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General Elections. - Cabinet Changes. - Communist Revolt, - Recognition of Cambodia's Frontiers by Foreign Governments. - Incidents on South Vietnamese and Thai Frontiers.

A political crisis in Cambodia was caused by a rising in Battambang province in April, which the Chief of State, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, attributed to Communist subversion. The right-wing Government led by Lieut.-General Lon Nol, which had taken office in the previous October, resigned in consequence, and Prince Sihanouk formed a new Government containing left-wing representatives on May 2. Although the revolt collapsed in June the political situation remained tense; Prince Sihanouk dismissed two of the left-wing Ministers on Sept. 11, and accused the Chinese Government of encouraging subversive activities inside Cambodia. Details of these and other recent developments are given below.

In general election held on Sept. 11, 1966, all the 82 seats in the National Assembly were won by the ruling Party, the *Sangkum Reastr Niryum* (Popular Socialist Community). The elections differed from those previously held in that the candidates had not been personally approved by Prince Sihanouk, and the successful candidates, although all claiming to support his nationalist and neutralist foreign policy, represented a wide range of opinions from conservatives to Chinese sympathizers.

Lieut.-General Lon Nol (the Army C.-in-C., who had previously been Defence Minister) was elected Prime Minister by the Assembly on Oct. 18, 1966, in place of Prince Norodom Kantol, and formed a Government on Oct. 22. The new Cabinet, which was regarded as more conservative than its predecessor, contained three Deputy Premiers—Prince Norodom Viriya (Foreign Minister), M. Sim Var, and M. Mau Say—and eight Ministers, including M. Hing Kunthel (Finance), M. Op Kim Aug (Defence), and M. Nhek Phonn (Commerce).

As with the selection of parliamentary candidates, Prince Sihanouk had abandoned his previous practice of vetting the Premier's choice of Ministers, but he was reported to disapprove of the conservative character of the Government. He therefore appointed on Oct. 26 a “counter-Government” of 18 members, largely drawn from the left wing of the *Sangkum*; this body, which was modelled on the British Shadow Cabinet, was authorized to criticize the Government's

policies and administration and to put forward alternative proposals. Following its formation, General Lon Nol tendered his Government's resignation on Nov. 4; Prince Sihanouk refused to accept it, but Prince Viriya and M. Nhek Phonn, who refused to withdraw their resignations, were replaced by Prince Norodom Phurissara and M. Chau San respectively. Further to maintain the balance between the two wings of the *Sangkum*, M. Chau Seng (Prince Sihanouk's *directeur du cabinet* and a leading left-winger) was promoted at the same time to the Crown Council.

When Prince Sihanouk returned from a visit to France on March 9, 1967, he was met by left-wing demonstrations in Pnom-Penh demanding the dismissal of the Government, the dissolution of the Assembly, and new elections. He thereupon convened a special congress of the *Sangkum*, which on March 12 voted against the dismissal of the Government and the Assembly and in favour of the Prince's assuming emergency powers. This decision was followed by a number of outbreaks of violence, and the houses of several delegates to the congress were set on fire, particularly in Battambang province, near the Thai frontier.

A revolt broke out in Battambang on April 2, when about 200 men, armed with knives and staves and carrying banners bearing anti-Government and anti-American slogans, attacked provincial guard posts and an agricultural settlement. In a broadcast on the following day Prince Sihanouk attributed the revolt to the Cambodian Communist Party (the *Pracheachon* or Khmer People's Party, which is believed to have fewer than 2,000 members). The rebels were reported to have lost 19 killed, 140 captured, 13 rifles, and about 100 home-made guns during April 6–30 in clashes with the Army, which had had four killed and four wounded.

Prince Sihanouk denied on April 10 French press reports that the revolt was not the work of the Communists but the result of popular discontent, and maintained that the Left had resorted to force because of its defeat in the elections. On April 24 he alleged that captured rebels had claimed to have acted under the orders of M. Chau Seng and four members of the “counter-Government,” and stated that these would be interrogated by a military court, although he had rejected demands for the lifting of their parliamentary immunity.

General Lon Nol again tendered his resignation on April 30, stating that because of injuries which he had received in a motor accident on March 5 he was no longer able to discharge his duties. In view of the gravity of the internal situation, Prince Sihanouk decided to form an emergency Government consisting of members selected by himself from outside the Assembly, which would hold office for three months. The principal members of the new Government were announced on May 2 as follows:

M. Son Sane	Prime Minister.
M. Penn Outh	Adviser to the Government.
Prince Norodom Phurissara	Foreign Affairs.
Major-General Duong San Ol	Defence.
M. Ung Hong Sath	Internal Affairs.
M. Chau Seng	National Economy.
M. Touch Kim	Planning and Finance.
M. So Nem	Health.

Although M. Son Sann (governor of the National Bank), M. Penn Outh (a former Premier), and several other Ministers were regarded as moderates or non-political figures, the left-wing element in the Government was greatly strengthened. The appointment in particular of M. Chau Seng, whom Prince Sihanouk had accused of complicity with the rebels only a week before, and of M. Ung Hong Sath and M. So Nem, who had been respectively chairman and general secretary of the “counter-Government,” was regarded as an attempt to conciliate the left. The “counter-Government” remained in existence, under the chairmanship of M. San Yun, a former palace official.

While attempting to come to terms with the left-wing forces inside Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk emphasized in a speech on May 6 that the Government would resist any subversive activities inspired from abroad, whether by the Communist or the Western Powers.

“We shall defend our territorial integrity, independence, and neutrality,” Prince Sihanouk said, “against any enemy whether it be the *Vietminh* or the United States. It is the Cambodians and no one else who must control Cambodia's destinies. As for the Socialist countries such as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front, and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea, we support them politically and diplomatically without reservations, but we cannot support certain of them in their attempt to turn Cambodia into a colony or a satellite by using the ‘Red Khmers’ as their Trojan horse....”

Prince Sihanouk announced on June 21 that the insurgents, who he admitted numbered several thousands, had laid down their arms, and that they would all be pardoned, including 42 prisoners who were due to appear before a military court. Following the ending of the emergency, the Government tendered its resignation on Aug. 5 to the Assembly, which refused to accept it. At a press conference two days later Prince Sihanouk revealed that the Communist Party had rejected his

offer of representation in the Cabinet, and accused them of wishing to turn Cambodia into a Chinese satellite; he made no criticism of the Chinese Government, however.

Prince Sihanouk ordered on Sept. 1, 1967, the dissolution of the Cambodian-Chinese Friendship Association, led by M. So Nem, which he accused of subversive activities. A newspaper owned by M. Chau Seng subsequently published a telegram from the Sino-Cambodian Friendship Association of Peking, which violently attacked "imperialism, revisionism, and reaction," and called on the Cambodian association to continue the struggle "side by side" with its Chinese comrades.

Prince Sihanouk announced on Sept. 11 that he had ordered M. Chau Seng and M. So Nem to resign from the Government; had suspended the publication of all Cambodian and foreign-language newspapers; and would hold a referendum early in 1968 to enable the people to choose between his regime and the pro-Chinese elements. Condemning the message from Peking as "the first official attack by China on our national regime and our Government" and "an extraordinary act of interference in our internal affairs," he declared that "China is contesting Cambodia's right to be mistress in her own house, trying to turn the people against the Government, and allying herself with its enemies." It was announced on Sept. 15 that three official newspapers, one in Cambodian, one in French, and one in Chinese and Vietnamese, would be established to replace the privately-owned Press.

On Sept. 14 Prince Sihanouk stated that the Government would recall the entire staff of the Cambodian Embassy in Peking, except one secretary, "to avoid incidents if there are Chinese demonstrations against our Embassy." He added: "We shall not break off diplomatic relations with China, which remains our friend, if China does not try to interfere in our internal affairs. The Chinese must respect us in future." The Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Chou En-lai, subsequently sent Prince Sihanouk a conciliatory message in which he asked him to reconsider his decision and not to take the Friendship Association's telegram too seriously, and assured him that Cambodian diplomats in Peking had nothing to fear. Western correspondents commented that Mr. Chou's message was the first apology sent to a foreign State by the Chinese Government since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

Announcing that in view of Mr. Chou's message he had decided not to recall the Embassy staff, Prince Sihanouk declared on Sept. 18 that he was being treated "like a satellite in disgrace," and that only his vigorous reaction had made the Chinese Government realize that "the Cambodian fruit is not yet ripe." At the same time he banned the French-language bulletin of the New China News

Agency, which he accused of “scandalous provocation,” and revoked its exchange agreement with the official Cambodian news agency.

Prior to this incident Cambodia's relations with China had been extremely friendly. Prince Sihanouk had himself paid an official visit to Peking from Sept. 22 to Oct. 4, 1965, at the conclusion of which it was stated that an identity of views had been reached on all the questions discussed. Two military aid agreements had been signed in the past two years; under the first, concluded on Nov. 27, 1965, China undertook to supply light and heavy arms for 20,000 infantrymen, anti-aircraft equipment, four transport and four trainer aircraft, and three patrol boats for the Cambodian Navy, whilst a protocol on the supply of technicians to train the Cambodian forces in the use of Chinese equipment was signed on Oct. 5, 1966. Prince Phurissara, who arrived in Peking for a friendly visit on Aug. 15, 1967, thanked the Chinese Government at a banquet the same evening for the “disinterested and unconditional” economic and military aid which it had given to Cambodia.

Other aspects of Cambodia's foreign relations are described below.

M. Koun Vik (then the Cambodian Foreign Minister) requested the Soviet Government on March 15, 1965, to convene the members of the Geneva Conference to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity, and on April 3 the Soviet Foreign Ministry proposed to the British Government that they should issue invitations to such a conference. When leaving London on April 14 for his tour of South-East Asia [see page 20786], however, Mr. Patrick Gordon Walker suggested that a conference on Cambodia might provide the occasion for informal talks on Vietnam. This suggestion was resented by Prince Sihanouk, who refused to receive Mr. Gordon Walker when he visited Pnom-Penh on April 26, although the latter assured him in a written communication that Britain would not ask for the inclusion in the conference agenda of any subject not directly concerned with Vietnam. Although the U.S. and British Governments respectively announced their willingness to participate in a conference on April 25 and 26, the Cambodian Government stated on May 23 that it would ask the interested Powers “to recognize its neutrality individually and to respect its territorial integrity,” thereby intimating that it had given up the idea.

The communique issued on Sept. 2, 1966, at the conclusion of President de Gaulle's visit to Cambodia reaffirmed France's “respect for the territorial integrity of Cambodia within the limits of its present borders” [see 21635 A]. During an official visit to Moscow by Prince Phurissara the Soviet Government also announced its respect for Cambodia's territorial integrity on June 6, 1967, and at Cambodia's request similar statements were issued in June and July by the

Governments of the United States, China, North Vietnam, North Korea, Singapore, Bulgaria, Eastern Germany, and Australia; the Australian Government, however, qualified its assurance by stating that it could not commit itself about exactly where the Cambodian border might lie, this qualification being rejected by the Cambodian Government. Prince Sihanouk stated on Sept. 1 that the heads of the Cambodian missions in countries which had refused to give the required assurance, such as Japan, Britain, Australia, and the Philippines, would be recalled, and that if it had not been given by January the Cambodian embassies in those countries would be closed; he added that because of Japan's refusal to recognize the integrity of Cambodia's present frontiers he had asked for a forthcoming visit to Cambodia by the Japanese Premier, Mr. Sate, to be cancelled.

Attacks on Cambodian frontier villages by the South Vietnamese forces continued during 1965-66. In a unanimous report the International Control Commission stated on July 15, 1965, that it had investigated eight incidents involving violations of Cambodian territory which had occurred between May 1964 and May 1965; had found conclusive evidence that the South Vietnamese forces were responsible; and was convinced that none of the incidents had been provoked by Cambodia. The border violations had increased in number and seriousness, and the number of minor incidents had also increased; Cambodia had notified the commission of 206 such incidents in 1963, 375 in 1964, and 385 in the first five months of 1965.

Several other attacks on Cambodian villages by South Vietnamese and U.S. troops and aircraft, in which a number of peasants were killed, were reported between August 1965 and September 1966. The first incident involving U.S. ground forces occurred on May 2, 1966, when American artillery shelled Cambodian territory; allegations that the *Viet Cong* had opened fire from the Cambodian side of the border were denied by a Cambodian Government spokesman, who said that "the Cambodian forces only replied to the unjustified bombardment of their positions by the American troops." The Cambodian village of Thlok-Trach was bombed by U.S. aircraft on July 31, 1966, and again on Aug. 2 while the International Control Commission was carrying out an investigation, three people being killed and nine wounded in the two attacks. Whereas the U.S. State Department admitted on Aug. 16 that the village was in Cambodia, the South Vietnamese Government asserted that it was in South Vietnam, and alleged that it was controlled by the *Viet Cong*.

Following the bombing of Thlok-Trach, Prince Sihanouk announced on Aug. 19, 1966, that in view of the Saigon Government's "consistently negative" attitude Cambodia would negotiate an agreement on its frontiers with the

National Liberation Front. He stated in a broadcast on June 8, 1967, that the Front had recognized Cambodia's present frontiers. *Le Monde* commented that by so doing the Front had acted "as a Government, and no longer merely as the 'sole authentic representative of the South Vietnamese people.' By accepting its declaration as juridically valid, it seems, Prince Sihanouk is tending to treat the Front as the *de jure* Government of South Vietnam."

Prince Sihanouk requested the International Control Commission on Dec. 7, 1965, to investigate allegations in the U.S. Press that Chinese arms intended for the *Viet Cong* were being unloaded at the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville. The Commission reported on Jan. 10, 1966, that all the Chinese arms landed during the past two years "were solely intended for the Cambodian Defence Ministry, and were scarcely sufficient for the needs of effective protection of Cambodian territory"; that it was convinced that no war material had passed through Sihanoukville to the *Viet Cong*; and that it had found no evidence of the presence of *Viet Cong* members at Sihanoukville or in the neighbourhood. The U.S. Defence Department stated on May 27, 1966, that although North Vietnamese troops might occasionally cross the Cambodian border, there was no evidence that they were stationed in Cambodia.

Allegations were frequently made in the South Vietnamese and U.S. Press in the summer of 1966 that every month 100 Cambodian lorries were carrying material for the *Viet Cong* along a track in north-Eastern Cambodia known as the "Sihanouk route." Separate investigations carried out by the British, French, Australian, Philippine, Indonesian, and Laotian military attaches and by an American committee, however, established that the track in question was completely unusable.

Prince Sihanouk stated on Sept. 11, 1967, that he had sent a letter to the U.N. security Council protesting against the "propaganda campaign against Cambodia's neutrality" in the U.S. Press. The letter referred in particular to continued allegations that North Vietnamese troops were stationed in Cambodia, and that large quantities of Soviet and Chinese arms and supplies for the *Viet Cong* were being landed at Sihanoukville, and quoted a recent statement in an American weekly that "the United States may soon find itself forced to carry the war into Cambodian territory."

The situation on the Thai frontier remained tense during 1965-67, owing to frequent border clashes between Thai and Cambodian forces and to the activities of the "Free Khmers," or *Khmers Serei*, the extreme right-wing terrorist movement led by M. Son Ngoc Thanh. Details of the recruitment and training of the "Free Khmers" were given in *Le Monde* on May 6, 1967, by

a French correspondent who had recently visited the frontier and interviewed a number of them wire had escaped into Cambodia.

“The *Khmers Serei*,” wrote the *Monde* correspondent, “number about 1,000, settled in camps in the Dangrek Mountains, on both sides of the Thai frontier. I talked to several *Khmers Serei* who had defected... 43 deserted in 1966 under cover of operations against Cambodia. They come from the former Cochin China, where there are 600,000 Cambodians, and it is there they are recruited.... They were at first conscripted to fight the *Viet Cong*, then the advisers of the ‘special forces’ told them that ‘the Communists are preparing to invade Cambodia’ and they must be regrouped. Taken in lorries to Saigon and embarked for Thailand on U.S. aircraft, they were brought by road to a training camp. There are four of these at present in the Dangrek Mountains—Tatum, Chup-Saray, Prasat-Kruos, and Aranh. Their training is carried out jointly by U.S. military advisers and Thai officers. Every week, they told me, C.I.A. men come to inspect the camps. Their task is to lay mines and attack frontier posts. On several occasions, notably at O-Smach, they have been supported by sections of the Thai Army....”

The most serious clash for some time between Thai and Cambodian forces occurred on June 20, 1965, each side accusing the other of entering its territory; the Thai Government reported that 13 Cambodians had been killed in the fighting. Further clashes on the Thai-Cambodian border occurred in December 1965 and February 1966. The temple of Preah Vihear, which had been recognized as Cambodian property by the International Court of Justice in 1962 [see 19831 B], was occupied by Thai troops on April 3, 1966, but was recaptured on April 6 by Cambodian forces, which repulsed a Thai attack on April 19.

During 1966 over 300 frontier incidents occurred in which 320 people were killed or wounded, 151 of them by mine explosions. The gravest incident of this type took place on June 12, 1966, when a train was derailed in Battambang province by the explosion of an anti-tank mine placed on the rails, several people being killed and many more injured. The Cambodian Government announced on Feb. 18, 1966, that in view of the “almost dally” aggression by South Vietnamese and Thai troops and the “Free Khmers” its army would be increased by 1,500 men, and on March 25 Prince Sihanouk stated that the Soviet Union was giving Cambodia five *MiG-17* fighter-bombers.

The Thai Government accused Cambodia of “provocative activities” on June 3, 1966, and requested the U.N. Secretary-General to send a personal representative to the border. U Thant's representative, Hr. Herbert de Ribbing, of Sweden, arrived in Bangkok on Aug. 26, and went on to Pnom-Penh on Aug.

30; in talks with him Prince Sihanouk stated that Cambodia was prepared to open negotiations with Thailand, and suggested that they should issue a joint declaration affirming their mutual respect for each other's frontiers. Although Hr. de Ribbing's visit brought about a temporary improvement in the situation, attacks on Cambodian military posts and the laying of mines were resumed in September, and continued throughout the spring and summer of 1967; the Cambodian Government announced on July 17, for example, that armed elements coming from Thailand had blown up a stretch of railway line near the frontier town of Poipet, in Battambang. "General" Chau Bory, a "Free Khmer" leader who had been captured at the head of an armed force in a jungle area of southern Cambodia, was shot in Pnom-Penh on Dec. 12, 1966, and his brother, Mathura, on Dec. 31.

Prince Sihanouk gave his views on the situation on the South Vietnamese and Thai frontiers in an interview which appeared in *The Guardian* on Dec. 17, 1966.

"Peace for my country," he stated, "is difficult to maintain when one is neighbour to peoples who for centuries have tried to annex our provinces one after the other, and who would like to be able to divide our kingdom by making the Mekong a common frontier. These people are the Siamese (today Thais) and the Annamite people (today Vietnam). The Governments of these eternal enemies to the existence of Cambodia are at the moment mere or less ardent supporters of the so-called free world, which they have managed to interest in their quarrel against us; it is with gifts and military material from the United States, for example, that they bomb our frontier villages or posts or place minefields deep within our territory. They succeed sometimes even in involving, on the basis of false information, American forces in making aggressions against Cambodia. The only danger for Cambodia at the moment is, then, the satellites of the United States. But we are under no illusions; the annexationist ambitions of our neighbours will never change, whatever the political colour of the regimes in power in Saigon and Bangkok...."

Cambodia's relations with Thailand were further embittered by the policy of "regrouping" the Cambodian population of the Thai frontier provinces of Trat and Surin adopted by the Thai Government in 1966. All Cambodians who refused to accept Thai nationality were forcibly removed to villages some miles from the frontier, and were forbidden to move more than a mile from their new homes, whilst the use of the Cambodian language in Cambodian schools in Thailand was prohibited. Although crossing points on the frontiers were strictly guarded, several hundred Cambodians succeeded in escaping over the border into Cambodia after walking through the jungle for several days.

Prince Sihanouk stated on June 21, 1967, that if Thailand continued to refuse to recognize Cambodia's frontiers, he would discuss the problem with the rebel "Thailand Patriotic Front," just as he had talked to the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front on the issue.—(Le Monde - Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian - Neue Zürcher Zeitung - New York Times) (Prev. rep. 20603A; 20746 C; 21223 A.)

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