

The Preservation of Cambodian Neutrality

AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

PRIME MINISTER Diefenbaker received a letter on August 28, 1962, from Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Chief of State of Cambodia, concerning the strained relations between Cambodia and the neighbouring states of Thailand and South Vietnam. In his letter, the Cambodian Chief of State asked if the Canadian Government, with other governments represented at the recent conference on Laos, would recognize and guarantee the neutrality and the territorial integrity of Cambodia. He proposed that a conference on Cambodia be held as soon as possible to negotiate an international agreement embodying these principles.

The Prime Minister replied to Prince Sihanouk on September 4, in the following terms:

Your Royal Highness,

I wish to thank you for your personal letter of August 20, 1962.

I am well aware of the situation along Cambodia's borders — a situation which has inevitably caused you deep concern. I fully share your hope that stability may be restored as quickly as possible.

The neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia are essential to the stability of Asia and the world. These are principles to which my Government fully and wholeheartedly subscribes. In consequence, I would favour any appropriate initiative that would strengthen Cambodia's status as a sovereign, independent, integral and neutral country.

In seeking ways and means of maintaining this status, I would hope that Your Royal Highness would keep in mind the machinery for conciliation available in the United Nations. I recall that the late Secretary-General's initiative in sending the Beck-Friis Mission to Cambodia and Thailand in 1959 led to the resumption of diplomatic relations. Some further step of this character might be helpful in the present circumstances.

The Canadian Government would, of course, be willing to make a public declaration undertaking to respect Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity.

I wish to assure you, however, that I am most anxious that some means be found of solving your border problems that would be both appropriate and agreeable to Your Royal Highness and generally acceptable to the Governments principally concerned.

Accept, Your Highness, the assurances of my highest consideration.

I am,

Yours sincerely,

John G. Diefenbaker