

Thais Receive Cambodian; May Sell Rice for Security

By Lewis M. Simons
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BANGKOK, Oct. 27 — Cambodian Deputy Premier Ieng Sary is scheduled to arrive here Tuesday morning to begin five days of talks aimed at improving relations between the new Communist Regime in Phnom Penh and the government of Thai Premier Kukrit Pramoj.

The visit is the first by a ranking Cambodian official to a non-Communist country in Southeast Asia since the Communist Khmer Rouge captured control of the country in April.

Ieng Sary, who is in charge of Cambodia's foreign affairs, is to head a delegation of eight, including Justice Minister Norodom Phurissara and Gouch Khampoun, Cambodia's ambassador to China.

Although Thai government officials said they were unable to confirm it, the Cambodian delegation is expected to arrive aboard a Chinese aircraft flying from Phnom Penh.

When Ieng Sary flew to Laos to attend the Oct. 12 independence day celebrations with Communist Pathet Lao

leaders, he arrived in Vientiane aboard a Chinese-owned Boeing 707.

Since taking control of Phnom Penh, the Khmer Rouge have established extremely close relations with Peking. They have chilly relations with the Soviet Union, which continued to recognize the U.S.-backed regime of President Lon Nol until the Communist victory.

Thailand, which has recently established diplomatic relations with China, is most interested in improving ties with Cambodia for reasons of its own immediate security as well as to offset the growing dominance of North Vietnamese-Soviet influence in Indochina and the rest of Southeast Asia.

A working relationship with the Khmer Rouge would do much to help the Thais establish that power balance. At the same time, they would assure themselves of relative security on at least one of their frontiers. Relations with neighboring Laos are deteriorating markedly.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Nissai Vejajiva told journalists that Ieng Sary and his delegation will meet

top Thai leaders, including Premier Kukrit and Foreign Minister Chatichai Choonhavan.

The spokesman said the Cambodian delegation would remain in Thailand until Saturday. Discussions would include means of establishing "direct contact," Nissai said, which could lead to "economic cooperation and trade."

Chatichai was reported to have told one Bangkok newspaper that he intended to propose the establishment of normal diplomatic relations as well as overland and air communications as soon as possible.

Although neither Chatichai nor Nissai said so, the discussions are certain to include the touchy subject of repatriating Cambodian refugees who fled to Thailand after the Khmer Rouge takeover.

The Cambodians are also expected to raise the question of increased trade with Thailand. Reports filtering out of Cambodia indicate that the Khmer Rouge are in desperate need of imports, particularly rice (until the first harvest), petroleum products and sugar.