

Plans for Economic Improvement

In the interim prior to the promulgation of the temporary constitution, the Revolutionary Council emphasized plans for the "revision and improvement" of the national economy. The Government announced that efforts would be made to provide the four basic needs of the Thai people: food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. With this object in view, the price of certain basic commodities such as rice, sugar, charcoal, oil, and electric power was reduced. In the field of economic planning, the Revolutionary Council established a National Economic Planning Committee, which included several of the economic advisors of the previous government, to work out both short and long range economic projects.

Relations with Cambodia

While attention was focussed on internal matters, the country's external relations with neighbouring Cambodia suddenly deteriorated. Unsettled disputes, caused by a poorly defined border in many sections, had long been a source of irritation between the two countries. The dispute over the ownership of the ancient Temple of Preah Vihear (Phra Vihar), which lies on the border area northwest of Bangkok, had given rise to ill feeling and inflammatory press comments on both sides — attempts to negotiate their differences earlier in the year had been unsuccessful. It was against this background that Cambodia notified Thailand on November 24 of the "provisional suspension" of diplomatic relations between the two countries, effective on December 1. The Cambodians charged that current developments, especially attacks against Cambodia in the Thai press, necessitated this action. The Thai press, it was stated, claimed that Cambodia, with the assistance of communist China, had become a threat to Thailand. The Cambodians also charged that the Thais had built fortifications along the border, and that Thai citizens had plundered Cambodian villages.

In reply to the Cambodian declaration, the Thai Government announced on November 25 that it was recalling its Ambassador to Cambodia and closing the border between the two countries. The Thai Government refuted the Cambodian accusation, referring to border raids by Cambodian groups into Thailand and Cambodian press attacks upon Thailand, as well as alleged abusive statements made by members of the Cambodian Government. In what appeared to be a reference to communist China, it was stated that "the Cambodian Government does not seem to act on its own but apparently as a willing tool of some others who are bent upon the destruction of friendship and good understanding between nations".

Efforts to find a solution to at least the immediate problem of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations reached an impasse in December, when the two Governments agreed to it in principle but were unable to reach agreement on the level on which it was to take place, as the Thai Government supported a resumption of relations at the Ambassadorial level and the Cambodian Government at a Chargé d'Affaires level. Following an exchange of letters concerning the dispute, between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Thai and Cambodian Governments, the Secretary-General agreed to send as a representative to the Thai-Cambodian border area, Baron Beck-Friis, a former Swedish diplomat, accompanied by Mr. G. S. Murray, a member of the Canadian Department of External Affairs, seconded to the