

## WHAT'S THE U.S. DOING IN CAMBODIA?

Nixon's statement concerning the United States long standing respect for Cambodian neutrality is pure fiction. In fact, the U. S. has refused to accept Sihanouk's neutralism since the 1954 Geneva Conference and has attempted to overthrow the Sihanouk regime. Beginning in the 1950's, the major instrument of U. S. sponsored subversion has been the Khmer Serai, a Cambodian sect dedicated to the overthrow of the Sihanouk regime, which has been trained and supported by the CIA and U. S. special forces (the activities of this group and U. S. complicity with it has been recently revealed at the trial of a Green Beret officer accused of assassinating one of its members, believed to be a double agent).

In 1965 the U.S. authorized hot pursuit into Cambodia by U.S. forces, but this was merely the formalization of a situation of long standing. During the 1969-1970 session of the UN General Assembly, the Cambodian delegate presented a list of 7000 border violations committed by U.S. Saigon forces between 1962 and the end of 1969, resulting in over 300 Cambodians killed and over 700 wounded.

Predictably, the overthrow of Sihanouk's regime on March 18 was welcomed by the U.S. and Saigon and no problems were raised over recognition. There is evidence to suggest U.S. complicity in the coup; Lieut. General Lon Nol, the new Premier, is pro-American (he is called "pragmatic" by the New York Times). Like the pro-American military dictator in South Vietnam, he fought with the French colonialists against the Vietminh. In 1969, there were large scaled defections of the CIA supported Khmer Serai to the Cambodian Government and they were welcomed into Lon Nol's army. This right wing group seems to have played a role in Lon Nol's coup and in the subsequent attempt to consolidate his regime and the massacre of Vietnamese.

The joint operations of U.S. and South Vietnamese forces into Cambodia, therefore, are the latest and most intense in an escalating process of involvement. Nixon claims that the VC and DRV "sanctuaries" in Cambodia can be quickly "cleared out" to facilitate the progress of Vietnamization and the safe withdrawal of American troops. The more likely result is to provoke further reaction from the NLF and DRV, to worsen the situation in Cambodia necessitating further U.S. involvement to retrieve the situation and an ever widening war with the possibility of Chinese participants.

The invasion of Cambodia is a consistent part of Nixon's policy to trying to win the war, not end it, and evidence of his commitment to a military solution to the conflict. His lack of interest in a negotiated settlement is manifested by his failure to replace Ambassador Lodge with an equal ranking negotiator at the Paris Peace Talks. Nixon's Cambodian policy is a serious escalation of the war which is increasingly sweeping across the entire face of Indochina.

Sources: New York Times  
Le Monde

Authors: Committee of Concerned  
Asian Scholars.