

Envoy Touring Cambodia Finds a No-Wage System

PEKING, March 7—Cambodia's people are working under “total mobilization” to create the most radical communized society in the world, according to Sweden's Ambassador to Peking, who is the first Westerner to tour Cambodia since the Communist takeover last April.

Kaj Bjork, the Swedish diplomat, described Cambodia as a nation under tight military control and led by nationalistic, Marxist intellectuals whose goals are more revolutionary than those of the leaders of China.

He said that there was no private ownership, not even any private plots for peasants. The society functions without money and people are not paid wages, he said. Those not working on the land must depend on rations and on bartering. Mr. Bjork said he did not see a single private shop in operation during his visit.

In an interview after his return from a two-week stay in Cambodia, Mr. Bjork said that he saw no signs of starvation and attributed this to the controversial decision of Cambodia's leaders to force people out of the cities to work in the rice fields.

Mr. Bjork said that wherever he went in Cambodia he saw “enormous numbers of young people with machine guns or other guns.” They were guarding the streets of the capital, Phnom Penh, and numerous checkpoints in the countryside.

“Around Phnom Penh you could see youngsters marching, all of them with a hoe and a spade, some of them also carrying a gun,” the Swedish diplomat continued. “I got the very strong impression that the regime has active support from this kind of young person.”

Mr. Bjork and a delegation of diplomats from third-world countries were accompanied by a military escort when they traveled in the countryside. In the capital, he said, it was virtually impossible to walk around freely because he was followed by armed security men and denied entry into some districts. “You are immediately struck by the empty, streets; every shop is closed; flats look empty. But by and by you discover there is some life, especially in the outskirts,” he said.

Although a few are being permitted back into the capital for designated work, he was told, there are still only 100,000 to 200,000 people in the city, compared with the 2.5 million people, mainly refugees, when the Communists conquered the city last April.

The problem then was feeding a population that had been kept alive by food brought in by convoys up the Mekong River and then by a United States airlift. The Cambodian Communist solution, which jolted people around the world, was to force everybody into the countryside.

“They argue that they didn't have any transportation facilities to bring food to the people and so the logical thing was to bring the people to the food,” Mr. Bjork said. “That is, to evacuate them all and make them get out into the rice fields.”

The signs of the population upheaval are everywhere, he said. Some former city dwellers are “guests” of peasants who were required to shelter them.

The countryside is in a state of “total mobilization,” Mr. Bjork said. Provinces are organized into districts, under which are communes. The lowest level of organization is the cooperative. Mr. Bjork said he saw groups of 20,000 to 25,000 workers mobilized by district organizations, digging new or deeper irrigation canals and building dams. The aim is to create a water-control system that will insure two or even three rice harvests a year.

“Everything in the country depends on this—getting more rice and getting enough rice for export,” the Ambassador said.

Cambodia's leaders envision using the income from rice exports to build small factories in scattered locations in the rural areas. They plan to control strictly the population of towns and cities, Mr. Bjork said, limiting Phnom Penh to “not more than a few hundred thousand.”

Asked about reports that people are starving in Cambodia, the envoy replied, “How can I judge? I saw no signs of starvation.”

Mr. Bjork and fellow diplomats talked with most of the prominent people in the Cambodian Government. He said Khieu Samphan, a Deputy Prime Minister and a key figure in the Government, “gives the impression of being an intellectual of some quality.”

“These are men who, as young men, were sent abroad to foreign universities, acquired a great deal of knowledge, a good deal of Marxist theory, and came back to Cambodia and reacted very strongly to existing social conditions,” the Swedish envoy said. “They have very strong collectivist and egalitarian ideas with a very strong overtone of nationalism.”

People Forced Into Fields

‘Total Mobilization’

‘No Signs of Starvation’