tons of paddy or 1,320,000 tons of rice used up domestically). This would leave 800,000 tons of paddy (480,000 tons of rice) for export already in 1976,³³⁷ twice the early 1960s baseline cited back at the beginning of June by Radio Phnom Penh,³³⁸ but only 20 percent higher than the 1960s maximum set at 400,000 tons in one academic publication.³³⁹

The September 1975 document did not perform further arithmetic, but it can be calculated that if the 1,800,000 tons of paddy were to go to feed seven million people in 1976 as local consumption, that would be an average of 257 kilograms of paddy (or 154 kilograms of milled rice) per person (and the amount would go up to 189 kilograms of rice per person if the “social action” use figure were included as being eaten). If the 480,000 tons of milled rice resulting from 800,000 tons of paddy were sold abroad for the US\$200 per ton that subsequent documents

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Ibid., pp.27, 30.

³³⁸ “Radio Phnom Penh on Rice, Animal, Rubber Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 11 June 1975; “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

³³⁹ H.J. Nesbit, ed., *op. cit.*, pp.11-12.

gave as the expected price,³⁴⁰ it would as soon as 1976 earn US\$96,000,000 that could be used as capital to finance imports to build and defend the country. This amount would be more than the US\$72 million credit the PRC would silently provide in 1976 (see Part Two). This would put DK in a position to use export earnings from whatever markets to which the rice was sold to and more than clear, at its own selected pace, this amount and therefore escape significantly from its covert financial dependence on the PRC in the realm of economic construction. At the very least, by giving the CPK the choices of either drawing down on the credit to pay for Chinese imports, or relying on its own growing export earnings to do so, or doing some combination of both until the credit was exhausted and imports could be entirely financed by exports alone. Other capital, in addition to rice, that the document indicated could be exported to effect modernization of Kampuchean agriculture and industry included rubber, fish, and corn.³⁴¹

The document promised that it would be up to the grassroots level to stipulate what was to be done with the paddy that was produced: how much would be kept at the subdistrict, district, sector, and zone levels, and how much from each would be sent upwards. It revealed that village-level administrations were going to be abolished and incorporated into subdistrict-level cooperatives. Under this arrangement, the cooperatives' administration would control use of the capital onto which they held, such as for the construction of clinics, machine shops, and schools. The same would be true for the districts, sectors, and zones, each of which would keep some capital for construction and send the remainder on up, so that at the top there would be capital with which to buy machinery and other things for distribution back via the State to the whole country. The allocations would be on the basis of barter, with the State deciding what to apportion to the zones, sectors, and districts, doing so according to overall needs and those in each of these localities. However, the guiding principle was that the State must have the capital necessary for building and defending the country as a whole. The zones would be given priority over sectors and districts, which only needed a moderate amount.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Chanthou Boua, "Document III: 'The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields,' Party Center, July-August 1976), Translation," in David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua, eds. and trans., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series 33, 1988), p.51; for the Khmer original, see *Kumrong Phenkar Buon Chhnam Kasang Sangkummiyum Krup Phnek Robas Pak* [The Party's Preliminary Draft Four-Year Plan for the Construction of Socialism in All Fields], p.18. Questions regarding the translation of the Khmer of this document into English are discussed in Part Two on 1976.

³⁴¹ ECCC Document E3/1765 [KH], op. cit., pp.21, 25-26.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, pp.27-29.

A special case, however, were the base areas that had been the CPK's reliable strongholds during the war, described as being populated by poverty-stricken people who had long supported the revolution and had sacrificed their children for it. The document argued it would not be right either to move these people to more comfortable locations or to keep them living in places of difficulty without possibilities for development. This latter course would mean they would be the last to benefit from the revolution, and that in case of war, the Party would lose their support, even as new people evacuees could not be relied upon to take the side of the revolution against the enemy. Therefore, as a matter of class principle and for purposes of national defense, it was necessary to find ways to preferentially supply capital to such historically poverty-stricken and politically reliable people.³⁴³

Continuing its focus on domestic matters, the document stressed that the internal distribution of items serving the people's livelihood, agricultural, industrial, and national defense needs were the responsibility of State Commerce, then severely criticized that unit's performance of this function. In particular, Commerce was accused of failing to fulfill the objective of delivering medicines, flints, sewing needles, tobacco, fermented fish, fish sauce, and other such articles to the people, the first three of which were among the items included in PRC aid. At the same time, Commerce was berated for paying too much attention to war spoils and items of foreign manufacture, which the document insisted could not solve the people's subsistence needs. It made it clear that such shortcomings would have to be resolved going forward.³⁴⁴

In its discussion of Commerce's responsibility for domestic trade,³⁴⁵ the text gave another account of how the revolution was going to create, circulate, and procure capital to serve the livelihood of the people and the needs of the industry, commerce, culture, social action, and foreign affairs sectors, as well as those of national defense. The country's capital would be produced by its people and industry, including rice, rubber, corn, and fish. Part of this would be distributed directly back to the people. Five percent would be contributed to the State. Another part would be traded by the people to the State for meat, fish, and medicines, either with no profit for the State or with some profit for the State, the latter being the course advocated by the document. Surpluses would be sold abroad to finance imports to be delivered to the people and to serve other local needs.³⁴⁶

³⁴³ Ibid., pp.28-29.

³⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.20-22.

³⁴⁵ Ibid., p.21

³⁴⁶ Ibid., pp.25-27.

The document's aspirations for domestic economic production were voiced together with insistence on the continuing need for self-reliance, but unusually, it did tell its select group of readers that a "supplementary" aspect of what Kampuchea had so far achieved was that it had received "some foreign aid,"³⁴⁷ namely, that coming from the PRC and the DPRK, which it selectively described. It also provided some information about what additional aid could be coming,³⁴⁸ doing so in the context of laying out broad plans for non-agricultural economic development in the near future that would implicitly require imports of a variety of goods that by contrast would not come as aid, but would have to be paid for one way or another, that is, either by credit, export earnings, or some other source of funds.

Thus, although the document never referred in any way to PRC (or Vietnamese) rice aid, it sometimes either referred rather specifically to certain kinds of items that were among those mentioned in the above-quoted listings of goods given gratis to Kampuchea by China or otherwise discussed categories of assistance that could very well include other items on those listings. Still, it was consistently silent about the quantities and resorted heavily to the usual device of vagueness to avoid saying anything very much about the extent to which particular aid items were contributing crucially to Kampuchean economic revival in key sectors, including not only industry and transport, but also agriculture. The document noted that current aid included tractors provided by the PRC and the DPRK, and that technicians from one or the other were involved in helping to create conditions for setting up facilities to manufacture tractors and machinery like electrical generators. It was also admitted that the PRC had been assisting with the processes of repair and other work to gradually put back into operation large factories in the provinces, including a cement factory, an oil refinery, a resin factory, and a factory to manufacture items out of rubber, a list that overlapped with sites about which the radio had been talking, but without admitting to foreign help. The document also reported that the DPRK was, for its part, helping in the construction of a boat factory.³⁴⁹ Thus, while the text emphasized the immediate importance of properly locating human labor and of using non-mechanical and locally-sourced ways and means of immediately increasing rice production self-reliantly, it also stated it was already time to start making arrangements to move on in several years' time to use of water pumps for irrigation, given that

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.3-4, 7, 11, 14, 17, 19.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

industry was now being put back into operation step-by-step, even if it did not yet have a properly industrial character. It explained that once it was possible to manufacture pumps, then generators would also have to be produced. To this end, the document foresaw that with the help of old society technicians and Chinese and Korean experts, and by importing wiring and carbon, little dynamos could certainly be made in two or three years, that is, by 1977 or 1978. Moreover, as the DPRK was going to help set up a factory to produce generators, the authorities responsible for industry would be responsible for making the necessary preparations to ensure it could also be put into operation within two years' time.³⁵⁰

The document further explained that although some old society tractors previously imported from the UK, France, US, PRC, and DPRK remained available, they were considered not right for use in Kampuchea, and anyway they could only be used for two or three years before they wore out, thus requiring replacement during 1977 or 1978. The good news was that precisely because the PRC and DPRK were already helping with a number of tractors, a few of these could be disassembled to be studied during three or four years (1978 or 1979) and in due course copied, even if crucial parts such as gearboxes would still have to be imported. The document added that although there were some veteran old society technicians who, in principle, might be able to manufacture new tractors and, in practice, be politically reliable enough to be employed to do so, hundreds of new technicians would have to be trained as part of a process that would last four years, into 1979. Finally, a factory could then be set up, but it would still be five years before production would be possible, which would be in 1980, the same year by which it had been suggested enough mechanization would have to be in place to make it possible for 4,000,000 people to grow rice on 4,000,000 hectares.

Regarding large-scale supply of electrical and fossil fuel energy, it was noted that Korea was helping with major generating capacity, but the fundamental goal was to get the old society's Kirirom hydroelectricity generation capacity back up and running and, eventually, to exploit other hydroelectricity possibilities throughout the country. A search for petroleum deposits was also called for.³⁵¹

As for industry more generally and for handicrafts, the line was to focus on solving immediate production problems while preparing the conditions described above to establish bases for advancing from backward to modern agriculture. The

³⁵⁰ Ibid., p.9.

³⁵¹ Ibid., pp.13-15.

document reported that lathe works and factories in Phnom Penh had gradually been put more or less back into operation, which in not a few cases was no doubt being more or less facilitated by unmentioned PRC aid. These establishments included facilities serving the railways and for producing automotive tires, textiles, lighters, soap, and cigarettes (the latter which it noted could eventually be sold in South Vietnam). The document said that, based on what had been achieved since April 1975, it should be possible to fully restore industry over the next three years (1975-1978). In the immediate future the priority was to strengthen and expand already existing factories making most importantly mosquito nets and blankets, but also thread, soap, tires, milk, fishing nets, buttons and shirts, plus cigarettes, lighters, flints, paper, pens and ink, fish sauce, and soy sauce, which, although it did not say so, would in some cases be replacing PRC aid. The next priority would be producing devices for agriculture—generators, motors, dynamos, and wheeled carts—followed by cement and plywood, then bricks and roofing tiles for factories, people's housing, schools, and warehouses. The document also looked forward to the future return to production, once raw materials were available, of a rice bran oil factory (for local consumption and sale in Southeast Asia), a beverage factory, and a distillery making alcoholic drinks, other alcohol products, vinegar, and perfumes, plus the construction of machinery-making factories and unspecified other ones. Elsewhere, according to the document, preparations were being made in the provinces to put large factories there into operation, such as a cement factory, the oil refinery, and a fertilizer factory. It stated that such restoration and creation of provincially-based industrial capacity would also be carried out with PRC help, either by repairing existing plants or adding new factories, such as one to manufacture various goods from locally-produced rubber.³⁵²

The document then discussed the situation with current and future lines of communication and means of transportation that were going to be needed for the movement of rice, corn, tobacco, rubber, and other cargo. It reported that the rail line to Kampong Saom was up and running thanks to the efforts of the army, workers from the industrial sector, and the people. It further went on to detail that national roads throughout the country had been repaired, and that waterways were also now usable, but no direct thanks were given to the PRC for the tons of railway equipment it had contributed to the restoration of transport by train. It nevertheless continued to stress that use of railways and waterways was to be much preferred to roads because trains and boats required much less fuel than

³⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.16-18.

automobiles. However, it warned that existing rail lines would remain usable for only two or three more years—or at most four years, thus requiring replacement as early as 1977 and at the latest by 1979, adding that existing locomotives, which were of European manufacture, would soon enough have to be replaced, and that the running of new locomotives would require new tracking. It did not say where the new locomotives would come from, but did reveal that the PRC would be providing 80-100 rail cars. Similarly, when the document reported that although there were some remaining boats, more would have to be constructed, it repeated that Korea would be helping set up a boat factory, although it added that other vessels would have to be made in Phnom Penh and the zones.³⁵³

Elaborating on matters of public health, the document called for increasing manufacture of traditional medicines, but also said that, to the extent that it could be made possible by sale of rice and rubber, medicines should be imported. It did specify that the PRC was helping in the production of modern medicines, albeit without mentioning that both modern medicines and medical equipment were among PRC aid shipments, and instead said that relying on Chinese assistance was only a transitional solution to be used until Kampuchea could produce them on its own. Similarly, it did not refer to Chinese aid for insecticides and spraying equipment when it reported, in connection with malaria prevention plans with which the Party Center was in unity, that zone spraying to suppress it in mosquito-infested areas would begin on a trial basis in November-December and then continue in 1976 in forested villages and on rubber plantations. Nor did the document disclose anything about Chinese aid for medications when it said that anti-malaria drugs must also be used to treat those infected.³⁵⁴

Perhaps two weeks later, on 9 October 1975, an apparently ordinary meeting of the Standing Committee was convened that was addressed by Pol in his capacity as Central Committee Secretary and dealt with the division of responsibilities for the carrying out of CPK work, including in the economic realm in general and trade matters in particular, presumably with a view to implementing what had been laid out at the late September gathering. Pol himself took overall charge of the economy as well as military matters, although Son Sen (Khieu) was responsible for the General Staff and Security. Authority over “Industry, Railways, and Fishing” was given to Vorn Vet, “Domestic and

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., p.31.

International Commerce” to Koy Thuon (Thuch), and the “accounting and pricing aspects” of commercial matters to Khieu Samphan. It was specified that Commerce had to make sure to “supply materials to the people well” and, following up on the September document’s harsh criticism of its work, that the test of its performance going forward would be whether the population found the results “acceptable or not.” Commerce was also warned that the administrative burden of doing economic work would increase in 1976 and again in 1977.³⁵⁵ Son Sen gave a rather detailed presentation about PRC military assistance to Kampuchean naval, air force, and radio and telecommunication units, including construction of a port, radar stations, and refurbishment and construction of airports or airfields, plus training of pilots.³⁵⁶

Pol reminded those present that the CPK’s “general line” was to both defend and build the country by “relying on the strength of the masses.” This meant setting things up using existing human resources and in the context of economic shortages to “modernize” things, and thinking in terms of proceeding from “low to high levels,” standing upon the country’s existing economic foundations. Thus, while adopting a stance of independence/autonomy, it would also take foreign aid, but only as long as it did not “adversely affect” this standpoint. Similarly, although Kampuchea would be accepting assistance for “large-scale as well as small-scale” projects, it would do so while only “deploying it appropriately with the situation.”³⁵⁷

Pol followed this up with many specific comments about PRC military aid, saying, for example, that the Kampuchean armed forces needed Chinese radios, but having accepted them, would study them, learn how to repair them and then eventually know how to manufacture them locally.³⁵⁸ The same path was laid out for tractors as in the September text. Pol also talked about Chinese-aided land, naval, and airfield installations, including munitions factories, plus learning to fire Chinese artillery and getting training to fly aircraft captured from the Khmer Republic.³⁵⁹ However, there was no elaboration on other PRC assistance, aside from a passing mention of malaria medications.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ ECCC Document E3/14 [KH], “Standing Committee Meeting, 9 October 1975,” pp.1-4.

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.8-12.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.17-19.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.6.

For its part, the September 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Youth* continued to maintain discretion regarding foreign aid, downplaying its importance. It published one article marking what it enumerated as the 24th anniversary of the creation of the CPK in which the magazine stressed the need for Youth League members to be determined to ensure construction of the country by “rapid leaps and bounds” (*rohah-lotphlah*) via collective production so that the revolutionary economy would be “able both to supply itself 100 percent and to contribute another 100 percent to national economic construction,”³⁶¹ if taken literally possibly meaning that as much rice would be exported as consumed in country.

Another article in the same issue again enjoined readers that in rebuilding Kampuchea, “we must rely chiefly upon the forces of our own people, on our existing capital and on our country’s national resources.” It added that “even if we are to have the aid of foreign friends, that would not be a decisive factor for victory in our work of defending and building our country,” but “only a tiny contributing factor, nothing more.” It hammered away on the theme that “in order to defend and build the country independently, with autonomy and self-reliance,” it was possible and necessary to concentrate on agriculture, that being the sector in which Kampuchea had “overwhelmingly many resources and the possibility of launching full-blown storming offensives independently and with autonomy.” Industry was also on the nation-building agenda, but that would have to come later, because comparable resources were lacking.³⁶²

Therefore, the immediate necessary task was to launch storming attacks to increase agricultural output, in particular paddy, corn, beans, rubber, fish, wood, and the like to the maximum extent. This offensive was what required concentrating labor forces to construct waterworks for irrigation. These would thus be able to produce the capital needed to expand agriculture further and to build, strengthen, and expand industry to both serve national defense and improve their own popular living standards. *Revolutionary Youth* further explained that in order to carry out this immediate task self-reliantly, it was imperative to avoid absolutely the mindset of only being able to do things in a “well-endowed” manner, according to which one would “chase after bourgeois materials, technology, and science in the construction of our country.” It was obligatory at this initial stage not to think in terms of relying on tractors, mechanical water pumps, and

³⁶¹ ECCC Document E3/728 [KH], “On the Occasion of This 30 September 1975 24th Anniversary of the Birth of the Communist Party of Kampuchea Best Wishes to the Glorious Communist Party of Kampuchea for Its Most Excellent Victories,” *Revolutionary Youth Special Number*, September 1975, pp.7-8.

³⁶² ECCC Document E3/728 [KH], “Strengthen the Stance of Independence, Self-Reliance and Holding the Fate of One’s Nation and People in One’s Own Hands,” *Revolutionary Youth Special Number*, September 1975, pp.26-28.

paddy-harvesting machinery to farm paddy fields on a large scale. These were resources that Kampuchea did not yet have and would therefore have to purchase as imports from abroad, which the country could not yet do, or beg for as foreign aid along with the fuel to run them, which it should not do in principle.³⁶³

Instead, with regard to both agriculture and industry, the policy was to “go all out to creatively improvise in a lively, concrete way in line with our existing possibilities and means” to deal with “whatever we need that we don’t yet have or don’t yet know how to do,” proceeding in this manner until “we are able to do them and have them.” This must be accompanied by careful conservation of all existing resources, avoiding any and all kinds of wastefulness.³⁶⁴ A third article described how this was purportedly being done by putting textile factories back into operation, with workers said to be successfully doing so without asking the Party to purchase spare parts from abroad,³⁶⁵ an assertion that neatly sidestepped the subject of current foreign aid.

³⁶³ Ibid., pp.27-29.

³⁶⁴ Ibid., pp.28-29.

³⁶⁵ ECCC Document E3/728 [KH], “Textile Workers’ Spirit of Creative Improvisation in Building the Country,” *Revolutionary Youth Special Number*, September 1975, pp.60-61.

OCTOBER to NOVEMBER 1975

The lead article in the October 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Youth* declared that following the first wave of population relocations—which resulted in 99.9 percent of Kampuchea’s people living in the countryside—the country was going through an “initial period” of post-war reconstruction during which it admitted they were now suffering from “shortages of everything.” These ranged “from shortages of shelter or other residences in housing, shortages of food supplies and shortages of various means and implements of production, etc.” However, it argued that the then-in-process expansion of what it straightforwardly labelled “cooperatives” from teams of 15-30 households to organizations at the level of whole villages was addressing such problems, overcoming such “temporary difficulties,” and enhancing the prospects for agricultural production. Escalating earlier admonitions by Radio Phnom Penh and in the September document, the magazine warned that fulfilling rice output targets would require the “most seething” and “constant” battle for production fought day and night, “without any rest at all.”³⁶⁶

A radio broadcast heard on 3 October continued proclaiming the rice production potential of the Northwest Zone, where the September document had said 500,000 people were going to be sent starting in November. In contrast to previous statements promoting the wonders of fertilization, the broadcast declared that the soil in the Northwest, historically “regarded as the rice bowl” of the country, “does not need to be fertilized because it is very rich,” such that it had in the past provided an average paddy yield of two tons per hectare. It painted a wonderfully positive picture of how labor on its fields starting since April 1975, including by evacuees from the cities already returned at that time supposedly to their original homes in the Northwest, had created conditions such that “in no time at all” the Zone would be “completely transformed and have a brand new outlook.” It reported that, operating in well-organized groups, the Zone’s pre-April residents and first wave evacuees had together been building dams and digging ditches, strengthening field embankments, and planting paddy. Thus, “rice fields which formerly were either too vast and untidy or without embankments” had been “adorned with large, long ditches and have straight, high and strong

³⁶⁶ ECCC Document E3/729 [KH], “Kampuchean Youth Must Forge and Re-Fashion Themselves in the Movement to Strengthen and Expand Production Cooperatives,” *Revolutionary Youth* Number 10, October 1975, pp.3-8.

embankments.” The population, about to be greatly augmented, had also been furrowing, harrowing, and transplanting, and it was supposedly now somehow putting almost one million hectares under rice cultivation in the Northwest alone, adding that where rain had been scanty, they had also been growing cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas, and corn.³⁶⁷ This later repeated claim about the acreage the Northwest could put into paddy production³⁶⁸ was presumably linked to the aspiration that they would be able to accomplish this once enough people were deployed to farm them. The implication was that the Northwest should be able to produce 2,000,000 tons of paddy, or 1,200,000 tons of rice, a result that would be more than four times as much as the 1960-1961 baseline laid down by Radio Phnom Penh for Battambang and Posat back in June,³⁶⁹ and as much as the station would in two days have listeners believe the whole country had ever produced in pre-revolutionary times.³⁷⁰

While announcing on 4 October that in some places, part of the rice crop was ripening and transplantation of the rest had been completed, the radio reminded its audience of the CPK’s two interconnected political truisms that “if we have rice, then we have everything,” and that “the more rice we have the better our national defense efforts will be.” It reported that “excellent headway” had already been made in the production movement in the Angkor Wat area and that thus the “wet season crop looks extremely promising.”³⁷¹ Meanwhile, according to this broadcast, a new wave of labor by mobile forces was beginning to build additional irrigation works in order to water the planting of a second, dry season rice crop.³⁷² Another broadcast declared such feats meant that what it called only “the first step in establishing” a new Kampuchean society had “so far” been successful.³⁷³ Echoing and territorially extending the ambition laid down for the Northwest, it proclaimed that there was now a nationwide:

³⁶⁷ “Production Flourishes in Northwest Provinces,” Radio Phnom Penh, 2 October 1975.

³⁶⁸ ECCC Document E3/759 [KH], “Extracts from the Presentation of the Comrade Representative of the Party Organization on the Occasion of the Grand Rally on 15 April in Phnom Penh Celebrating the First Anniversary of the Phenomenal 17 April Great Victory,” *Revolutionary Flags Number Four*, April 1976, pp.42-43.

³⁶⁹ “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

³⁷⁰ “Prospects for Greater Rice Yields Viewed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 October 1975.

³⁷¹ “Agricultural Output Rises in Angkorwat Region,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975.

³⁷² *Ibid.*; “Banteay Srei Women’s Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 October 1975; “Village Boosts Output Through Solidarity Groups,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 October 1975.

³⁷³ “Tasks Outlined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975.

plan that calls for a three to fourfold rice production increase by 1975-1977. This means an increase of 300 to 400 percent. In order to successfully implement this plan, our people and revolutionary armed forces have pledged to raise the per hectare yield from 1 or 1.5 tons to three tons by 1976 and four tons by 1977.³⁷⁴

If the increase was to be on a purported historical baseline of 2,000,000 tons of paddy, this imagined a 1976 crop of 6,000,000 tons and a 1977 crop of 8,000,000 tons.

Whatever the numbers, the broadcast stressed that in the country as a whole, as in the Northwest, such dramatic increases would require properly organizing the production forces to “plunge into the battle to build dams, dig ditches, excavate ponds, and strengthen field embankments, multiplying the number of irrigation works a hundred-fold” nationwide so as to be able to cultivate land all year round and grow three crops of paddy per annum.³⁷⁵

Thus, this broadcast said, the target was to implement a “great leap forward concept” to achieve such yields. It explained that this was in order to make the Kampuchean economy as a whole “develop quickly,” with rice to play the leading role in “saving and expanding capital,” according to the expanded prophecy, “if we have rice we have steel; if we have rice we have factories; if we have rice we have energy; and if we have rice we have tractors.”³⁷⁶ In the meantime, in the industrial sphere, the policy was to “further strengthen and expand existing factories” serving the people’s livelihood and the boosting of production, with new factories to follow at a later point.³⁷⁷

The promising prospects attributed to this concept contrasted with the radio’s earlier contention that pre-revolutionary Kampuchea had been unable to exploit its potential 3,000,000 hectares of paddy-growing land,³⁷⁸ a failure which it now said had in those days left its people with not enough to eat because only 2,000,000 of these had been planted and had yielded an average of only one ton per hectare. This had meant a result of only 2,000,000 tons of paddy per annum, of which about 400,000 (or 240,000 tons of rice) were exported, leaving

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Ibid. I can find no earlier mention in FBIS-translated media of the phrase “Great Leap Forward.” This may be FBIS’s rendering of the Khmer “*mohalotphlah*,” although this cannot be taken as absolutely certain.

³⁷⁷ “Tasks Outlined,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975.

³⁷⁸ “Potential for Increased Rice Production,” Radio Phnom Penh, 13 June 1975.

only 1,600,000 tons of paddy (or 960,000 tons of rice) for other purposes, insufficient for the country's pre-1970 population, the size of which the radio did not specify.³⁷⁹

Also in October, amidst the beginning of preparations for the harvest of the main 1975 paddy crop,³⁸⁰ Radio Phnom Penh aired further programming on future rice production plans. Going out under the headline "From One Ton to Six Tons or More Per Hectare from the Wastelands to the Orchards – This Is Our Goal in the New Era of Revolution." Reverting to singing the praises of fertilization, it envisioned a doubling in 1976 of the already ambitious September document's apparent 1975 paddy production goal and reaching a resulting heightened rice consumption and export targets from 1976 output. Also, suddenly upping the official figure for Kampuchea's current population to 7,500,000, this program discussed in some detail what it presented as the country's current situation and its huge potentialities in the immediate and longer-term future, again most notably in the Northwest, with its population about to be expanded by half a million, saying:

The [paddy] yield throughout the country now averages one or 1.5 tons per hectare. In some [Zones], such as the Northwest, where the soil is fertile, the yield is as high as two tons, without irrigation. If we till the land, sow the seeds, transplant the seedlings, and supply water, the yield will increase from two tons to three tons. With the use of fertilizers, the yield in the Northwest can be increased two or three times more. Attaining six tons per hectare is therefore not difficult. In other [Zones], the yield is also being increased, such as in the North and East. We are thus in a position to maximize the yield. Next year we will do our utmost to reap three tons per hectare, and with such a yield our total production will amount to six million tons [of paddy]. Taking away two million tons from this for domestic consumption—which is more than sufficient for our people's needs—we will have four million tons of [paddy] left to export and the capital thus earned will be used to buy factories, energy, and tractors.³⁸¹

³⁷⁹ "Prospects for Greater Rice Yield Viewed," Radio Phnom Penh, 4 October 1975.

³⁸⁰ "Phnom Penh Reports Rice Production Efforts," Radio Phnom Penh, 6 October 1975.

³⁸¹ "Prospects for Greater Rice Yields Viewed," Radio Phnom Penh, 4 October 1975.

Such a bountiful 1976 paddy crop, again twice that of 3,000,000 tons in 1975 for which the September document had apparently been hoping, would when milled into rice, feed 7,500,000 people with 1,200,000 tons or 160 kilograms of rice per person per year, “more than enough for our people’s needs,” the radio declared. It also claimed that the promised remainder paddy amounting to 2,400,000 tons of rice could be “sold anywhere,” although the broadcast did not say where, only that it would be needed by the one billion hungry people in the world³⁸² presumably desperate for Kampuchean rice. Sold for US\$200 per ton, this amount of rice would earn Kampuchea a fantastic US\$480,000,000, almost seven times the upcoming US\$72 million PRC credit, and provide a huge amount of funds to finance a rapid mechanization of agriculture and launching of industrialization going forward, both proceeding in 1977 with little or no financial reliance on the PRC. This in turn would help establish a basis for what the radio saw as further hikes in yields from 1977 cultivation in some places beyond the Northwest to four tons of paddy per hectare and in future years beyond that to six or more tons per hectare.³⁸³ This projected output would thus greatly increase Kampuchea’s economic independence, self-reliance, and autonomy vis-à-vis any and all foreign powers, the PRC included.

The radio also explained that in order to achieve the desired results,

[w]e must do our best to correctly organize our fields and use modern scientific methods and technology, as is already being done in some places. We are trying to build a new countryside and set up new fields. We will transform our fields, changing their outlook and characteristics and turning them into gardens, fruit gardens, and rice gardens in particular, by using good seed, fertilizer, water, ditches, and soil. By the end of 1975, we will carry out this project. Now ... the countryside in the Northwest, such as those areas at Mongkolborei, Sisophon, along the Sangker River, around Battambang town, and along Route 5 and 6, is undergoing great change. These areas are getting a brand-new outlook. In 1976, we will expand and more vigorously accelerate this great movement throughout the country. We will launch a great rice growing campaign and modernize our rice fields so that they will have sufficient water, good manure, and excellent seed and will yield as much as possible.³⁸⁴

382 Ibid.

383 Ibid.

384 Ibid.

This broadcast's focus on the Northwest as crucial to ensuring future agricultural success was again obviously based in significant part on the assumption that during 1976 production there would benefit from the additional labor being relocated to the Northwest from other parts of the country to make up for what *Revolutionary Youth* was characterizing as a labor shortage situation hitherto existing in the Zone.³⁸⁵ The radio meanwhile added that the paddy yield was already being increased in the North and East Zones,³⁸⁶ to which the late September document had also said labor was also going to be reallocated, again presumably because of a belief that these areas would thus be better able to ensure the success of the economic miracle of which it was now being dreamt.

This broadcast however again informed listeners that going down the path of expansion of yields would require everyone to “work harder and faster,” standing firm on the position that the key to producing such great amounts of paddy in 1976 and 1977 was for the population now to “plunge into the battle to build dams, dig ditches, excavate ponds and strengthening field embankments, multiplying the number of irrigation works a hundred-fold” throughout Kampuchea in accordance with what was again described as “the great leap forward concept.”³⁸⁷ The radio also again swore that by following this path, “we will have everything if we have rice,” including agricultural mechanization, factories, steel, and energy.³⁸⁸

Two days later, the radio repeated its message that quickly obtaining such economically modernizing results would require ensuring that, in the immediate term, the population was “striving to build as many embankments and ditches as possible in order to master water conservancy and to change technical methods in order to increase production” of rice and other crops.³⁸⁹ While making this demand, it continued to exude optimism centered on the Northwest, followed by the North and the East, saying in a broadcast heard on 7 October that:

³⁸⁵ ECCC Document E3/729 [KH], “The Heroism of the Mobile Production Brigades in the Northwest Zone,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 10*, October 1975, p.52.

³⁸⁶ “Prospects for Greater Rice Yield Viewed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 4 October 1975.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ “Commentary on Tasks in Building a New Cambodia,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 October 1975.

Throughout our country, rice is excellent this year. In the Northwest Zone in particular, and in Battambang district, from the west to the Cambodia-Thai border area, rice is very good. In the North [Zone], rice is fair. On Route 6 and on Route 7 from Skoun to Kampong Chey, from the Romlong, Tang Kouk and Baray areas to Kampong Thom town, and from Skoun to Prey Chhor and Kampong Cham town [all in the North Zone], rice is also excellent. In the East Zone, in the vicinity of Tbaung Khmum on Route 7, such as in Veal Khmum, from Phnom Penh to Neak Luong on Route 1 and from Neak Luong to Bavet on Route 15, from the vicinity of Prey Veng town to Kampong Cham Province and to Tonle Bet, around O Reang Auv and in Kamchay Mea, the young rice stalks are growing greener everywhere. In the Siem Reap-Angkor Sector, in the Oddar Meanchey, Preah Vihear and Mondulkiri Sectors, rice is good in comparison with previous years. In the Northeast Zone, such as in Kratie, in the Southwest and West Zones, even where rainfall has been scanty in some places, our brothers have plunged into the battle to resolve the water problem and their young rice stalks are growing well.³⁹⁰

Noting that by November, late rice should be ripening, it called on the people to prepare to harvest it in a timely fashion while also going “into battle to build dikes, dig ditches and build high and stable embankments as much as possible” to create irrigation systems that would support the cultivation of rice in the coming dry season and the 1976 rainy season and the results of which would “make all our people prosperous.”³⁹¹

However, during the second half of October, a renewed exhortation went out to listeners that in order to make comfortable prosperity possible in such a near future, they would have to continue to endure the hardship-filled present while submitting to the kinds of sacrifices suffered during wartime, because only such perseverance would ensure success. This meant again “enduring all difficulties, overcoming all obstacles and remaining certain of winning victory,” including by “launching offensives day and night.”³⁹² It explained it also meant Kampuchean “acting independently” in the same manner as they had during the war, when victory on this basis was one won “at the cost of blood which was

³⁹⁰ “Phnom Penh Reports Rice Production Efforts,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 October 1975.

³⁹¹ Ibid

³⁹² “Phnom Penh on Past Struggle, Future Tasks,” Radio Phnom Penh, 16 October 1975.

profusely shed,”³⁹³ in other words, one could infer, with fatalities being suffered as a price paid for being independent.

At the end of the month, amidst reports that transplanting was still going on in some places,³⁹⁴ the radio provided a general survey of the year’s agricultural situation so far, implying a major increase in the acreage tilled, stating that:

This year our crop looks more promising than ever. We have cultivated all the existing rice fields and cleared land for many additional fields. ...

.... First, our people planted a combination of late and early rice. The early crop in particular has been sown on far greater acreage and under better conditions than ever before; second, water project construction and the soil enrichment and cultivation processes have been conducted vigorously and simultaneously, that is, we have managed to grow rice, build dams, dig ditches, and enrich the fields with fertilizer at the same time. ...³⁹⁵

It then asserted that the rice crop was “good everywhere” and promised that already the resulting “harvest will be greater than ever before.”³⁹⁶

general programs were accompanied by more specific ones describing ongoing mobile labor force work to build more dams and dig more ditches, ponds, and reservoirs to serve dry season rice cultivation in particular places.³⁹⁷ Later in the month, there was talk both about additional preparations for the coming dry season crop and simultaneous work to expand re-diking of paddy fields with higher and straighter embankments, the goal being to have this done one hundred percent during 1976.³⁹⁸ The radio was also further highlighting locations where people should in that year be able grow rice all year round, boosting the scenario according to which “after harvesting and storing one crop, they start cultivating another without waiting for the seasonable rainfall because they have the water

³⁹³ “Radio Lauds Nation’s Independent Line,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 October 1975.

³⁹⁴ “Banteay Srei Women’s Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 October 1975; “Village Boosts Output Through Solidarity Groups,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 October 1975.

³⁹⁵ “1975 Production Prospects Termed ‘Excellent,’” Radio Phnom Penh, 18 October 1975.

³⁹⁶ “Progress in Metal Work Handicrafts Praised,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 October 1975.

³⁹⁷ “Agricultural Output Rises in Angkorwat Region,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975; “Banteay Srei Women’s Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 October 1975; “Village Boosts Output Through Solidarity Groups,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 October 1975.

³⁹⁸ “Srok Banteay Srei Agriculture,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 October 1975.

they want – having mastered the problem of water supply for both the rainy and dry seasons.”³⁹⁹

October 1975 was meanwhile a period during which both Prince Sihanouk (still formally Chief of State) and foreign minister Ieng Sary travelled abroad. Sometime early in the month, Sihanouk visited France, where he insisted Kampuchea was determined to be a neutral country, saying this was the stated position of “the home leadership” (i.e., in fact the CPK). He explained that although China was Kampuchea’s “best friend,” it was not its “patron,” nor was Kampuchea aligned with it. He declared that like the previous false labelling of certain figures of the home leadership as “pro-Hanoi,” calling others “pro-Peking” was “a joke.” The leadership was not composed of “mere extensions” of Hanoi or Beijing, but of “nationalists” who were “very concerned about national dignity.” He did affirm that Chinese (and Korean) aid was being provided to Kampuchea in 1975 and would be in 1976, adding “that is all for the moment,” seeming to leave open whether or not it would continue beyond 1976. Somewhat echoing his comment earlier in Algeria, he said that even if Kampuchea was offered humanitarian aid, presumably from other sources, “we will express our gratitude, but without committing ourselves.” He characterized Kampuchea’s leaders as being “as wary as peasants,” always suspecting what might be behind offers of aid. He then exclaimed: “The pre-war Sihanouk accepted everything. Well, that was catastrophic!”⁴⁰⁰

Ieng Sary made a side trip to China from 15 to 17 October on his way back to Kampuchea from a leading a high-level delegation to Laos.⁴⁰¹ He attended the PRC’s Guangdong autumn commodities export fair along with visitors from more than one hundred countries and regions. Some 40,000 samples of industrial, agricultural, scientific, and technical goods were on display. He did not go on to Beijing and met only with a PRC vice-minister of foreign trade.⁴⁰² Neither PRC nor Kampuchean media provided any further information.⁴⁰³

As November began, the radio made a further promise to listeners that there was going to be a good paddy harvest. This took into account a claim that the situation in the Southwest Zone had improved because the June to

³⁹⁹ “Visit to Kampong Cham Village Described,” Radio Phnom Penh, 19 October 1975

⁴⁰⁰ *Le Monde*, 11 October 1975 (FBIS translation).

⁴⁰¹ “Ieng Sary Delegation Leaves Vientiane for Home,” Peking NCNA, 14 October 1975; “Ieng Sary Arrives in Canton,” Peking NCNA, 15 October 1975.

⁴⁰² “Canton Export Commodities Fair Opens,” Peking NCNA, 15 October 1975; “Ieng Sary Departs Canton for Home,” Peking NCNA, 18 October 1975.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*

September dry spell that had adversely affected the whole Zone except the very well-performing Kampot province and some river-bank districts had since been replaced by adequate rainfall that supplied water through the irrigation works that had been dug in advance everywhere. It described a situation in which those areas in the Southwest with better crops would now, as harvesting began in November, be able to feed themselves and to supply relief to those elsewhere in the Zone that were still going to be short despite the rain having finally begun. It implied that Takeo province would be in the latter category, even if it was now “expected to reap a fair harvest,” although it would be less good in interior districts such as Tram Kak than in those bordering Vietnam.⁴⁰⁴

During October–November 1975, the radio also had increasingly good things to say about local industrial, handicrafts, and medicine manufacture. In early October, the radio spoke about factories producing glasses, dishes, pots, soap, paper, hoes, plows, axes, and knives.⁴⁰⁵ At the end of the month, it again stressed the extent to which farm tools were, as during the war, successfully being crafted locally from scrap iron or in other ways according to methods devised by the peasantry itself, again mentioning hoes, plows, plowshares, harrows, knives, axes, sickles, picks, and scythes,⁴⁰⁶ but not PRC gifts of some of these items.

In its late November recap of 1975 accomplishments in light industry, the radio was equally silent about Chinese help when it hailed the return to work of “textile mills – ranging from garment, blanket, and mosquito net to gunny sack factories – bicycle and tire plants, tanning hides, the dry cell battery plant, the soap-making factory, the nail factory, and so forth.” It provided a glowing account according to which the textile industry under the new regime was supposedly more productive than in the old, saying that now a:

soaring spirit of creativeness has ... been displayed in the production of all kinds of fabrics, scarves, sarongs, mosquito nets, and sewing thread. Compared with the period under the traitor Lon Nol, today’s production has increased five-fold. For example, the nine textile mills in Phnom Penh turn out an average 17,000 meters of fabric in 16 hours, whereas the traitorous Lon Nol clique used three times as many workers to produce half as much as we do in the same period

⁴⁰⁴ “Southwestern Production Efforts, Successes Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 5 November 1975.

⁴⁰⁵ “Armed Forces Help in the Task of Rice Growing,” Radio Phnom Penh, 6 October 1975.

⁴⁰⁶ “Progress in Metal Work Handicrafts Praised,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 October 1975. “Southwestern Production Efforts, Successes Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 5 November 1975.

of time. ... Furthermore, the fraternal workers and combatants ... at our textile mill in Battambang town are able to turn out at least 6,500 meters of unbleached cotton and mosquito net in an eight-hour day of work.⁴⁰⁷

It attributed feats of industrial restoration solely to “inventiveness” in both “making all the screws, bolts, and parts of the equipment” needed for pre-existing factories and in “collecting old parts, bits, and pieces from damaged plants and reassembling them to make” new ones.⁴⁰⁸

There were also new accounts of the success of the rural handicraft industries of cotton-growing and local weaving and spinning in a variety of places,⁴⁰⁹ and likewise of medicine production in the countryside. These latter mentioned Banteay Srey district of Siem Reap Sector, Santuk district of Kampong Thom province of the North Zone,⁴¹⁰ and the whole southern part of the Northwest. In that CPK favorite Zone, medical workers were praised for reportedly going into the forest to select tree roots, bark, and leaves necessary for making drugs in pill and injection form. It credited them with “so far” having “created more than 40 types of medicine “to cure malaria, ordinary fever, diarrhea, dysentery, stomachaches, coughs, infections, hemorrhoids, migraine headaches, and toothaches,” plus various tonics and antiseptics. It described herbs as “the main resource for pharmaceutical production.”⁴¹¹ Elsewhere, such examples were cited in Kanchriech district of Prey Veng Province in the East.⁴¹² One sour note was that in the middle of October, the radio admitted that railway repair work still was not finished, and the radio called for it to be speeded up,⁴¹³ while still not admitting that the PRC aid included tons of railway equipment.

Even more sour in content was the November 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Youth*, published as the harvest of the main 1975 paddy crops would have still

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ “Agricultural Output Rises in Angkorwat Region,” Radio Phnom Penh, 3 October 1975; “Srok Banteay Srei Agriculture,” Radio Phnom Penh, 23 October 1975; “Banteay Srei Women’s Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 October 1975; “Village Boosts Output Through Solidarity Groups,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 October 1975.

⁴⁰⁹ “Banteay Srei Women’s Contributions,” Radio Phnom Penh, 26 October 1975.

⁴¹⁰ “Thanks to the Cambodian Revolution the Fraternal Poor and Lower Middle Peasants in Phum Boeung and Phum Trapeaing Tum Have Better Living Standards and a Radiant Future,” Radio Phnom Penh, 25 October 1975.

⁴¹¹ “Progress in Public Health Work Reported,” Radio Phnom Penh, 29 October 1975.

⁴¹² “Srok Kanchriech Achievements,” Radio Phnom Penh, 21 November 1975.

⁴¹³ “Phnom Penh on Past Struggle, Future Tasks,” Radio Phnom Penh, 16 October 1975.

been far from complete.⁴¹⁴ To its Youth League only readers, it painted a very different picture of the food situation since 17 April than the radio had been airing to Kampuchea's general population listeners, frankly describing things as having been and continuing to be dire. It admitted that the veterans of wartime life in the CPK's liberated zones had already at the time of the fall of Phnom Penh been experiencing "shortages of every kind" and immediately thereafter had been required to take on full responsibility for sustaining what the magazine, in this article, enumerated back down to three million people sent from the cities to the countryside. The result was a situation as of November in which even revolutionary regime veteran people were hungry, and the population as a whole was suffering from "enormously great shortages," including of food, clothing, medicines, items of everyday use, and the means of and implements for agricultural production. It declared the undeniable reality that everyone must clearly recognize was that the people "were starving nearly to death."⁴¹⁵ However, it endorsed the notion that by reaching a 1976 target of producing what it said must be an average of at least three tons of paddy per hectare, Kampuchea would by all means have the possibility of achieving "glorious plenty."⁴¹⁶ On industry the same issue was virtually silent. It simply described how workers in factories in Battambang were struggling to put them back into operation despite having no spare parts, so were instead using creatively improvised solutions to do so,⁴¹⁷ thus avoiding having to rely on imports.

Meanwhile and following up on a late 1975 Party annual study session, the CPK convened a rushed first nationwide Party economics conference in November. As apparently Pol Pot would later recall, it was convened at a time when the Party had little experience in country building.⁴¹⁸ He would also retrospectively concede that at the time of this conference, there were still "many problems" with regard to sorting out food supplies, shelter, and medications for the people that had left them with "serious shortages" and "difficulties in every field" such that there would continue to be such hardship into 1976, accompanied by a drawing down on the regime's remnant capital resources left over from pre-17 April 1975.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁴ JICA, "Cambodia Rice Cultivation Calendar," Figure 1: Rice cropping pattern in each ecosystem, p.A-3.

⁴¹⁵ ECCC Document E3/750 [KH], "Revolutionary Youth Must Go Down Personally into the Fray and Help Sort Out the People's Living Standards," *Revolutionary Youth Number 11*, November 1975, pp.3-4.

⁴¹⁶ ECCC Document E3/750 [KH], "Youths in the Cooperatives Are Fighting to Put Up Dike and Dig Feeder Canals to Solve the Problem of Water," *Revolutionary Youth Number 11*, November 1975, p.62.

⁴¹⁷ ECCC Document E3/750 [KH], "The Creative Improvisation Spirit of the New Workers at the Textile Jute Factories in Battambang Province," *Revolutionary Youth Number 11*, November 1975, pp.54-56.

⁴¹⁸ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], "The Party's Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization)," op. cit., pp.3-6.

⁴¹⁹ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], op. cit., pp.4-10; and ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], "Strengthening and

It was in the context of such economic duress that the cadres attending the November 1975 gathering were not only present for discussion of economic plans for 1976, but also embarked on a planning process that would extend into late 1976 and would eventuate in a preliminary draft plan covering the ensuing four-year period from 1977 to 1980.⁴²⁰ The immediate outcome of the gathering was an elaboration of the overall vision of the future contained in the late September document's call to modernize Kampuchean agriculture in ten to 15 years and modernize its industry in between 15 to 20 years; with agricultural modernization serving as the foundation for industrial modernization, using increasing rice production to feed well a growing population and earn more and more foreign exchange to import the means for industrial expansion.⁴²¹

The contemporaneous double (October-November 1975) issue of *Revolutionary Flags* evidently circulated not long after the November 1975 conference reported that cadres of the CPK's Economy Department and cadres from all over Kampuchea responsible for local economic matters had attended.⁴²² They were told that although the country had just undergone a war, the Party had decided it was necessary to build socialism in Kampuchea according what must be in a much accelerated manner, advancing at what may have been characterized for the first time as a "phenomenally great leap forward speed." It was declared necessary to proceed at this pace in order to so rapidly sort the people's living standards that it would be made impossible for the revolution's unnamed "enemies unable to trod on its heels." The conference was presented as therefore having correctly affirmed that all-out efforts had to be made in 1976 to ensure nationwide achievement of a three ton per hectare paddy yield per crop and rightly instructed that this must be achieved by sorting out the problems of water, fertilizer, and seed supply and by using Party-prescribed cultivation methods.⁴²³

Expanding Party Leadership during the New Period of Socialist Revolution and Socialist Construction," *Revolutionary Flags Number 11*, November 1976, p. 82.

⁴²⁰ Chanthou Boua, "Document III: 'The Party's Four-Year Plan to Build Socialism in All Fields, 1977-1980, op. cit., p.45; Kumrong Phenkar Buon Chhnam Kasang Sangkummiyum Krup Phnek Robas Pak, p.2; David P. Chandler, translator, "Report of Activities of the Party Center According to the General Political Tasks of 1976" (dated 20 December 1976), in David P. Chandler, Ben Kiernan, and Chanthou Boua, eds. and trans., *Pol Pot Plans the Future: Confidential Leadership Documents from Democratic Kampuchea, 1976-1977* (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series 33, 1988), p.187

⁴²¹ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], "The Party's Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization)," op. cit., pp.4, 9.

⁴²² ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], "A Number of the Important Contents Excerpted from the Party's First National Economics Conference, November 1975," *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, p.15.

⁴²³ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], "The Party's Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization)," op. cit., pp.6, 9-10. "Phenomenally Great Leap Forward" is my rendering of "mohalotphlah-moha ahchar."

It would subsequently be explained that the adoption of the “phenomenally great leap forward” slogan signaled how, starting from 1976, Kampuchea would be advancing beyond having completed a “national people’s democratic revolution” to fully “making a socialist revolution and building socialism.”⁴²⁴ It was accompanied at the same November 1975 conference by the putting forward of a number of themes for Party members’ “consideration and study as guiding lights” with regard to Kampuchea’s economic construction, particularly during 1976.⁴²⁵ These entailed a recommitment to the objective of a “most rapid” construction of a new Kampuchean economy to reach transformation of the country from economic agricultural backwardness to modernity within ten to 15 years and to industrialization within 15 to 20 years. They reiterated that such speed was necessary in order to quickly build up the popular living standards to one of sufficiency and ease, specifying that this meant cooperatives were to provide a now stipulated annual ration to their members according to their age and the kind of work they were doing, measured in *thang* (approximately 24 kilograms) of paddy. The four prescribed levels were 15, 12, ten, and eight *thang* (or approximately 360, 288, 240 and 192 kilograms) of paddy per person per annum, which it was said would be enough not just to feed the people well but also to facilitate the CPK’s objective of rapid population growth. The themes added that once the economy progressed, there would be capital for national defense.⁴²⁶

The conference was naturally also said to have reaffirmed that movement towards creation of capital must be based on a stance of self-reliance, which meant relying most importantly on paddy, but also on rubber, wood, and fish—the production of all of which must be maximally increased. Reaching increasingly modern paddy production targets would require not only mastery over water, but also over agricultural implements from low-level to high-level ones, from ancient to modern ones and all the way to generalized mechanization, over fertilizer and agrochemicals, over all kinds of fuel, including petroleum products and electricity, and over agrotechnology and agro-science, including with regard to seed selection

⁴²⁴ ECCC Document E3/731 [KH], “1960 Was the Year the First Party Congress Stipulated the Strategic Line of National People’s National Democratic Revolution; 1975 Was the Year the Phenomenally Great Victory of the National People’s Democratic Revolution Was Successfully Completed; 1976 Is the Year of Going on to Make Socialist Revolution and Construct Socialism,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, December-January 1975-76, pp.2-3.

⁴²⁵ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “A Number of the Important Contents Excerpted from the Party’s First National Economics Conference, November 1975,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, p.15.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.16-17.

and cultivation methods.⁴²⁷ It was explained that mastery in the sense used by the CPK in this context meant advancing at the speed required towards all these eventual goals despite the fact that Kampuchea was starting with little capital and a small labor force (even when concentrated), based on the understanding that the country would nevertheless be able to begin making the rapid progress foreseen via a combination of creative improvisation and inculcation of a stance of launching daring and strong storming attacks.⁴²⁸ The conference also stressed that the kind of progressive improvements in future productivity laid down would require mass mobilization of old and newly arrived labor to achieve mastery in terms of irrigation.⁴²⁹

As for industry, the first priority was meanwhile to serve popular needs in terms of food, clothing, and items for daily use such as plates, pots, and shoes. After that came production of salt, agricultural implements such as hoes, small and large machinery such as generators, tractors and boats, construction materials such as cement, bricks, roofing tiles, gravel, and sand, fuels including petroleum products, coal, firewood, and hydro-electricity, chemicals, land and water transportation equipment and materials, including for the railways, medicines, and metals such as iron, copper, lead, and aluminum. In addition, there were also calls to improve mining and also processing of rubber, timber, fish, and raised animals.⁴³⁰ Ultimately, it was suggested that the general principle of self-reliance notwithstanding, quick movement towards reaching such nation-building agricultural and industrial goals would require having a variety of foreign friends and foreign economic trade relations,⁴³¹ presumably to do both exporting and importing, but it seemed to be implied, without aid being a factor.

The account of the conference in the October-November 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Flags* revealed that “some” Party members believed that the immediate three-ton target would be “rather tough to achieve because we have just come out of the war and our people lack this and that.” It condemned such doubters as conservatives who lacked faith in the poor and lower-middle peasantry, in the system of production by cooperatives and in the Party’s

⁴²⁷ Ibid., pp.18-21, 23.

⁴²⁸ Ibid., p.24.

⁴²⁹ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “Strengthen and Expand the Party’s Production Cooperatives to Make Them Even More Strong and Daring in Order that They Become the Core Force for Achieving Three Tons Per Hectare in 1976,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.33-34.

⁴³⁰ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “A Number of the Important Contents Excerpted from the Party’s First National Economics Conference, November 1975,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.18-19, 21.

⁴³¹ Ibid., p.22.

leadership.⁴³² Contradicting this politically unacceptable pessimism, the magazine insisted that forging ahead with production could succeed via the expansion of existing forms of collective production, reiterating the necessity of upgrading them generally to the level of village cooperatives during 1976 and, once that was done, to moving on to the eventual establishment of 1,000-household cooperatives. Achieving production goals and waging such “socialist revolution” to expand cooperatives were presented as integrally linked.⁴³³

In his retrospective account of the conference a year later, Pol would say that “the general understanding” of those present had been that the whole set of immediate goals being put forward were “doable,” although “some were of this view or that.”⁴³⁴ He would also state that the conferees stipulated that in 1976, it was necessary to go all out to achieve three tons per hectare per crop throughout the country, an effort that would require sorting out seed, water, and fertilizer provision and proper cultivation techniques, including for plowing, harrowing, and transplanting.⁴³⁵

In its contemporaneous version of the proceedings, *Revolutionary Flags* explained that despite the misgivings among some attendees, the conference decided “unanimously” that the average per hectare paddy yield in 1976 must be three tons for each crop grown, regardless of whether it was on land to be single-cropped or double-cropped, so that the latter would produce six tons, although it did not say how much land would get these two levels of yield. It explained that the objective of reaching this target was “to create the underlying conditions for the construction of a collectivist socialism” and “a reliable basis” for the economic construction in every way of the whole country. It still cautioned that such a success in the next year, although great, would still leave the country’s agriculture as backward, that it would not mean the population would thereby

⁴³² ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “What Is the Significance of Three Tons Per Hectare,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.26-27. Such dissent at the 1975 gathering was mentioned in the *Revolutionary Flags*’ report on the second Party economics conference a year later. See ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], “The Party’s Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization),” op. cit., p.15.

⁴³³ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “Strengthen and Expand the Party’s Production Cooperatives to Make them Even More Strong and Daring in Order to Turn Them into the Core Force for Achieving Three Tons per Hectare for 1976,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.54-58.

⁴³⁴ ECCC Document E3/139 [KH], “The Party’s Second Nationwide Economics Conference, 17 and 18 November 1976 (Presentation by the Comrade Secretary Representing the Party Organization),” op. cit., p.15. (The ECCC English version of this passage on its pp.8-9 inexplicably mistranslates the phrase in question as the phrase “the general understanding was that it was not doable.”) *Ibid.*, pp.3-6.

⁴³⁵ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “What Is the Significance of Three Tons Per Hectare,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.26-32.

already enjoy lives of plenty, and that it would indeed be difficult to achieve amidst the shortages for the people of a country just emerging from war. Along the way, it would thus have to be achieved by them via a fight “against hardship and suffering.”⁴³⁶ The magazine was nevertheless confidently sanguine that under CPK leadership the upcoming 1976 paddy output target could be achieved, which would make it possible to go on to achieve four to five tons per hectare in 1977 and six to seven tons per hectare in 1978.⁴³⁷ Ominously, however, it also warned that it was only as long as Party members heightened their revolutionary vigilance against all enemies, both foreign and domestic,⁴³⁸ that economic victories would be won in 1976, ensuring that the people would no longer suffer from shortages of food and clothing, and would instead enjoy a reasonable standard of living.⁴³⁹

It is remarkable that despite all the talk by Radio Phnom Penh and the available issues of *Revolutionary Flags* and *Revolutionary Youth* since April 1975 about the absolutely essential role exports of rice and other possible foreign-exchange earners for the ultimate economic success of Kampuchea and its revolution, through to the end of 1975 none ever spoke of any actual exports during that year. The DCCam files, however, show that there were at least some exports to China in the latter part of 1975. One such record is dated 2 October 1975 and reports that these had gone in two tranches, the first consisting of 39 tons of nux vomica seeds, 197 tons of black pepper, and 750 tons of raw rubber, and the second of 1,625 tons of raw and cured rubber, 113 tons of coconuts, and 2,166 tons of round timber. Neither when exactly these commodities were shipped nor what prices they fetched are stated.⁴⁴⁰ Secondly, a retrospective report noted that an unspecified quantity of kapok fiber was received by China on 5 November 1975, but again what this earned is not stated.⁴⁴¹ However, the extent to which these export records are complete is unclear, so based on what is available from DCCam, it is impossible to say whether there were may have been more exports, including possibly rice.

⁴³⁶ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “What Is the Significance of Three Tons Per Hectare,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.26-32.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.33-34.

⁴³⁸ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “Strengthen the Stance of Revolutionary Vigilance to Make It Even More Solid in Order to Fight and Smash All the Covert and Overt Tricks of the American Imperialists and Their Lackeys and Ensure Victorious Defense and Construction of the Country,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, *passim*.

⁴³⁹ ECCC Document E3/748 [KH], “Strengthen the Stance of Fighting to Sort Out the People’s Standard of Living,” *Revolutionary Flags Special Number*, October-November 1975, pp.61-62.

⁴⁴⁰ D22048, “Report on Materials Shipped Out of Kampong Saom Port Headed for China,” 2 October 1975, signed “For the State Commerce Committee.”

⁴⁴¹ D20725, Ministry of Commerce, “Presented to Respected and Beloved Commerce Committee,” 5 May 1977, np, signed “Import Department Com.”

DECEMBER 1975

A late December 1975 radio program gave a rather positive account of the situation in the North Zone, saying that it was “making comprehensive progress,” including by producing a “generally excellent rainy season crop,” more than half of which it reported had already been harvested along Route 6 and Route 7 and in some other sectors and districts. It said a crop “better than ever” had been cultivated along the north and west banks of the Mekong. Thus, it foresaw that the Zone’s crop was going to be sufficient to feed its own population, to provide a certain amount of rice to other zones and in addition to “support the Organization,” thus “contributing greatly to the building of a new Cambodia.”⁴⁴² Meanwhile, three large worksites, one with tens of thousands of workers, were said to be operating to build new field embankment and ditch networks in preparation for further rice cultivation.⁴⁴³ Local farm tool manufacturing and local clothing production were reportedly continuing, and larger Zone workshops were said to be making waterwheels, threshing machines, soap, and tractor spare parts.⁴⁴⁴ In addition, the North was praised for having made “outstanding progress in the production of medicines” in handicraft buildings including sections for crushing tree bark and roots as ingredients, for brewing and steaming concoctions, and for drying and packaging outcomes said to be able to treat ailments from dysentery, cholera, and coughing to smallpox and heart disease.⁴⁴⁵

Another end-of-year broadcast featured an also quite enthusiastic assessment of the East Zone, which it said had “been developed in all fields and especially the field of agriculture.” It described its “natural and geographic conditions” as “excellent,” in terms almost as glowing as for the Northwest. It explained that this advantage was because land along the Mekong and Tonle Touch rivers and Route 7 was particularly fertile, and the former had those rivers plus canals and lakes as sources of water. Elsewhere in the Zone, the land along Route 1 and Route 15 in Prey Veng was “fairly rich.” Only in Svay Rieng province was the land rich only in “some areas.” In addition, the East Zone was blessed with multiple locations having red basaltic soil good for growing rubber.⁴⁴⁶ Overall, the East Zone rice crop was characterized as “excellent” and “more abundant

⁴⁴² “Economic Progress in Northern Region Detailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 22 December 1975.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁶ “Developments in Eastern Region Hailed,” Radio Phnom Penh, 28 December 1975.

than in any previous year,” indeed “so abundant that each rice field is full of high stalks loaded with heavy ears” and “everywhere all alike, resembling golden carpets.” Although there was no mention of any rice going to other zones or to the Organization, the East was praised for its concentration on efforts to solve water problems by building new networks of field embankments and irrigation canals and building dams and dikes, making it possible to begin growing rice all year round. In addition, the East was said to have “made substantial progress” in handicraft production of agricultural tools, motor-pumps, cloth, soap, waterwheels, and carts, as well as of cotton for local weaving.⁴⁴⁷ At the same time, rubber plantations in the East were reported to be becoming “even more developed” and producing higher quality latex,⁴⁴⁸ again without reference to the possibility of PRC assistance to the main one at Chup.

The radio seemed to suggest that 1975 achievements in the East were both despite and because of what it described as the particular devastation, and thus hardship, it had endured during the war period. It recalled that:

During the more than five years of war waged by the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, the population of this Zone suffered heavily from the oppression and invasion of the three most ferocious enemies: the U.S. imperialists, the Nguyen Van Thieu Saigon clique, and the traitorous Lon Nol clique. In 1970, 1971, and 1972, the three enemies committed the most barbaric invasion against our population in the East Zone. While invading our territory, the Nguyen Van Thieu troops, in particular, adopted the most criminal policy, which consisted of burning, plundering, and killing everything in their path. The most criminal aggression of these three enemies had further enraged the population of the East Zone. While training themselves in the hot flames of the revolution, they heightened even more their spirit of patriotism. This is why the people in the East Zone have the highest spirit of being masters of the country, the revolution, and their own initiative.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid.

In December 1975, Sihanouk stressed during a visit to Uganda that in order for them to live in an independent country, Kampucheans had to depend on themselves, not foreign aid, adding that only on this basis would Kampuchea be able to fight its “enemies really.” This, the Prince said, was why after liberation Kampuchea had decided to concentrate on agriculture and “grow rice everywhere,” expanding cultivation of it, plus rubber and other crops onto previously unused land. He asserted that agricultural production had already doubled as rice was being double- or triple-cropped and anticipated that export of food would begin in 1976, explaining that exporting meant independence. He insisted that the principle of self-reliance also applied to China. Thus, although some assistance, particularly “material aid of technology,” had been accepted from China because it was a “very safe” friend, offers of ten or a hundred times more aid had been rejected, and Kampuchea was taking from China only what was “indispensable.” His remark about Kampuchea having declined a potentially huge amount of PRC help may have been a reference to the one-billion-dollar loan in the French wire service story. In any case, Sihanouk indicated Kampuchea would be exporting rubber and timber to China and buying machines or oil to run its industry, but that its food exports would be competing with those of Uganda,⁴⁵⁰ seeming to suggest they would not be going to China.

Meanwhile, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic announced at the end of December 1975 that because Kampuchea was enjoying an “excellent” rice harvest, it would be providing Laos with 3,000 tons of gratis aid rice to help solve food difficulties there.⁴⁵¹ This political gesture rice was eventually handed over to Lao authorities on 20 March 1976.⁴⁵²

From the December 1975 issue of *Revolutionary Youth*, an again quite different picture from that of the radio emerged. It not only conceded that the Kampuchean people had been faced with food and other shortages during the five rainy season months starting in May, but also that they were continuing to do so in every way even though the main crop harvest period had commenced. It mentioned hunger and described rations of rice gruel and salt morning and night, noting that even urban workers were sometimes going “hungry collectively,” while youth work teams too were experiencing “exhaustion and hunger.” It at one point explained that such conditions existed because the

⁴⁵⁰ “Continued Reporting on Visit by Cambodia’s Sihanouk,” Kampala Radio, 8 December 1975.

⁴⁵¹ “Cambodia to Provide Free Rice Aid in Early 1976,” Vientiane Radio, 30 December 1975.

⁴⁵² “Cambodia Hands Over 3,000 Tons of Rice to LPDR,” Vientiane Radio, 26 March 1976.

CPK had been making “a revolution of the poor classes.” It reported that meanwhile work was being done to gather up various unspecified kinds and quantities of produce not only to serve domestic needs but also those of foreign trade⁴⁵³ and to prepare the fields for planting of dry season paddy in order to begin achieving the three-tons-per hectare target.⁴⁵⁴ This latter was supposed to be the crucial step towards putting an end to shortages and creating conditions for exporting and importing on a scale that would contribute to what the magazine described as progress at a “constant leaps and bounds speed” towards the modernization of agriculture and industrialization of the country described in more extravagant terms in recent CPK public propaganda and some internal publications.⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵³ ECCC Document E3/730 [KH], “The Heroism of Transport Unit Youth,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 12*, December 1975, pp.61-63; “How Must Revolutionary Youth Refashion Themselves in This Current New Phase of the Revolution,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 12*, December 1975, p.7; “Experiences in Managing Youth,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 12* December 1975, p.22.

⁴⁵⁴ ECCC Document E3/730 [KH], “Go Ever Forward, Revolutionary Youth!,” *Revolutionary Youth Number 12*, December 1975, pp.68-69.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

