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Israel's Technical Assistance to Cambodia 1965 - 1975

HISTORY, ASIA, AUSTRALIA AND OCEANIA

CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF CAMBODIA (1949-1975)
UNDER AN ISRAELI PERSPECTIVE. [FRENCH TEXT]

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This dissertation, as indicated by its title and subtitle, deals mainly with relations between two small states. However, while both these states are located in Asia, they are in fact very different and distant one from the other. They have an ancient heritage which includes certain periods of glorious history, and both have always suffered because they are neither integrated in their respective regions nor accepted by their neighbors.

This dissertation tries to trace in detail (supported by the personal experience of the author and by unedited documents) the Israeli policy towards this--when it was still non-aligned and was led by the charismatic Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The broad scope of relations

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on Israel and Cambodia encompassed the political-diplomatic as well as Israeli technical assistance to help Cambodia in its development.

The contemporary history of Cambodia between 1949 and 1975 is placed from an Israeli perspective. This period includes Cambodia's limited independence within the French Union (1949-1952), the Sihanouk Regime (1952-1970), and continue until the Khmer Republic (1970-1975). Special attention is given to the mostly negative relations between Cambodia and its more powerful neighbors, Vietnam and Thailand, and to the important but changing role played in Cambodia by the three Superpowers: The Peoples' Republic of China, the Soviet Union and the United States, which resulted in a kind of Super-Power-Triangle under Sihanouk, and Cambodia falling under the American orbit during the Republic.

The ten years (1965-1975) of unique relations in the field of technical assistance--Israel's motivation, its quest for political leverage, and the Cambodians' concepts and reactions to technical aid, especially those of Sihanouk--are assessed in detail, as is the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk.

With the entry of the Khmer Rouge into Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, the relations between Israel and Cambodia came to an abrupt end. It would seem that 20 years of political relations and 10 years of relatively important technical and humanitarian assistance were blotted out. Israel retained the memory of its interesting and challenging "Cambodian Experience," which might prove a useful lesson for future Israeli policy towards Asia.

Three detailed appendices are presented: (1) a chronology of Cambodian history and one of the special relations between Cambodia and Israel; (2) details of the projects, experts, scholarships, etc., granted or disbursed within the framework of technical assistance, and (3) the case history of Sihanouk's use of Israel, by demanding (in 1967) that she sign his proposal regarding Cambodia's integrity and sovereignty inside its actual borders.

Israel's programme for technical assistance to countries of the Third World,¹ which started modestly in the mid-fifties, was motivated by two apparently contradictory motives: (1) a kind of moral duty to help underdeveloped nations² and to share with them the valuable experience gained in several fields, especially agriculture; (2) the hope that the impact of the generous technical assistance to practically all nations who asked for it would help to breach the political isolation of Israel and to create a favourable political climate for strengthening friendly relations with these underdeveloped nations.³ In some cases, technical assistance was even granted to countries who refused to enter into diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

On 15 June 1956, Moshe Sharett, at the time Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote a letter to his Cambodian counterpart, Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak. This letter contained not only a customary invitation to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries but, couched in diplomatic language, also offered technical assistance: "...le gouvernement et le peuple d'Israël se voient obligés de faire face a des taches écrasantes de reconstruction... ils ont suivi de près avec admiration le développement survenu au Cambodge... ils seront heureux de pouvoir coopérer avec le gouvernement du Cambodge..."

Although the matter of establishing diplomatic relations and granting technical assistance appeared in the same letter, the latter was not made a condition for the former. However, it should be noted that this letter, to which no reply from the Cambodian side could be traced, was sent a few months before the Suez campaign, when official Israeli diplomacy had not yet fully abandoned the last vestiges of its former policy of non-alignment and Cambodia, under Sihanouk, was a member-nation of the non-aligned movement.

Nine years passed before Cambodia accepted Sharett's offer. In 1965 Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia commenced,⁵ both on a bilateral and on a multilateral level, the latter within the framework of the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia (ECAFE). Israeli technical assistance continued practically without interruption under both the Sihanouk regime (1965-1970) and the Khmer Republic under Lon Nol (1970-1975). With the establishment of Democratic Kampuchea, after the victory of the Khmer Rouge in April 1975, diplomatic relations as well as Israel's presence in Cambodia came to an abrupt end.

The fact that Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia started in earnest during May 1965, the same year that Sihanouk severed diplomatic relations with the United States, was not wholly by chance. It seems reasonable to assume that at that point Sihanouk had become more interested than ever before in accepting and even encouraging assistance from a small and far-away country like Israel. Israel, on the other hand, discreetly encouraged by the United States, was interested in assisting a non-aligned Third World country like Cambodia, since Israel wanted friendly relations with such countries, especially after the set-back of not being invited to the Bandung Conference of the non-aligned countries in April 1955.

It should not be forgotten that, unlike most Third World nations, Cambodia, at least until 1970, was neither poor nor under-developed. Pre-1970 Cambodia not only produced enough rice to feed her population, she even succeeded in exporting some. In addition, the practically unlimited fish reserves of the large central lake, the Tonle Sap, provided enough protein-containing food. Therefore, the primary aims of Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia were to encourage diversification and modernization

of Cambodia's traditional agriculture and to modernize irrigation and exploitation of her water resources. Secondary importance was attached to the development of light industry and to preliminary mineral research.

Sihanouk was well aware of the need for foreign assistance, but he was very reluctant to allow the three superpowers to invest considerable amounts of money in aid to Cambodia, fearing that large projects requiring the influx of hundreds of experts would enable the superpowers to gain too much influence and would endanger his policy of neutrality.⁶ Nonetheless, he could not avoid permitting the Soviet Union and China to undertake a few important costly projects.⁷ Cambodia also received valuable assistance from western countries, such as Japan, Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany. Moreover, France was especially important to Cambodia and won special recognition from Sihanouk because of the vast assistance she granted in the field of secondary and higher education and because of the cultural relations between the two countries, motivated by historical reasons and France's endeavour to keep Cambodia, previously a French protectorate, within the framework of the "Francophonie".

Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia, albeit limited to certain fields, grew between 1965 and 1970, with the encouragement of Sihanouk, who closely followed its progress. In public speeches, articles, personal letters and conversations with visiting Israeli leaders, Sihanouk did not hide his admiration for Israel: In his flowery language he spoke of "le vaillant peuple d'Israël" and "le peuple qui fait fleurir le desert".⁸ But Sihanouk did not allow his positive attitude to Israel to influence his political positions, as evidenced by Cambodia's voting record at the

United Nations General Assembly. Cambodia generally supported, with rare deviations, the anti-Israeli position of the non-aligned movement, although Sihanouk seemed more understanding and more pragmatic towards Israel than such senior founding fathers of the non-aligned movement as Nehru, Tito and of course, Nasser. Sihanouk seemed impressed by the devoted work of the Israeli experts, and at the end of their missions, as well as on other occasions, he usually showered them with decorations and warm letters of appreciation. He seemed convinced that Israel, the beleaguered little country that knew how to defend herself against many enemies and underwent an accelerated process of self-development, despite the wars, could and should serve the Khmer people, ^{as an example/} especially the peasants. While excessive weight should not be attached to his laudatory speeches, a certain genuine admiration on his part "pour l'expérience Israélienne" seems undeniable, based upon his notion of a certain "parallelism" between the two small nations both conscious of their glorious past, both surrounded and threatened by powerful enemies and both not yet accepted in their region.

Therefore, it is not surprising that on 14 June 1965 Sihanouk gave Son Sann, then deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic affairs and ministries, the green light⁹ to request, through Israel Ambassador Varon, that certain Israeli experts and advisers be placed at the disposal of Cambodia. In effect, the demand for Israeli assistance in the areas of agriculture, irrigation, cooperation and the like increased. Nevertheless, some Israeli proposals, such as the establishment of a school for technical education (as part of ORT) to be staffed by French-speaking Israeli instructors, were not taken up.

In addition to bilateral technical assistance, Israel also participated

in multilateral technical assistance to Cambodia, mainly in the important U.N. project of the Prek Thnot, under the responsibility of ECAFE and under the management of the "Committee of the Mekong". The hydro-electrical project, "Le grand barrage du Prek Thnot pour l'irrigation et l'électrification du Cambodge", was an important and even ambitious project: the construction of a great dam which was intended to solve the irrigation and electrification problems of Cambodia. In addition to U.N. funding, the project was financed by a group of states, mainly Japan, Australia and the Federal Republic of Germany. Israel contributed in a modest way,¹⁰ mainly through the TAHAL Company. Israel also participated in the various conferences with the status of observer. Israeli firms participated actively in the planning stage and in certain irrigation and hydraulic engineering work connected with the project. Aside from the commercial venture of these firms, Israel's involvement also entailed technical assistance insofar as TAHAL trained Cambodians during the implementation of the project and scholarships were granted to qualified Cambodians for advanced training in Israel.

The bulk of Israel's technical assistance was granted to the "Agricultural Experimental Centre for the Prek Thnot Region",¹¹ which was undoubtedly the most successful Israeli project. Formally, this was a modest side project within the ambitious multilateral Prek Thnot project, but in practice it was, de facto, a bilateral Khmer-Israeli venture managed by a permanent presence of Israeli experts.¹² The co-operation between the competent Israeli authorities and the long-time Secretary of the Mekong Committee, Dr. C. Hart-Schaaf, was on the whole smooth and efficient from the early stages of the project.

The pilot-farm project started in 1963 with the submission of a rather

sketchy 35 pages of preliminary suggestions¹³ regarding the establishment of an Agricultural Experimental Station in the Prek Thnot. On 23 August, 1964 a more detailed "Draft plan of operation regarding the design of an Agricultural Experimental Station to get up (sic) in the Prek Thnot region" was submitted, and towards the end of 1964 actual work on the site started. In early 1965 a "trial feasibility report" prepared by A. Barkol, director of the AGRIDEV Company, was submitted to the Cambodian authorities, and this report paved the way for the arrival of the first long-term Israeli experts (Efraim Carmi and Joseph Yona).

Formally, the status of the Israeli experts was similar to that of other U.N. experts employed within the framework of the Mekong Committee; in practice, they were linked to and worked directly with the competent Cambodian authorities. The close contact with both the Khmer authorities and their Khmer colleagues, with whom they collaborated and with whom they shared in effect the management of the pilot-farm, often demanded very delicate handling of problems.

The pilot-farm project¹⁴ got off to a promising start. Towards the end of its first year (1965), an Israeli study mission¹⁵ noted with satisfaction the first achievements,¹⁶ although some difficulties, such as the lack of proper tools and cumbersome administrative problems¹⁷ also came to light at this early stage. Even so, steady progress was experienced during the period 1965-1970. The pilot-farm was enlarged and in their progress reports to the competent authorities in Israel, the heads of the Israeli team cited encouraging results in diversification and agricultural instruction (vulgarisation). Many nearby villages¹⁸ profitted in practical terms from what they saw and learned at the pilot-farm.

Rice being the staple food in Cambodia(as in most Asian countries), the pilot-farm had to direct at least part of its efforts to increasing rice production and to improving rice - quality. Without achieving visible results in rice production. the work of the Israeli experts - however successful in other fields - would have been considered a failure in Cambodian eyes. This posed a serious problem insofar as Israel is not a rice-growing country and most of her experts lack a sound knowledge of rice growing. However, by sending experts to a crash course at the International Institute for Rice Research at Los Banos in the Philippines, before or during their service and by relying upon their ability to study rice while conducting experiments on the farm, this difficulty was successfully overcome and rice production per hectare at the station was doubled.

The Israeli team of agricultural experts at the Prek Thnot pilot-farm consisted of the following members: (1) the team-leader, usually a certified agronomist with practical experience, who served as co-ordinator and liaison with the many authorities (U.N., Khmer, Israeli) connected in one way or another with the project; (2) a research agronomist (chercheur) in charge of the various experimental and research work undertaken at the pilot-farm; (3) an agricultural instructor (vulgarisation), responsible for contact with the peasants of the region, charged with demonstrating to them the marked results obtained at the farm and with encouraging them to introduce new products and more modern methods in their villages. The Secretary of the Mekong Committee requested increased Israeli support, including additional experts. However, after the Six Day War, Israel was unable to increase her assistance, mainly due to budgetary reasons, but also because of growing opposition in Israel to aiding countries that

supported (by voting and making declarations at the U.N. and in other organizations) an anti-Israel policy. However, despite Cambodia's anti-Israeli voting record and wavering in appointing an ambassador to Israel, technical assistance was maintained at the pre-war level.

The outbreak of hostilities in Cambodia after the deposition of Sihanouk in March 1970 did not spare the Prek Thnot region, including the large hydraulic project and the pilot-farm.¹⁹ Nevertheless, work on the pilot-farm continued, although it became more and more insecure. The vague hopes, based upon rumours and undercover contacts between Khmers working on the project and friends and relatives from "the other side", that the Khmer Rouge, if victorious, would spare, in the national interest, this beneficial non-military project, proved to be merely wishful thinking.

Israeli participation in the multilateral Prek Thnot project, while it lasted, had an impact on Cambodia, but Israel's bilateral technical assistance, which was spread over a variety of projects, had much less impact, if any. It is not difficult to determine the main reasons for this: only a few of the twenty projects²⁰ were fully realized or even implemented; some of them were beyond the means and human resources Israel was able or willing to mobilize;²¹ several non-agricultural projects, which were successfully instituted in some African states -- for example, national service (service civique), technical education, pre-military youth training, and the establishment of co-operatives -- were vetoed by Sihanouk; and the outbreak of fighting in 1970 created unfavourable and discouraging conditions for providing technical assistance.

During the ten years of Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia, especially from 1967 with the establishment of the Israel Embassy in

Phnom Penh, contact and dialogue were maintained between Israel and various Khmer personalities and authorities. The Israel Embassy devoted much of its time to matters of technical assistance. The ambassador was often approached in regard to these matters by ministries and private persons, and he in turn kept the various ministries informed about scholarships and courses to be held in Israel which he believed would be in the interests of Cambodia, thereby encouraging Cambodian requests for assistance. It is likely that a more severe screening of the feasibility of some projects before forwarding them to Jerusalem and before entering into more detailed negotiations with the competent Khmer authorities would have avoided misunderstandings and bad feelings. The limited funds available were not always channelled to the most worthy and feasible projects -- that is projects which could yield productive results and be realized within a foreseeable period, and which would not grow into a financial burden or be continued merely for prestige. The Israeli's learned the hard way that the success of a project did not depend on its beneficial, far-reaching goals; it was necessary to ensure the means within the assistance budget or through other sources, to obtain constant and efficient support from the inviting Cambodian authority, and to find and enlist a competent, suitable expert. This last point was often decisive: There were a few cases where an expert's professional competence and academic qualifications were impeccable, but he was not capable of finding a common language with his Khmer counterparts. In other words, it was important for an expert to respect the Khmer way of doing things, and to unobtrusively overcome red tape and "roll up his sleeves". However, partly on the basis of my own personal knowledge,

it can be said that the overwhelming majority of the 56 Israeli experts who served in Cambodia between 1963 and 1975 met the above-defined standards and fulfilled their task with dedication and efficiency.

The granting of scholarships to qualified Cambodians for study or for training in Israel was an integral part of the technical assistance program. From 1965 to 1975 at least 96 trainees²³ were sent to Israel, mostly to attend courses organized by specialized semi-governmental institutions²⁴ created for this purpose. In addition, some scholarships were also provided by institutions, societies and private firms. In principle, Israel provided board, lodging, free tuition, pocket money, etc. Cambodia was supposed to provide transportation to and from Israel, but in many cases this also had to be provided by Israel or an outside source.

The cumulative impact of the various scholarships appeared to be having a positive if modest influence upon the relations between the two countries, which might have developed into stronger ties if political and military events had not lead to their abrupt end.

No description of Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia would be complete without at least mentioning her special contributions, for instance, the supply of special high-quality hybrid seeds for sorghum and ground-nuts and the donation of building materials and a small tractor, mostly for the Prek Thnot pilot-farm. The seeds and building materials contributed essentially to the positive results of the diversification efforts and to the improvement of crop quality. Within the framework of humanitarian aid, between 1970 and 1975 drugs destined for civil and military hospitals were sent. And on at least two occasions, cash grants were donated.²⁵ Compared to the grants-in-aid of some Western nations,

such as the Federal Republic of Germany, Israel's contribution was insignificant. Nevertheless, it represented a gesture of solidarity by the Government and people of Israel - conscious of the Jewish people's holocaust - to the suffering and helpless Khmer people and to war-torn Cambodia. All in all the amounts involved in material and humanitarian aid were modest, but measured against the unsolved social problems in Israel and the fact that Israel herself was receiving very considerable foreign aid, they acquired a certain importance.

The question cannot be avoided: Was Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia -- as well as to many other Third World countries -- wholly or partially an instrument to further political aims? According to Israel's official spokesmen, no conditions were attached to her technical assistance, and indeed, in the Cambodia case no technical assistance accord or protocol was ever signed. Israeli leaders often expressed the view that Israel's positive experiences in development should be shared with other developing nations, in the hope that Israel's ability to provide efficient and useful assistance in economic and social development would result in friendship between Israel and the developing nations of Africa and Asia.²⁶ On the other hand, while the existence of an element of such altruistic and almost messianic motivation in Israel's technical assistance efforts should not be denied, its main intention was to further, in a general way, Israel's political and diplomatic efforts to breach the wall of isolation and animosity surrounding Israel and to halt the world-wide anti-Israeli trend by helping to create a political climate in which it would be difficult or almost impossible for countries receiving aid from Israel to give their whole-hearted political support to the condemnation of both Israel and Zionism

at the U.N., the Organization of African Unity and various non-aligned organizations. In this vein, the "no-strings-attached" concept of technical assistance was more and more frequently questioned and attacked in the Israeli press, with concurrent demands that the funds intended for technical assistance be used to relieve urgent social problems in Israel and that no aid be granted to countries that condemned Israel or Zionism by voting for anti-Israel resolutions or that took publicly a pronounced anti-Israel stand.²⁷

Perhaps, surprisingly, Sihanouk, whose policy towards Israel was not much friendlier than that of most of the non-aligned states, nevertheless allowed the establishment of an Israeli Embassy in Phnom Penh despite Arab opposition and his delegation at the U.N. General Assembly even abstained, in a few instances, from voting for extreme anti-Israel draft resolutions. In addition, Sihanouk did not hesitate to express in public speeches his personal admiration for Israel and to praise her as a shining example for Cambodia. Officials within the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs who favoured continuing technical assistance to Cambodia became more and more disappointed when, even under the Khmer Republic whose existence depended entirely on U.S. economic and military support there was a trend, from 1973 onwards, to abandoning Cambodia's friendly or at least even-handed policy towards Israel, despite Israel's maintenance of full relations with the Khmer Republic and vote in favour of the Republic keeping Cambodia's seat at the U.N.

In conclusion, from a purely political viewpoint, Israel's policy of technical assistance to Cambodia must be considered a painful failure and a bitter disappointment for Israel. Nonetheless, Israeli policy makers

may be slightly consoled by the fact that the assistance program in general, and several projects in particular, were successful and had encouraging practical and beneficial results: notably the Prek Thnot pilot-farm which succeeded during a few years in diversification and improving to some extent agricultural production in Cambodia.²⁸

Israel's venture in Cambodia taught a valuable lesson to Israel's policy makers: Any future request by a Third World country for technical assistance, would certainly be weighed in the light of the vast experience gained during Israel's years of efforts in Cambodia. That a positive response on Israel's part would entail her insistence upon some measure of contractually based linkage between political relations and technical assistance seems a self-evident condition sine qua non.

1. Israel's technical assistance started in a piecemeal fashion: in 1955 in Burma, in 1956 in Ghana, which at the time was still a British Colony. Only in 1958 was MASHAV, a Hebrew acronym for Division of International Cooperation, formally established by the foreign minister at the time, Golda Meir.. MASHAV transformed the sporadic efforts into a planned and budgeted government project within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When the British and French colonies became independent in the early 1960s, Israel's technical assistance programme expanded rapidly, together with the establishment of diplomatic relations. Robert Slater, "Israel's aide to developing nations," ^(1973, p. 4) estimates that during the fifteen-year period 1958-1973 the Israeli technical assistance programme reached 80 countries, that about 4000 experts served abroad and that about 15,000 trainees came to Israel. In 1966, the year before the Six-Day War, 640 Israeli experts served abroad and 1749 trainees studied in Israel (see Leopold Laufer, "Israel and the Third World", Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 87, No. 4, Dec. 1972, p. 620). Although the figures decreased slightly, after the Six-Day War, in 1972 Israel was still granting technical assistance to 69 developing countries (Israel Government Yearbook 1972, pp. 124-139).
2. In Israel, some kind of messianic zeal was felt. David Ben-Gurion, for instance, spoke about "Israel's mission to the world", or to her being "a light to peoples of the world".
3. In most cases, bilateral co-operation agreements were signed between Israel and the country receiving assistance; however, these treaties contained no political clauses. In all, 33 such agreements were signed, but only two were with Asian countries: the Philippines (16 March 1964) and Thailand (19 August 1966).

4. Israel accorded official recognition to Cambodia on 13 February 1955. Diplomatic relations were established only in 1960, when the first non-resident Israeli ambassador to Phnom Penh received the agreement of the Cambodian government.

5. Formally, the beginning of Israel's technical assistance to Cambodia began on 14 June 1965, when Deputy Prime Minister Son Sann asked Israeli Ambassador Meshulam M. Varon to place three senior economics experts at the disposal of Cambodian ministers. In actuality, there had been earlier contacts: In 1962 an Israeli mission visited Cambodia; on 15 July 1963 a group of irrigation experts proposed the establishment of an experimental agricultural research station in the Prek Thnot region to the Cambodian Minister of Agriculture, Chau Seng, who invited "the competent authorities" in Israel to prepare a detailed program. On 24 January 1964, the Secretary of the Mekong Committee, the executive body of ECAFE, authorized two Israeli agricultural experts to establish the station. The first resident Israeli experts started their work at the station only in mid-1965.

6. For Sihanouk's views on technical assistance and foreign aid, see Le Sangkum, August 1969, "Des aides étrangères ou la coopération entre le Cambodge et les pays développés".

7. For instance, the Soviet Union helped to construct the railroad line from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville (later named Kompong Som) and the Chinese participated in the construction of a glass factory.

8. At a dinner in honour of visiting Foreign Minister Golda Meir in 1962, Sihanouk proposed the following toast:

Le Cambodge a suivi avec beaucoup d'admiration les efforts du peuple Israélien pour mettre son pays en valeur et a salué les brillants résultats obtenus dans des conditions particulièrement difficiles. Vos pionniers ont donné réellement au monde l'exemple de ce que peut réaliser un peuple qui est mu par l'enthousiasme et la foi en son destin. J'ai la conviction que des pays comme le notre...ont beaucoup à apprendre des expériences Israéliennes...

The official bulletin, AKP (no. 5973, 16 July 1967), quotes Sihanouk as having said on the occasion of "arbour day":

En Israël il n'y avait que du sable inculte et la pluie ne tombait que rarement. C'est précisément en raison de cette adversité affligeante que les colons juifs ont droit aux plus grands mérites, car ils ont fait de leurs terres condamnées des terres de cultures, des jardins...

Ambassador Raphael Benshalom quotes Sihanouk as having said at a closed meeting of senior officials (letter No. 1073, 24 December 1968): le Cambodge doit imiter Israël comme exemple dans ses efforts pour améliorer la situation économique...

9. According to Ambassador Varon (letter No. 129, 14 June 1965, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem): "... he [SON SANN] informed me of Sihanouk's advice to his ministers: 'qu'il fallait apprendre de l'expérience d'Israël dans les domaines de l'irrigation, la coopération, des recherches géologiques, l'exploitation industrielle des minéraux...'"

10. During the planning stage, 1962-1966, the following semi-public Israeli companies were involved: (1) AGRIDEV (2) WERED -- Water Resources Development International Ltd., but later, (3) TAHAL (Tahal Consulting Engineers, Ltd.) was active in Cambodia until 1975. TAHAL served as sub-contractor to ECAFE and the Mekong Committee. During its five years of activity in Cambodia (1970-1975), TAHAL employed 23 experts and technicians, mostly for short assignments, who were directed by a "team head" resident in Phnom Penh.
11. The official name of the project, both in French and in English, varied in different official documents. At the early stage, the quasi-official French name was "Station d'expérimentation et de vulgarisation de la région du Prek Thnot". The following cumbersome name also appeared in some Israeli publications: "The Prek Thnot farm for field and vegetable crops with demonstration plots established in villages and furtherance of agricultural extension services". Later, such names as "Centre régional d'expérimentation et de recherches dans le zone du barrage du Prek Thnot" and "Ferme Expérimentale du Réseau Prek Thnot" could be found in official Khmer documents. In practice, however, the project was referred to by the shorter term ferme pilote (pilot-farm).
12. From 1965 to 1975, 14 Israeli experts were employed at the pilot-farm, generally for two to three years. Their salaries were paid by Israel. For details, see Avimor, Shimon, L'Histoire contemporaine du Cambodge (1949-1975) sous une perspective Israélienne, 1982, p. 527.
13. Nevertheless, this report, prepared by WERED, established the main purposes of the project: (1) to demonstrate the use of modern agricultural methods; (2) to experiment with new crops; (3) to adapt various strains of rice seeds to the soil and climate (4) to propagate effective methods of water use; (5) to train technicians; and (6) to show farmers of the region advantages of applying new agricultural techniques.

14. For a plan of the pilot-farm, see Appendix I, No. 1.
15. The three-member mission headed by the (non-resident) Ambassador to Cambodia, Varon, stayed in Cambodia from 22 November 1965 until 4 December 1965.
16. Agricultural products either introduced or propagated by the Israeli team, in many cases with the help of high-quality seeds supplied free of charge by Israel, included French beans, tomatoes, eggplant, onions, cauliflower, cabbage, cucumbers, peas, ground nuts, cotton, garlic, maize, and especially sorghum.
17. Most of the administrative difficulties were rooted in the triangular set-up of authority:
 - (1) the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture;
 - (2) the Israeli authorities connected with the project: MASHAV, the division for international Cooperation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, represented in Phnom Penh since 1967 by the Embassy, and the Department of Foreign Technical Assistance within the Ministry of Agriculture in Rehovot; and
 - (3) the U.N. representative in Phnom Penh and ECAFE with its regional office in Bangkok and the Committee of the Mekong, also in Bangkok, but with a branch office in Phnom Penh headed by a Cambodian.
18. For a list of these villages, see Avimor, op. cit., 412-413.
19. The first attack on the Prek Thnot project took place on 25 September 1971, causing serious damage to the dam under construction.
20. See Avimor, op. cit., pp. 515-522.
21. Two promising projects which did not go beyond the preparatory stages include:
 - (1) The project of mineral research. An Israeli geologist, A. Zohar, spent a few weeks in Cambodia and submitted an encouraging report: "Compte rendu d'une enquête géologique". Although the report raised high expectations on the Khmer side, Israel did not make a commitment because the responsible officials

in MASHAV were convinced that the budget required for even partial implementation of the suggestions would exceed the available resources and the possibilities of finding the necessary investment from outside sources were slight.

- (2) The Cambodian proposal to the Israel National Navigation Company ZIM to establish a Cambodian merchant marine. This project did not materialize because ZIM (partially owned by the Israel Government) refused to enter into a partnership with Cambodia.

22. Avimor, op. cit., pp. 527-529, lists 56 experts and advisors: 18 connected with the Prek Thnot pilot farm; 15 within the framework of bilateral assistance, mostly sent by MASHAV; 23 experts, mostly short term, sent by TAHAL for irrigation work. However, because no central records were kept, the exact number of Israeli experts may well have been between 60 and 65. Israeli experts could generally be divided into three groups: (1) highly qualified senior advisors or counsellors, usually attached directly to ministers or heads of special government agencies; (2) experts or researchers, working in the field, usually under long-term contracts, (e.g., the 18 experts employed at the pilot-farm) ; (3) short-term experts, including members of study missions, or experts charged with preparing feasibility reports.

23. This figure does not include the following high level Cambodian study missions that visited Israel: (1) "Mission d'études", 1959, led by Phoc Theun, 5 members, (2) "Mission d'études", 1964, led by Meach Konn, 4 members, and (3) "Mission de bonne volonté", 1971, led by Pho Proeung, 15 members.

24. The main institutions were the following (in brackets the number of Cambodian trainees):

- (1) The Afro-Asian Institute, Tel-Aviv: co-operative and trade union problems (29)
- (2) Ministry of Agriculture, Tel-Aviv: agricultural extension methods, intensive cattle and poultry raising, irrigation, agricultural credit, etc (23)

(3) International Community Centre, M.C.T.C., Haifa: community development, integration of women (7)

(4) Centre of Rural Management, Ministry of Agriculture, Rehovot: rural development (4)

(5) Various other institutions or firms (33).

25. The most important cash donation was in 1973, when the Government of Israel contributed to Prime Minister Long Beret's special relief fund for the inhabitants of the Beng Salang quarter, which was totally destroyed by fire-bombs. Israel's humanitarian and material aid can be reasonably estimated at \$60,000 to \$80,000.

26. Leopold Laufer, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

27. The case of Uganda's Idi Amin, who received important technical assistance and other aid from Israel but then became one of the most outspoken enemies of Israel, serves as the main argument of opponents to unconditional technical assistance. Another example is politically anti-Israel Tanzania: After the 1967 Six-Day War Tanzania requested special courses in agricultural co-operation from Israel. See Leopold Laufer (*op. cit.*, p. 621).

28. Leopold Laufer *Israel and the Developing Countries*, 1967, pp. 75, 87-88) includes the Prek Thnot pilot-farm among the twenty most successful agricultural products undertaken by Israel, only five of which were in Asia.

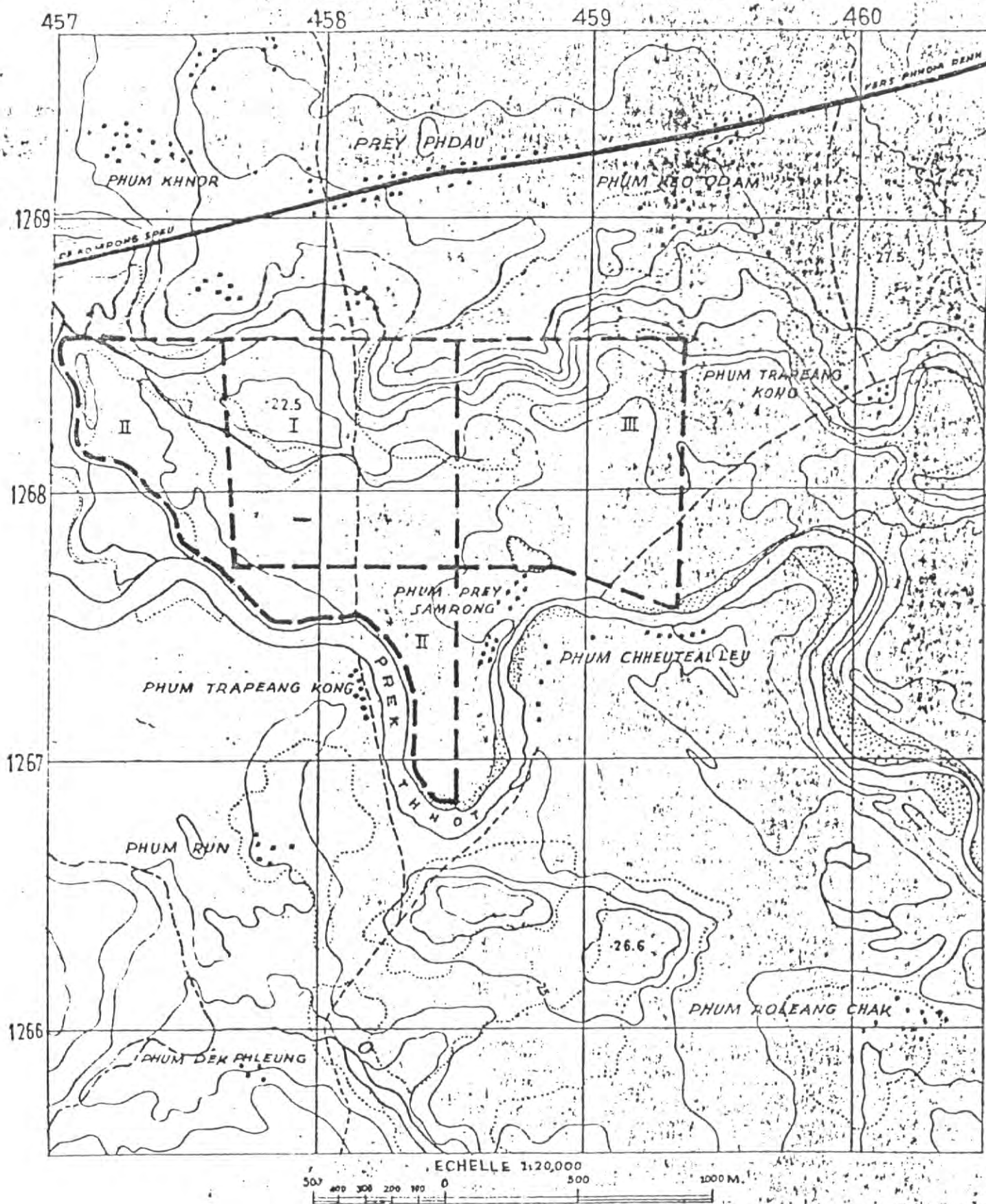
Appendix

- I. Selected Documents
- II. Selected Bibliography

I Selected Documents

- (1) Plan (1:20000) of the "Station d'expérimentation et de vulgarisation, région du Prek Thnot," drawn in January 1967.
- (2) Official demand, 5 July 1965, of Cambodia for technical assistance in prospection and mineral research, including petrol. The demand was made through the Foreign Ministry based on instructions from the Head of State, Prince Noradom Sihanouk.
- (3) Covering letter dated June 6, 1966 for the "Plan détaillé du Centre Pilot agricole proposé pour la région du Prek Thnot", submitted by WERED.
- (4) Letter of thanks (and according a decoration) 6 August 1967, written by Prince Noradom Sihanouk, Head of State, to the Israeli expert Efraim Carmi on the occasion of the end of his (two year) mission.
- (5) Official note of thanks to the Government of Israel, 5 December 1967, from the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture for having supplied 8 kilos of different varieties of ground-nuts and other seeds for use at the pilot-farm of the Prek Thnot.
- (6) Official note of thanks of the Khmer Republic, 16 May 1972, for medical supplies handed to the army on 11 April 1972.
- (7) Letter dated 31 July 1974, from the Cambodian Minister of Finance and Economy, asking for two Israel experts.

REGION DE PREK THNOT



I. TERRE ACHETÉE (100 HA)

II. TERRE À ACHETER

III. RÉGION D'EXPANSION

PHNOM PENH, JANVIER 1965

4/6-1965 AS 7/13 N

14 JUIL 1965 (2)



No. 2100 /DGE/AE/007

Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères du Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge présente ses compliments à l'Ambassade d'Israël et, se référant aux propositions d'aide sur les recherches minières, présentées par Son Excellence Monsieur Max M. VARON à Son Altesse Royale NRODOM SIHANOUK Chef de l'Etat au cours de Sa visite à l'Exposition d'Israël à Phnom-Penh le 7 Juin 1965, a l'honneur de lui faire connaître que le Gouvernement Royal apprécie hautement ces propositions et souhaite obtenir du Gouvernement Israélien une assistance technique portant sur des travaux de prospection et de recherches ci-après :

- Recherche pétrolière,
- Région S.W. du Pays (Terrains primaires situés à l'Est de la Chaîne de l'Eléphant) (10.000 à 12.000 km²),
- Région S.E. du Pays (Province de Mondolkiri) (13.000 km²),
- Zone de la frontière NW : de la cassitérite a été trouvée de l'autre côté de la frontière (2.000 à 3.000 km²),
- Placer alluvionnaire ou éluvionnaire de Bo-Sup-Trup (Or) (10 à 20 km²),
- Région frontière au Nord du Pays en bordure des Dangrek (4.000 km²),
- Recherches d'éventuelles concentrations de phosphorites en aval des gisements actuellement connus (500 km²).

Le Ministère serait très reconnaissant à l'Ambassade si elle voulait bien porter ce qui précède à la connaissance de son Gouvernement.

En remerciant l'Ambassade d'Israël de son aimable obligeance,

Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères saisit cette occasion pour lui renouveler l'assurance de sa haute considération ./-

PHNOM-PENH, le 5 Juillet 1965

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BASSADE D'ISRAEL
à





WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (INTERNATIONAL) LTD.

3
9, LINCOLN STR
TEL-AVIV, ISRAEL
P. O. B. 20096
TELEPHONE : 36211
CABLE ADDRESS: WATERDEV

our Rel.
our Rel.

Date le 15 Juin, 1966

Son Excellence,
Monsieur Chuon Saodi,
Secrétaire d'Etat
à l'Agriculture,
Ministère de l'Agriculture,
Royaume du Cambodge,
Phnom - Penh

Excellence,

Nous avons l'honneur de vous présenter, ci-joint, le Plan Détaillé du Centre Pilote Agricole proposé pour la région du Prek Thnot. Ce projet a été élaboré conformément au Plan d'Opération E/CN.11/WRD/MKG/L.125 Rev.1 signé le 25 septembre 1964.

L'idée de créer un centre de ce genre est née au cours de la préparation du Projet d'Irrigation du Prek Thnot qui fut également confiée à nos planificateurs. Ceux-ci, ainsi que les organismes intéressés du gouvernement cambodgien, sont rapidement arrivés à la conclusion que l'établissement d'un Centre Pilote de Démonstration et d'Expérimentation Agricole était nécessaire pour permettre d'étudier et de déterminer quelles sont les cultures les plus appropriées et les plus rentables pour la région.

Dans le Projet d'Irrigation - par manque de données expérimentales concernant les cultures à recommander pour l'avenir - nos planificateurs ont dû se contenter de mentionner certaines cultures types en attendant que des renseignements plus précis puissent être obtenus suite aux essais qui seront faits dans le Centre Pilote dont le plan est soumis ci-après. Le problème ne se limite toutefois pas uniquement à l'étude des cultures convenant le mieux pour la région, mais il est à prévoir également qu'après l'installation du réseau d'irrigation sur une aussi grande étendue des modifications sensibles se produiront dans tous les aspects de la vie agricole. Il est donc indispensable de préparer les outils qui permettront aux agriculteurs de s'adapter à ces innovations.

C'est pourquoi il a été décidé-avec votre approbation -qu'il était souhaitable de dresser le plan d'un Centre polyvalent susceptible de fournir les réponses à plusieurs autres questions primordiales à prendre en considération dans le développement général de la région. Le plan du Centre prévoit donc qu'il assurera les fonctions suivantes: recherche agricole, services de démonstration et de vulgarisation, institut de formation de cadres et de spécialistes professionnels, services conseils pour les organisations des agriculteurs dans le domaine de l'irrigation, la mécanisation, la commercialisation des produits, service d'approvisionnement en semences de reproduction sélectionnées, et éventuellement même un service administratif agricole coordinateur pour toute la région.

Il se peut que dans les conditions actuelles, le plan proposé paraisse quelque peu ambitieux, mais il faut y voir un programme à longue échéance dont l'exécution pourra se faire par étapes successives conformément aux possibilités financières et selon le rythme de développement, tout en aspirant à atteindre le but lointain qui a été fixé.

Il est très probable qu'en vertu de l'expérience qui sera acquise aux cours des divers stades de développement certains changements devront être apportés au plan par la suite.

Bien que le plan ait été dressé pour un terrain défini, nous voudrions suggérer qu'avant qu'une décision définitive soit prise concernant l'emplacement exact du centre la question soit réexaminée soigneusement afin de s'assurer que le terrain est, effectivement, approprié à ce genre d'entreprise et qu'il est suffisamment protégé contre les inondations.

Nous tenons à exprimer nos vifs remerciements à tous ceux qui nous ont aidé dans l'exécution de notre travail et ont bien voulu nous accorder leurs conseils et leur appui.

Nous vous prions de croire, Excellence, à l'assurance de notre très haute considération.

A. Sprinzak
Directeur

SAMDECH PREAH
NORODOM SIHANOUK LPAYUVAREACH
CHEF DE L'ETAT DU CAMBODGE

PHNOM PENH, le 6 Août 1957

N° 530/SPU

Monsieur,

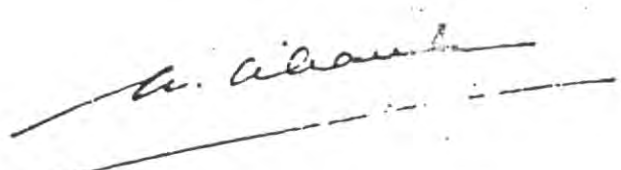
J'ai été très touché par la lettre que vous avez bien voulu m'adresser au terme de votre mission au Cambodge et vous en exprime mes vifs remerciements. Qu'il me soit permis de vous assurer de notre gratitude pour vos efforts et votre dévouement dans vos activités au service de l'agriculture cambodgienne.

Je tiens en particulier à vous adresser mes chaleureuses félicitations pour les brillants résultats qui couronnent vos travaux à Præk Thnot et confirment l'excellence des techniques agricoles israéliennes.

En témoignage de notre reconnaissance je suis heureux de vous conférer la médaille de Chevalier de l'Ordre Royal du Cambodge. Permettez-moi enfin de vous exprimer mes vœux les meilleurs de bonheur pour vous-même et votre famille et de vous souhaiter de nouveaux succès dans vos prochaines missions.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'assurance de ma haute considération ./-

Monsieur Efraïm CARMI
Chef de l'équipe israélienne
pour la Station expérimentale
de Præk Thnot.


NORODOM SIHANOUK

5

Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères du Gouvernement Royal du Cambodge présente ses compliments à l'Ambassade d'Israël à Phnom-Penh et, se référant à la note de l'Ambassade No.349/AI, a l'honneur de la prier de bien vouloir transmettre au Ministère de l'Agriculture d'Israël les vifs remerciements du Département de l'Agriculture du Gouvernement Royal pour son aimable envoi de 8 Kgs. de différentes variétés de semence d'arachide et de petit pois destinés aux travaux d'essai de la saison sèche à la station expérimentale du Préa Thnot.

Ce généreux don du Gouvernement d'Israël en faveur de l'Agriculture au Cambodge est très apprécié par les Services Cambodgiens de l'Agriculture et contribue à renforcer davantage les relations amicales entre les deux pays.

En remerciant l'Ambassade d'Israël de son aimable coopération, le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères saisit cette occasion pour lui renouveler l'assurance de sa haute considération.

Phnom-Penh, le 5 décembre 1967

AMBASSADE D'ISRAEL
PHNOM-PENH



Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères présente ses compliments à l'Ambassade d'Israël à Phnom-Penh et a l'honneur de la prier de bien vouloir transmettre au Gouvernement d'Israël les vifs remerciements du Gouvernement de la République Khmère pour l'importante aide en matériels techniques sanitaires qui a été remise aux Forces Armées Nationales Khmères le 11 avril 1972 par les très bons soins de l'Ambassade.

Ces matériels en quantité si importante sont hautement appréciés par les autorités khmères compétentes pour leur qualité, et auront pour effet non seulement de relever la force morale de nos militaires, en particulier, ceux qui sont blessés, mais également de concrétiser le ferme soutien du Gouvernement d'Israël dans la lutte actuelle du peuple khmer pour défendre sa juste cause, et de resserrer davantage les liens d'amitié entre nos deux pays.

Le Ministère des Affaires Etrangères saisit cette occasion pour renouveler à l'Ambassade l'assurance de sa haute considération./-

Phnom-Penh, le 16 mai 1972

AMBAassade D'ISRAEL
PHNOM-PENH



Phnom-Penh, le 31 JUILLET 1974

LE MINISTRE DES FINANCES, DU PLAN ET DE
L'ECONOMIE (MINPLAN)

SON EXCELLENCE MONSIEUR L'AMBASSADEUR D'ISRAEL

à PHNOM-PENH

Excellence,

J'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que, en vue de résoudre le problème de pénurie des produits alimentaires que connaît la République Khmère dans les circonstances difficiles actuelles, le Gouvernement a lancé un programme d'urgence de productions vivrières visant à développer rapidement les diverses cultures, l'élevage et la pisciculture, dans les zones environnant la capitale ainsi que dans les provinces.

Je vous serai reconnaissant de bien vouloir examiner la possibilité d'intervenir auprès de votre Gouvernement pour qu'une assistance technique soit accordée à la République Khmère en vue d'aider les techniques khmers à réaliser le programme de productions vivrières susmentionné. Il est demandé, à ce sujet, le concours de deux experts israéliens, à savoir :

- un expert en productions vivrières chargé d'assister le Comité de Production et des services techniques du Ministère de l'Agriculture,

- et un expert-spécialiste en crédit agricole qui assistera la Banque Agricole Paysanne dont les concours financiers à accorder aux producteurs doivent être de plus en plus importants et efficaces..

Vous voudriez trouver ci-joint le rapport d'avancement des travaux du Comité de Production.

Veuillez agréer, Excellence, l'assurance de ma très haute considération ./-



KHY TAING LIM

Dans le cadre du programme de production, le Comité de Production va travailler étroitement avec la Municipalité de Phnom-Penh et les organismes humanitaires. Un plan de travail est déjà es-

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