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OPERATION TOTAL VICTORY

by Pacific Studies Center



The military situation in Indochina is escalating rapidly. Nixon's "limited" invasion of Cambodia may be that for American troops, but South Vietnamese troops are already on their way to Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital. There they are to aid the Lon Nol government in suppressing an internal insurgency (which is supported by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese). Even the May 11 Time understands that "the chief purpose of the intervention in Cambodia was to shore up the Lon Nol government rather than to merely "clean out" the communist sanctuaries along the border. Several thousand U.S. Green Beret-trained Khmers from the South Vietnamese army have already been flown in to Phnom Penh to fight with the Cambodian army. And, according to the New York Times, May 9, "authoritative Cambodian sources said that South Vietnamese troops in the Parrot's Beak area were expected to come to the aid of the capital."

The Cambodian invasion, which is the largest single operation of the war, involving now nearly 50,000 allied troops, has added more fuel to revolutionary fires in Cambodia, as Cambodian people and towns are destroyed. Nixon's "limited action," now increases the likelihood that all of Cambodia will become a "communist sanctuary," unless the U.S. massively backs the right-wing government in Cambodia. (The South Vietnamese have made it clear that they are not bound by Nixon's timetable and do not expect to leave by June 30.) In other words, Nixon has "Vietnamized" Cambodia.

Under Nixon, the CIA war in Laos -- as old as the war in Vietnam -- has also been escalated. Bombing raids over Laos have been increased from a few thousand sorties per month before Nixon was elected, to 20,000 sorties per month by January, 1970. (Far Eastern Economic Review,

*"The expeditions to destroy North Viet Nam's military sanctuaries in Cambodia were officially tagged by the Army Operation Total Victory No. 42 and No. 43. Operations Total Victory Nos. 1 through 41 had taken place over the past 18 months -- with results the country knew only too well." -- Time

January 1, 1970) This massive bombing is directed against the Pathet Lao, an indigenous revolutionary movement that controls two-thirds of the territory of Laos, governing a population of at most one million people. The Pathet Lao peasants are able to farm only at night, and they are forced to live in caves because of the continuous bombing which long ago destroyed their villages.

While Nixon has tried to make the American people believe that his staggered troop withdrawals are de-escalating the war, and that a compromise negotiated settlement is possible, the reality is quite different. Negotiated compromise is impossible because the main point of conflict between the U.S. and the Viet Cong is over whether the U.S. will maintain a military presence in Vietnam. Either the U.S. will win the war, remain in Vietnam, Laos, and now

"As he briefed White House staffers last week, Henry Kissinger announced with a straight face that the Cambodians had 'sent in a request for enough stuff to equip an army of 200,000. We asked them to take it back and reconsider,' Kissinger went on, 'and then they came in with a request for enough stuff to equip an army of 400,000.'" Time May 1970

Cambodia, and control Indochina militarily, or it will lose the war and be forced to withdraw. No compromise is possible, and Nixon knows it.

Nixon's April 30 speech, and again his May 8 press conference, were clear statements of his intention to seek a military victory in Indochina. But political expediency has required that Nixon pacify the American public by bringing some of the troops home. The strategy he has adopted to achieve both goals is that of "forced urbanization" -- the substantive side of "Vietnamization." The Viet Cong's 1968 Tet offensive demonstrated that Johnson's program of pacification in the countryside was a complete failure. It became clear that the U.S. could not control the South Vietnamese population without the constant presence of occupation forces in the country's thousands of villages. This was impossible because of the huge number of troops required.

Forced Urbanization

Since the French war in Indochina, the alternative to occupation of the countryside has been "forced urbanization," and this is the Nixon strategy. Noam Chomsky has explained this strategy:







It is important to understand that the massacre of the rural population of Vietnam and their forced evacuation is not an accidental by-product of the war. Rather it is of the very essence of American strategy. The theory behind it has been explained with great clarity and explicitness, for example by Professor Samuel Huntington, Chairman of the Government Department at Harvard ... He explains that the Viet Cong is "a powerful force which cannot be dislodged from its constituency so long as the constituency continues to exist." The conclusion is obvious, and he does not shrink from it. We can ensure that the constituency ceases to exist by "direct application of mechanical and conventional power ... on such a massive scale as to produce a massive migration from countryside to city," where the Viet Cong constituency -- the rural population -- can, it is hoped, be controlled in refugee camps and suburban slums around Saigon ... Technically, the process is known as "urbanization" or "modernization." (New York Review of Books, January 1, 1970)

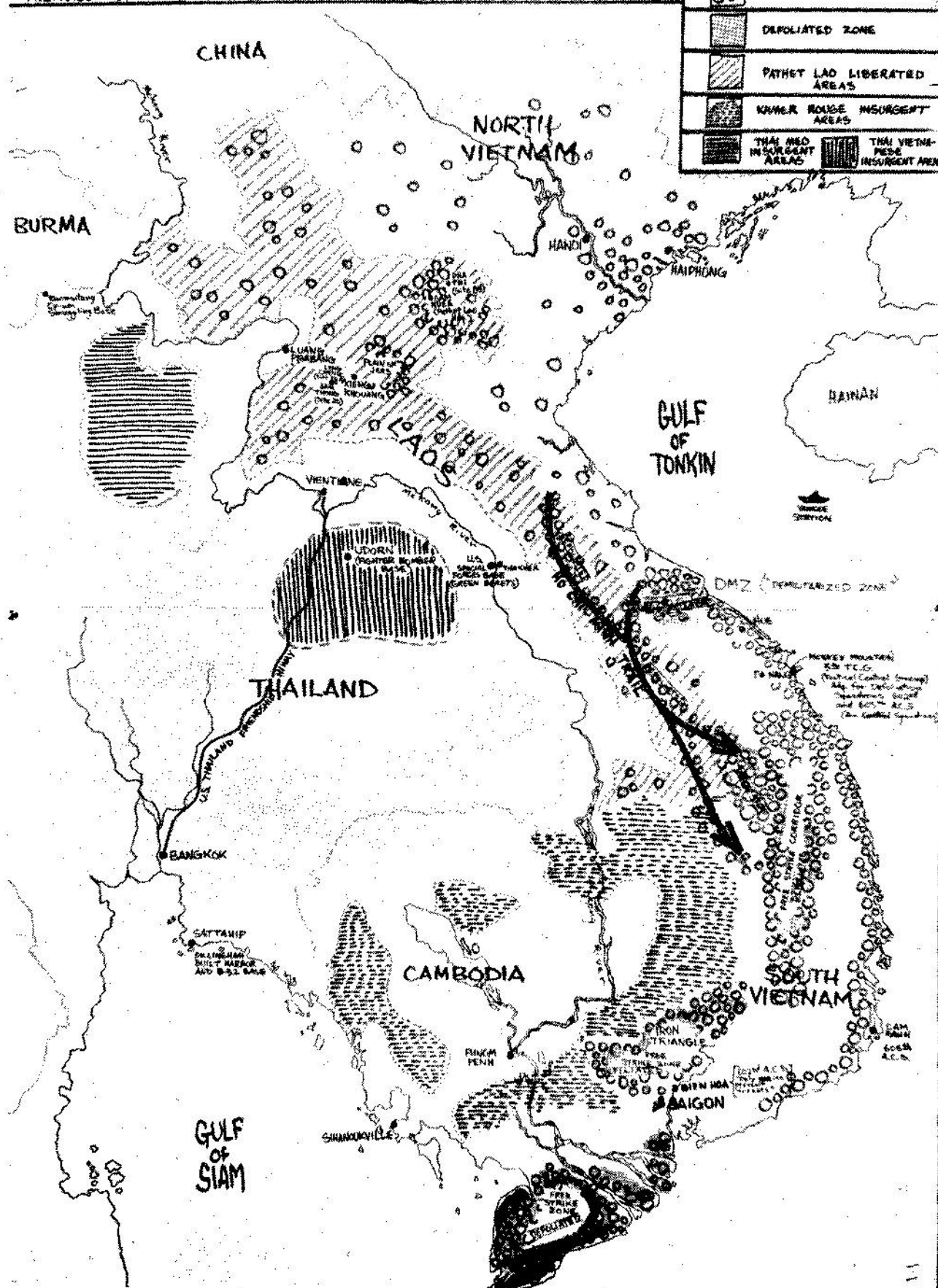
In other words, the answer to peoples' war is to eliminate the people. The means to accomplish this end are the "modernizing instruments" of bombs and artillery. The U.S. can thus escalate the war by bombing the countryside, while pulling out some U.S. troops. (Plans are to maintain an American force of 200,000 to 300,000 men in Vietnam indefinitely, as well as to continue or escalate the air war indefinitely.) The policy of "urbanization" has produced 700,000 refugees in Laos out of a total population of 2.5-3 million.

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LEGEND

	CRATERIZED ZONE
	DEPOLLATED ZONE
	PATHET LAO LIBERATED AREAS
	KHAMMOUNA ROUGE INSURGENT AREAS
	THAI MEO INSURGENT AREAS
	THAI VIET- NA- PEUD INSURGENT AREAS



The cities can obviously be held with fewer American troops than occupation of the countryside required. But that is not the only "advantage" of "urbanization": during the Tet offensive, the U.S. demonstrated its willingness to destroy the cities as well as the countryside, and if further insurrection were to break out in the cities, it is likely that this "technique" would be employed again.

End of Neutrality

While Vietnam and Laos were becoming a depopulated land of craters, Prince Sihanouk had been able to keep Cambodia from suffering the same fate. Sihanouk tolerated Viet Cong and North Vietnamese sanctuaries on the eastern border of Cambodia and did not interfere with shipments of supplies to them (reportedly his wife Monique was one of the chief profiteers from this trade). Because the U.S. wanted to eliminate the sanctuaries and cut off the supplies, they apparently backed General Lon Nol's right-wing, pro-American coup which ousted Sihanouk.

Although it is more likely that the Pentagon was behind this coup, the CIA has backed previous attempted coups in 1959, 1962, and 1966. And since the late '50's, the CIA (and its military arm, the U.S. Special Forces or 'Green Berets') has armed and organized -- in Vietnam and in Thailand -- the Khmer Serei (or "Free Khmer"), a right-wing guerilla force. The "Free Khmer" were to overthrow Sihanouk and to fight against the Vietnamese communists in South Vietnam. (Le Monde, 2 May 1970). Since the coup the U.S. has sent several thousand of these Cambodian mercenaries to Phnom Penh to aid the disintegrating Cambodian army. If these units are integrated into the Cambodian army, they will more than double its numbers, and will be the only combat-experienced units.

The ouster of Sihanouk has inflamed a previously low-key civil war in Cambodia, which poses an immediate threat to the pro-American regime. Left-wing guerilla forces, the Khmer Rouge ("Red Cambodians"), which the May 9 New York Times describes as "the Cambodian equivalent of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam and the Pathet Lao in Laos," have joined

Jacques Decornoy quotes an American diplomat in Vientiane (the capital of Laos) who says: "To make progress in this country, it is necessary to level everything." And Decornoy comments: "The Americans accuse the North Vietnamese of intervening militarily in the country, but it is they who talk of reducing Laos to zero, while the Pathet Lao exalts the national culture and national independence." Le Monde, July 1968

with pro-Sihanouk peasants and other non-communist forces in the National United Front of Kampuchea (Cambodia), headed by Sihanouk. The NUF includes many of the half-million ethnic Vietnamese, who have lived in the country for generations, and who have been sympathetic to the Viet Cong. The NUF is apparently getting aid and cadres from the Viet Cong, and reporters have seen many Khmers and Viet Cong fighting side by side in Eastern Cambodia. (Le Monde, 3-4 May). Unlike the U.S. and South Vietnamese troops who have looted and destroyed villages, the April 2 Le Monde reports peasants saying that the guerillas "do not touch anything. They never levy taxes. When they want something, they buy it."

Most of the American news media has called the uprising a North Vietnamese invasion, but it is in fact an indigenous uprising of Cambodians, who now control at least three key provinces and partially control five others. The United Front Army has been going through villages arming and organizing the peasants to fight the Lon Nol (and now Allied) forces. But the Lon Nol regime, in bringing in the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces, will have a massive military machine with which to attempt to exterminate the popular forces.

General Lon Nol has as little support among Cambodians as Thieu and Ky do among South Vietnamese. He has murdered at least 3500 Vietnamese civilians so far, and according to the May 9 New York Times, there are at least 20,000 Vietnamese residents of Phnom Penh in

Ecocide in Southeast Asia

Cambodia

- June '69: Cambodia government complains that defoliants used in Vietnam affecting its land - U.S. State Department claims that raids go no closer than 3 miles of the border - study groups sent in to investigate - New York Times
- January '70: found that the use of the herbicide "orange" (a mixture of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T) damaged 173,000 rubber trees and 38,300 acres in eastern Cambodia. The Kompong Cham province of Cambodia along the border of South Vietnam suffered almost total destruction of food crops. Damage to the rubber trees was placed at \$11 million. Animals became ill, birds paralyzed and people, particularly infants, suffered diarrhea and digestive problems.

South Vietnam

- 3,900 square miles completely destroyed by bombings and herbicides, 6.25% of total land area. (conservative estimate) - NYT, Dec. 6, '69
- 285,000 South Vietnamese contaminated by herbicides - NYT, Jan. 21, '70
- Last November, the Nixon Administration halted usage of "2,4,5-T", a herbicide shown to produce birth defects in mice. However, it was stressed that use of tear gas and other defoliants would continue. - NYT, Nov., '69
- 50,000 tons of herbicides dropped on South Vietnam. - NYT, Dec. 6, '69
- B-52 raids alone have torn 3.5 million craters - 45 feet in diameter, 30 feet deep. These holes fill with water to become breeding areas for malarial mosquitos and other insects. - The Nation, April 21, '69
- 4 million people, as of May, 1968, have fled native homes. This is 1/3 of the rural population and 1/4 of the total population. 80% fled because of the bombing. (conservative estimate) - Report of the Subcommittee to Investigate Problems Connected with Refugees and Escapees, May 9, 1968.
- Saigon has become the world's most crowded city, with an average of 148 persons per acre - (compared to Tokyo's 63 persons per acre). Density rates are as high as 830 per acre. - Vietnam Guardian, March 22, '69
- U.S. spent \$100 million on herbicides in '67-'68. - NYT

North Vietnam and the Ho Chi Minh Trail

- 100,000 B-52 missions alone, from February '65 to August '68, over North Vietnam - average carry, 7 tons of bombs. - official Pentagon figures
- January '68: U.S. Air Force reports 250 planes daily to attack the trail - NYT
- November '68: U.S. announces plans to triple the level of bombing along the trail - NYT

Laos

- September '68: 3,000 sorties (bombing raids) per month
- December '68: 12,000 sorties per month
- January '70: 20,000 sorties per month - Far Eastern Economic Review, Jan. 1, '70
- 700,000 Laotians driven from native homes into relocation areas over the past five years.
- in the 2/3 of the land area of Laos, the area controlled by the Pathet Lao, almost all of the people are forced to live in caves because of the bombing.

detention camps. Terror and racism have apparently failed to win the regime support in the countryside, but it is unclear at this point on which side the population of Phnom Penh stands. Clearly Lon Nol fears the pro-Viet Cong sentiments of the Vietnamese (which makes their supposed re-patriation to South Vietnam a grotesque irony, as they will probably be put in concentration camps there by the Saigon regime).

Many of the youth of the 500,000 Chinese Cambodians are Maoists, and probably pro-NUF. But many of the Khmer students were discontented under Sihanouk because he educated far more people than there were jobs. Some of them apparently have supported the Lon Nol regime in the initial stages, but there is also a leftist tradition among the students, and over the past several years many have joined the Khmer Rouge. Lon Nol's main support apparently comes from big businessmen in Phnom Penh, the army, and probably some sectors of the civil service, as well as from the traditional feudal right-wing. But probably most of the Phnom Penh population is just trying to survive and watching from the sidelines. In any case, the Newsweek's May 4 statement that "despite the weapons sent to Lon Nol's government last week, there was little doubt that the communists could capture Phnom Penh and restore Sihanouk if they wanted to," is accurate. Only massive intervention by the U.S. and South Vietnamese can possibly save the regime.

Nixon's Options

As we said in the May 4 version of this pamphlet, Nixon has the option of accepting a red Cambodia, or backing the Lon Nol regime against revolutionary forces, and thus be tied down in another Vietnam. The South Vietnamese march on Phnom Penh indicates that he has chosen the latter option. It seems certain now that the slaughter in Laos and Vietnam will be extended to Cambodia on a similar scale.

The massive allied invasion of Cambodia leaves vulnerable the U.S. troops in South Vietnam. There have already been some heavy attacks by the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in South Vietnam, as we predicted last week. More are likely to follow. It is unclear at this point whether Nixon will resume round-the-clock bombing of North Vietnam, and thus further escalate the war as the situation in Indochina deteriorates for the U.S. Nixon's warning on May 8 that he will not escalate the war step by step, as did Johnson, but rather "all at once," is ominous.

How the various communist forces will react to the American escalations is uncertain. It is widely accepted that the Pathet Lao could completely take over Laos at any time, and last week they took Attapeu, a U.S. base-city on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Southern Laos, and are



"LYNDON, THE WHOLE GENERAL AREA
SEEMS TO ACHE. . . !"

attacking Saravane, a similar base to the north. The major U.S. base in Laos, Long Cheng, is apparently still under siege, and Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese units are reportedly near the royal capital of Luang Prabang in the north. The NUF in Cambodia will probably still be

"One thing is clear: so long as an organized social life can be maintained in South Vietnam, the NLF will be a powerful, probably dominant, force. This is the dilemma which has always plagued American policy, and which has made it impossible for us to permit even the most rudimentary democratic institutions in South Vietnam. For these reasons we have been forced to the solution outlined by Professor Huntington: to crush the people's war, we must eliminate the people." Noam Chomsky New York Review of Books, 1 January 1970.

able to topple Lon Nol if it acts quickly enough before massive U.S. -South Vietnamese aid can be effective. And the Viet Cong may be able to launch another offensive on the scale of Tet.

Politics of Escalation

If the U.S. is willing to continue to escalate its destruction of Indochina in order to protect its economic, military, and political "interests" in Southeast Asia, then the question arises as to what China will do. If China enters the war, then the U.S. is left with two choices. One is to accept an immediate political settlement leading to complete American withdrawal from Indochina (probably unthinkable for Nixon). The other is to attempt to stop the Chinese intervention with either massive use of conventional bombing or strategic use of nuclear weapons. Some in the government would consider this a golden opportunity to "get" China, a strategy based on the dubious assumption that the Soviet Union will not retaliate for attacks against China.

So far the Chinese have stated their support for Sihanouk and the NUF particularly, and the United Front of Indochinese Peoples generally, but have left their options open. If the Chinese say, as they did in Korea, "Go no further," and if the U.S. then continues to destroy Indochina, then a major war will have already begun.

The U.S. cannot and should not win the Indochinese war, and every additional day of U.S. presence in Indochina means more massive destruction. The time to demand immediate withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from Southeast Asia is now.

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THE CONINUING SUCCESS OF THAT WITHDRAWAL PROGRAM...
THIS IS NOT AN INVASION OF CAMBODIA...WE HAVE TAKEN
THIS ACTION NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF EXPANDING THE
WAR INTO CAMBODIA BUT FOR THE PURPOSE OF ENDING THE
WAR IN VIETNAM AND WINNING THE JUST PEACE WE ALL
DESIRE." --RICHARD M. NIXON, THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1970

