

Ke Pauk's Autobiography from 1949-1985

I joined the struggle since 1949 in Khmer Issarak period. After the Geneva Conference, I abandoned the struggle and returned home. In 1957, Siv Heng, the Secretary of the Party, contacted me and told me to rejoin the struggle. I did so and enlisted into the party in Svay Teab Sub-district, Chamkar Leu District, in the same year. A person named Tieb, the Secretary of the District, accepted me. However, at that time, the party had some relationship with Yuon (Vietnam).

In 1958, after I became a member of the party, they assigned me to conduct some activities in Chamkar Leu District, my birthplace.

In late 1958, Siv Heng and Pen Yut betrayed. When Siv Heng, a secretary of the party, betrayed, the communication between the rural areas and the city (Phnom Penh) was cut off.

In 1959, there was a struggle for the position of party secretary. During that period Tou Samouth was disguising himself as a worker. But, Siv Heng, who betrayed [the party], informed the spies to arrest and kill Tou Samouth. Communication between the rural and Phnom Penh was still disconnected.

In 1960, the first general assembly of the party was conducted at Phnom Penh Railway Station. A general assembly conducted in 1964 was attended by Yong, from Eastern Zone, a protégé of Sao Phim. Yong worked in my side and controlled all cadres mentioned above.

In later 1964, Koy Thuon came and held an assembly for the region in Koky Thom District. The assembly promoted him as a secretary followed by subordinates Yong, Sat... I was at the bottom of the list.

After a while, we had some relationship with one another and planned to destroy Yong. Koy Thuon was responsible for this. It was in 1967. After the death of Yong, Sao Phim examined the activities in Braes Meas Village, Chamkar Andaung District. By this time, I had some power and reestablished good relationship with all cadres positioning on the right side of Mekong River.

My political bases during that time included:

-Baray District: Chhouk Ksach, Treul, Sralao, Chreaneang, Korky Thom and Krava Sub-districts.

-Tang Kork [District]: Srayong, Svay Phleung and Chreaneang Sub-districts.

-Cheung Prey District: Sampornng Phai, Sdaeng Phai, Cheung Chhnok, Ta Prorng and Braes Meas Sub-districts.

-Chamka Leu District: Chamkar Andaung, Svay Teab, Speu, Chiyo, Lvea Leu, Neang Leung and Ta Brok Sub-districts.

-Stung Trang District: Tuol Preah Khleang, Prey Kakk, Me Sarchrey, Dang Kdar, O' Mlou, Naom Koh Sma, Tuol Sambuor and Boeng Ket Sub-districts.

-Kampong Siem District: Romeas, Srak and Rumchek sub-districts

-Prey Chhor District: Chrey Vien and Samraong Sub-districts.

-Stung District: Krasaing and Popork Sub-districts.

-Santuk Leu District: Sandan, Moan Rit and Kleng Sub-districts.

-Prek Prasap District: Memot, Russey Keo, Ta Mao, and Saob Sub-districts.

In mid-1967, Zone Committee was in composition of Koy Thuon was as secretary and I, the Deputy Secretary, and Doeun, Sreng, Bra, Thaong and Sam-At as members. At that time, Brother

Nuon was away to Prey Chhor to assign forces.

In 1968, I began working in the jungle. At that time, Koy Thuon and Doeun stayed in the city, while Sreng positioned along road number 7. The rest stayed in the forest with me. In 1968, Bra was shot by the enemies in Region 130. Thaong Sam-At was arrested by the enemies and transported to Chamkar Andaung.

Year 1968 was a year of riot provocation. My brigade provoked people in Krava, Bakksma, Lvea Leu and Tabrok Post. Our riot at Krava failed, while at Tabrok we confiscated three guns. After the riots, 250 rioters escaped to the forest in the area of Koky Thom. They were starving.

In April 1968, we had a hard time. We did not have enough food to eat and the enemies kept attacking us. We escaped in disarray; some of us were arrested or killed. Most were later detained and forced into confessing. Only ten to twenty personnel and I remained, and we carried on our movement in the forest and in all districts described above.

From June-July, 1968, the enemies were very active. My family moved from their home in Kampong Som to Kratie. We lost a child during the relocation. My wife took care of the whole family.

In 1970, Lon Nol released some Khmer Rouge prisoners. I had to contact these forces and reeducate them. They were Chan, Tol, Khann, and Phy, etc. Adding these people to my existing forces in the forest, I had about 30-40 men. When the 1970 Coup broke out, I was in Chamkar Leu preparing forces to Stung, Sandao, Kampong Svay, Santuk, Baray and Tangkok, Kampong Siem, and Prey Chhor, each with a group men. Many groups were sent to Chamkar Leu and Stung Trang. They were put in charge of military propaganda and local authority organization.

After completing this tasks in July, upper brothers ordered me to Siem Reap. Before I went, I assigned a brigade of 60 men to Siem Reap ahead of me to organize village, sub-district authorities in Siem Reap. Then I was accompanied by Sot who was my deputy.

Early in 1972, Zone and Central Committees ordered me to Kampong Cham to work as a Zone Deputy Secretary and a Regiment Chief. There I began to prepare three kinds of military forces:

- 1) District military forces, one district one company (of 120 men)
- 2) Regional military forces, one region one or two battalions (each of which consisted of 60 to 500 men)
- 3) Zone mobile units; 13 battalions were assigned (each of which consists of 360 to 500 men)

Note: In July 1970, all leaders from all over the country arrived in Boeng Lvea. I was in charge of preparing their settlements. Later, [I] went to Region 130 [and] upper Stung Trang.

In February 1972, the central committee ordered me to cooperate with central unit, called Unit 39, led by Brother Khieu, to sweep and clean enemies around Kampong Thom. We prepared forces and fought at the same time. We almost liberated the city, but we could not, so we surrounded it.

From the end of 1972 to the beginning of 1973, there was a revolt emerging from Angkor Chey, Siem Reap Province. I went there and took some actions to suppress it. After that I returned to Kampong Thom. In April 1973, prince Sihanouk ordered me to greet him at Angkor. As soon as I met him, I returned to Kampong Thom.

In July 1973, I prepared forces to attack Road No.6. We entered randomly, such as Bakham, Cheung Prey and an area between Skun and Prek Kdam. The Central Committee held a meeting and declared to fight and clean Road No. 6 from Prek Kdam to Skun, Tang Kork, Kang Meas and Prey Chhor. We successfully swept and cleaned these areas. [The Central Committee then] told me to organize zone military forces to take over Kampong Cham in two prongs; Koy Thuon and I took one prong each. My plan was to reach the provincial town, textile factories and Sup military base. But, Koy Thuon did not attack, but allowed the enemies to move in from behind, from

Tonle Bet. As a result, we could not liberate Kampong Cham. We decided to surround it for the time being.

In September 1973, the Central Committee pledged to attack all over the country. It organized many plans:

- Eastern Zone attacked Road No.1, and Upper and Lower Mekong River.

- Southwestern Zone attacked Road No. 2, 3 and 4.

- Western Zone attacked from the northwest to areas between Road No. 4 and 5, Baset Mountain and Anglong Kan.

- Northern Zone used three brigades to liberate Road No....[?]. When attacking Road No. 5, I prepared three directions east of Tunle Buon Muk. Our first attempt failed. We then reorganized troops and launched another attack. We succeed. We swept and controlled Road No. 5 in a section from Udong Market to Phnom Penh, about 30 Km.

My target was taken over successfully, but not others. After half a month of controlling the position above, the higher level [Brothers] decided to launch offensives on Udong. But I could not accomplish this mission. So, I discussed with Brother Khieu on attacking Road No. 4 by cooperating with the Southwest Zone. When we almost liberated Road No.4, the arrested special zone forces confessed to the enemies and led them to take back the area. But, we succeeded in capturing Udong. After a short period, Division 80 from Phnom Penh took it back again. Later we annihilated the enemies and confiscated tanks, artillery, and thousands of tons of ammunition.

After Division 80 was defeated, Koy Thuon let the enemies to recapture Road No. 6 from Siem Reap provincial town to Chy Kreng District. Thus, the Central Committee conducted a meeting in July 1974, in which they assigned me to Siem Reap to defend Angkor. I then resigned from my current position as Zone Staff for the purpose of defending Angkor. Koy Thuon was ordered to take charge my troops moving into Phnom Penh.

In Siem Reap, at the beginning I attacked from the west and controlled the area from Puok to Siem Reap for 25 days. The enemies were in lack of food, and as a result, we won them easily.

Later on the enemies launched Operation 802 which was under the command of Koy Thuon. But, I defended by using zone and regional troops. The enemies withdrew. When the party prepared to launch major offensive on Phnom Penh, I prepared to do so on Siem Reap. In the end, Phnom Penh and Siem Reap were captured at the same time.

When nationwide liberation was obtained, the Central Committee transferred Koy Thuon to the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, as the minister. Regional troops were also withdrawn. Only Division 312 left. I was transferred to Kampong Cham to take charge of political, military and economic sections and also the rubber plantation. As I was assigned to Kampong Cham, Siem Reap and Oudar Meanchey were labeled as Region 35, which was directly controlled by the Central Committee. The Central Zone consisted of western Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, western Kratie and Muk Kampoul on the other river bank. From then on these areas were classified as the Central Zone. The committee of this zone comprised of me as the secretary, Sreng as the deputy secretary, and Tol and Chan as members. Koy Thuon and Doeun had been sent to Phnom Penh.

In ... 1975, in Phnom Penh, the Central Committee held meetings to refashioned its guidelines. National democratic revolutionary way was over. It had to abandon this and practice new way. It chose revolutionary socialism. After new political stance was identified, the Central Committee spread it to the people. Returning from Phnom Penh, I gathered about 500 cadres in a gathering right in the center of Kampong Cham Provincial Town telling them the abandonment of the old revolutionary stance, people, and democracy, and spreading new stance, Socialist Revolution, to them.

Note: After the meeting to identify new political stance of the Central Committee, there were some arguments, one of which was about evacuating the cities (however cities had already been emptied). I remarked that we should evacuate only governmental staff, while ordinary

people should remain in the cities. Then we assigned new authority to control the cities. However, some opposed that if we did so, it was just an "exchange of horses."

After the new political stance had been spread through out the country, the Central Committee held another meeting in Preah Keo Pagoda on the Four-Year Plan. The meeting agreed on all the points in the plan. The plan had two primary objectives:

- 1) Defend the country from the annexation of Yuon.
- 2) Develop the country quickly with the speed of great leap forward.

In order to achieve the two objectives, the Party had to set up cooperatives using the experience of the five-year war. The meeting was in total agreement. [We] decided to set 100 families in one cooperative, in which they had communal eating. In so doing, they mentioned, they would have military forces to defend the country and labor forces to construct dams and irrigation system, etc.

At the same time, there was a preparation to print banknote. When the note was actually printed and circulated there was a decision to stop this process. The defense department began dispatching military forces to the borders. The cooperatives were also set up.

In early 1977, there was a news leaking from Phnom Penh. I saw a document about as thick as my little finger, which had one section erased so that I could not read. When I read and placed the erased section against light, Koy Thuon's name was clearly revealed. As I saw this, I summoned Sreng, Tol and Sey to meet me and told them not to say anything, otherwise they might be killed.

A few days later, order was sent from Phnom Penh to arrest Hoh, accused of being a major, and *Achar Ven*, a former monk in Phnom Penh, enticed by Vorn Vet. At that time, *Achar Ven* had been the secretary of Prek Prasap District, and later was a regional secretary.

After Hoh and *Achar Ven* were arrested, they retrieved answers from them relating to Koy Thuon. Document relating to Koy Thuon was sent to me, who was in an assembly participated by Region 41 and 42.

Note: The Central Zone was divided into three regions: Region 41 covering Prey Chhor, Cheung Prey, Kang Meas and Kampong Siem Districts; Region 42 comprising of Tang Kok, Baray, Stung Trang, Chamkar Leu and Prek Prasap Districts; Region 43 including Santuk, Kampong Svay and Stung Districts.

When I was conducting an assembly in the Region 41, a messenger from Phnom Penh arrived, telling me to get prepared for inspection mission in various locations. However, as I arrived Phnom Penh, I met Pol Pot and Brother Nuon Chea. They showed me documents of all regions and ministries. Furthermore, the answer was too clear to correct. At that time, Brother Khieu and Duch were security chiefs.

I had to make some explanation to the ministry, since the ministry worked closely with me. I said, "It is difficult to say, because all comrades are life-and-death friends. However, if Angkar has decided already, I do not have any complaint." Some soldiers served me since 1968, but they were accused of being CIAs. I did not know what to do, except telling them, "I just put them forward for the higher level [upper brothers]."

In February 1977, Phnom Penh sent security trucks to arrest the chiefs of ministries: ministry of agriculture, industry, commerce and public affairs. I protected the chief of rubber plantations, because I considered him as my parents. I requested the higher level to call him to Phnom Penh themselves. But, this rubber plantation chief, named Ta Sat, escaped to the forest.

In the same year, security trucks from Phnom Penh arrived to bring with them 5-6 chiefs of Region 41, 5-6 chiefs of Region 42, and 5-6 chiefs of Region 43. After they arrested all regional committee members, they arrested leaders of regional ministries, since each region had its own ministries.

After that, they also arrested the regional commander in chief.

In total, 50 to 60 regional cadres and ministries were arrested.

Note: The chiefs of Region 35, Siem Reap-Oudar Meanchey, were also arrested like the Central Zone's.

Toward May 1977, security trucks from Phnom Penh appeared again to arrest district chiefs of all districts, two or three chiefs in one district. Then, some sub-district chiefs were also taken with them (but not from all sub-districts).

In June 1977, the first stage of capturing was over. By that time, only me remained and the Central Zone had no cadres left. The upper brothers decided to transfer cadres from Southwestern Zone to fill the unoccupied positions. They sent about 200 cadres from that zone. The first personnel was Kang Chab, who had worked in the stadium. The higher level decided to make Region 35 of Central Zone as a new Northern Zone where I served as secretary, Kang Chab as my deputy and Ta An as member.

After working in the new Northern Zone for a while, there was an answer [order] from Kampot to arrest a line of cadres of Kang Chab and sent them to Phnom Penh. I did not know where they were sent to after that.

From then on, the new Northern Zone was divided into two: Kang Chab took charge of Siem Reap-Oudar Meanchey region under the direct control of the Central Committee; as for me, I was told to stay in the Central Zone.

For cadres sent from Southwestern Zone to the Central Zone, those whose names appear in the confessions were taken back to Phnom Penh, but they were seen alive after the Vietnamese invasion; and for those who were not in the conspiracy list of the prisoners continued to stay.

Please be aware that good cadres from Southwest Zone still survive up to now. [But those who] added some salt [figuratively means overdoing what they were told] to the] documents caused a lot of troubles to the public. For instance, there was a cadre called Ty sent from Kampot to work as the secretary of Baray District. He ordered an arrest of more 70 brothers from Bak Sma, by accusing them of being bandits. When I visited them, I could recognize some of them as people who had assisted me in my political struggle. When asked, they said they did not know why they were detained. I ordered Comrade Ty to release all of them and prepared food for them. I set up a one-day meeting in Bak Sma to apologize them.

In another example, the secretary of Sandann transferred from Southwestern Zone severely maltreated the people. He even burnt them to death in brick kilns.

In short, evil cadres from Southwestern Zone caused a lot of troubles to my zone.

That was why I told Brother Khieu in 1979 that I had run out of idea, because they had destroyed our fundamental political foundation. I also personally talked to Ieng Sary (but I dared not do this with Pol Pot) in 1978 that it was not good to do like this. Should problems arise, we would not know what to do. Ieng Sary replied hesitantly that he did not know what to do, too, and the Chinese cultural revolution had also faced these problems.

In conclusion, I believe that Pol Pot had misled since 1975. From 1975, when we practiced the new policy, people starved, foreign aids were not accepted, and cooperative tasks effected too much labor.

One day, they attempted to hurt me. At that time, Ta An had already arrived. It was at January 1st Dam. Pang was also at the dam. Returning, Pang gave me a lift to Phnom Penh and he took handkerchiefs to seal the mirror(s). I asked him why? He said no one could see. I knew this was not good, so I was ready to reach my pistol. Arriving Skun, as we took off the car to piss, there were guards standing in the buffalo-horn sharp of military strategy. Then I asked Pang once again why he did that, since doing like this was not good at all. He asked me, "Are there patrolling forces from Skun to Prek Kdam? I told him they were along the way. From Skun, there were soldiers positioning along the road. So he did not do anything. In Phnom Penh he said I was to walk across barbed wires. I said to myself that this was the time for me. However, he brought me to see Pol Pot. As I met Pol Pot, I informed him about this, but he did not say anything.

In 1978 before the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, when we were conducting the fifth general assembly in the national assembly building, people became disorganized. Then Cheng An reported there was a small boat floating on the river. But, when closely inspected, it was a boat loaded with handmade bran-cake. Nevertheless, the assembly was closed. Pol Pot told me to stay waiting to see a movie. I was wondering of what was going on. I decided to stay in the building of the Central Committee. To my amazement, at one in the morning, they captured Ta Keu and Vorn Vet. After that Pol Pot questioned me whether I saw the movie. I had thought it was a motion picture. In fact, it was the scene of arresting Ta Keu and Vorn Vet. They accused Vorn Vet of working with both China and Vietnam and that he wanted to become the prime minister.

When Vietnam invaded and camped along the border, at first it was OK for me; Pol Pot still continued to lead the fight, but his ideology had changed. He changed radically in about 1984 or 1985 to now. He once met me and seemed to tell me to resign.

At first, [Pol Pot] appointed the committee of Dang Rek, which consisted of Ta, Brother Khieu and me. In October 1980, [Pol Pot] ordered me to take charge of internal tasks. In June 1982, [he] called me from inside to work; at the time his real attitude toward me was not changed.

By September 1984, when working in a house on Cardamom mountains, I recognized that Pol Pot seemed strange with me. Every time in such a work, he called me to meet him. But this time he met only Brother Khieu. After the work, I returned to the inside.

By 1985, I came up to work again. Then Pol Pot ordered me to resign from the military. At the time, he did not mention clearly. Wanted to be clear, I asked him. He said he wanted me to be the secretary of the battlefields. But, when I arrived Peou River, he ordered me to Koh Kong. I stayed there for one month. One day Pol Pot's messenger told me to meet Pol Pot. Pol Pot asked me whether I had any problem. I replied I had none, except that I heard that Northern Zone remained only me. But when Yuon arrived, such a rumor was quiet. After that he told me, "If I want to win the election for a representative in the future, just buy many rice mills and charge people little. They'll surely vote for you."

Lastly, Pol Pot invited me to join a meeting of Regional Revolutionary Angkar. I asked Comrade Yann to meet Pol Pot. He told me, "To meet Pol Pot, give [me] 10,000 Baht."

Ke Pauk

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