

THIS FILE IS MADE AVAILABLE THROUGH THE DECLASSIFICATION EFFORTS AND RESEARCH OF:

# THE BLACK VAULT

THE BLACK VAULT IS THE LARGEST ONLINE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT / GOVERNMENT RECORD CLEARING HOUSE IN THE WORLD. THE RESEARCH EFFORTS HERE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DECLASSIFICATION OF THOUSANDS OF DOCUMENTS THROUGHOUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, AND ALL CAN BE DOWNLOADED BY VISITING:

[HTTP://WWW.BLACKVAULT.COM](http://www.blackvault.com)

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO FORWARD THIS DOCUMENT TO YOUR FRIENDS, BUT PLEASE KEEP THIS IDENTIFYING IMAGE AT THE TOP OF THE .PDF SO OTHERS CAN DOWNLOAD MORE!

~~TOP SECRET~~

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: MAY 2007

Copy No.

50

PRINCE SIHANOUK AND THE NEW ORDER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

DD/I STAFF STUDY

CIA/RSS

REFERENCE TITLE: ESAU XXVI

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~This document contains classified information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, US Code Title 18, Sections 793, 794, and 798. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States.~~

~~It is to be seen only by US personnel especially indoctrinated and authorized to receive [redacted] information; its security must be maintained in accordance with [redacted]~~

~~No action is to be taken on any [redacted] GENCE which may be contained herein, regardless of the advantages to be gained, unless such action is first approved by the Director of Central Intelligence.~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Off Ser. No. 20 [REDACTED]

**PRINCE SIHANOUK AND THE NEW ORDER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**

This is a working paper of the DD/I Research Staff. It is the first of our papers to deal primarily with a person of interest to the Communists--in this case, Sihanouk of Cambodia--rather than primarily with the affairs of the Communists themselves.

We have had useful reviews of this paper by several officers of OCI and DD/P. In this connection, the writer of this paper, John M. Taylor, finds in Sihanouk's personal and negative attitude toward the United States perhaps a more decisive influence on Cambodia's foreign relations than have some other analysts of Cambodian affairs, who place the greater emphasis on Sihanouk's desire to conform Cambodian policy to his estimate of Southeast Asia's future. The DDI/RS would welcome additional comment, addressed in this instance to the Chief or Deputy Chief of the staff  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

PRINCE SIHANOUK AND THE NEW ORDER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Table of Contents

I.	INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALISM	
	A. King Sihanouk.....	1
	B. Independent Cambodia.....	6
	C. The Geneva Conference.....	10
	D. The Troubles of a King.....	14
	E. Neutralism: Stage I.....	19
II.	MILITANT NEUTRALISM	
	A. Sihanouk Discovers the Bloc.....	23
	B. Foreign Friends and Domestic Enemies.....	28
	C. Righting the Balance.....	34
	D. China Again.....	38
III.	ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS	
	A. Dap Chhuon and Sam Sary.....	46
	B. The Aftermath.....	52
	C. Through Sihanouk's Eyes.....	57
IV.	THE POLITICS OF NEUTRALISM	
	A. The Lonesome Prince.....	63
	B. The Prince Goes Shopping.....	71
	C. Laos: Crabs and Crocodiles.....	74
	D. Belgrade, New York and Bangkok.....	78
V.	GATHERING MOMENTUM	
	A. Neutrality for Vietnam.....	86
	B. "Sarit Is a Pig".....	90
	C. Sihanouk Seeks New Guarantees.....	93
	D. Cambodia and India.....	97
	E. Communion in Peiping.....	101
VI.	THE STORM	
	A. Homecoming Crisis.....	105
	B. Russia and China.....	109
	C. The Two Vietnams.....	112
	D. Whom the Gods Would Destroy.....	115
	E. The Final Breach.....	123
	F. "Alone and Unaided".....	130
	G. Any Kind of Conference.....	134
VII.	CONCLUSION.....	143

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

## PRINCE SIHANOUK AND THE NEW ORDER IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

### Summary

Prince Norodom Sihanouk, onetime King and now Chief of State of Cambodia, is the undisputed father of his country to most Cambodians. He was initially installed as King in 1941, following some sleight of hand by the French, who believed that the 19-year-old Sihanouk would prove a pliable figurehead for their Cambodian protectorate. In the general surge of nationalism following World War II, however, Sihanouk became active in urging independence for Cambodia, contending to the French that only complete independence would undercut the appeal of Communism to his countrymen.

Various French cabinets, viewing Cambodia as part of the Indo-China whole, feared that an "independent" Cambodia would be quickly absorbed by the Viet Minh, and were dubious concerning the quality of Cambodia's political leadership. Early experiments with parliamentary democracy were unpromising, and corruption was endemic among Cambodian officialdom. Politically-aware Cambodians tended to divide in their allegiance, with some supporting Sihanouk and others favoring Son Ngoc Thanh, an ex-premier whose underground independence movement tended to attract leftist and anti-royalist elements.

In June 1952, Sihanouk discharged the incumbent premier and assumed personal power for a period limited to three years. The years of the "royal mandate" were fruitful ones: grants of amnesty depleted the ranks of Thanh's Khmer Issarak (Free Cambodia) adherents, and threats of drastic action by Sihanouk led France to grant full independence in November 1953. Sihanouk succeeded in discrediting the once-popular Son Ngoc Thanh to most of his five million countrymen, and in so doing reinforced the prestige of the throne.

- i -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The Geneva Conference of July 1954, which brought about the partition of Vietnam, was crucial in defining Cambodia's relations with neighboring countries. At Geneva, the Cambodian delegation successfully resisted Communist efforts to establish a regroupment area within Cambodia for the Issarak, and secured acceptance of Cambodia's right to seek foreign military aid. Cambodia agreed not to join any military pact, or to permit foreign bases.

In March 1955, Sihanouk, dissatisfied with the throne as a vehicle for political leadership, abdicated as King in favor of his father. He set about organizing the Sangkum (People's Socialist Community) as his own political movement, and through it urged a program of economic improvement and welfare. In 1955, the United States initiated a program of direct economic and military aid, though on a smaller scale than that provided Thailand and South Vietnam.

Although Cambodia never suffered from internal cleavages comparable to those which afflicted Laos and Vietnam, politics tended to be chaotic. There were few trained administrators, and Sihanouk's vanity was such that he often failed to make effective use of those he had. Capable officials were easily discredited by rivals, who found in Sihanouk a receptive ear to rumors and gossip. The Prince's own behavior was erratic: in the two years following his abdication, he resigned the premiership three times, generally over minor issues which he felt reflected criticism of himself. "Interim" premiers, however, were always approved by Sihanouk and most often were handpicked by him.

At approximately the time of the Bandung conference in April 1955, Sihanouk began to demonstrate a greater interest in foreign affairs. Whereas the previous three years had been devoted to obtaining and consolidating Cambodia's independence, he now sought to participate in international affairs as a neutralist of the Nehru school. Sihanouk emulated Nehru as an apologist for Communist China, and lectured the West on the necessity of coexistence. Sihanouk held off recognizing Peiping

- ii -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

for a time, probably out of reluctance to take any action which might stimulate political activity among overseas Chinese in Cambodia. In February 1956, however, Sihanouk undertook the first of four visits to Communist China which have brought him into close rapport with Chou En-lai.

The ensuing honeymoon with Communist China did not prevent Sihanouk from taking action when necessary against Cambodian leftists, including the small crypto-Communist Pracheachon (People's Party). It encouraged him, however, to take a hard line in his relations with Thailand and South Vietnam, and to spurn any association with SEATO. When, in 1958, Sihanouk was angered by the reception accorded him on a visit to Bangkok, he vented his pique by recognizing Communist China and endorsing Peiping's position on issues such as UN recognition and Taiwan.

As time went on, Sihanouk came increasingly to link the United States with the unfriendly attitude of Thailand and South Vietnam, who distrusted Cambodia's neutrality and with whom Cambodia had outstanding territorial disputes. In February 1959, Sihanouk--warned by the Chinese and French--crushed the abortive Dap Chhuon revolt, which had been financed and supported by Thailand and South Vietnam. The incident occurred at a time when Sihanouk was already seething over alleged protocol slights during a visit to the United States; when interrogation of the plotters uncovered evidence of CIA contact with Chhuon, Sihanouk's anger against the United States grew into active hostility. To this day, Sihanouk's speeches ring with outrage at CIA's alleged support of Dap Chhuon. When, in the wake of the revolt, clandestine transmitters began broadcasting anti-Sihanouk propaganda from the jungle, Sihanouk became convinced that his overthrow was an objective of U.S. policy.

Over a period of years Sihanouk had come to the conclusion--unenthusiastically--that a Communist triumph in Southeast Asia was a foregone conclusion. His thinking on this matter is unclear; although he was clearly impressed by what he had seen of China, it was the DRV which he appeared most to fear. Nevertheless, his attitude

- iii -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

since 1960 has been shaped by two key assumptions: the hostility of the United States, and the inevitability of a Communist victory. On several occasions Sihanouk has argued that there are worse fates than that of a Communist satellite, and he has cited Poland as a nation which has preserved its identity even though absorbed in the bloc. Sihanouk's very real fear that Cambodia may once again be partitioned between Vietnam and Thailand helps explain his fetish on the subject of territorial guarantees, and his willingness to accept satellite status if the Khmer nation can be preserved by no other means.

Cambodia's foreign policy, although overshadowed by Sihanouk's outbursts, has been marked since 1960 by disorganized but persistent efforts to convene an international conference to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity. Although there is reason to believe that Sihanouk genuinely desires such a conference, he has made no effort to make such a conference palatable to the Thais and the South Vietnamese, and the conference may end up a casualty of Sihanouk's declining effectiveness as an international politician. Meanwhile, the support given his proposal by the bloc and by France has evoked effusive expressions of thanks from Sihanouk, while the opposition of the United States, Great Britain, Thailand and South Vietnam has brought forth expressions of hostility and scorn.

Apart from the question of the neutrality conference, there is other evidence that Sihanouk has lost his sure touch in international affairs. In the early 1950s, he had demonstrated considerable acumen in pressuring France into a grant of full independence, and in uniting his countrymen behind the Sangkum. In 1963, however, he succumbed to his emotions in a series of incidents which served to isolate Cambodia further from the Free World.

In January-February 1963, Sihanouk visited both India and Communist China in a mission to attempt to resolve the border dispute. Notwithstanding his pro-Peiping bias, he at first regarded China as legally at fault, a view which prompted him to charge that the West had "incited India to provoke China." In a night-long brainwashing

- iv -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

at Kunming, however, Chou En-lai converted Sihanouk to a position which was, on balance, favorable to China. His doubts concerning China's ultimate objectives regarding Cambodia appear to have been resolved when, as in 1959, his hosts provided him with accurate and timely information concerning opposition elements at home.

In April 1963, the Franco-American monopoly on military assistance to Cambodia was broken when Sihanouk accepted an offer of MIG aircraft and antiaircraft guns from the USSR. Later in the year, he accepted additional equipment from Communist China. On 27 August 1963, Sihanouk broke relations with South Vietnam following a series of border incidents and the beginning of anti-Diem demonstrations by Vietnamese Buddhists. Since Cambodia had broken relations with Thailand the previous fall, Cambodia's relations with its neighbors had reached a point where Sihanouk had reason to fear a new attempt to overthrow him.

A wild month in November-December 1963 was triggered by an ultimatum by Sihanouk on 5 November, in which he warned that he would terminate U.S. aid to Cambodia if Son Ngoc Thanh's Khmer Serei (Free Khmer) broadcasts were not halted by 31 December. On the domestic front, Sihanouk announced the imminent nationalization of all banks, and named one of his sons--then a student in Communist China--as his heir to leadership of the Sangkum. In a 10 November broadcast he underscored the significance of his actions, remarking that "As people sing 'Goodbye, Hawaii,' I say 'Goodbye, Free World,' I must tell them goodbye."

The Khmer Serei radio was silent for more than a week following Sihanouk's 5 November speech and the Prince appeared to have second thoughts concerning the desirability of ending the United States' \$30 million annual assistance. On 16 November, however, he again lost his temper, this time over information provided by two captured Khmer Serei. A public interrogation brought out only that the clandestine transmitters had been provided to the Vietnamese by the Americans, who had turned them over to the Khmer Serei. Sihanouk, however, seized upon this latest "proof" of U.S. perfidy to announce the immediate termination of US aid.

- v -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In a statement of 21 November, Peiping promised "all-out support" for Cambodia in the event of armed invasion by the United States or its "vassals"--a limited commitment which is as far as the Chinese have gone in pledging assistance to their erratic supporter. Sihanouk, however, appeared satisfied with Peiping's reaction, and outwardly unconcerned over Cambodia's unprecedented isolation from the West.

Sihanouk's relations with the West continued to deteriorate. In December, a slur against the late President Kennedy--whom Sihanouk publicly characterized as an enemy of Cambodia--brought a protest from the United States which was rejected. In March 1964, a government-sponsored demonstration against US and British diplomatic missions degenerated into a riot which caused heavy damage. The only Western nation with whom Sihanouk continued to maintain cordial relations was France. In January 1964, a French military mission agreed to provide Cambodia with some of the military equipment no longer available from the United States.

Barring a deterioration in relations between Cambodia and Communist China, prospects for a significant improvement in Cambodian-American relations are not bright. Sihanouk's hatred for the United States is deep-rooted and seemingly implacable. If his commitment to Peiping is less than total, and unsupported by any devotion to Marxist ideology, it nonetheless stems from a firm belief that Cambodia requires a champion and that China is the only one available.

In view of the recent changes of government in Thailand and South Vietnam, some improvement in Cambodia's relations with these countries cannot be ruled out. Any meaningful rapprochement, however, is unlikely in the absence of a change in the balance of power in Southeast Asia. Sihanouk has alluded frequently to the inevitability of a Communist triumph, and he is unlikely to offend Communist China, or even the DRV, in the interest of any transitory improvement in his relations with Thailand or South Vietnam. Moreover, having seen into the future with such clarity, Sihanouk will be most reluctant to recognize a trend favorable to the West should one develop.

- vi -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Should Sihanouk be overthrown, become incapacitated, or die, almost any successor would be more easy for the United States to deal with than the incumbent. The facts of geopolitics, however, are unlikely to dictate any dramatic reversal of Sihanouk's policies. Although a successor regime would probably take a more tolerant view of U.S. aid, it would be no more desirous of antagonizing China than is Sihanouk, and not necessarily more accommodating towards Thailand and South Vietnam. The most reasonable hope is for an eventual return by Cambodia to more of a "true" neutrality.

- vii -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## I. INDEPENDENCE AND NEUTRALISM

### A. King Sihanouk

To French officers in Cambodia, the little protectorate was in 1952 a backwater in the war against the Viet Minh for control of Indo-China. The squalid little capital at Phnom Penh offered neither the comforts of Saigon nor the satisfaction which attended field service against the Viet Minh. Yet to some foreign observers, Cambodia was under a Communist threat only slightly less grave than that in neighboring Vietnam. Although there was little actual fighting in Cambodia, perhaps half of the countryside was loosely controlled by the Viet Minh. In addition to the Viet Minh, several thousand Khmer Issarak (Free Cambodia) partisans inhabited the jungles, demanding complete independence for the protectorate.

In Phnom Penh, if not in the hinterland, the French had things pretty well under control. The Franco-Cambodian treaty of November 8, 1949, had made Cambodia an internally self-governing monarchy, but had left military and foreign affairs largely in the hands of the French. Cambodia's 10,000-man army was under French control, and the accreditation of ambassadors was subject to French concurrence. Yet there was growing pressure for complete independence of France, pressure which the French had succeeded in controlling largely because of a serious schism within the independence movement itself.

On one hand was the reigning monarch, 30-year-old King Norodom Sihanouk Varman. The rules for succession were vague in Cambodia, and Sihanouk had been placed on the throne by the French in 1941 in preference to the heir presumptive, who was said to be independent-minded.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk was felt to be no problem on this score. He liked fast cars, fast horses, and girls, girls, girls. He admired French culture, and was studying humanities at a French-run school in Saigon. Moreover, Sihanouk's father was a Norodom and his mother a Sisowath; the crowning of Prince Sihanouk would reunite the two main royal lines in Cambodia.\*

Information on Sihanouk's early years as King is sketchy, but the first decade appears to have been uneventful. After leaving the Lycee Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon, where he had studied Latin and Greek prior to 1941, the King studied under tutors in Phnom Penh. He was a virtual prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, but was not himself molested. It was during the 1940's that the press portrayed Sihanouk as the playboy King. Sihanouk, who did not marry until 1955, is believed to have fathered at least twelve children by various mistresses; the royal tradition of concubinage was such that all were recognized as princes and princesses of the Cambodian court.

The King's playboy image tended to obscure his very real political strength at home. As King, Sihanouk was automatically a god-figure to the bulk of Cambodia's five million inhabitants. Not only was he the embodiment of Cambodian nationalism, but as head of the Buddhist religion in Cambodia he was a spiritual leader as well. Sihanouk was not one to ignore the sources of his political strength. Royal audiences were held in which any subject could express a grievance to the King. Speechmaking tours took Sihanouk into every corner of the kingdom. To the institutional strength of the Cambodian monarchy.

---

\*When King Norodom died in 1904, the French resident proposed that the crown pass not to his son, but to his brother Sisowath. King Sisowath ruled until 1927, and was succeeded by his son who reigned until 1941. Sihanouk's mother was a daughter of King Sisowath; his father was a grandson of King Norodom.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk brought a large dose of personal charm and a seemingly genuine desire to raise the living standards of his people.

The question of independence, however, was something else again. In March 1945, Sihanouk had followed the example of Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai in seizing upon the collapse of Japan to declare Cambodia "independent." The euphoria in Phnom Penh was shortlived; the French returned in October 1945 and the following year Cambodia became "an autonomous state within the French Union." Independence partisans took to the jungle, and the Khmer Issarak was born. The question of independence left Sihanouk perplexed; in February 1947 he observed,

No one is more desirous of complete independence than I, but we must look facts in the face. We are too poor to support or defend ourselves. We are dependent upon some major power to give us technicians and troops. If not France it would be some other great nation.

No such doubts disturbed Sihanouk's main rival as a Cambodian nationalist, Son Ngoc Thanh. Thanh had been born in 1908 of a Cambodian father and a Vietnamese mother, and had studied in Saigon and Paris. In 1936 he returned to Cambodia to found a nationalist newspaper, but was continuously harassed by the French and in 1942 went into exile, first to Thailand and then to Japan. Following Sihanouk's premature independence declaration in March 1945, Thanh made his way back to Cambodia and--during a brief honeymoon with Sihanouk--was appointed Foreign Minister and subsequently Prime Minister. Thanh was jailed by the French in October, but his prestige was such in Cambodia that he was removed to house arrest in France. His followers took to the jungle.

Thanh was pardoned in 1951, and returned to the newspaper which he had founded 15 years earlier. But he was no longer preeminent among Cambodian nationalists. Sihanouk's always-great prestige had been further enhanced when the French secured the return to Cambodia of three

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

western provinces lost to Thailand during World War II. Moreover, the King had taken up the cause of Cambodian independence--albeit with a great deal more caution than had Thanh many years before. When the French once again closed down his newspaper, Thanh defected to the Khmer Issarak in March 1952.

Thanh's action served to underscore the cleavage among Cambodian nationalists. The King spoke of obtaining independence through negotiations with the French, and cited as evidence of France's good faith the restitution of Cambodia's western territories, and certain constitutional concessions granted in 1949. More militant nationalists, however, felt that there could be no independence so long as the French were fighting in Vietnam, and needed to control access to Cambodia. In contrast to the peasants' blind faith in their King, few among Cambodia's elite shared Sihanouk's optimism. Significantly, the National Assembly was controlled by members of the Democratic Party--whose views roughly paralleled those of Son Ngoc Thanh.

In addition to the question of independence, Cambodian politicians were undecided concerning their own form of internal government. Cambodia's constitution--drafted under French guidance in 1947--had sought to please both royalists and advocates of a strong and "democratic" parliament. All power was declared to emanate from the King and be exercised in his name. It provided for a cabinet responsible to the lower house of the legislature, but allowed the King to appoint the Prime Minister, and to dissolve the Assembly on the advice of the cabinet. Thus the King controlled the cabinet through the Prime Minister and the Assembly through the cabinet; the French had weighted the constitution strongly in favor of the King.

The struggle between Sihanouk and the Assembly quickly led to governmental paralysis. The failure of the Assembly to ratify the Franco-Cambodian treaty of 1949 forced the King to put it into effect through a series of protocols. By the summer of 1952, rumors of a showdown between the King and the Assembly were rife.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

On 3 June, the King delivered a lecture to the Democratic cabinet, rebuking it for its anti-French posture and reportedly warning that if the government did not mend its ways he might have to assume special powers. French officials made no secret that they continued to stand behind the King.

On 15 June, Sihanouk dismissed the Democratic cabinet and personally took over the government. The Assembly continued to meet, but was powerless. Sihanouk insisted that he had done nothing but exercise his royal prerogative in the interest of order, and heatedly denied that he had sold out to the French. The American Legation viewed the events of June as a marriage of convenience between Sihanouk and the French:

It would appear that the French, working directly and also through members of the royal family, convinced the King that they just would not do business with the Democrats. They made no secret of their conviction that the only solution to the French-Cambodian deadlock was the assumption of full powers by the King....The King could not fail to note that the French view envisaged the continued exercise of his kingly powers whereas the Democrat view seemed to take for granted the gradual obsolescence of these powers.

In the six months following Sihanouk's power play, the political situation showed little improvement. Although the King displayed energy in his experiment with one-man government, there was no discernible progress toward his two main objectives: national unity and independence. Moreover, the estrangement between Sihanouk and Son Ngoc Thanh was complete. Thanh had obtained a radio transmitter, and in the summer and fall of 1952 broadcast attacks against the King. In September Sihanouk declared his rival an outlaw, and sent the army to find him.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In December, Sihanouk appealed to the Assembly for a state of emergency, citing the continued dissidence of Thanh, a strike among students in Phnom Penh, and two bomb-throwing incidents growing out of the student grievances. When the Assembly refused, Sihanouk played his trump card. On 14 January he had 12 deputies arrested, proclaimed martial law, and dissolved the Assembly. As "Premier" to handle routine matters he named a personal lieutenant, Penn Nouth. In an address to his people the King asked three years in which to achieve complete independence.

B. Independent Cambodia

Sihanouk's coup of January 1953 was, in retrospect, the death knell for democracy in Cambodia. Whether a western form of government could have taken root may be questioned; in any case, the coup gave complete power to Sihanouk, who has never returned a significant amount of it to the cabinet or Assembly. An immediate result was a degree of domestic stability. Only once since the Democratic Party cabinet of 1952-1953 has Sihanouk faced a serious internal challenge.

But whereas life was easy for Sihanouk when his post entailed few responsibilities, he had propelled himself into the center of Cambodian politics. Notwithstanding his personal popularity, he had several distinct liabilities. Because Sihanouk had not been regarded as a candidate for the throne, his education had been casual, and nothing in his early years as King had suggested that he would make any mark on the Southeast Asian political scene. He was widely regarded by foreigners as a French stooge, and the French themselves were slow to disabuse themselves. Western newsmen generally played up his saxophone playing, his penchant for sports, and the harem-like atmosphere of the Cambodian court.

Sihanouk, however, had already made one shrewd judgment which placed him far ahead of most of his critics. He had decided that the problems of independence and the

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Issarak insurgency were inseparable, and that the achievement of full independence would go far toward cutting the ground out from under the insurgents. The King startled observers in Phnom Penh when, just weeks after his January coup, he left for a "vacation" on the Riviera.

In Europe, and subsequently at the UN, Sihanouk cut a wide swath. From his villa on the French Riviera, he sent a memorial to the President of France asking for immediate independence. At a time when more than half of his country was controlled by the Issarak and the Viet Minh, Sihanouk used the insurgent threat as the main argument for independence:

The Issarak propaganda speaks of me as the principal obstacle to complete independence...they say that I and my government are too Francophile to make our country really sovereign. Now I ask you, Mr. President, what am I to reply to this propaganda when I am denied the means to fight effectively to defend my people?...It seems to me that it is the duty and the self-interest of France to entrust to the Cambodians themselves the destiny of their country.

Sihanouk was just warming to his task. From the Riviera he flew to New York, where he loosed a then-unprecedented press blast. The New York Times quoted Sihanouk as saying that unless "the French guaranteed Cambodia greater freedom "within the next few months," there was danger that the Cambodians would go over to the Viet Minh. "Cambodia is very sorry that her wishes do not please France," observed the King. "If France does not understand us...I will simply go home and ask my people what they want to do."

By this time the French realized that Sihanouk had ideas of his own concerning the future of Cambodia. In Saigon, a senior French official told the US ambassador that the King was clearly "amok," since no rational person in a position such as Sihanouk's would use the threat

- 7 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

of popular uprisings to force out a friendly, anti-Communist power. Nevertheless, Sihanouk returned to a popular welcome in Phnom Penh, his reputation as a French puppet seriously impaired. The King made early use of his new prestige against the Khmer Issarak; in June 1953, in the course of a tour of the western provinces, he prevailed on the leaders of two Issarak bands to make peace with the government. Both accepted commissions as captains in the Cambodian army.

The French, however, offered no concessions concerning Cambodian independence, even though Sihanouk indicated that he was prepared to accept dominion status for his country, or even a French pledge of independence following defeat of the Communists. A new gesture was called for, and once more Sihanouk was equal to the occasion. The King again jolted his French mentors when, on 12 June, he crossed into Thailand and requested asylum. In a "farewell statement" he stressed the same point which he had made to French President Auriol:

Again I find myself today under the obligation of alerting world public opinion, and to draw French public opinion in particular to the true aspirations of the Cambodian people....

Experience and facts have sufficiently demonstrated that the King is capable of rallying about him almost all the Cambodian rebels as long as He proves himself able to attain real and complete independence for Cambodia. Only then can the Cambodians face the Viet Minh to defend jointly their independence their civilization and the patrimony of their ancestors.

Even as he left the country, Sihanouk underscored his point. At Siem Reap--site of the great ruins of the Khmer empire--he conferred with two semi-autonomous local chieftains, Puth Chay and Dap Chhuon. Once again Sihanouk cast his spell: Chay assured his safety to the Thai border, and both pledged their loyalty to the King. Only Son

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

Ngoc Thanh continued outwardly indifferent to Sihanouk's campaign for Cambodian independence.

The King's flight to Bangkok kept Cambodia in the headlines, but otherwise was not a conspicuous success. Until his brief exile in Thailand, Sihanouk appears to have entertained friendly feelings toward the Thais. He had on occasion corresponded with King Bumipol who, like Sihanouk, was young and a jazz buff. But the welcome mat was not out in Bangkok. The Thais turned down Sihanouk's request that they bring Cambodia's plight to the attention of the UN, and treated him more as a political refugee than as a distinguished guest. The US embassy in Bangkok reported that the "strict propriety" of the Thais had resulted in Sihanouk's virtual confinement in his hotel, and that the behavior of the Thais had served to "improve local Thai-French relations." Sihanouk never forgot the cool reception he received in Thailand, however, and his resentment at the treatment accorded him in Bangkok would color Thai-Cambodian relations for a decade to come.

Sihanouk returned to Cambodia in late June, but not to Phnom Penh. Instead, he began a self-imposed exile in Battambang, leaving an ineffectual government in the capital to cope with the French, the Issarak, and the day-to-day problems of administration. In the hinterland, Sihanouk resumed his campaign to reconstruct the Issarak; by July, an estimated 3,000 insurgents had rallied to the King, a fact which prompted Marguerite Higgins to characterize it as "something of a triumph when you consider how many dollars and bullets it takes to destroy 3,000 Chinese or Viet Minh troops."

A main point of contention between Sihanouk and the French remained the question of whether an independent Cambodia could defend itself against the Viet Minh without the presence of French forces. Sihanouk admitted to no doubts. ("Except for a few Communists, who are the least numerous of the Issarak, almost all the rebels have officially defected to the King.") He stated, however, that if the French felt that Cambodia required a larger military force,

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

I have decided, compatriots, made strong by...your decision to put full confidence in my success...to put into application without delay in our country a plan which I conceived in Battambang with the assistance of a few eminent collaborators. This is a plan of mobilization of the vital forces of the nation which should give the country in a short time a regular army, provincial auxiliary forces, and people's and youth support forces suitable to constitute for our Fatherland a defensive military power and an argument to present to the great nations.

It was apparent that Sihanouk meant business, and results were forthcoming. In early July, France agreed to independence for all three of the "Associated States" of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It was impelled to such action not by Sihanouk's oratory, but by the need to bolster morale in Vietnam. To most Cambodians, however, the glory belonged to their King. On November 8, 1953, Sihanouk journeyed from Battambang to Phnom Penh, for ceremonies commemorating Cambodia's independence.

### C. The Geneva Conference

The Viet Minh never operated in Cambodia on the scale that it did elsewhere in Indo-China. For one thing, there were sociological factors operative in Cambodia which tended to check the Communists' popular appeal. The Cambodian Communist party--of which more will be said later--was so small as to be scarcely recognizable.

Resistance to Communism--albeit passive resistance--stemmed from an accumulation of national, religious and economic factors. Although Cambodia was an underdeveloped country, there was little population pressure and rice enough for all. The countryside was racially homogeneous, with a long history of loyalty to the

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

monarchy. Acceptance of the status quo had been encouraged by the French, who did nothing to encourage political consciousness among the Cambodians.

In their campaign to develop a "liberation front" in Cambodia as they had in Laos, the Viet Minh encountered major problems. In addition to the factors mentioned, Communist efforts to foment discontent were hampered by the enervating climate, the historic mistrust of the Cambodians for the Vietnamese, and a politically passive tendency which is a reflection of Cambodia's Theravada Buddhism. The impact of any "liberation front" was further undercut once Sihanouk began actively campaigning for Cambodian independence.

As far as can be determined, the Viet Minh strategy in Cambodia appears to have been the development of a common front with the Issarak. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the line between the Viet Minh and the Issarak was sometimes blurred; both operated in the bush, and both were anti-French and anti-Sihanouk. French officials tended to add to the confusion by dismissing anyone who favored complete independence for Cambodia as a Communist.

Viet Minh cadres in Cambodia first appeared in 1949, in the guise of the "Committee for the Liberation of the Cambodian People". In an effort to capitalize on the reputation of Son Ngoc Thanh, and to attract his Issarak followers, leadership of the Liberation Committee was ascribed to one Son Ngoc Minh.\* It enjoyed a precarious existence until 1952, when Thanh broke with Sihanouk and himself went into dissidence. The extent of cooperation

---

\*There is some question whether there is or was anyone named Son Ngoc Minh. The seeming play on words vis-a-vis Son Ngoc Thanh suggests that Minh, like Kim Il-song in North Korea, may be a local leader attempting to cash in on the reputation of a popular hero. The issue has been clouded, however, by Thanh's refusal either to confirm or deny reports that Son Ngoc Minh is his brother.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

between the Issarak and the Viet Minh is unclear, and there are believed to have been instances in which they fought one another. But the Issarak--who at one stage numbered around 10,000--could hardly have escaped being influenced by Viet Minh propaganda. Sihanouk was careful to distinguish between the misguided Issarak and the Viet Minh for as long as he was able to secure defections from the Issarak. After 1953, however, he was increasingly prone to lump Son Ngoc Thanh with the Viet Minh and other "traitors."

As the war in Vietnam turned against the French, the Cambodians became more circumspect in their anti-Communism. One reason that the French had balked at allowing Cambodia to assume responsibility for its own defense was Sihanouk's unwillingness to permit Cambodian forces to serve outside the country. Prime Minister Penn Nouth observed in the fall of 1953 that Cambodia did not feel bound to oppose Communism "unless the Communists seek to impose their doctrine on us by force." Notwithstanding these efforts to stay out of the line of fire, Cambodia found itself being invaded by regular Viet Minh forces in March 1954, on the very eve of the Geneva conference on Indo-China.

The Viet Minh invasion of the Cambodian Northeast almost made an anti-Communist out of Sihanouk. Following an inspection trip to threatened provinces in April, the Prince broadcast to his people:

Compatriots, at this moment I have the painful duty to announce to you that the situation of our country has become grave. In Stung Treng the Communist forces of Mr. Ho Chi Minh, coming from a neighboring country, have infiltrated in an attempt to destroy a part of our national forces....

At present they openly declare themselves enemies of our country....The Viet Minh are the aggressors who act against human rights. There is no juridical argument

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

which permits them to violate...our nation. And here is why: The Viet Minh proclaim that, in this war, if they invade Laos, it is to help the country obtain complete independence. But in our country there is independence which is the result of our personal accomplishment....

If the Viet Minh really want independence, why do they not first of all seek the independence of their own country? Why do they come to attack us at the risk of our young sovereignty?

The eleventh-hour invasion of Cambodia by the Viet Minh was probably designed to strengthen the Communists' hand at the Geneva negotiations; at one stage in the talks, Molotov boasted that the Viet Minh held 75 per cent of Vietnam, half of Laos, and a "small but increasing" portion of Cambodia. At the conference, however, it was concerning Cambodia that the bloc made its most significant concessions. When the negotiations began in May, both Laos and Cambodia objected strongly to a Communist status quo ante proposal in which Communist pockets would remain in both countries following a cease-fire. The Cambodians won their point, probably because the Communists were aware of their limited assets there, but the Laotians did not. The Communists were similarly unsuccessful in securing recognition of Son Ngoc Thanh and his Issarak as an opposition government to that of Sihanouk. The conference decided that Viet Minh forces must be withdrawn from Cambodia. In an interview with Marguerite Higgins, Sihanouk--who did not go to Geneva--discussed Cambodia's tactics there:

The military defense of this country is of great importance, of course, and we are doing everything to strengthen ourselves. But military strength is not enough. After all, every time I create three battalions the Communists can, if they wish, create six, and this can go on ad infinitum. What we must do is bring

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

into play world opinion and world moral support for Cambodia, which will show up the Communist aggressors for what they are.

The main results of the Geneva conference were the partition of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel, and the "demilitarization" of Laos and Cambodia. Of the three Indo-Chinese states, Cambodia emerged in by far the best shape. Not only did it secure the withdrawal of Communist troops (most were indeed pulled out, in fact as well as in promise), but it successfully demanded the right to maintain an army for defensive purposes, and to solicit military assistance "for the purpose of the effective defense of the territory." An International Control Commission (ICC) was established to observe the treaty provisions in each of the three Indo-Chinese states.

#### D. The Troubles of a King

The handling of Cambodia's interests at Geneva brought new prestige to its diplomats and its young King. Cambodia had, in fact, parlayed its military weakness into concessions which might not have been granted by the Communists to a more powerful state. Within the country, Sihanouk's prestige was at a zenith. First he had brought independence, which had in turn brought a predictable erosion in the strength of the Issarak. Now he had achieved the Viet Minh withdrawal, without recourse to bloodshed.

Only in Phnom Penh itself were discordant notes to be heard. When Sihanouk returned to his capital in November 1953, he was faced with complicated technical problems arising from the transfer of powers from France. Faced with problems such as the stabilization of his country's currency, the supervision of the Viet Minh withdrawal, and the development of a new economic relationship with France, Sihanouk reacted in an emotional and petulant manner. The King was hardly a prototype revolutionary: he had never gone hungry, never thrown a bomb,

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

and never lived in a garret. He was, however, of the revolutionary breed, and his effectiveness as a soap box orator was matched by his impatience with more prosaic matters of governmental administration. He was further hampered by the fact that the French had done little to train Cambodians for the civil service.

At the root of Sihanouk's problems was his own uneasiness as to the proper form of government for his country. In theory he was in favor of a democracy, and had promised general elections at the close of his three-year "royal mandate" in 1952. At the same time, he had a deep contempt for his critics in the Assembly and had no desire--on both personal and patriotic grounds--to surrender the instruments of political power. He brooded over his country's weakness and over threats, real and imagined, to his own position. For all his intelligence, he continued to place a child-like faith in the royal astrologers whose participation in the royal decision-making process was little changed from the days of the Khmer empire.

Premier Penn Nouth was regarded by most observers in Phnom Penh as a dedicated public servant, who had run the governmental administration as well as could be done with the King in Battambang. In December 1954, however, the King dismissed him and his government. Like many of Sihanouk's "loyal" following, Nouth would eventually regain the royal favor and make a political comeback. The same could not be said of Son Ngoc Thanh. In September 1954, Thanh sent a message to the King, pledging his loyalty and asking for an audience. One can only speculate what prompted Sihanouk's reply. He may have weighed the pros and cons, and determined that a final resolution of the Issarak problem was not worth the threat of a political comeback by Thanh. Or he may have reacted more emotionally towards the person responsible for propaganda broadcasts against the King himself. In any case Thanh's appeal was publicly rejected by the King, who charged that "You would not serve His Majesty, the King, at the critical hour when he was accomplishing his royal mission, but instead went into the bush to work against the King....You have broken promises, you have openly attacked the King."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In February 1955, Sihanouk said nothing of elections. Instead, he held a referendum of sorts. In it, eligible voters indicated approval or disapproval of the King's handling of affairs. In a country where illiteracy ran well over 50 percent, the people were instructed, "If you love your King, vote white; if you do not, vote black." The balloting was not secret, and the combination of official pressure and the King's genuine popularity resulted in a 99% endorsement for Sihanouk.

In the wake of the referendum, popular demonstrations were staged in the capital. Petitioners arrived from the provinces, all urging the King to retain control of the government and to keep the "politicians" from regaining power. As with the referendum, the demonstrations reflected both official policy and the popular will; to the US ambassador, Sihanouk spoke of his desire to achieve an amalgum between theoretically pure democracy and the centuries-old desire of the Cambodian people to be ruled by a kind and enlightened absolute monarch. The upshot was that Sihanouk viewed the referendum and the demonstrations that followed as a mandate for constitutional reforms, and these he outlined on 19 February.

The key to Sihanouk's "reforms" was abolition of the party system, which had generally been regarded as ineffective under the Democratic party cabinets of 1950-1952. The King envisioned the creation of various local assemblies and one national assembly, whose functions--since all power would reside in the King--would be strictly advisory. Deputies would have to have resided three years in their constituencies--a seemingly innocuous proviso, which in effect disenfranchised all Issarak in apparent violation of the Geneva agreement. The King would be the final arbiter of the constitution, as well as chief executive, with power to veto Assembly bills and to appoint and dismiss cabinet ministers.

Predictably, the political groups threatened by the King raised a storm. Sihanouk was uneasy, as he was prone to be when "isolated" in Phnom Penh, away from his admiring subjects in the hinterland. Moreover, his forebodings with regard to the three-year residence

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

provision appeared justified; it was widely rumored in the capital that the ICC was opposed both to the residence provision and to the postponement of elections.

On 2 March, Sihanouk abruptly abdicated as King. In an announcement fairly dripping with self-pity, he explained his action to the people:

After having brought independence and peace to our people, I find that I am betrayed, ill-treated and abused by men who use unjust democracy. I have decided to find the means (to correct this situation). These means are laws which I have written to permit our humblest citizens, who are a majority and who are the true representatives of the nation, to use the power desired by the people and to protect themselves against new injustices....

But this new law provokes the opposition of the politicians, the rich, and the educated, who are accustomed to using their knowledge to deceive others and to place innumerable obstacles in the path on which I must lead our people toward prosperity and justice....

Poor and humble fellow citizens who are the object of my love: in all tasks... I have very often met hostility, treason, calumny, scorn and insults from dishonest persons who are my enemies. They have never let me carry out my mission for nation and people easily.... Even now I must oppose these men, (but) I must first of all bear you witness of my gratitude.

To you, little people, I owe much because you chose to follow me in my efforts to achieve national independence.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

And turning a deaf ear to provocation and the incitement of traitors...you supported me and enabled me to gain all sorts of victories for the nation....

I see that even if I continue to reign I will not be able to work for your best interests...I ask, fellow-citizens, permission to abdicate, and I definitely do not intend to change my mind. I wish to put my father and mother, to whom I am grateful and who are the eldest members of the royal family, on the throne as King and Queen to reign after me.

Sihanouk's abdication stirred a wave of speculation, most of which was wide of the mark. Some observers expected Sihanouk to return to the throne by popular demand, and thereby sweep aside all opposition to his reform program. Others accepted his abdication at face value, and assumed that political power would in fact as well as in theory pass to Sihanouk's family. [REDACTED] Few appeared to feel that the ex-King--now titled Prince Sihanouk--could maintain his political preeminence apart from the throne.

With the advantage of hindsight, it is obvious that Sihanouk had no intention of yielding political

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

leadership. Rather, he appears to have recognized absolute monarchy as an anachronism in the Twentieth Century, and a potential obstacle to his reform program. Although his abdication appears to have been a sudden decision, and in part the result of Sihanouk's sensitivity to criticism, the ex-King did not lack for courses of action. Within weeks he was devoting all his energies to organizing a new political movement, the Sangkum Reastr Niyum, or People's Socialist Community. It became apparent that Sihanouk had left the throne largely to gain more effective control of the political arena. In abdicating he had left no power vacuum in the palace: Sihanouk's enemies would have little access to and little influence with the royal couple, Sihanouk's parents.

E. Neutralism: Stage I

In the months prior to Cambodian independence, Sihanouk had argued persuasively that France's unwillingness to grant full independence served to strengthen the Issarak and Viet Minh in the jungle. Although Sihanouk was not outspoken in his anti-Communism, his interest in French culture, his lip service to democratic precepts, and especially his opposition to those dissidents whom the French had labeled as Communist, all inspired hopes that he would prove to be a friend of the West. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

At the same time, there were signs that Son Ngoc Thanh was becoming an obsession with the Prince. In discussing his new political movement [REDACTED], Sihanouk emphasized that while membership in the Sangkum was open to all who would renounce their previous political allegiances, this offer did not apply to Thanh. [REDACTED] remarked that the more he observed Sihanouk, the more he was impressed by "the feeling of almost morbid fascination, bordering on terror, with which he regards this

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

somewhat shadowy figure of Son Ngoc Thanh. Thanh is hiding out in the jungle...yet the former King speaks...as though he were a powerful warlord, able at a moment's notice to challenge the authority of the Crown and Constitution."

Sihanouk's attitude toward Thanh was probably inspired less by fear than by the emotional manner in which he reacted to criticism. It appears to have been at this time that French authorities--fearful concerning the displacement of French by American influence in Indo-China--first sought to discredit the U.S. with Sihanouk by linking American agencies with the Issarak. As early as April 1955, Ambassador McClintock was obliged to deny French-inspired rumors that his embassy was "in league" with Son Ngoc Thanh.

Overshadowing Sihanouk's concern with Thanh, however, were considerations of foreign policy. Whether, in a different political setting, he might have kept his country on a moderately pro-Western course will never be known. The fact was that Cambodia's weakness made it imperative that she reach a modus vivendi with the Communists, whose skill at infiltration was daily evident in Laos. In later years he would become preoccupied with threats, real and imagined, from Thailand and South Vietnam. His early moves towards neutralism, however, appear to have been a logical outgrowth of the Communist victory at Dien Bien Phu and the subsequent partition of Vietnam.

The first major sounding board for Sihanouk and his views was the Bandung conference in April 1955. There, at a meeting dedicated to Afro-Asian solidarity and anticolonialism, Sihanouk was in fast company. From Peiping came Chou En-lai (their meeting at Bandung was the first contact between them). North Vietnam was represented by Premier Pham Van Dong, India by Nehru and Krishna Menon, Burma by U Nu. Although the meeting encompassed neutral as well as Communist nations, the dominant country was acknowledged to be mainland China and the dominant figure Chou En-lai.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk made two speeches at the conference, one on 19 April and another on 23 April, covering much the same ground. Their effect was to place Cambodia clearly in the neutral camp, as defined by Nehru's Five Principles of Coexistence. Sihanouk showed a keen awareness of the significance of the conference:

Eminent voices have already defined the main features and revealed the objectives of the present conference:...

That it puts in concrete form, for the very first time, the solidarity of African and Asian peoples, in their common love of freedom, equality, peace and welfare.

That it shatters the frontiers which separated two worlds: the Communist and the non-Communist.

Although Sihanouk had earlier endorsed the Five Principles--notably during a visit to India immediately following his abdication--at Bandung he made them his own. Sihanouk spoke of his pride, not only at having led his people's fight for independence, but at having "resolutely directed our national policy towards the Five Principles, and the community of neutral nations such as India and Burma." Although Cambodia still recognized Nationalist China, Sihanouk hinted broadly that Peiping should be admitted into the UN, observing that the Bandung conference "offers an opportunity for regretting that the United Nations have not yet opened their doors to some nations [which have fulfilled] the conditions of sovereignty and capacity required for membership."

Sihanouk was so clearly a convert to neutralism that he appeared embarrassed concerning negotiations with the U.S. for military assistance, then nearing completion. Although such "defensive" assistance was permitted under the Geneva agreement, Sihanouk stated,

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

We are bound to the Western bloc by no commitment, by no treaty. We have accepted French and American aid, because they have been granted us without terms.

One might ask why we have not turned to other nations for instructors. I declare that we shall gratefully accept any specialists whom friendly countries might be willing to propose, according to our needs.

Sihanouk summed up his country's position in terms of the political realities of Southeast Asia:

Independent and neutral Cambodia now finds herself on the dividing line of two civilizations, of two races, of two political worlds...and as such, she has the dangerous privilege of standing the test and application of the Five Principles.

My country has adopted these principles and wishes to apply them to the fullest extent. In so doing she only asks an absolute reciprocity. She requests that her independence, her security, her traditions and political ideology not be threatened.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## II. MILITANT NEUTRALISM

### A. Sihanouk Discovers the Bloc

Sihanouk held in September 1955 the Assembly elections which had been originally scheduled for April. In practice, they amounted to nothing more than a re-run of the earlier referendum. All resources of the government were marshalled on behalf of the Sangkum, and where strong-arm tactics were necessary they were used; Sihanouk may have been confident of his own prestige, but he also wanted to put his political organization on a firm footing. Not surprisingly, Sangkum won all the Assembly seats and 82 percent of the popular vote. The once-influential Democrats were able to gain only 12 percent. The elections marked the appearance of a legal crypto-Communist party in Cambodia--the Krom Pracheachon (Group of the Nation)--but it polled only 3 percent of the vote. Despite the irregularities, the elections were certified by the ICC as having been carried out in conformity with the Geneva agreement.

The election triumph left Sihanouk at the head of a government which was now virtually without domestic opposition. He had routed his enemies in the political area, and his popularity was if anything greater than before his abdication. To the image of Sihanouk, Father of his Country, had been added that of international statesman, scourge of the Viet Minh, and now democratic leader. In his ability to monopolize the tools of power, yet retain the affection of his subjects, he was without peer in Asia.

In January 1956, Sihanouk began a year devoted in large measure to international travel. It started with a neighborly visit to the Philippines, where, to the Prince's discomfiture, his views concerning the bright prospects for neutralism were subjected to critical scrutiny. The Filipinos, under President Magsaysay,

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

were strong advocates of the fledgling SEATO organization to which the US had given backing. They did not hesitate to press their views on Sihanouk, without the deference to which he was accustomed at home. The visit to Manila left a bad taste in his mouth, which lasted until his next stop--the first of four visits which he has now made to Peiping.

At the time of this visit, Cambodia had diplomatic relations only with Western powers. The Chinese Nationalists maintained a consulate in Phnom Penh, and there were no relations at all with North Vietnam.\* By rejecting membership in SEATO, however, Sihanouk had assured himself of a warm welcome in Peiping.

Of Sihanouk's special relationship with Chou En-lai--begun at the Bandung conference--more will be said later. In the course of this first visit to Peiping, however, Sihanouk was wined, dined and flattered in a manner which relegated Manila to the status of a bad memory. The joint communique laid heavy stress on peaceful coexistence, and referred favorably to improved economic and cultural relations. On his return to Phnom Penh, Sihanouk announced that he would send a delegation to Peiping to negotiate an economic agreement, and the following April a \$14 million trade agreement was signed. In June, an aid agreement was concluded under which Peiping agreed to provide Cambodia with \$22.4 million worth of goods and services over a period of two years.

---

\*There were some 250,000 overseas Chinese in Cambodia, about half of them in Phnom Penh. In Cambodia as elsewhere in Southeast Asia, their clannishness, together with their disproportionate influence in commerce and trade, made them an object of distrust to the host government. Sihanouk's hesitation in recognizing Peiping probably stemmed in part from fear that such action would increase the influence of the mainland-oriented Chinese community.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The support of so powerful an "ally" must have been particularly reassuring to Sihanouk, who returned to a full-blown diplomatic crisis with South Vietnam. Khmer-Vietnamese relations had been cool for some time as a result of territorial claims left unresolved by the French, and from charges by each side concerning the alleged mistreatment of Cambodian and Vietnamese minorities. At the time of Cambodia's independence, Sihanouk had unsuccessfully demanded the internationalization of that portion of the Mekong River on which Cambodia depended for an outlet to Saigon. South Vietnam predictably rejected any such arrangement, but in practice had usually permitted Cambodian shipments to transit the country without harassment. Then, in February 1956, South Vietnam closed its border to trade with Cambodia. There was no public explanation, but the consensus was that Diem had been angered by Sihanouk's charges of border violations, as well as by his flirtation with Peiping.

Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh convinced that there was more to the Vietnamese move than met the eye. To Sihanouk, it was one more move to blackmail Cambodia into joining SEATO, and the United States was behind it. The Prince's frame of mind was not improved when he was advised of friction in the administration of the U.S. aid program. Cambodian officials had hoped that U.S. budgetary support for the armed forces would be in the form of dollar grants, and thus constitute a source of foreign exchange. The U.S. insisted on the use of counterpart funds, i.e., Cambodian riels generated through the sale of U.S. goods. A major problem for Sihanouk had always been the stream of misleading and often inaccurate information provided by the courtiers and syncophants with which he surrounded himself. Now, informed that the U.S. was "threatening to cut off its aid program," Sihanouk saw his worst fears confirmed. Indian representatives in Phnom Penh, whose influence had grown since Sihanouk's conversion to neutralism, encouraged him in his anti-U.S., anti-SEATO campaign.

The result was a nationwide campaign against those who would "pressure against Cambodian neutrality." The curious aspect of this campaign was not that demonstrations took place, but that they were targeted primarily

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

against the U.S. By any standard of "balanced" neutralism, Sihanouk had matched his acceptance of U.S. aid by the negotiations in Peiping; the anti-American demonstrations in Phnom Penh, therefore, loomed as a spontaneous reflection of Sihanouk's emotional instability and susceptibility to anti-American propaganda. "The Americans," observed the Prince on 6 April, "who have so often promised to defend the freedom of little countries, have just shown their true face to Cambodia. It is not a noble one." Elsewhere, he contrasted the no-strings aid made available by China with the alleged U.S. policy of aiding only countries which "accept its supervision."

At the height of the agitation, in early March, Sihanouk had resigned his post as premier in favor of one Khim Tit, implying that the change might mollify the Americans. After all, he pointed out sadly, Cambodia's \$100 million development program, launched in the fall of 1955, was predicated on a set level of U.S. aid. Any question as to where the real power lay in Cambodia was removed when the ex-premier warned that further "pressure" from the United States or SEATO would cause his country to establish closer relations with the bloc.

Sihanouk was out of the premiership for only a matter of weeks. Not long after he resumed his post the Vietnamese--prodded by the U.S.--lifted their blockade of the Mekong. As tempers cooled, the main result of the confrontation appeared to be a speedup in work on a deepwater port on the Gulf of Siam, at Sihanoukville. Actually, Sihanouk had set a pattern of erratic behavior which he has continued to this day.

Sihanouk continued to explore the opportunities inherent in neutralism. In July he embarked on a trip to the USSR and Eastern Europe. Once again the welcome mat was out: in a joint communique of 7 July, Sihanouk and Soviet Premier Bulganin endorsed the Five Principles, and announced that the USSR would provide Cambodia with "unconditional" economic and technical assistance. Ambassadors would be exchanged, and the Soviets would build and equip a hospital in Phnom Penh as a gift to the Cambodian people.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The same ritual was repeated when Sihanouk visited the European satellites. The Poles were favorably disposed concerning aid for Cambodia, and promised to add a wing to the Soviet hospital. In Czechoslovakia, agreement was reached concerning a trade agreement, to be finalized in Phnom Penh. In a joint communique, Sihanouk joined the Czechs in calling for the seating of Communist China in the UN.

When Sihanouk returned to Cambodia, he extolled the agreements he had negotiated in the bloc, emphasizing not only the material benefits they promised but the fact that they involved recognition of Cambodia's independence. In an extemporaneous speech at the airport, he characterized the agreements as "a form of alliance"--a remark which he later qualified, but which was an early reflection of Sihanouk's preoccupation with the trappings of security: recognition, endorsement of the Five Principles, and border guarantees.

If there was any solace for the West in Sihanouk's junket, it was that the Prince was now uneasy concerning the very abundance of pledges which he had secured from the East. He moderated his criticism of the U.S. aid program, and appeared anxious not to become dependent on the bloc or to drive out American aid. Although Chinese technicians arrived in Phnom Penh to begin surveys for a textile plant, diplomatic recognition of Peiping was not yet forthcoming and the Chinese Nationalist consulate remained.

Sihanouk was prone to "define" his country's neutrality to anyone who would listen, usually with emphasis on Cambodia's weakness and insignificance in a world of super-powers. On the occasion of Ambassador McClintock's departure from Phnom Penh, Sihanouk made a speech in which he stressed the bonds of friendship between Cambodia and the U.S. He went on to add,

We could not, however, declare ourselves neutral and continue to conduct only a one-way neutrality which opened a gap between us and the powers which represent more than a third of the

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

inhabitants of the world, when some of those powers are practically at our doorstep. We consider that our present attitude will allow our little country to be a meeting place for the governments that confront each other with opposing ideologies, whereas the aspirations and the interests of all people converge on one single objective: peace.

B. Foreign Friends and Domestic Enemies

Sihanouk received on his return to Phnom Penh the tumultuous welcome due a conquering hero. After the first few days, however, he had difficulty in adjusting from his role of visiting dignitary to that of a head of government with problems at home. Sihanouk was at his best on ceremonial visits, when there was no reminder that Cambodia was a small and rather insignificant power, but much of the gushy flattery which he loved. At home there was also flattery, but there were also glimpses of reality: official corruption, inadequate budgets, and even criticism of the Prince.

In October Sihanouk issued another in a series of moving statements with which he proclaimed his periodic resignations. The main problem appeared to be anonymous letters which he had received at the palace:

I can no longer bear the contempt, the insults and the repeated bitter criticism which are being heaped upon me by people of the other side every day through innumerable anonymous letters. They say that I can serve the people only through words, that I am good at making loud-mouthed speeches without any real consequence, and that I leave the government bureaucracies and the deputies free to abuse the confidence of the people and to make off with public funds in order to eat and drink in opulence.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk then launched into a rambling, defensive account of his achievements for Cambodia, of the enthusiasm with which he had been received on his travels, and of the aid which he had been promised by his foreign friends. No charge was so petty that Sihanouk did not feel a need to refute it: land rehabilitated in Phnom Penh's slum clearance program was not being reserved for the rich; corrupt officials did not enjoy the protection of the palace; the Prince did not condone carousing by government officials at local dance halls. In fact, he had had enough:

Why, these days, do some of my compatriots treat me as lower than an animal? They think that I am here to be kicked in the head anytime they please, just because I received the confidence and the votes of the people. I wish to state that if ever I held power at one time or another, it was only in order to be able to serve you. I am not power-hungry or power-mad, for the job of Chief of Government has given me nothing but unutterable weariness, vexation and humiliation.

By resigning, Sihanouk placed himself in the unusual role of unofficial host to a Chinese delegation headed by Chou En-lai, who was eager to return the visit paid by Sihanouk earlier in the year. Actually, there was some evidence that the Prince was growing uneasy concerning his relations with the bloc. First there had been the grudging expressions of gratitude for U.S. aid. Subsequently, the Soviet intervention in Hungary was generally condemned in official circles in Phnom Penh, although Cambodia abstained from the UN resolution which censured the USSR. In various speeches, Sihanouk sought to emphasize the distinction between the Sangkum's brand of "national" socialism and the servitude implicit in "international" socialism. On one occasion he noted that the Hungarians had "preferred to shed their blood" rather than live under Communism.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

None of this detracted from the welcome accorded Chou En-lai. At Phnom Penh airport, where an official greeting of 100,000 persons had been organized, Prince Sihanouk introduced the distinguished visitors to his parents, while Premier San Yun hovered diffidently nearby. Chou's visit produced nothing startling, but there was much toasting of the Five Principles, and the Indian Legation played host to one reception. There, Chou observed that "India, China and Cambodia have established close and friendly relations on the basis of the Five Principles," and that India had provided "helpful assistance to the development of friendly ties between China and Cambodia."

Chou referred to the "great honor" he had felt at working with Sihanouk at the Bandung conference, and alluded to the "great friendship and admiration" felt by the Chinese people for "this statesman defending peace and cooperation among nations." He lauded Cambodia's policy of neutrality, and only with reference to the Suez crisis ("with which both the Chinese and Cambodian people are concerned") did he indulge in overt propaganda. Premier Yun, at a banquet, provided ample explanation for Cambodia's policy of neutrality. "Our people need peace because they know the serious disasters war brings to us," he said. "War would undermine the work of our beloved Prince to reconstruct the country."

Cambodia's foreign policy could at least be said to reflect intelligent opportunism. It contrasted with the domestic scene in Cambodia, which was chaos. Ever since independence, Sihanouk had been hampered by the absence of a trained civil service, and by endemic corruption among top officials. Sihanouk was not responsible for the failure of the French to train local administrators, or for the low salaries and greed which spawned corruption. The Prince exacerbated these shortcomings, however, by his unwillingness to make effective use of those few qualified public servants who were available. The atmosphere around Sihanouk was such that honest officials were usually discredited by talebearers, who found in the Prince a receptive audience. Adding to these administrative woes there was the erratic behavior of

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk himself. In the two years following his abdication as King, Sihanouk resigned the premiership no fewer than three times. The first instance was during the aid dispute with the U.S. in April 1956, a second was the following October, when he was upset by the anonymous letters. The third resignation was in June 1957, when Sihanouk threw up his hands over the problem of import licenses.

These resignations--whatever their psychological motivation--were little more than grandstand plays by the Prince. "Interim" premiers were always approved by Sihanouk and usually were handpicked by him. The impact of such revolving-door administration was nonetheless unsettling, and hardly conducive to effective government, even though some Cambodians took the relaxed view. In June 1957, a palace official confirmed to a U.S. Embassy officer that Sihanouk had indeed submitted his resignation on June 12th, and, when it was not acted upon, had resigned again on the 14th. The palace official observed in explanation, "This is not very serious, for (Sihanouk) has submitted his resignation six or seven times during the present government, but (Privy Counselor) Penn Nouth sometimes pockets them and does not even hand them on to the King and Queen unless pressed by Sihanouk. On the average two out of three resignations submitted actually reach Their Majesties."

Actually, government in the formal sense of the word scarcely existed in Cambodia. The National Assembly met periodically, but as it comprised only members of the Sangkum it was not even much of a debating society. The provincial assemblies, which had stood high on the list of Sihanouk's proposed reforms in 1955, had been elected in 1956 but had never met. Because they had no real responsibilities, there was no clear delineation of function between the local groups and the National Assembly, and the government had provided no funds for the provincial assemblies.

One result of this disorganization was that non-adherents of the Sangkum--political neutrals as well as critics of Sihanouk--had no satisfactory means of criticizing the government, constructively or otherwise. While

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk's opponents had access to press organs in Phnom Penh, it was clearly understood to be in the best interest of all that any criticism be genteel and avoid any personal attack on members of the royal family.

In mid-April 1957, Sihanouk initiated a characteristically bizarre period in Cambodian politics when he resumed the premiership which he had resigned the previous fall. The ostensible reason for Sihanouk's return was the inability of Premier San Yun to regulate the issue of import licenses--political plums which permitted the recipient to import luxury goods which could be resold at a high profit. Upon resuming the premiership, Sihanouk appointed a long-time advisor, Sam Sary, as economic czar with full power to regulate the issuance of import licenses.

The predictable aftermath to Sary's appointment was a string of protests which reached Sihanouk by way of the palace grapevine. Sary was accused of accepting kickbacks and of favoring the Chinese over the Cambodian business community. In May, the angry Sihanouk called a meeting of the central committee of the Sangkum and heard more charges of bias against his lieutenant. Finally, Sary resigned and sought temporary seclusion in a Buddhist monastery. Sihanouk submitted a fourth "resignation" and left Phnom Penh for the seashore.

Nothing was resolved concerning the matter of the import licenses, but by June Sihanouk had withdrawn his resignation. Sam Sary emerged from the monastery, only to find key administrative posts staffed with political rivals. In his disillusionment, Sary found companionship in Dap Chhuon, the erstwhile shogun of Battambang province. Sihanouk's Sangkum--never the unifying force which he had hoped it would be--was generating an anti-Sihanouk faction.

The humiliating inability of his government to solve the license problem caused Sihanouk once again to throw up his hands. This time it was the Prince who betook himself to a monastery. For one of Sihanouk's temperament, however, this was a mistake. He appears to have meditated less on Buddha's precepts than on real and imagined wrongs

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

which he had suffered as premier. Over a period of years, Sihanouk had demonstrated that he was most formidable when aggrieved: witness his threat of a revolt if France did not grant Cambodia early independence, and his abdication as King when his reform program encountered obstacles. That he was not always discriminating in his actions when aggrieved was demonstrated by the anti-American demonstrations following the blockading of the Mekong by Diem.

While at the Phnom Koulen monastery, Sihanouk's despair over domestic affairs turned into belligerence--anger directed not at divisive influences within Sangkum, but at the leaders of the dormant Democratic party. It is difficult to find an explanation for Sihanouk's pre-occupation with a political fragment which had no Assembly representation and no party structure, and which had done nothing of late to bring down Sihanouk's ire. The Prince, however, thrived on adulation, and the Democrats--drawn largely from the intelligensia of Phnom Penh--were guilty of withholding this. Moreover, Sihanouk badly needed a scapegoat, lest his own creation, Sangkum, be saddled with the onus for Cambodia's deficiencies.

Upon leaving the monastery in August, Sihanouk challenged the Democrats to debate government policies with him. The Democrats refused. Again the Prince "invited" his opponents to debate, couching the invitation in terms which suggested a private audience. The result was public humiliation for the Democrats. The "private" audience was held on 11 August in the palace grounds, with the public invited and radio broadcasters in attendance. Sihanouk blistered his opponents as seeking the destruction of the monarchy, while the Democrats protested their loyalty to Sihanouk. After the debate, four leading Democrats were physically assaulted outside the palace grounds in a burst of violence unusual for Cambodia. As for Sihanouk, the Prince flew off for a vacation in France.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

C. Righting the Balance

Sihanouk's "rest cure" in France lasted until the end of the year. In a curious fashion, it brought about new affirmations of Cambodia's neutrality, and the first discernible anti-Communist campaign since the Geneva conference.

One of Sihanouk's pet projects had been the establishment, in Paris, of a center for Cambodian students in France. "Cambodia House," as it came to be known, provided a rallying-place for the 400-odd Cambodian students in Paris, who were to be found in greater numbers in France than in any other country. To Sihanouk's distress, however, Cambodians in Paris had demonstrated a susceptibility to leftist teachings. He planned several talks to Cambodia House, whose students he regarded with mild distrust (many came from urban families with a Democratic party bias) and who had been denied the spiritual enrichment provided by the Sangkum. His apprehensions were well-founded; the Prince was the target of barbed questions which drew from Sihanouk a forthright defense of Cambodia's ties with the West:

I deplore certain deviationists who pretend to follow me but in reality have worked to make the people believe that the Sangkum government is fettered to the American imperialists; thence this criticism at present of American aid....

This aid, although it is minimal if we compare it to that which is granted to Thailand or South Vietnam, is much higher than other foreign aid that we have received up to now: French aid granted over a period of three years totals 900,000,000 riels; that of China 810,000,000 riels and it is perhaps non-renewable. From the USSR we have received only a 500-bed hospital.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk returned to Cambodia on 15 December. Elections for a new National Assembly were scheduled for March, and although the result was a foregone conclusion the campaign provided the Prince with an excuse for the barnstorming which he loved. Beginning with the Sangkum convention in January, it became apparent that there was a new emphasis on neutralism as a shield against the bloc as well as the West. Three factors appeared to have inspired Sihanouk's unusual preoccupation with Communism. One was the prevalence of leftist sentiment among the students in Paris. A second was tactical; he had routed the Democrats so completely the preceding August that even he realized that they no longer posed any political threat. What appears to have impressed Sihanouk most, however, was evidence of large-scale propaganda activity on the part of the Soviet embassy in Phnom Penh.

The Soviet embassy, which had been established in November 1956, had become in its first year of operation the largest propaganda mill in town. Material in both Cambodian and French was distributed--often unsolicited--to schools, monasteries and journals. The actual threat posed by such a propaganda campaign is not easy to evaluate. It is difficult to regard the circulation of Marxist literature as a threat to Cambodian security equal to the economic influence exerted by the Chinese community. Sihanouk's reaction probably stemmed in part from his sense of propriety: the Soviet operation was excessive in its volume, was implicitly critical of Khmer socialism, and invited competition from Western outlets which--unlike competitive economic aid--held nothing for Cambodia. At no time did Sihanouk attack the Soviets by name, but the government in January ordered the embassy sharply to curb its distributions, and to clear any scholarship offers with the ministry of education. Sihanouk made himself sufficiently clear in an address to the Sangkum conference:

If our neutrality is officially accepted by all powers, it does not follow that it is always respected in daily reality, and our vigilance in protecting it must not fail.

- 35 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

We have given so many proofs of our absolute good will that we have the right to request certain powers (sic.) who seem now to be favoring an effort of subversion in our country to give reasonable limits henceforth to their propaganda activities, since other opposing powers might want to follow this example and our position would quickly become difficult.

When Western press organs--including Time and The New York Times--implied a "shift" in Cambodia's foreign policy, Sihanouk was indignant: his country remained a true neutral. Actually, there was room for misunderstanding. While Sihanouk had never been naive respecting the Communists, as Time implied in an article entitled "Late Wisdom," his actions had not always reflected true neutralism. Even in his criticism of the Soviet propaganda campaign, Sihanouk's use of the plural served to dilute his point, and to suggest a wrist slap at one or more Western embassies as well as the Soviet embassy.

Then, as now, Sihanouk was far more inhibited in his criticism of Communism and the bloc than he was of the U.S. and the West. The USSR was not criticized by name; the U.S. enjoyed no such privileged status, and was often lumped with "the imperialists"--a metaphor popular with Sihanouk since his visit to Peiping. The gingerly anti-Communist campaign of early 1958 had two main characteristics: unfavorable comparisons between "international" and Khmer socialism, and press attacks against Cambodia's home-grown Pracheachon. Most press organs in Phnom Penh, following Sihanouk's example, switched from attacks on the West and cited the Pracheachon as "enemies of the monarchy." The traditional Khmer hostility towards the Vietnamese prompted stories that the Pracheachon was "in contact" with the Viet Minh.

The early months of 1958 were marked by a large number of speeches by Sihanouk, ostensibly in connection with the March elections. At Kampot, he painted a glowing picture of the Sangkum brand of socialism, based on

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

"one national family" and dedicated "to the raising up of the poor and the weak."

The Communists say that they aid in the same manner. It is not true. What they do, for example, is to knock down with a stick the rich people, the capitalists in their vocabulary, that is to say people who have great riches, before they confiscate all their property. For example, a rich man owns a factory. The Communists confiscate the factory, but this confiscation is not for the benefit of the poor but for that of the State. In brief, one takes from the rich man to give to the State, which thus replaces the rich man.

When the Assembly elections were held, the Sangkum once again swept all before it, this time gaining 99.9 percent of the popular vote. The vote was primarily a vote of confidence in Sihanouk, but also bore testimony to his effectiveness in isolating opposition elements such as the Democratic party and the Pracheachon. The result appears to have been reassuring to Sihanouk, for by the summer he was once more preoccupied with foreign affairs.

In an interview published in his private press outlet, Realites Cambodgiennes, Sihanouk indicated that new foreign policy moves would be forthcoming. In the interview, published on 5 July, Sihanouk stated,

Our neutrality remains. However, it must become more active (sic.). We have wished to be too "pure." By shutting ourselves up in our shell we have lost those indispensable outside contacts. Cambodia no longer appears on the international scene, except in the case of recent frontier events. This is regrettable. I expect to go in person to Saigon and then to Bangkok to meet with President Diem and the

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

head of the Thai government. These trips will be...for the purpose of relieving strain in our relations and clearing the atmosphere. (Emphasis added)

The strain to which Sihanouk referred derived from an increasing number of border incidents, some of which involved the Thais but most of which grew out of counter-insurgency operations in South Vietnam. In late June Vietnamese troops, in pursuit of Viet Cong, had attacked and briefly occupied the Cambodian village of Pak Nhay. Such incidents had always drawn strong protests from Cambodia, but had not generally developed into full-blown crises. The aftermath of the Pak Nhay affair, however, prompted Sihanouk to call off his trip to Saigon. One factor probably was the appearance of press criticism of the Prince in the Saigon press, including the official Times of Vietnam. A second factor was implicit in Sihanouk's 5 July interview; he wanted Cambodia in the headlines, and his refusal to proceed with his trip to Saigon was one way to accomplish this.

On the day that he was to have flown to Saigon, Sihanouk left for Bangkok, taking a circuitous route that allowed him to first consult with Nehru in New Delhi. Among the topics to be discussed with the Thais were trade, agreement on customs, and joint action to prevent "crimes" along the Khmer-Thai border. Far from providing the basis for a rapprochement, however, the Bangkok negotiations proved acrimonious from the start. Cambodian charges that Thailand was not respecting Cambodia's neutrality were countered by Thai allegations that Cambodia was a base for Communist infiltration into Thailand. Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh convinced more than ever that Thailand and South Vietnam were his implacable foes.

#### D. China Again

Sihanouk had scarcely returned to Phnom Penh when he made a dramatic announcement: Cambodia would recognize the Peiping government as the legal government of China.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

On 23 July, Sihanouk and Chou En-lai exchanged congratulatory messages. The Prince made no secret of the fact that Cambodia's relations with its two SEATO neighbors had contributed to his decision. Since Sihanouk had doubtless planned his recognition move for some time, he may have deliberately acerbated relations with his neighbors in order that he might pose as the injured party in connection with the recognition of China. On 24 July Sihanouk announced his decision, including both an explanation and a slap at Thailand and South Vietnam:

Because of the speedy establishment of a deep and lasting friendship with Premier Chou En-lai during the Bandung conference in 1955, I have renewed the traditional relations between us and you. Our nation has devoted its efforts to normalizing such relations. This is because I believe: (1) that New China, being strong and great, will never breach the trust we have bestowed on it and will forever respect the principles of peace, friendship, cooperation, mutual benefit and noninterference in internal affairs; (2) that the Khmer people are very willing to rely on the Chinese people for the strong defense of our freedom, independence, and our own and world peace.

Under the circumstances it was hardly surprising that Sihanouk received a new invitation to visit Communist China. When he arrived on 14 August, the welcome mat was out even more than in 1956. Chou En-lai hardly left his elbow. Mao entertained him for two days at a seaside resort, where Sihanouk was informed that only Khrushchev had been allowed as many conversations with the Supreme Leader in the course of a single visit. Sihanouk was effusive in his praise of China's reconstruction, while his hosts were equally emphatic in their endorsement of the Five Principles. As during Chou's visit to Cambodia, peaceful coexistence was cemented at a reception hosted by the Indian ambassador.

- 39 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Although much of Sihanouk's visit was devoted to sightseeing, there was also discussion of trade. The Chinese--about to embark on the abortive Leap Forward--promised to provide, in addition to their earlier aid commitment, assistance in the construction of small iron and steel works in Cambodia. There is no evidence that China's "back yard" blast furnaces ever made the transition to Cambodia.

Between pledges of eternal friendship, a certain amount of negotiation took place in Peiping. Subsequent statements by Sihanouk suggest that he asked the Chinese to keep the Viet Minh out of Cambodia, and received assurances that they would. The Prince may also have sought assurance that China would assist Cambodia in any war with Vietnam or Thailand. While evidence of any iron-clad agreement is lacking, Sihanouk's subsequent behavior has indicated that he is confident that, if fighting broke out, the Chinese would regard it as in their interest to intervene. The one area in which Sihanouk appears certain to have pressed the Chinese concerned the overseas Chinese in Cambodia. At a banquet on 24 August Chou En-lai provided reassurance:

....Some countries, in order to sow discord between China and the Southeast Asian countries and to damage China's international prestige, have spread the false story about China's employing the Overseas Chinese to carry out subversive activities. But the facts show that the overwhelming majority of the Overseas Chinese in Southeast Asian countries have always lived on friendly terms with the local inhabitants in accordance with the directives of the Chinese government....

We note with satisfaction that full respect and confidence prevails between the Chinese and Cambodian governments on the question of Overseas Chinese, thus preventing the exercise of any

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

influence by sowers of discord. This is another concrete manifestation of Sino-Cambodian friendship.

As for Sihanouk, he avoided echoing his hosts' attacks on the U.S. on issues such as the Lebanon landing and the Taiwan Straits. He was characteristically sensitive concerning Western criticism of his recent actions, and at one point stated that while Cambodia "thanked" those countries which gave her aid, "if they should desire to withdraw such aid we do not think we would die as a result. In such an eventuality, we would simply endure more sacrifices in order to preserve our country."

When leave-taking came, it was apparent that Sihanouk had been greatly impressed with the mixture of pig iron and flattery. In his departure speech the Prince observed,

The Chinese people have a sincere love for peace. They make their unprecedented achievements serve the welfare of the entire people and the strengthening of friendship with other countries under an atmosphere of peace and prosperity. The Khmer people are proud of having your friendship, especially when we see that you are not haughty and selfish at all, although you are great and strong.

His triumphant return from Peiping did not mark the end of Sihanouk's travels for the year. In September he took off for the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York. The UN session was, in Sihanouk's eyes, the embodiment of degradation and humiliation. With his encyclopedic memory for insults and slights, Sihanouk can to this day recite his grievances in connection with his visits to the UN.\* Whereas only a month before

---

\*The most extended discussion by Sihanouk of his "humiliations" in New York is one which he delivered following (footnote continued on page 42)

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

he had been the center of attention in Peiping, in New York there was no adulation, little praise, and worst of all almost no attention.

(Footnote continued from page 41)

his visit to the UN in 1960, to the UN session made memorable by Khrushchev's shoe-pounding. On returning to Phnom Penh he poured out his frustrations to his countrymen:

The addresses of the "colossi," of the "first tenors," of the "stars," were applauded noisily by those who found them in their own interests, by their clans, by their satellites, by their associates and by their accomplices. /The "stars" linger in the corridors and salons to indulge in secret meetings, in varied maneuvers, and also to offer themselves for the adoration of admirers, courtesans and the ladies and gentlemen of the press....

Sihanouk himself delivered in 1960 a reasoned defense of Cambodia's neutralism, called for the admission of Communist China, and advocated independence for Algeria. His subsequent remarks indicate his sensitivity to how his speech was received:

Among the greats, the Yugoslavs, the French and the Americans demonstrated for fair play. According to the observations of the press, Marshal Tito did not hesitate to applaud me briskly behind an abstentionist Khrushchev. Mr. Herter... warmly applauded certain passages in spite of the poisoned arrows that I launched against certain responsible parties, certain agents and certain American journals. As to our French friends, they too applauded me, in spite of the paragraph on the Algerian

(footnote continued on page 43)

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(footnote continued from page 42)

question, strongly risking the displeasure of General de Gaulle....

The majority of Sihanouk's grievances were related to matters of protocol:

For Mr. Khrushchev, /America/ reserved hundreds of policemen, several squadrons of motorcyclists and patrol cars that cluttered the entire city. When our delegation had the bad luck to go out at about the same time as the Soviet prime minister, or any other "great," the Yankee police rudely stopped us to make way for the passage of these "greats." This mishap at times brought about more or less lengthy and embarrassing delays in getting to our appointments....

On my arrival in New York, a policeman was assigned to guard the door of my room. By contrast, President Sukarno, who lived in the same hotel as I did, found himself furnished with detectives, bodyguards and uniformed police escorts. Must I state that I sent my unfortunate, sad and solitary policeman on his way?

/One day/ Marshal Tito offered to accompany me to the United Nations, in order, he said, to give me the benefit... that his escort provided him. He had at his disposal two or three escort cars and a squad of motorcycles, which were certainly far fewer than what was reserved for Mr. Khrushchev, but much more than what was authorized for the Vice President of the Council of Morocco, Prince Moulay Hassan, who in comparison had only an escort car with siren, but no motorcycles.

(footnote continued on page 44)

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

(footnote continued from page 43)

As Chief of State of Cambodia, I should have enjoyed at least the same privileges and facilities as those of the Vice President of the Moroccan Council. This was made especially clear one day when my car was forced to make way for the car of Prince Moulay Hassan, the presence of which was announced by its powerful siren....

A rather embarrassed American friend thought it necessary to give me this astonishing explanation: "You are," he said to me, "one of the rare leaders who has only friends here in the United States. It is for this reason, I think, that our government did not think it necessary to have you escorted."

I accept this nice thesis, but doubt strongly that my compatriots accept it willingly. They know too well...the sentiments of certain American circles toward me and toward our neutrality--imperialist sentiment that is reflected so naively in Time and other rags--not to be troubled by them.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Although Sihanouk was to become a frequent visitor to New York, his statesmanship never encompassed issues beyond those which affected his own country. He had demonstrated a certain talent in capitalizing on the Cold War to his country's benefit. He had skillfully gained the friendship of China as the most likely source of assistance against the Thais and Vietnamese. At a meeting where Cambodian interests were not at stake, however, Sihanouk was incapable of taking the broad view, and usually demonstrated instead a first-class inferiority complex. It is interesting that his protocol grievances are directed only in part against the U.S. as host country; he was deeply resentful toward the big-power diplomacy in which Khrushchev, Sukarno and the Vice President of the Council of Morocco all rated larger escorts than he. Sihanouk clung desperately to the diplomatic fiction concerning the equality of nations. He could accept the political reality that a country of five million was small potatoes; when circumstances conspired to deny him even the trappings of equality, however, he didn't want to play.

There was another side to this same coin. The one area in which a small power could play a role on the world scene was in the role of arbiter and conciliator between the two great blocs. But to be a third force of any kind required that Cambodia be accorded proper respect, and this Sihanouk felt was denied him at the UN.

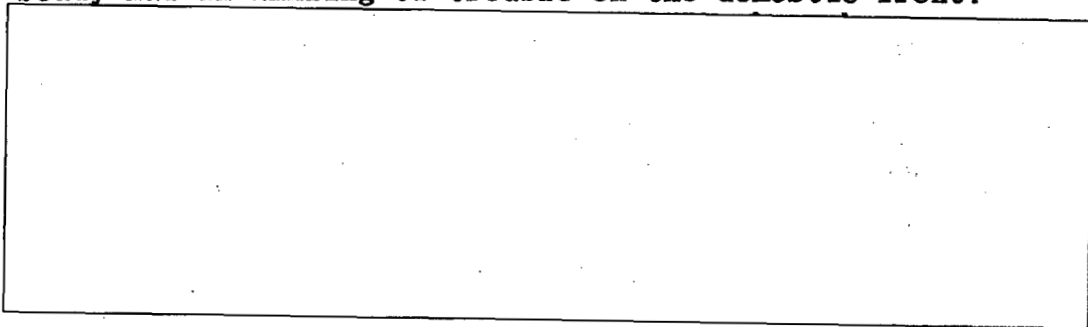
~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

### III. ALARUMS AND EXCURSIONS

#### A. Dap Chhuon and Sam Sary

When Sihanouk returned home from the U.S., he already had an inkling of trouble on the domestic front.



Sihanouk probably had an idea as to one of the troublemakers. Sam Sary, the erstwhile economic czar, had returned from a leader grant in the U.S. sufficiently pro-Western in outlook that Sihanouk named him as ambassador to Great Britain. There Sary incurred unfavorable publicity when he defended in letters to London newspapers his action in beating his children's Cambodian governess, even after it was revealed that she was pregnant by Sary. Brought home in disgrace, Sary was rumored to have joined Dap Chhuon in opposition to Sihanouk's neutralism, and to certain of his domestic policies--notably the Prince's refusal to permit rice exports, on grounds that the Royal Astrologer had predicted a poor rice crop for 1959.

Although Sihanouk mistrusted Sary, he was curiously relaxed concerning Dap Chhuon, even though Chhuon made only nominal obeissance to Sihanouk and ran Siem Reap province according to his own whim. As early as March 1956, Chhuon--then chief of the palace guard--had told Ambassador Strom that he was "awaiting a favorable opportunity" to frustrate Sihanouk's neutralism and to

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

break relations with the bloc. On two other occasions Chhuon solicited US support for a coup, apparently without tipping his hand to Sihanouk. In July 1958, Chhuon sent word to the U.S. ambassador that he was "deeply disturbed" by his country's recognition of Communist China, adding that while he was loyal to Sihanouk that he "loved his country" more than the Prince.

In 1958 Chhuon had been promoted to brigadier general and been made governor of his home province of Siem Reap. There he commanded three battalions of the Cambodian army, and was regarded by some observers in Phnom Penh as having considerable influence also in the palace guard. Undaunted by his rebuffs from the U.S. ambassador, Dap Chhuon solidified his hold on western Cambodia and contemplated means of bringing off a coup.

Chhuon's plot might have remained an internal political problem had not Sihanouk, in November 1958, suspended diplomatic relations with Thailand. In Saigon, President Diem had long considered Sihanouk a menace to his country, the channel by which Peiping might achieve a foothold in Southeast Asia without recourse to arms. When on 24 November Cambodia "temporarily suspended" its representation in Bangkok, Diem had little trouble in winning Thailand's Sarit to his view of Sihanouk. Sihanouk's action had indeed been precipitous, as the border incidents to which he alluded in justifying the break were of no particular consequence. The Thais' main sin appeared to be that a number of Bangkok newspapers had criticized Cambodia's recognition of Communist China, and the Thai police had tightened controls along the Cambodian border.

Prospects for Sihanouk's ouster appeared to brighten in December, when Sam Sary--enticed by the Vietnamese--defected to Saigon. Sary not only was in full agreement with Diem concerning the desirability of removing Sihanouk, but was able to advise the Vietnamese concerning Chhuon's attitude, if they did not know of it already. In the first week of January 1959, Ngo Trong Hieu, the representative of Diem's special intelligence (SEPES) in Phnom Penh, traveled to Bangkok for a week of talks with senior members of the Thai ruling junta, plus Sam Sary. In

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

conversation [ ] Gen. Prapat stated that the Thais had determined to support an anti-Sihanouk coup, but conceded that its success involved cooperation by Cambodian army chief of staff Lon Nol. The plotters, however, were not entirely without assets of their own. In addition to Dap Chhuon and his 3,000 men in Siem Reap province, an estimated 1,200 Cambodian dissidents under Son Ngoc Thanh were "training" on the Thai side of the border, and there appears to have been a smaller group of Cambodian dissidents in South Vietnam.

Prapat, who claimed [ ] that he was in "full control" of the coup plotting, stated that the coup would begin with the infiltration of Sam Sary into Cambodia for the purpose of disseminating propaganda and "organizing" the political opposition. After a time there was to be an army coup, presumably led by Dap Chhuon with the connivance of Lon Nol. The circumstances in which Son Ngoc Thanh's force would be used were vague, but it was presumably available to reinforce Dap Chhuon should the need arise.

At about the time that Prapat was briefing [ ] concerning his plans, the Chinese and Soviet embassies in Phnom Penh were warning Sihanouk of a possible coup attempt. At some point, the French also passed a warning to the Prince. It appears likely that all three governments derived their information from the same source: insecure SEPES messages from Saigon to Bangkok. These and subsequent messages, including some to Chhuon's headquarters at Siem Reap, were also being monitored by US agencies, but the threat to Sihanouk brought no word of warning from Washington.

As time went on, Prapat's plan gave way to improvisation. Sam Sary never did reenter Cambodia, [ ] if there was to be a coup the main responsibility would fall on Chhuon. Even with outside assistance, however, Chhuon's three battalions were badly outnumbered by the 25,000 men in Cambodian army units outside his jurisdiction. For reasons not clear today, Lon Nol was felt by the plotters to be sympathetic to their cause. In the wake of

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

the bloc and French warnings, however, security was tightened in Phnom Penh, and US Embassy personnel were among those placed under surveillance.

Ironically, any suspicion which might have attached to Dap Chhuon appears to have been diverted by Sary's defection. Sihanouk actually assigned to Chhuon responsibility for investigating the coup reports, and for arresting Sary if he could be located. In public speeches on 10 and 13 January, Sihanouk charged that Thailand and South Vietnam were plotting his overthrow, in collaboration with Sam Sary and Son Ngoc Thanh. He confirmed that his information had come from "foreign" sources, but the lack of specifics suggests that the Prince's friends had been properly vague concerning their sources of information.

On 24 January, Realites published an interview with Sihanouk in which he stated that the United States must know of Sary's plotting, and that the Americans' failure to warn him "places their impartiality in doubt." Even as Sihanouk spoke, Son Ngoc Thanh's dissidents were unlimbering a mobile, U.S.-made radio transmitter, provided by the Thais for propaganda support of the coup. Dap Chhuon, meanwhile, informed the Thais that his coup would take place in mid-February, and indicated that he would require military as well as propaganda support.

By early February Sihanouk had awakened to the danger from Dap Chhuon, who drew attention to himself by refusing to come to Phnom Penh for the wedding of one of Sihanouk's daughters. The Prince's suspicions were confirmed when he was told that Cambodian army officers from Phnom Penh were not permitted to inspect Chhuon's troops. Chhuon had long been recognized as independent-minded, and disposed to run his own show in Siem Reap. Belatedly, however, Sihanouk realized that Sam Sary was the least of his worries.

On 20 February, Chhuon precipitated a showdown by forwarding a "declaration of dissidence" to King Suramarit. Chhuon apparently hoped to exact concessions from the government rather than to remove Sihanouk by force, and in

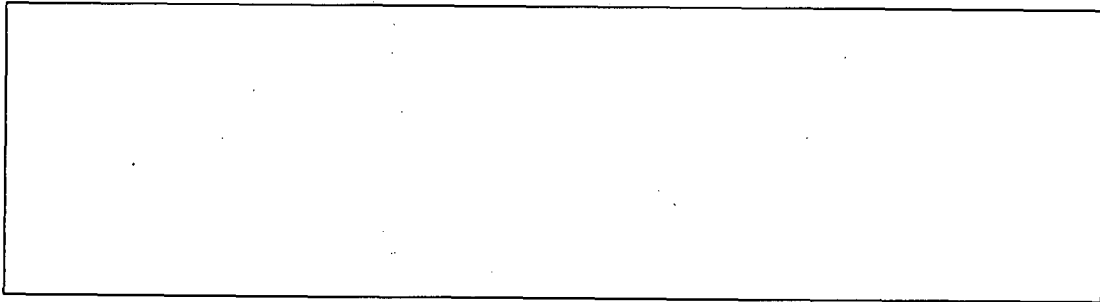
~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

pursuit of this modest goal had become impatient for a confrontation. No negotiations were forthcoming, however, and the result was disaster for Dap Chhuon.

The only Western power which had assumed from the first that the plot would fail was France. Once Chhuon had burned his bridges, the French set out to assure that he did fail. French Ambassador Gorce flew to Siem Reap, ostensibly for another look at the monuments at Ankor. In Phnom Penh, the French military mission supervised the mobilization of an armored column, and drove it with unprecedented efficiency to Siem Reap on the night of 21-22 February. There was no resistance; Chhuon was taken so completely by surprise that he was barely able to make his escape. Even this was only a respite, and ten days later he was shot and killed while trying to reach the Thai border.

In the aftermath of his successful counter coup, Sihanouk chose to be cozy concerning the matter of U.S. involvement. [REDACTED] (For all his "mercurial" temperament, Sihanouk has never been one to fly off the handle on important matters of state. Rather, he is prone to brood on real or imagined injuries until righteous indignation has fermented into implacable hatred.) He contented himself with making it very clear that he was not fooled by U.S. denials of complicity, and this point he made not by formally accusing the U.S. but by letting the conspirators speak for themselves.



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

On 2 March, Sihanouk accepted the plaudits of the multitude at Siem Reap. In discussing outside support for Dap Chhuon he mentioned only the South Vietnamese by name: two Vietnamese radio operators, he said, had been captured in Chhuon's house along with six new radio sets. According to Sihanouk, radio logs indicated that the sets had been used to establish contact with Son Ngoc Thanh's force in Thailand. The official Cambodian broadcast stated that Sihanouk also read the confession of Chhuon's brother, Kem Srey, and of his mistress. The broadcast stated that the testimony had "seriously implicated" the Vietnamese representative in Phnom Penh, Nguyen Van Nhieu, but mentioned no Americans.

In a speech before the Khmer Socialist Youth--a Sangkum affiliate--Sihanouk discussed the plot in greater detail on 4 March. Basic to the plot, according to the Prince, was Cambodia's refusal to join SEATO, an action which provided Cambodia's neighbors with the pretext for encroachments on its territory. After characterizing Dap Chhuon and his entourage as the rotten apples to be found in any barrel, he expressed gratitude for the timely warnings he had received from three friendly governments, "two governments from the Socialist camp and one government from the Western camp." He hinted that more revelations would follow:

Finally, we should mention the declaration of another of Dap Chhuon's brothers, former National Assembly Deputy Slat Peou, which revealed that he was responsible for regular contacts with the embassy of a great SEATO power.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]  
[redacted]

No name was mentioned. Any chance that the Dap Chhuon case might be allowed to die a quiet death, however, was dispelled by the inauguration of anti-Sihanouk broadcasts by Son Ngoc Thanh's mobile transmitters. In March, Thanh began broadcasts in the name of the Khmer Serei (Free Khmers). Government forces were unable to locate and seize the transmitters, and as time went on the broadcasts became an obsession with Sihanouk.

In September, the background of the Dap Chhuon affair came out in the open when 18 of his followers, including two of his brothers, were tried for treason by a military court. The most sensational aspect of the trial was the testimony of one of the brothers, Slat Peou [redacted]  
[redacted]

On February 11, /Dap Chhuon/ told me that Ngo Trong Hieu had given him a quantity of gold worth 30 millions (sic).  
[redacted]

Peou went on to provide details of his [redacted] network, which included [redacted] [redacted] the office of the Vietnamese representative, Son Ngoc Thanh's jungle headquarters, and the "South Vietnam central post," which may have been SEPES headquarters in Saigon.

#### B. The Aftermath

Publication of Peou's testimony, which could have been taken privately, was symptomatic of Cambodia's deteriorating relations with the US and South Vietnam. Although

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]  
[redacted]



the Dap Chhuon plot appeared to be the most important factor influencing Sihanouk's outlook, it was not the only one.

Sihanouk vacationed in France during April and May, and returned to Cambodia in a seemingly mellow mood. Far from preoccupying himself with Thai and Vietnamese intrigues, he appeared prepared to let bygones be bygones. The Thai foreign minister visited Phnom Penh in mid-June, where he and Sihanouk reached agreement on a "press truce," and exchanged pledges of noninterference in one another's internal affairs. For the next three months, Thai and Cambodian papers refrained from personal attacks of the kind which had prompted Sihanouk to suspend diplomatic relations the previous November.\*

Sihanouk's next effort at fence-mending centered on the Vietnamese. He visited Saigon for three days in August, and there held reasonably cordial talks with Diem and his advisors. Agreement was reached on several administrative problems in the area of trade relations and border controls. On broader issues, however, the Cambodians and the Vietnamese remained far apart. Sihanouk contended that neutrality was the only policy consistent with the self-interest of small nations, and cited the civil war in Laos as the result of the government's taking too strong an anti-Communist stand. When chided about Cambodia's recognition of Communist China, Sihanouk reportedly observed that "one cannot oppose destiny"--

---

\*Despite these achievements, a number of outstanding issues were left unresolved. Diplomatic relations were not restored, and there was no agreement concerning Wat Preah Vihear, the historic monastery on the Thai-Cambodian border which was claimed by both countries but occupied by the Thais. Moreover, in providing a base for the Khmer Serei, the Thais were even then flouting their pledge to prohibit any activity on their territory "which could adversely affect the security of the other country."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

an early reflection of Sihanouk's belief, more firmly held today, that Communist ascendancy in Southeast Asia was a foregone conclusion.

It should be noted that, in 1959 as today, Sihanouk spoke with at least three voices. The first was reserved for official negotiations, as with the Thais in Phnom Penh and with Diem in Saigon. Sihanouk's "diplomatic" voice was usually affable rather than strident, but was the least reliable indicator of the Prince's true views. Although he could be forthright on occasion, as in certain of his conversations with the Vietnamese, he was prone to be agreeable as a matter of diplomatic etiquette so long as he was accorded satisfactory protocol treatment.

The second voice was that of the Chautauqua Prince, the stump speaker who was never more at ease than when visiting remote villages of the Kingdom, dedicating schools and exhorting his subjects. In his interminable speeches to the "venerables, bonzes and dear children", Sihanouk kicked over all the traces. As if in private conversation (although it was a rare speech by Sihanouk which was not broadcast throughout Cambodia), he would excoriate the Thais or the Khmer Serei; rage over the latest border incursion by the Vietnamese; flaunt his willingness to accept aid from all quarters; laud Sangkum socialism as Cambodia's middle way. Sihanouk's impromptu orations became the bane of official visitors, for no conversation was too sensitive to be shared by Sihanouk with his "children." The Prince had no compunction about repeating the substance of a confidential discussion over the radio to five million Khmers and anyone else who might happen to be listening.\*

The distinction between this unrestrained second voice and the third was essentially the difference between "the spoken and the written word." The distinction was important to Sihanouk, who resented foreign monitoring of his radio monologues, and to this day refuses to acknowledge them as official utterances. Many of his informal addresses were toned down, edited, and run in Realites, The Nationalist, or some other semi-official organ. Sihanouk would accept responsibility only for such "official" versions of his addresses.

---

\*One example of Sihanouk's handling of a somewhat delicate issue will be found in Annex "B."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

A predictable result was that the Prince, when using his third voice, could be fairly bland. On occasion, however, his more formal pronouncements embodied some of Sihanouk's best-reasoned rationales of Cambodian policy. Certain of his essays in Realites have been noted elsewhere. Equally interesting was an article by Sihanouk in the July 1959 issue of Foreign Affairs, which he titled "Cambodia Neutral: The Dictate of Necessity." The gist of Sihanouk's thesis was that there was no alternative to neutrality for a country in Cambodia's geographical position, and that Cambodian neutralism was more like that of Sweden or Switzerland than that of Egypt or Indonesia.

Our neutrality has been forced on us by necessity. A glance at a map of our part of the world will show that we are wedged in between two medium-sized nations of the Western bloc and only thinly screened by Laos from the scrutiny of two countries of the Eastern bloc, North Vietnam and the vast People's Republic of China. What choice have we but to try to maintain an equal balance between the "blocs?"...

I have sometimes been represented to the American public as trying to "flirt with the Reds." The fact is that I abdicated in 1955 to save the monarchy--not to abandon it....I am sure that the citizens of the United States can appreciate that, short of being mentally deranged, a Prince and former King must be well aware that the first concern of the Communists is to get rid of the King and natural elite of any country they succeed in laying hands on. By that I do not mean to imply that the Communists wish to take possession of Cambodia; that may not enter into their plans at all and, for the moment at least, they have far weightier matters to occupy them....

- 55 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

We are not a "breach" in the Western bloc merely because we cannot be a "rampart." In the event of a world conflict, we might very well become one of the first victims of a harsh occupation. In that case, the "free world" would have other things to do besides undertaking our liberation--or rather the liberation of what little remained of us.

The geopolitical insecurity to which Sihanouk alluded was shortly dramatized in Phnom Penh. On the evening of 31 August, a plastic bomb exploded in the palace, killing the chief of protocol and three servants. Only minutes before, the King and Queen had been in the room where the explosion took place; the bomb itself had come wrapped as a gift, with a card expressing the wish that "this humble gift...might give the Queen pleasure."\*

It is unclear to this day who was responsible for the bomb. Sihanouk expressed to the U.S. ambassador his conviction that Sam Sary was the culprit, and government spokesmen contended that the writing on the card was in Sary's hand. The fact that the note was on the card of a U.S. engineering firm, however, and the fact that the Queen was one of the few conservative voices close to Sihanouk, allow a good case to be made for the bomb having originated with the Pracheachon.

To Sihanouk, however, Sary was the culprit, and Sihanouk was all too prone to equate Sary with South Vietnam,

\*Even before the bomb, Sihanouk's parents were upset over prospects for calendar 1959 as a result of certain auguries and omens. Allegedly, a Cambodian bonze had told the King three years earlier that 1959 would bring a serious upheaval affecting the royal family. One result of the Dap Chhuon affair was that the King refused to go to France for treatment of a serious kidney ailment, on grounds that something might happen to Sihanouk while he was gone.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

and South Vietnam with the US. The bomb brought an end to Sihanouk's effort to improve relations with his neighbors, and reinforced his sense of personal insecurity. Sihanouk's attitude hardened further following the apprehension in September of three Khmer Serei, who stated that they had been trained at a sabotage school in South Vietnam. In a 17 October article in The Nationalist, the Prince warned one and all that support of the Khmer Serei by Cambodia's neighbors, if pushed too far, would force Cambodia to ally itself with the bloc.

C. Through Sihanouk's Eyes

In late August, Sihanouk began a series of articles in Realites Cambodgiennes designed to set forth his view of the world situation and the future of Cambodia. The title of the series--"Will Cambodia Become a Republic?"--was a misnomer, for the articles were in fact an extended discussion of the various pressures, as seen by the Prince, at work against Cambodia.

Sihanouk began with a discussion of monarchies in general, with emphasis on the number of kings who had lost their crowns in the years following World War II. He then launched into a recital of recent Cambodian history in which his opponents--particularly Son Ngoc Thanh--were cast in the role of enemies of the monarchy. Only the Democrats came out reasonably well in Sihanouk's analysis. He cited with satisfaction "the reconciliation and almost total integration of this party in the body of the Sangkum." Reflecting on his earlier battles with the Democratic Party, Sihanouk quoted with approval Ngo Dinh Nhu as stating that the highest form of courage for a statesman was "to dare to face unpopularity."

To save our country and even our democracy itself, I, myself, did not hesitate to brave unpopularity. Certain people wished, of course, to take the merit from me in order to give it to either the "heroic member of the resistance, Thanh, (who resisted the King but never the French troops)

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

or to the Geneva conference, where our delegation nevertheless fought with courage and success to spare our people the sad fate of our neighboring brother-countries.

Virtually all of the ten articles included potshots at Thanh, which were disruptive to organization but which lent a thread of consistency to the series. In the fourth article, Sihanouk helped to analyze Thanh's difficulty. "Thanh's error," he wrote, "is to have chosen for his objective...to destroy our neutrality. Living outside the country, Thanh and his people are not able to understand the profound sentiments and convictions of their compatriots who have stayed in the fatherland."

Sihanouk wrote with satisfaction of the defeat of the Dap Chhuon uprising. He characterized Thanh as having done his country a service by helping to expose the Sam Sary-Dap Chhuon "gangrene" in the body politic. He implied that he no longer feared the Thanhists, so completely had they discredited themselves. It was difficult to quarrel with his logic: the "traditional" opposition groups in Cambodia had indeed been assimilated into the Sangkum or driven outside Cambodia's borders.

Beginning with the fifth article, Sihanouk devoted most of his attention to the Communists. At the outset he conceded that the Communists had made "progress" in Cambodia, and emphasized that, far from being oblivious to the Communist threat, he was very much aware of it. Sihanouk contended that Communism had made no progress within Cambodia (his emphasis). He stated correctly that the monarchy enjoyed the support of the great majority of the people; he added, without elaboration, that the Chinese and Vietnamese communities were peaceful and law-abiding. Sihanouk arrived at the conclusion that the Communist threat was no greater in 1959 than in previous years, but that it was still a problem.

Sihanouk viewed Communism as essentially a long-term threat. He cited four factors as assisting the Communists: the existence of an "unoccupied" class, susceptible

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

to Communist blandishments; the rural exodus, which in one year had increased the population of Phnom Penh by 10,000 and provided the basis of an urban proletariat; the vulnerability of an uneducated and largely illiterate populace to Communist propaganda; and the attraction of Communism to Cambodian students abroad.

Of those students at foreign universities (Cambodia still had no university of its own), 90 percent went to France. Sihanouk favored French education in principle, but was concerned over Communist proselytizing among homesick Cambodian students:

One must impute...this unhappy state of affairs to the Governments which have succeeded each other here in Cambodia since 1946. They contented themselves with giving scholarships to these youths and sending them off...towards the unknown, to adventure in the Tower of Babel which is the "Latin Quarter."

Our diplomatic representatives hardly bothered themselves...about the living conditions of these state scholarship students, away from home, abandoned, in moral disarray; these latter could not but accept with gratitude the fact that "someone" bothered with them.

According to Sihanouk, the "someone" was inevitably a Communist, and as a result 70 percent of Cambodian students in France returned as Communists. Of this 70 percent, slightly more than half were "recovered" after they "regained touch with national realities." This still left a Communist hard core comprising 30 percent of the total--more than 100 students per year--and this, Sihanouk conceded, was an unhappy state of affairs.

Sihanouk then turned to the question of Communist economic aid, and disarmed his Western critics by conceding at the outset that the presence of Chinese and Soviet technicians in Cambodia was bound to produce "a certain contamination." He observed, in explanation, that a poor

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

country such as Cambodia "could not afford the luxury" of refusing a factory or a 500-bed hospital.

Despite his misgivings concerning bloc aid, Sihanouk derived comfort from his belief in an eventual Communist victory. (Although he did not qualify his statements, references to the inevitability of Communist domination appeared to refer primarily to Southeast Asia.) He argued, implicitly, that the only policy for Cambodia was to delay the day of reckoning as best it could, and to avoid antagonizing the bloc where possible. And since it was only a matter of time, no real harm could come from the acceptance of bloc aid.

This /constant Communist/ advance is undeniable. To be frank, I see as yet little which would be able to stop it and make it pull back....

The Hungarian people failed tragically in their attempt at rebellion, without the "West" or the UN being able to spare them vigorous and terribly bloody reprisals.

Sihanouk paid tribute to the democratic ideal, but regarded the West as a weak reed in the face of social realities in Asia:

The superiority of Western Democracy lies in the fact that it places man at the summit, while man is reduced by Communism to the position of a slave of the all-powerful State, which is not the people but a "symbol" of the people.

The great weakness of Western democracy lies in its incapacity to realize social justice in the sense understood by Marxism.... Western democracy is intrinsically difficult to apply in Asia and in Africa. That is why Communism attacks in these regions with so much success: first the social injustices (or inequalities) are

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

much more marked there than elsewhere, and /secondly, they are/ more difficult to eliminate because the countries in question are, as I believe Mr. Nehru has said, two revolutions behind Europe or America and are barely emerging from the feudal system.

Sihanouk went on to lecture the West concerning its spiritual shortcomings, and then turned to the question of the succession in Cambodia. Emphasizing that he himself would never return to the throne, he spoke sympathetically of those who were concerned over the succession to King Suramarit. Sihanouk launched into a eulogy of his parents: the King was an ideal monarch and a tremendous unifying force, the Queen "an intelligent woman" who was the tool of neither the United States nor anyone else. Sihanouk conceded that he was not sanguine as to possible successors to his ailing father, even though the Crown Council had 183 persons of royal blood from whom to choose a king.

The Sihanouk who emerges from the Realites series is a bombastic, rambling but essentially shrewd observer. As if stung by charges in the Western press that he was "taken in" by the Communists, he demonstrated in the articles a clear awareness of the Communist threat, if also a rather defeatist attitude towards it both for Cambodia and the West. The most striking aspect of the series was the infrequent mention of Cambodia's traditional enemies, Thailand and Vietnam, even though the palace bomb incident occurred early in the period in which the articles were published.

Thus Sihanouk and Cambodia were firmly committed to a policy of neutralism at the end of 1959. Their ties to the West, however, were being frayed. On a balance sheet, Western assets in Cambodia would have included its proportionately large aid program, Sihanouk's demonstrated annoyance with Communist methods and objectives, and his admiration for things French. There were, however, serious liabilities: Sihanouk's fear--acerbated by the Dap Chhuon affair--of encroachments by his SEATO neighbors; his

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

admiration for the New China, especially the way it treated distinguished guests; his hypersensitivity to criticism, which was rarely impinged upon by the bloc but often by the Western press; and, finally, his belief in the inevitability of a Communist triumph in Southeast Asia. Of all the factors on the balance sheet, this last one was the most important.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### IV. THE POLITICS OF NEUTRALISM

##### A. The Lonesome Prince

In January 1960, the U.S. Embassy at Phnom Penh examined Sihanouk's position in Cambodia and found it secure. Among the peasants--80 percent of the population--Sihanouk was still the god-king, venerated as the father of Cambodian independence. To a considerable extent, this uncritical acceptance was also found among urban workers. Only the urban intelligentsia retained strong reservations concerning the Prince, and here the prevailing attitude was not so much hostility as of bored indifference.

In one speech, Sihanouk volunteered his estimate that 10 percent of the populace was "against" him. The embassy hazarded a guess that this figure "may be somewhat low," but dismissed the opposition to Sihanouk as a leaderless pot pourri comprising a "relatively insignificant number" of Khmer Serei, some former Democratic party elements, certain businessmen opposed to the Sangkum welfare state, and a "handful" of pro-Western individuals critical of Sihanouk's neutralism.

The Cambodian press was so well trained that criticism of the Prince was unknown. What criticism existed was directed at certain government programs (such as the manual labor program, which Sihanouk had borrowed from China's Leap Forward) or at economic phenomena such as the increased cost of living, which was a factor in the cities but not in the countryside. Censorship of the press was only occasionally necessary, even though Phnom Penh was surfeited with newspapers, including four controlled by the Communists and two by Sihanouk (Realites, The Nationalist). Even the opposition papers were sycophantic concerning Sihanouk personally, not from conviction but out of a desire to stay in print.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

The death of King Suramarit in April 1960 left Sihanouk with a political problem of some magnitude. Despite the ceremonial role to which the monarch had been relegated, considerable intrigue accompanied deliberations concerning the succession. The Queen appears to have sought the prerogatives of the late King, and to have entertained hopes of strengthening the throne as a conservative bulwark. Sihanouk, predictably, had no desire to strengthen the monarchy; nor was he impressed with the qualifications any of his sons or other members of the royal family. For nearly two months the country operated under a makeshift three-man regency comprised of Sihanouk, Prince Monireth, and the Queen.

Although steadfast in his own refusal to return to the throne, Sihanouk appeared reluctant to see anyone else in the theoretically paramount post. Thus in June he held another of his do-you-love-your-Prince referendums, in which out of over two million voters 99.98 percent voted yes. The referendum was followed by demonstrations in which Sihanouk was called upon to assume the post of chief of state. Sihanouk resigned from the regency, which brought about its collapse on 12 June. The National Assembly quickly amended the constitution to provide for a chief of state, to be filled by "an uncontested personality expressly designated by the national suffrage." Sihanouk thus became king in all except name.

Resolution of the succession problem brought little satisfaction to Sihanouk. His concern over international affairs, particularly Cambodia's relations with the West, appears to have brought on a physical reaction during 1960. Long a compulsive eater, Sihanouk went on a diet in the spring which did nothing to improve his disposition. There were unconfirmed reports in Phnom Penh that the Prince was suffering from a cardiovascular condition.

High on the list of Sihanouk's concerns was the threat posed by Thailand and Vietnam. These concerns were ministered to by Chou En-lai, who from 5-9 May returned Sihanouk's previous visit to Peiping. (Sihanouk later spoke of his shame at having to entertain Chou on the same motor launch which he had employed in 1956. He

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

explained that he had saved face by repainting the boat "so that Chou would not recognize it.") Reports on their conversations indicate that Sihanouk returned time and time again to the question of Cambodia's defense and security. According to one report, the Chinese promised "to use their influence" with Ho Chi Minh to persuade the Viet Cong to respect Cambodia's neutrality, and to avoid incidents close to the Cambodian border. Following a cruise on the Bay of Siam in Sihanouk's newly-painted launch, Chou announced China's support for Cambodia's title to several small islands claimed by the South Vietnamese.

Concerning Sihanouk's hunger for assurances of military support against any of the SEATO powers, Chou was evasive. The final communique was bland, and the Chinese went no further than to promise "moral and political support" to Cambodia. Any other assistance, Chou stated, would depend on Cambodia's needs, the resources at Peiping's disposal, and the conditions prevailing at any given time.

If Sihanouk was disappointed by the cautious Chinese commitment, he gave no indication. Neither did he discourage speculation that a defense pact comprised a secret protocol reached during Chou's visit. Whatever the reason, Sihanouk appeared greatly buoyed by his conferences with the Chinese. In June, he felt sufficiently bold to take the issue of the disputed Preah Vihear temple to the World Court--an action which infuriated the Thais, and which Sihanouk had long hesitated to take.

Sihanouk had much on his mind, but one of his chief complaints was the US aid program, in both the military and the economic fields. The public scandal was the U.S.-Khmer Friendship Highway, which linked Phnom Penh with Sihanoukville on the Gulf of Siam. The highway had been completed in July 1959, and opened briefly to traffic. From the first, however, it was a laughing-stock. So shoddy was the work (by a U.S. construction firm) and so haphazard the Cambodian maintenance, that the highway was almost continuously closed for repairs.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

Sihanouk was predictably disgusted over the Friendship Highway fiasco, but his main annoyance was with the extent of the U.S. military aid to his country. Here he was impossible to please, for he invariably viewed U.S. aid in terms relative to that provided South Vietnam and Thailand. Sihanouk conceded that the U.S. had sound reasons for providing much greater assistance to its allies than to a small neutral. At the same time, he viewed with alarm an aid program which armed Cambodia's potential enemies at a much greater rate than it assisted Cambodia.

In a 14 July speech at Siem Reap, Sihanouk stated that China and the USSR had promised military assistance, and warned that if the U.S. refused his request to provide jet pilot training he might send his pilots to the USSR for training. He attacked both South Vietnam and Thailand at length, and stated that he would never be satisfied with the level of U.S. military aid until it was equal to that provided Cambodia's enemies. Sihanouk went on to praise China, and stated that if Cambodia were invaded it could count on Communist aid.

Not for some time had Sihanouk spoken so disparagingly of the US. In all likelihood his pique stemmed in part from outside factors, such as his health and the debacle of the Friendship Highway. But Sihanouk's speech at Siem Reap was one of a series of indicators that he was tending to regard China as the best guarantor of Cambodia's security. In October 1959, he had for the first time permitted Cambodian technicians to visit China, in order to learn the operation of the textile and cement plants built in Cambodia by the Chinese. In June 1960, following Chou's visit, he had sent three of his own sons to study in China--a dramatic gesture for the Francophile Sihanouk, and one probably aimed as a warning to the US.

Interestingly enough, none of his other vendettas prevented Sihanouk from continuing his feud with the Pracheachon. It flared into open warfare over a seemingly minor issue: criticism in Communist papers, led by The Observer, of a pet project of Sihanouk's; the expansion of French-language training in Cambodian elementary schools. In August 1960, Sihanouk gave the Communists the full

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

verbal treatment, complete with comparisons to the Khmer Serei:

The Khmer Serei are not patriots since they have nothing constructive to propose and just keep on saying that under the Sangkum and Sihanouk the country is not advancing but declining. The Khmer Reds..hardly differ in their criticism from the Khmer Serei. One of the rare things they approve of is manual labor. But while our nationalists are working and glowing and getting sunburned at it, our Reds are content with covering reams of paper in their newspaper offices....

Does People's China understand us? And support us? We consider her sincerely and gratefully as our great friend. But from our angle, we only consider Cambodia and our own interests. This is the unbridgable gap which today still so seriously divides the nationalist members of the Sangkum and the Communists and pro-Communists whether they be members of the Pracheachon or disguised within the Sangkum.

Sihanouk had long been prone to regard an attack on Sangkum programs as personal criticism of himself and, on occasion, as efforts to undermine the monarchy. In his effort to refute Communist opposition to his educational program Sihanouk launched into a rambling defense of everything Cambodian.

Let me speak first of all the Khmer princes in general. One surely cannot say that our democracy had preserved many privileges for them....Three days ago... the royal princess Her Royal Highness Lom Ankasaw /was apprehended/ organizing certain games with cards. Although she is the daughter of the King /sic./ and her name, Floridaz, is a very pretty one, she

- 67 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

will have to cool her heels in the central prison for a few months....

As far as I am concerned, I repeat that my only desire is to abandon this power to which 99 percent of the electorate insists on conferring on me. I am frequently saddened when I see these frequent popular demonstrations obliging me constantly to postpone my resignation.

The speech marked the beginning of one of Sihanouk's black moods, notable only for the fact that the Communists rather than the West were the main target for his displeasure. On 15 August, the government closed the four Communist newspapers and arrested their editors.

Sihanouk left for France shortly thereafter, for the long rest recommended by his physicians. Vacations, however, were never more than qualified successes for Sihanouk, for he never lost sight of his grievances and at the Riviera was able to devote full time to brooding on them. In October, Sihanouk cabled to Phnom Penh that he wished to resign as chief of state "at least temporarily," as a result of "intolerable" pressure from the Communists.

Sihanouk's message brought hand-wringing in Phnom Penh. The Acting Premier professed to be "overwhelmed" by the news, and sent a message begging Sihanouk to reconsider. The National Assembly called a special session to draft a message expressing full support for the Prince and his policies and imploring him to continue as chief of state.

Sihanouk withdrew his resignation, and extended his vacation. He had earlier accepted invitations from Moscow and Peiping for a state visit in December; in the wake of Sihanouk's altercations with the Pracheachon there was speculation in Phnom Penh that the visits might be postponed. Sihanouk continued in a disturbed frame of mind. While he probably had not intended that his resignation be accepted, a speech by the Prince at Cambodia House provided some interesting insights into his outlook.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Sihanouk spoke for five hours--from 5:30 until 10:30--on 19 November 1960. He began by explaining why he had come to France, that he needed a cool climate and a place where he need not be bothered by visitors. He stated that it was important for him to lose weight in order that he could wear last year's clothes to the next UN General Assembly.

Sihanouk was frank in admitting that another reason for his coming to France was that he was distraught over criticism by the Pracheachon, the plots of Son Ngoc Thanh, and by the threat posed by Cambodia's SEATO neighbors. In his only known reference to suicide he stated, "I truly thought of killing myself in order to remove this burden." He spoke moodily of his health, observing that after doing his stint of manual labor on the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville railway he was so exhausted that he could hardly deliver his speech. The Prince rambled on at length concerning Cambodia's neighbors, saying nothing which he had not said on other occasions but betraying concern over the civil war in Laos.\*

Sihanouk appeared to have had a change of heart concerning U.S. military aid. "America is this way," explained the Prince. "If you want them to come and give you aid, then you must not ask other countries for aid. If Red countries give us /economic/ aid America will be very unhappy, and if the Red countries give us military aid the Americans will want to stop theirs." Sihanouk--before what he regarded as a leftist student audience--was charitable in his assessment of the U.S., observing at one point that "America is an old friend of ours and there is no point in kicking someone for no reason." There

---

\*Cambodian information media were inured to Sihanouk's ruminations, and it was a rare speech of the Prince which did not receive saturation coverage even when delivered abroad. His Cambodia House speech, however, was handled very gingerly, with only one paper printing the full text.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

was, however, a strong element of the pragmatic in Sihanouk's thinking:

An increase in /Cambodian budget/ funds for national defense would make it impossible for us to breathe, therefore, in order to give us breath for construction, it is best to ask America to give us the pay for our troops. So, although China, the USSR, Czechoslovakia and other Red countries furnish us with equipment and technical aid, they are unwilling to give us troop pay. America, on the other hand, is willing to furnish troop pay, and we may as well ask Uncle Sam to furnish it.

Sihanouk, like many another head of state in countries receiving U.S. aid, was frustrated by his inability to count on a set level of assistance:

I told him /name not given; perhaps President Eisenhower/ Excellency, you are only giving us troop pay, what else? The troop pay is continually decreasing. We still need you as before. Let us know how much you will reduce it, and we will accept that much!....

If you hear that this year it has not been reduced, it is because our General Lon Nol has gone to America for talks; Uncle Sam is afraid that we will go to the other side, and /he/ will release quite a lot.

In conversation with a Western official on the following day, Sihanouk underscored his neutralism in more conventional language. The West should not be concerned over his forthcoming bloc tour, he said. He would accept offers of economic aid if it was "suitable," but in no case would he accept military assistance. On his return to Phnom Penh he would thank China and the USSR for their offers of aid, but would reiterate Cambodia's continuing neutrality.

- 70 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

B. The Prince Goes Shopping

Sihanouk was no stranger in Prague, Moscow or Peiping. He had visited all three in 1956, and had been granted aid by each. His junket of November-December 1960, however, was his most transparent shopping tour to date. Nothing was allowed to interfere with its success; in Phnom Penh, the Communist newspapers which had been shut down in August were permitted to resume publication in October.

Viewed as a shopping expedition, Sihanouk's tour was an unqualified success. At Prague, he was promised six mobile X-ray units by the Czechs, and arrangements were made for a Khmer-Czech shipping combine which would seek to provide Cambodia with the rudiments of a merchant marine.

Sihanouk was even more successful in Moscow. For many months he had badgered the U.S. concerning his desire for a technological school in Phnom Penh. His request had never been flatly turned down, but it had floundered in red tape while the Prince grew increasingly impatient. In Moscow, a joint communique on 3 December proclaimed Khrushchev's intention to provide the school concerning which Sihanouk had unsuccessfully approached the U.S. The Soviets tossed in a helicopter, for use by Sihanouk in barnstorming his country. They also agreed to make certain geological studies, including soundings for a hydroelectric dam on the Mekong.

The Soviets, however, exacted a quid pro quo. Indeed, the cynicism with which Sihanouk cultivated the Soviets and Chinese is nowhere better illustrated than by his negotiations in Moscow. [ ] In the 3 December communique, Sihanouk supported the admission to the UN of



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

both China and Outer Mongolia, a country with which Cambodia did not even maintain diplomatic relations. In the same communique Sihanouk endorsed the Soviet demand for "general and complete" disarmament, expressed concern over "foreign [i.e., American] intervention" in Laos, and became one of a handful of non-bloc nations to support Khrushchev's "troika" plan for the reorganization of the UN. As in Prague, the Prince received in Moscow assurances of support for maintenance of Cambodia's territorial integrity.

The greatest fanfare was reserved for Sihanouk's visit to Peiping. His stopover was the occasion for the signing of a treaty of nonaggression and friendship, embodying new and loftier expression of the Five Principles of Coexistence. The Chinese announcement reflected recognition that they had a good thing going for them in Cambodia.

As everyone knows, His Royal Highness Prince Sihanouk and the Royal Cambodian Government have consistently supported China's peaceful foreign policy...and have sympathized with the Chinese people's just stand in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity....

The Royal Cambodian Government has also shown warm response and support to the peace proposal repeatedly put forward by the Chinese Government that the countries in Asia and around the Pacific, including the United States, conclude a peace pact of mutual nonaggression and make this area a region free of nuclear weapons. For this, we wish to express our profound thanks.

Cambodia was also grateful. Sihanouk stated,

Our understanding of New China has been made complete by the initial results of the generous aid which she accorded us in 1956 and by the joint fraternal labor

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

of the Chinese and Khmer technicians. From 1958 to 1960, ...the inauguration of the first group of factories built with Chinese aid and their going into production, the putting into service of a great radio station presented by China, the dispatching of more and more...students to pursue their studies in China, and the arrival in Cambodia of new Chinese technicians who, with admirable devotion, have contributed to our national construction, and educated and made perfect young Khmer cadres, the friendship and cooperation between China and Cambodia have registered a great "leap forward."

According to an aide who accompanied Sihanouk, all except two of his conferences in Peiping were confidential tete-a-tetes with Mao, Liu Shao-chi and Chou En-lai. Entertainment was lavish, and Sihanouk was said to be visibly impressed that at no time was he turned over to lower echelons of government. All members of the Cambodian party were laden with gifts, including silks, TV sets and ginseng. A second member of Sihanouk's entourage characterized the Prince as "overwhelmed" by this, his third visit to Peiping, and far more impressed with China than with either Czechoslovakia or the USSR.

Sihanouk's hosts scored not only with their protocol treatment but with offers of aid. Peiping had already provided economic assistance totaling \$28,000,000; on the occasion of Sihanouk's visit, the Chinese promised \$26,500,000 more. The funds would be used to expand and complete projects already under way, to build a steel mill and a machine plant, and to assist in the reorganization of Cambodia's rural producer cooperatives.

Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh on 26 December understandably pleased with himself. In his airport speech he stated, "I am glad to inform you that my present visit was completely satisfactory from every point of view." He rattled off the aid commitments obtained, X-rays, helicopters and all. Concerning the technological institute,

- 73 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

he ridiculed the U.S.; Khrushchev had told him that he already knew that Cambodia

had negotiated with another friend of ours from the West, a big friend from the West, and asked this friend to grant us a technical school....He told me that I was entirely free to accept or reject this gift /of a technological institute/ since it was just a suggestion of his own....I had not heard of any information that another foreign power wanted to grant us this aid, and I therefore accepted.

Sihanouk was not blind to the implications of his trip. At the airport, he observed that his support for China's "legitimate rights," i.e., to UN admission and to Taiwan, was worth as much to China as China's aid was to Cambodia. But Sihanouk, too, had received more than material benefits, since all three bloc countries had held his hand, and gone on record as respecting Cambodia's territorial integrity and neutrality. If he lost anything, it was self-respect: the joint communique full of Communist jargon, and the opportunistic endorsement of Khrushchev's UN troika, served to underscore Sihanouk's point that Cambodia's neutralism was pragmatic rather than ideological.

#### C. Laos: Crabs and Crocodiles

For all his enjoyment of bloc hospitality, Sihanouk liked his Communists at a distance. In a February 1961 interview in Le Monde, Sihanouk conceded that the existence of an anti-Communist regime in South Vietnam was to Cambodia's advantage. Three months later, in a second interview, he volunteered that "In order to remain on good terms with my Communist friends, we prefer not to have a common border with them."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Sihanouk's confirmation that absence made the heart grow fonder was a logical extension of the tight rein he had kept on Communism within Cambodia. What prompted his remarks was the situation in Laos, which had changed during 1960 from one merely of disorder, to one which embodied a confrontation between the Western and Communist blocs. In "normal" circumstances Sihanouk was prone to take a patronizing tone concerning Laos, comparing unfavorably its chronic factionalism with the national unity he had achieved in Cambodia. With Laos clearly threatened by a Communist takeover, Sihanouk was apprehensive and pessimistic.

As early as August 1959, Sihanouk had expressed concern that the civil war in Laos might escalate as a result of great power intervention. He criticized the U.S. for "sabotaging" the neutral government of Prince Souvanna Phouma in favor of the rightist Phoumi, and attacked the U.S. penchant for "interfering" in Laotian affairs, as he felt the U.S. had interfered in Cambodia. In addition, he feared that U.S. activity in Laos might provoke the Communists into more active intervention.

Sihanouk's advocacy of a neutralized Laos was one of the few consistent elements in the complex Laotian situation during 1960. Western fortunes there fluctuated every few months; they were dealt a jolt, however, when in August Kong Le emerged as a third force in opposition to the U.S.-supported Phoumi government. Sihanouk called for an expanded version of the 1954 Geneva conference, to assure the territorial integrity and neutrality of Laos. By late 1960, however, right-wing forces were again in the ascendancy, and the United States turned a deaf ear to Sihanouk. On the other hand, the USSR supported the Cambodian proposal for a 14-nation conference on Laos.

When the Pathet Lao recouped their military losses, Sihanouk felt himself fully vindicated.

The present (and future) evolution of events in Laos will work only to the advantage of the Pathet Lao and to those who support it. Under such circumstances I am unable to see that the Socialist

- 75 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

powers will persist in support of my proposition for the effective and guaranteed neutralization of Laos. If, despite their advantage, these powers continue to support it, one must hope that they will sincerely consent to sacrifice their major advantages in the interest of world peace....But in this world conflict, is it reasonable to hope that the big powers will make a sacrifice gratuitously?

Even when the West agreed to an international conference, Sihanouk was pessimistic concerning the outcome.\* In conversation with Averell Harriman, he stated that he could see "no hope" for a truly neutral Laos, and thought that the country would be dominated by the Pathet Lao, whom he equated with the Communists. He correctly assessed Souvanna Phouma as not sufficiently strong a personality to resist Pathet Lao pressure.

When the conference was finally held in Geneva, Sihanouk was one of the star attractions. He presided over the opening session on 16 May, and found both the major blocs receptive in principle to neutralization. In the protracted wrangling which followed--centered on the seating of rival Laotian delegations, and the devising of a means to police the cease-fire--Sihanouk was more impressed with the Western delegations than with those of the bloc. According to [ ], Sihanouk was angered by the arrogance of Gromkyo and Chen Yi, which compared unfavorably with the "civilized" manner of the Western delegates, who deferred to Sihanouk and convinced him of their genuine desire to resolve the

\*According to [ ] Sihanouk intended to try at Geneva to "limit the loss" in Laos, and to "buy time" for Cambodia. His comment is an interesting reflection of Sihanouk's belief in an eventual Communist triumph in Southeast Asia.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Laotian impasse. A member of Sihanouk's entourage described the Prince as having discovered that, when bloc interests were at stake, Communists were not friendly to any outsider.

The conference ran into June, and then into July. Sihanouk was no longer in the limelight, and his attendance became irregular. More and more time was spent at various health spas in Zurich, and on 8 July he arrived back at Phnom Penh. There was the usual airport speech.

I knew that uniting our Laotian brothers would be as difficult as keeping crabs in a basket, and that getting the great powers to meet would be as difficult as keeping crocodiles in a house....My efforts to bring the concerned parties to meet in Geneva could be compared to the efforts of a middleman in a marriage. After going to the bride's home to convince her parents to agree to the marriage, the middleman must go to the bridegroom's to convince his parents....As a middleman in this Laotian affair I was not lucky despite all my efforts; I could not score a victory. Yet some important and satisfactory results were achieved.

Sihanouk went on to compare Laos with a house afire, threatening all around it. In rambling fashion, he implied that the Geneva conference held out promise that the fire would not be allowed to spread. Whatever success was achieved was due largely to Cambodia:

Thanks to our efforts, a meeting between the three Laotian princes was achieved. When the great powers refused to attend the Geneva conference on grounds that the Boun Oum party was absent, I persuaded the Boun Oum party to go to the conference and they agreed....

- 77 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

We have been away from our country for almost two months and have spent a lot of money. Expenses were considerable and numerous: plane tickets, gasoline, receptions and so forth. The great powers are millionaires; they can afford enormous expenses. The Laotian parties spent the money of their bosses. But we Khmers spent the money of our people. As I found that our expenses were excessive, I decided to return home and work for our nation....

I must conclude that we will have to let the Laotians settle their own affairs because--as these Laotians have said--"they are no longer children and they need advice from nobody." But we entreat them not to let the foreigners lead them because, up to now, their words have not been Laotian words.

D. Belgrade, New York and Bangkok

Sihanouk was home for little more than a month. In September he was off again, first to the conference of nonaligned nations at Belgrade, and then to the opening of the UN session in New York.

Sihanouk had for some time viewed Tito, together with Nehru, as a leading practitioner of that brand of common-sense neutralism which he himself favored. Moreover, Tito had behaved thoughtfully toward Sihanouk in sharing his motorcycle escort at the UN opening in 1960, and the Prince's elephantine memory encompassed courtesies as well as slights. Sihanouk was doubtless pleased to be invited to Belgrade, and to assist his host in exerting a moderating influence on the newly independent African states. At Belgrade, there was a distinct cleavage between the Asian and the African groups, in which the Asians sought to head off a drive by African delegations to turn the conference into an anti-Western rally. Individual

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

members of both groups sought to air their pet hates, be it Israel or South Africa.

The speech by Sihanouk on 3 September showed the Prince at his best, and was one of his most articulate expositions of his country's foreign policy. He touched on most of the major problems of the cold war. After condemning "the imperialism of the two great blocs," he spoke on the subject of Germany. Sihanouk observed that two German states clearly existed, and Cambodia enjoyed economic and cultural relations with each. He urged--without going into specifics--that the way to obtain stability in Western Europe would be to reunify Germany "under the express condition that it be neutralized."

The concept of buffer states and neutrality belts held a fascination for Sihanouk. He had earlier urged the creation of Laos as a neutral buffer in Southeast Asia, and had broadly hinted that Thailand and South Vietnam would be best off neutral. When discussing areas outside of Southeast Asia, however, his thinking tended to be superficial. Concerning Germany, he offered no suggestions as to the implementation of his neutrality proposal, which took no account of the aspirations of most West Germans.

On the issue of disarmament Sihanouk continued to urge "complete" disarmament, but sought to erase the impression that he was in complete accord with the Soviet position. He conceded that a need for controls existed, though here again his solution was impractical.

Before concluding I would like to say a few words about disarmament....I will content myself with stressing that we think disarmament should be complete and simultaneously controlled. But, along with /Ghanaian/ President Nkrumah, I believe that to be effective this control should not be assured by the two great responsible powers...but by a neutral commission of nonaligned countries.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk held forth on the subject of foreign bases, and attempted to steer a middle course. He contended that no nation had the right to maintain bases on the territory of another without its consent, and came out in support of Tunisia in its campaign to oust the French from Bizerte. Sihanouk added, however, that he did not fault those states who found it in their interest to permit foreign bases. His protests had been directed only at the supplying of arms to certain Southeast Asian countries who then used them not against the Communists but against Cambodia.

Sihanouk spoke at some length against racism in all forms, and made use of the opportunity to attack South Vietnam for its treatment of the Cambodian minority there. By and large, however, his speech was moderate in tone, and far more acceptable to Western ears than the diatribes of Nkrumah and Nasir. As for Sihanouk, he appeared to enjoy his role.

From Belgrade Sihanouk went to New York. He was not enthusiastic concerning the results at Belgrade, where the conferees had ended up issuing a bland communique decrying colonialism. There is some evidence that Sihanouk's estrangement from Nehru may have begun at Belgrade; [REDACTED] the Prince felt Nehru to have been "gloomy and lofty." Other delegates, too, were irritated by Nehru's pontificating, and Sihanouk may have privately resented the Indian's penchant for the limelight.

In New York, Sihanouk had his first meeting with President Kennedy and the leaders of his administration. He appears to have been favorably impressed by President Kennedy, who met with him for over an hour in New York. Unfortunately, Sihanouk was impossible to please.

Like certain statesmen in the Free World, President Kennedy is very clever. He does not listen to the press and he knows how to flatter neutral countries.... During my visit, Mr. Kennedy petted and flattered me for an hour and congratulated

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

me for my speech despite the fact that it contained criticisms of the Free World. Meanwhile, the Communist bloc did not dare compliment me, maybe because I had criticized both blocs. Nevertheless, it appeared that Mr. Kennedy was determined to get the better of the Communists /by/ repeating that /my/ speech was fine, that he admired and congratulated me for Cambodia's genuine, nonaligned neutrality, and that he hoped the Khmers would help the Laotians achieve the same type of neutrality. This proves that the Free World knows how to pet me though it dislikes neutral countries.

Nothing ever seemed to go right for Sihanouk in the United States, and his visit in 1961 was no exception to the rule. "New York is not a nice place for Cambodians to live," he reported after returning to Phnom Penh. "Each time we asked for room service, the hotel boys grimaced to show their reluctance to serve us. Once the boy I had called to carry my clothes to the laundry got angry and scolded my subordinates for calling him so often."

Sihanouk's visit to the UN in 1960 had foundered on matters of relative protocol. A year later he had fewer complaints on this score, but was not appreciably happier. This time his bete noire was the press, notably Time, Newsweek and The New York Times. The magazines persisted in dwelling on Sihanouk the Playboy Prince; the Times was equally culpable in Sihanouk's eyes for its insinuations that Cambodia was providing safe haven for the Viet Cong. Efforts to cultivate the big-city press appear to have been unsuccessful, and Sihanouk returned to Phnom Penh with a tale of woe:

Concerning the Americans, I will say this to all who have come here....I must say that the American journalists are most corrupt men. One day, I entertained American journalists at a first-class banquet

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

with champagne during which I talked with them for three successive hours. I did this because, as the expenses were borne by our national budget, I thought that the American journalists would consequently take pity on the Khmer nation. The journalists enjoyed the banquet very much. They cleverly managed to have each of them in turn talk to me while the others ate at ease. As a result, I myself could not eat anything and, therefore, felt dizzy. At the end of the banquet they declared that they had fully understood my views, thus making me think that my move was successful. But they did not write a single line on Cambodia.

There was something about returning to Phnom Penh from abroad--be it from New York or Peiping--that made Sihanouk wish to flex his muscles. Perhaps he felt a need to shake his countrymen out of their tropical lethargy, and was more sensitive to this problem after returning from a temperate climate. In any case, he returned from New York to a crisis with Thailand which marked a turning point in Cambodia's international relations.

Even before the conferences at Geneva and Belgrade, Cambodia was engaged in a new border squabble with South Vietnam. In March, Sihanouk had touched a sensitive nerve by charging the Diem government with mistreatment of South Vietnam's ethnic Cambodians--the charge which he reiterated at Belgrade. Yet Sihanouk was indignant when the Vietnamese press responded by attacking the Prince in violation of a press truce agreed upon six months earlier; he responded with casual references to the inevitability of Viet Cong victory which he correctly assumed would infuriate the Vietnamese.

The Laotian crisis, and Sihanouk's subsequent pre-occupation at Geneva and Belgrade, may have averted a crisis with Vietnam. Whatever the reason, Cambodia's major confrontation of 1961 was not with Vietnam but with Thailand. The immediate cause, however, was the same

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

as in the altercation with Saigon: charges that the Thais had violated the press truce.

At Geneva, Sihanouk had repeatedly made caustic remarks concerning Thailand, particularly as regarded the Thais' support for the rightists in Laos. On 20 October, Sarit--without mentioning him by name--charged Sihanouk with "treachery to Southeast Asian nations" and with allowing Cambodia to be used as a base for Communist attacks. On 23 October, Sihanouk delivered a two-hour diatribe to the National Assembly, calling for the severing of diplomatic relations with Thailand and attacking the U.S. as Sarit's mentor. The bitterness of Sihanouk's attack surprised even the American Embassy, long inured to the Prince's oratory. In an unofficial translation, Sihanouk was quoted as describing Sarit as "running around like a mad pig." He charged that Allen Dulles was seeking to overthrow him, and threatened to take to the bush rather than surrender. Diplomatic relations were broken on the same day that Sihanouk spoke.

Sihanouk had long argued that the U.S., if it wished, could bring sufficient pressure to bear on Thailand and South Vietnam to force them to respect Cambodia's neutrality. The issue to Sihanouk was not whether Washington had the means, but whether it had the will to make Diem and Sarit come to heel. The failure of the US to take such action was regarded by Sihanouk--along with the Dap Chhuon plot, the extensive U.S. support of Cambodia's traditional enemies, and protocol gaffes in New York--as evidence of American ill will toward him and his country. At a school dedication on 26 October, Sihanouk accused the US of wishing to "kill us," and announced that he no longer considered Americans as friends.

Eighteen months earlier, Sihanouk's quarrels with his neighbors had prompted him to make almost equally harsh criticism of the United States. With the passage of time, he appeared more certain that his country would command support from China in any confrontation with SEATO, and correspondingly more prepared to take chances. Nevertheless, Peiping appears to have given Sihanouk a difficult time. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Chou En-lai assured the Cambodian ambassador

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

[ ] that China "always stands by Cambodia." Not until 27 October, however, four days after the break with Thailand, did People's Daily publicly support Sihanouk's "just stand." Even then there was no promise of military support; a month later Sihanouk observed, "I had carefully reflected before launching my noisy campaign to defend my dear children....I made believe there was someone behind me to support me. In reality, there was no one at that moment. If the enemy had attacked us during that week, there were only Khmers and no one else."

Thus did the uninhibited Sihanouk lay to rest the rumors of a secret military treaty between Cambodia and China. This is not to say, however, that the threat of Chinese intervention was entirely illusory. Sihanouk may well have felt that, when the chips were down, China would regard the maintenance of Cambodia's territorial integrity as in its own interest. He was sufficiently compos mentis to recognize that he was playing a dangerous game:

We prefer neutrality because we want complete freedom and independence. But if the Free World and Messrs. Sarit and Ngo Dieh Diem continue to try to enslave us... we will be forced to ask the Communists' help to be able to wage war with the Free World. If the Communists energetically aid us, we will surely be victorious and our country will surely become Red as we must show the Reds our gratitude. /Emphasis added/

Having elected to risk Communist domination in return for a degree of security from his neighbors, Sihanouk spent much of the fall of 1961 making himself useful to Peiping with blasts against the U.S. and Thailand. At the same time, he continued sensitive to press coverage of Cambodia in the West, demonstrating an almost childlike desire both to tweak the Eagle's beak and to command laudatory articles in the American press. In a 28 October broadcast at the height of the crisis with Thailand, Sihanouk charged that the American press had "unceasingly worked against our neutrality and against

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

my own person," singling out once again Time, Newsweek and The New York Times. His grievance on this occasion is an interesting one:

The American press is also responsible for the legend of a prince with a changeable, inconsistent and unstable character and of unforeseeable and inexplicable decisions. In fact, it has never paid the least consideration to the persistency with which I have pursued the aims entrusted to me by my nation.

It is possible to feel some sympathy for this statement: in 1961 as before, his great goal was to maintain his country's independence and territorial integrity. But the means by which Sihanouk sought to maintain the status quo were changing. As time went on, he had relied increasingly on Chinese protection, and less on a policy of true neutrality. Following the break with Thailand, Sihanouk embarked on a period in which he felt a need to curry favor with Peiping in return for the military protection which he hoped China would afford.

- 85 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

V. GATHERING MOMENTUM

A. Neutrality for Vietnam

Sihanouk's protest that he was not an erratic prince, and that he led his country along an essentially consistent course, had a certain merit. That he was still capable of coming down hard on domestic Communism was demonstrated early in 1962 in a widely-publicized instance of Communist subversion. On 10 January, Cambodian police arrested Non Suon, editor of a Communist newspaper, and 13 other Pracheachon members, complete with a quantity of incriminating documents. Those arrested were tried by a special military court, found guilty, and sentenced to death. Sihanouk later commuted the sentences to prison terms on the recommendation of a review board.

The incident left Sihanouk disturbed. ("Last night I was unable to sleep.") In a speech before the National Assembly he read from the documents, many of which were information-collection directives, targeting the recipient against the army, the peasantry, or some other segment of the Cambodian populace. Sihanouk lectured the Assembly on a subject which was occupying an increasing amount of his attention: the maintenance of national unity in the face of the inevitable Communist triumph:

If we practice Communism, we will achieve major progress in the production of rice, maize, steel, and so forth. But...will we find in our pagodas the same atmosphere as we have now?

If our people decide to practice Communism, I will not object to it. But, I beg our dear compatriots to recall that as our country is very small, to succeed in any task all of us must follow the same path and must not be divided into groups....

If we follow two different paths we will die. That is why I have often told the Khmer Communists that they should temporarily abandon the Communist path for the nationalist path /since/ when Communism triumphs in Asia they will be free to practice Communism without having to carry out any revolution.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

[ ]

Sihanouk went on to say that he was prepared to release the 14 culprits if they promised to give up their subversive activities and rally to the Sangkum. The incident did not affect his favorable attitude towards Communist China; analysis of the captured documents confirmed Sihanouk's suspicion that they had been translated into Cambodian from Vietnamese. In his speeches in early 1962, Sihanouk lumped the Viet Minh with returned-from-Paris students as the major leftist threats to national stability.

The affair of the 14 Communists distracted Sihanouk from international matters only briefly. At various times in early 1962 he elaborated upon a pet scheme, the neutralization of South Vietnam by means of an international conference such as had been held on Laos. Actually, Sihanouk could be said to be on a buffer-state binge. In a speech at the Geneva conference on Laos, he had advocated a neutral zone stretching from Vietnam to India. In September 1961, at the UN, he had urged that all divided countries become neutral buffers -- an extension of his program for German reunification set forth at Belgrade.

In contrast to Laos, where the three main factions periodically took to the conference table, South Vietnam was at least nominally unified behind Diem, who was not interested in the neutralization of his country. Sihanouk regarded Diem as the major obstacle to his plan, and quite happily provided asylum to one of two South Vietnamese pilots who bombed Diem's palace in the course of an abortive coup. (Sihanouk expressed surprise at the bombing. "Before dropping bombs," he philosophized over the national radio, "it should be determined whether Mr. Diem is at home. If he is out it would be useless to drop bombs on his house.")

In late February, Peiping set forth a proposal for an international conference to "resolve" the fighting in South Vietnam. On 1 March, Sihanouk gave it his blessing. According to Sihanouk, the latest Geneva conference had demonstrated in the case of Laos that such meetings, even if they do not achieve all objectives, exert a restraining effect in preventing certain situations "from generating into an irredeemable catastrophe."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

On the surface, Sihanouk's urging of a conference which had virtually no chance of being held appeared puzzling. Moreover, Sihanouk himself appeared uneasy about the prospect of a reunified Vietnam, and properly skeptical of DRV statements that the North would be satisfied with the replacement of Diem and a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. To the U.S. ambassador, Sihanouk observed that while American intervention in Vietnam was merely delaying the inevitable, he himself was apprehensive of "Vietminh hordes" moving into South Vietnam, and that his good relations with the Chinese did not extend to his wanting a common frontier with them. Nevertheless, on 15 March the Cambodian radio again endorsed the Chinese proposal:

As a member of the Geneva conference, China has the right to propose the convening of this international conference. It is also as a member of the Geneva conference that the Cambodian Chief of State seconds the Chinese proposal. In fact, the increasing threat of the SVN situation forces people...to reopen a Geneva Conference on the Indochina issue in order to take measures for defending world peace.

The Sino-Khmer proposal predictably foundered when Diem would have no part of it. The most revealing aspect of the affair was evidence of close coordination between Peiping and Phnom Penh concerning the conference proposal.

[REDACTED] Chou En-lai in June strongly urged to visiting elder statesman Penn Nouth that Sihanouk once again give public endorsement to the Chinese proposal for a conference on Vietnam. It appears likely that the initiative on the conference proposal had been Peiping's from its inception -- and that Sihanouk had all but jumped through hoops on behalf of his friend Chou En-lai.

The incident was an ominous precedent in terms of Cambodia's being used as a sounding board for Communist China. In one respect, however, Sihanouk elaborated on Peiping's proposal: Sihanouk indicated in conversation that he felt that any conference should deal with all of Vietnam and not just the "struggle" in the South.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk appears to have realized that the conference proposal would get nowhere. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] he indicated in July that he saw little likelihood of a conference so long as Diem was alive. He conceded that anti-Diem nationalists were also critical of any solution involving the neutralization of Vietnam. Sihanouk reportedly hoped to see a coup against Diem by army elements, whom he felt could be prevailed upon to see the virtues of neutralization.

The Sihanouk who was so responsive to Chou En-lai's foreign policy proposals understandably felt the need to condition his people to the inevitability of a Communist triumph. He sought to delay the inevitable, and to avoid if possible the political fragmentation of his country in the face of the Communist threat.

When the right time to become Communist comes, we will not need to communize ourselves as the Communists will immediately come to transform us. There is no need for certain gentlemen like Mr. Non Suon and others to practice Red doctrine as when the right time comes we will immediately have a Communist regime....

I have sent my own children to study in Communist countries because I know very well that the Khmers will not be able to avoid becoming a satellite of the Communists....If we have not yet become Red, it is because the Reds do not want us to become Red but only want us to practice neutrality at first. Look at Laos and you will understand.

Sihanouk ruminated at length concerning his professed desire to step down. In justifying his continuance in office he cited the absence of qualified successors in terms doubtless intended to reach Peiping:

Some have said that /Sihanouk/ is fond of power and, therefore, does not want to resign. I am not happy at all at having power. Dear comrades, I have been in power since I was 18 and now I am 41. I must realize that this is enough for me; otherwise, I would be a bad fellow...What obliges me to stay and work is my four or five million people and my country. If I abandon my country, it will immediately

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

become another Congo and not a country like that of Mr. Mao Tse-tung. Therefore, I must stay in power until the Khmers can find a Mao Tse-tung and not a Vansak, Sam Sary or Son Ngoc Thanh. None of the latter three can substitute for a Mao Tse-tung. If it were Mao Tse-tung, I would not object and would readily quit power.

For the first time, Sihanouk went into specifics concerning how he thought Communism would come to Cambodia. The picture he painted was not a rosy one.

It will perhaps be impossible for us to become a direct satellite of Russia or China as we shall at first become a satellite of the Vietminh....It is difficult for China or Russia to colonize us.... but the Vietnamese are beside us and Vietnam is very populous. If we took the Vietnamese as masters for Communist indoctrination, they would come in large numbers to our country....Then some time later our country would resemble Cochinchina where there are only some 600,000 Khmers against 11 million Vietnamese.

B. "Sarit Is a Pig"

Although Cambodia was a member of the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN, Sihanouk's preoccupation with his own area caused Cambodia often to be a rather passive member. By any standard, Sihanouk was "soft" on colonialism; although he went along with the Afro-Asians on most issues before the UN, and was prone to needle the French concerning Algeria, his penchant for long vacations in France made him suspect to his peers. And while Sihanouk did not say so, he was suspected of regarding the century-long French protectorate in Cambodia as having saved the country from predatory Afro-Asians in the area.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Sihanouk's disinterest in anti-colonialist, anti-base campaigns had been demonstrated at the Belgrade conference. It was also reflected in his relations with Indonesia. Although he and Sukarno had exchanged visits, not until late 1962 were Khmer-Indonesian relations marked by any degree of cordiality. In the course of a week-long visit in December, Sihanouk received the red carpet treatment that he loved. He expressed proper admiration for Indonesia's long struggle against colonialism, and applauded the peaceful resolution of the West New Guinea issue. He refused to join Sukarno in a declaration opposing Malaysia, however, and Sukarno reportedly was miffed when his guest flew directly to Singapore from Djakarta at the end of his tour.

In the acrimony which surrounded Cambodia's relations with Thailand and South Vietnam, it was difficult to tell which country Sihanouk regarded with the greater dislike. Between the two of them, according to Sihanouk, Cambodia's border was violated 91 times during 1962. In a bygone day, Sihanouk had been disposed to take a more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger approach concerning the Thais, whose common Buddhist heritage with the Khmers he was quick to acknowledge. In purely political terms, he appears to have regarded the Vietnamese as posing the greater threat. The Prince, however, was not controlled by political factors alone.

Cambodia would eventually sever relations with South Vietnam as well as Thailand. The priority accorded the Thais was essentially a matter of personalities. In conversation with a Western observer in May 1962, Sihanouk characterized Sarit's deprecating remarks concerning himself as a reflection of the Thais' "patronizing attitude" towards Cambodia. In his barnstorming trips, Sihanouk appealed to his subjects' pride with reminders that the Thais had used Cambodian slave labor to dig the canals at Bangkok.

There was less need to generate popular awareness concerning the Vietnamese. Most Cambodians wanted no part of the civil war to the east, and found their own Vietnamese minority to be dangerously aggressive in business and commerce. As for Sihanouk, he claimed that he had no desire to become embroiled with a regime -- i.e., the Diem Government -- which was on the verge of collapse. To a Western observer he mentioned another reason: that while

-91-

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

he was attacked in the Saigon press, President Diem had personally observed the diplomatic proprieties in dealing with him. To Sihanouk, this carried great weight. He conceded, however, that there was an economic reason for caution in his dealings with the Diem government. Cambodia was still dependent on the port of Saigon, and a new blockade of the Mekong would deprive Cambodia of the bulk of its oil supply.

If relations with South Vietnam were maintained through a certain observance of the amenities, the opposite was true with respect to Thailand. It could be predicted that Sihanouk would find little in common with [REDACTED] Sarit. In June 1962, the World Court upheld the Cambodian claim to Preah Vihear temple. The decision enraged the Thais, and prompted Sarit to initiate a squalid exchange of insults with Sihanouk, a form of duel at which Sihanouk acknowledged no peer. In one radio broadcast Sihanouk discussed Thai-Khmer relations:

The Vietnamese have said that I am a Communist lackey. I am not angry with them. They are free to insult me. They do so because they are jealous of me. The Thai are also jealous of me. Sarit Thanarat called me a pig and boasted that he is a lion and that a lion does not need to speak to a pig. As I have told the children in Svay Chek, I took a mirror and looked into it to see whether I resemble a pig. I know Sarit. Actually he is a pig because he is fatter than I. If people kill me to make Chinese soup the soup would not be delicious, but if people kill this pig Sarit to make Chinese soup, the soup would be delicious because this pork contained three layers of grease.

A few days later, Sihanouk again took to the earthy metaphor to refute Vietnamese charges of border violations by the Cambodians.

Since we were so busy, how could we spare time to go and mistreat Vietnamese citizens, to look for Vietnamese girls, or disembowel Vietnamese women? Since Khmer girls are numberless, why should Khmers not court them? Our Khmer girls and my own girls are nice. Therefore, it

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

is not necessary to take pains to look for Vietnamese girls, who have narrow hips and no beauty. Though familiar with Vietnamese girls, I do not have a taste for them. Were I to be paid for taking Vietnamese girls, I would refuse.

C. Sihanouk Seeks New Guarantees

In July 1962, the endemic charges of border violations between Cambodia and its neighbors assumed a more serious character. Although the Cambodians were also guilty of cattle rustling expeditions into Thailand and Cambodia, the number of border violations by Vietnamese troops appears to have increased in mid-year. When Thai troops "on maneuvers" crossed into Cambodia in July, Sihanouk appeared both apprehensive over his neighbors' intentions and concerned at the inability of his armed forces adequately to police the border areas.

Peiping seized upon certain of the more publicized border violations to assure Cambodia of its support, although there were no promises of military intervention. Moscow was much less responsive to events in Cambodia; only rarely did the Soviets allude to the broader forays, and in contrast to the Chinese, they had never endorsed Sihanouk's call for a conference to "neutralize" Vietnam. In late July, however, an article by Observer in Pravda characterized the "provocations" by Thailand and South Vietnam as having assumed a particularly serious character, and warned "those who like to play with fire" that Cambodia had loyal friends "who would not leave it in the lurch."

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow evaluated the article as an attempt by the Soviets to maintain influence in Southeast Asia vis-a-vis Peiping. As far as Sihanouk was concerned, however, the Soviets were hardly in the running. [REDACTED] the two-month visit of ex-Premier Penn Nouth to China (April-June 1962) was designed to determine how far Peiping was prepared to go in support of Sihanouk's foreign policy objectives. The first of these objectives was to bring about a new

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

convening of the 1954 9-nation Geneva Conference for the purpose of ratifying Cambodia's neutral status and of guaranteeing its territorial integrity.

Sihanouk made his pitch at a press conference on 14 August. Speaking in Kompong province, he called for intervention by the great powers "to end this gross comedy played by the Bangkok and Saigon governments." The proposal put the U.S. squarely on the spot. The Thais, already concerned over indications of Communist subversion in northeastern Thailand, were critical of any move by the U.S. to conciliate Sihanouk. On 23 August, Thailand's acting foreign minister expressed the hope that his country's allies would not be "tricked" into any arrangement which tended to credit Sihanouk's charges of aggression by his SEATO neighbors. The U.S. Embassy in Saigon urged that the U.S. not negotiate any agreement based on Sihanouk's proposal, noting that to the Vietnamese the U.S. would appear to be siding with a country fully prepared to collaborate with the Bloc and against one engaged in a bitter struggle against Communist insurgency.

The United States sought to gain time, and several months were spent in securing "clarification" of Sihanouk's proposal. The thrust of his plan changed sufficiently from week to week that a good deal of clarification was required. Initially, Sihanouk appeared to have hoped that the territorial guarantee provision might embody international recognition of Cambodia's sovereignty of several disputed provinces held by the Vietnamese. Moreover, Sihanouk viewed the most recent conference on Laos as his model, and for a time contemplated the withdrawal of all Western military missions, including MAAG, and even the termination of Western military aid. In a speech on 22 August he stated,

Our neutrality is not a false neutrality but is a pure neutrality. It must be respected. All countries must declare that they will respect our neutrality...They must also respect our frontier. Neutrality does not have a form but territory has a form. If they respect our neutrality without respecting our territory there will be violations of our territory by planes and armored cars....

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Let us now wait and see. If we do not have the Free World's assurance that we will be respected, then we cannot remain neutral. We must act exactly as accused by the Siamese and Vietnamese, and must be allied with the Communists. If we do not ally with the Communists, we will not have security.

In August, Sihanouk began a correspondence with the 13 other Geneva signatories, aimed at securing their support for a conference such as he had mentioned. Peiping came through with a firm statement of support, probably in accordance with a commitment made to Penn Nouth. Hanoi, which had no common border with Cambodia, gave its blessing to Sihanouk's proposal. Of the Communist signatories, only the USSR qualified its approval; the Soviets merely endorsed Sihanouk's plan "in principle." France issued a statement of support, but warned that the territorial clauses -- embodying Sihanouk's claims against South Vietnam -- might cause difficulties. Sihanouk, with a display of flexibility, agreed to drop the territorial clauses and to settle for an agreement "similar in scope" to that concluded for Laos.

By December, returns were in from most of the nations polled. Thailand and South Vietnam were adamantly opposed, and if one of Sihanouk's aims was the disruption of SEATO he was at least partially successful. The U.S., the U.K. and India equivocated. Sihanouk ridiculed the West for its hesitation, but was enjoying the limelight and appeared in no hurry to embrace the bloc. In a speech on 31 December he stated,

Negotiations to obtain an international agreement on our country will be long, even very long. Negotiations by correspondence rather than assembled conference can only make things drag out. Our case is, however, much simpler than that of Laos. It could be solved in one second if those who pretend to respect our sovereignty, our neutrality, our territorial integrity and our internal peace were sincere....They should at least make some effort to prevent our two neighbors from committing other offenses against our country. If they succeed in stabilizing the present situation and preserving peace with these neighbors, with respect for our frontiers, we can patiently await the day, doubtless far off, of the signature of the agreement on our country.

-95-

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Although Sihanouk paid lip service to this long-term view, he appears to have been bitter towards the West, particularly the U.S. In conversation [ ] [ ] in December, he stated that however sympathetic one might feel towards the Americans, one was bound to distrust them. He added that he felt more drawn to China than to the U.S. and that this had not been the case before.

Sihanouk had a change of heart concerning U.S. aid, and made no move to terminate either MAAG or the U.S. aid program. In one broadcast he conceded that for Cambodia to have to support its own armed forces would slow national development; in a second he pointed out that should he terminate U.S. assistance there was no assurance that the Bloc would make up any difference. He shelved for the time being his earlier argument that a continuation of military assistance was incompatible with a Laos-like neutrality.\*

Largely overlooked in the discussion of the mechanics of Sihanouk's proposal was its long-term effect on his relations with the U.S. Since 1955, U.S. military aid, together with French assistance in training, had been Cambodia's bulwark against internal subversion and

\*Possibly in response to Sihanouk's doubts concerning bloc aid, Chinese Vice Premier Chen Yi informed the Cambodian ambassador in October that an offer of Chinese arms -- made two years earlier -- was still open. According to the ambassador, Chen offered to provide "modern conventional weapons obtained from the USSR." As Sihanouk had long complained that the U.S. provided only old weapons, the offer was doubtless appreciated.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

foreign attack. Although most of Sihanouk's verbiage was directed against his SEATO neighbors, he had demonstrated concern over Communist incursions, particularly by the Viet Minh. Bloc acceptance of his neutrality plan, in Sihanouk's scheme of things, involved an automatic downgrading of U.S. assistance. He felt less need of the U.S. which, in any case, had been of little assistance in curbing border violations by its allies. And should bloc endorsement of Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity not have a deterrent effect on Thailand and South Vietnam, there would still be time to take up Chen Yi on his offer of arms.

To the extent that the West retained a foothold in Cambodia, the influence was that of France rather than the U.S. Sihanouk's liking for France was as instinctive and natural as his dislike of the United States. He required a friend in the West if Cambodia was to talk convincingly of "pure neutrality", and in De Gaulle he had a Western statesman who was as anxious to cultivate Sihanouk as Sihanouk was to retain the friendship of France. In his speeches, Sihanouk cited France with those bloc powers which had demonstrated statesmanship in supporting the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia.

#### D. Cambodia and India

When ex-Premier Penn Nouth had gone to Peiping in April, the trip ostensibly was for treatment of a nervous condition. As he had returned from therapy in France only weeks before, Nouth's trip took on obvious political overtones. Like Sihanouk, his advisor traveled extensively in China, was lavishly feted, and met repeatedly with Chou En-lai.

One reason for Nouth's trip appears to have been to obtain Chinese support for Sihanouk's neutralization guarantee. A second objective, according to a senior Cambodian official, was to urge the Chinese to intervene on Cambodia's behalf with the North Vietnamese, and to obtain assurances that the Viet Cong would respect Cambodia's border. In all likelihood Nouth broached both of these subjects; according to Defense Minister

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Lon Nol, he also worked out the details of a secret treaty with China, whereby China would provide both materiel and troop assistance in the event Cambodia was invaded by Thailand or South Vietnam.

In November 1961, a month following his break with Thailand, Sihanouk had confessed that he had no assurance of Chinese troop support had the Thais resorted to military action. If this admission is accepted at face value, his desire for some commitment from China is understandable.\* Whether or not a military agreement was actually signed in Peiping, the period of Penn Nouth's visit inaugurated a period of even greater cordiality between Phnom Penh and Peiping. Sihanouk sent a special message to the UN in October, urging the seating of Communist China and characterizing Peiping as having "contributed greatly to the safeguarding of peace in Asia and the freedom of small nations who are the victims of imperialism and its ideology of hatred." In the past, Sihanouk had conceded that the status of Taiwan posed a special problem in Asia, and had spoken of some form of plebescite to determine its status vis-a-vis the Mainland. Now he denounced the two-Chinas concept as "absurd," observing that "the island of Taiwan is certainly Chinese and must be administered by the only legal government of China, the CPR."

With the outbreak of fighting along the Sino-Indian frontier, Sihanouk faced the unhappy choice between the claims of two friendly powers. Although his personal admiration for Nehru had long since cooled, [REDACTED] reports suggest that Sihanouk initially regarded China as culpable, and was uneasy over its seeming encroachment

\*In connection with the alleged military pact, [REDACTED] reports of a Sino-Cambodian "treaty" frequently coincided with an upsurge in incidents along the Cambodian border, or with visits to Peiping by Cambodian VIPs. In the opinion of the writer, however, the trend in Cambodia's foreign relations subsequent to Nouth's visit lends credence to the possibility that some form of understanding was reached. The provision for secrecy would appear to play into the hands of the Chinese, by enabling them to avoid involvement in any of Sihanouk's more bizarre adventures.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

on a neutral neighbor. Although Peiping radio was able to quote expressions of support from leftist Cambodian newspapers, not until 30 October did Sihanouk's organ, The Nationalist, put in a good word for Peiping. On that date the paper welcomed China's proposals -- centering on a joint withdrawal of Chinese and Indian forces -- for a peaceful settlement of the dispute. India's refusal to accept them, the paper editorialized, would be of concern to the people of the world.

According to [REDACTED] it was in early November that Chou En-lai invited Sihanouk to serve as a mediator between China and India, and to visit China prior to his scheduled trip to India in January 1963. Sihanouk reportedly observed privately that he did not desire the role of peacemaker, adding that the Chinese were clearly in the wrong and that he had said as much in a letter to Chou. Gradually, however, his position began to shift. In late November, Sihanouk agreed to attend the Colombo conference of nonaligned nations called to discuss the Sino-Indian situation.

For two weeks prior to the Colombo conference, Sihanouk was Sukarno's guest on a state visit to Indonesia. He appeared to entertain mixed feelings concerning his host. On one hand, Sukarno was careful to give Sihanouk a grand welcome, and in conference the two found themselves in agreement on key world issues. On the other hand, Sihanouk was reportedly suspicious of Sukarno's designs on Malaysia, and of his alleged aspirations concerning leadership of the Afro-Asian bloc. Sihanouk was generous in his praise of Indonesia's struggle against colonialism, but from Djakarta he flew directly to Singapore en route to Colombo -- a move which was interpreted by the Indonesians as indicating less than total sympathy with Sukarno's Malaysia policy.

Sihanouk indicated both before and during the conference (10-14 December 1962) that he was pessimistic concerning its prospects for assisting in a settlement of the Sino-Indian fighting. Only six nations were represented -- Ceylon, Indonesia, Cambodia, Ghana, Burma and the UAR. The conferees shared a reluctance to discuss the merits of the border dispute, and discussion centered on the form which should be used for an appeal to the disputants. The Ghanaian delegation initially favored a positive approach, in which the conferees would call for a neutral

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

zone, to be policed by both sides until a boundary could be agreed upon. Sihanouk, however, argued that the conference's role seemed limited to an appeal for negotiations, or for a Sino-Indian agreement to refrain from action "calculated to aggravate the existing situation."

Sihanouk contended that no technical arrangement could compensate for the absence of good will on the part of the antagonists, and from this premise moved on to an account of Thai and Vietnamese depredations against Cambodia. Finally, the conference agreed to send Mme. Bandaranaike to New Delhi and Peiping to relay the conferees' hopes for a negotiated settlement. Sihanouk observed to intimates that the conference had been a complete waste of time.

The Prince returned to Cambodia long enough to lead a party of officials, diplomats and foreign journalists on a pilgrimage to Preah Vihear temple, so recently "liberated" from the Thais. He then left for India and China, in effect accepting Chou's invitation but visiting India first as originally planned.

Sihanouk did not enjoy his two weeks in India. A contributing factor was the unwillingness of the Indians to be drawn into bilateral talks with the Chinese, as Sihanouk and the other Colombo conferees desired. The major cause of Sihanouk's unhappiness, however, appeared to be that the Indians simply did not "make" over him as Sukarno had done. A member of Sihanouk's entourage characterized him as surprised at the "apathy and ignorance" demonstrated by Indian officials towards Cambodia, and angered by questions such as whether there were roads or radio stations in his country.

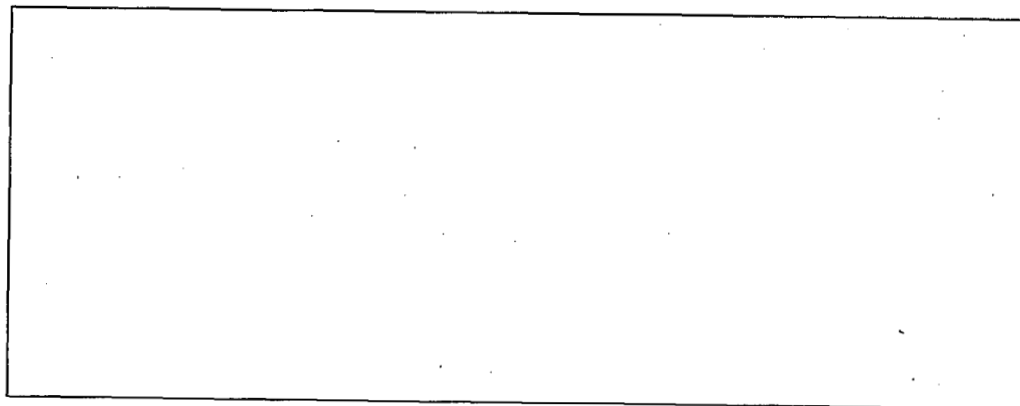
On 9 February 1963, Sihanouk and his party left for China. Sihanouk was weary from his travels within India, and had wired to Peiping that he would appreciate a short rest before beginning his official visit. Chou En-lai was happy to oblige, and from Calcutta Sihanouk flew to a VIP villa in Kunming.

[ ]  
~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

E. Communion in Peiping



In all likelihood, Sihanouk and Chou were in frequent correspondence. Whether the Prince operated "in compliance" with "directives" from Chou is a subjective question, and it is questionable whether anyone could make Sihanouk jump through the hoop. Nevertheless, there was ample evidence of close coordination of foreign policy between Cambodia and its "good friend" to the north since the period of Penn Nouth's visit in the spring of 1962. In his public statements, however, Sihanouk had given little support to Peiping on the India border issue, and privately the Prince had indicated that he regarded the Chinese as at fault.

Sihanouk arrived in Kunming on 9 February. On the following day Chou En-lai flew down from Peiping, ostensibly to greet his guest. On his return to Phnom Penh, Sihanouk described the evening of 10 February:

On the first day, Mr. Chou En-lai, being informed of my arrival, left Peiping at once to join me in Kunming. He brought a file with him and discussed it with me from morning till evening, even after banquets and theatrical performances. Instead of sleeping, I studied the Chinese file.

-101-

[ ]  
~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

According to [REDACTED] the Prince was flattered by Chou's attention and "apparently spellbound" by Chou's personality. He states that Sihanouk accepted the Chinese version of the origins of the Sino-Indian dispute "without a murmur," a contention largely born out by Sihanouk's subsequent behavior. Sihanouk himself described his reaction as follows:

After studying the Chinese file, I found that /The Sino-Indian dispute/ has a very deep cause. Therefore, it is difficult to condemn one or the other party and we must not pass judgment on the problem without due consideration. China did not ask us to condemn India as the culprit. But at the same time, she was disgusted because certain persons condemned her. I found in the Chinese document so much evidence that I could not condemn China, and China is aware of our feelings toward her. We must not pass judgment on this Sino-Indian problem.... We could only beg them to negotiate.

In winning Sihanouk over to at least a benevolent neutrality, Chou achieved what must have been his major objective in connection with the Cambodian visit.\* The Prince was not so successful. Sihanouk had hopes of obtaining a financial grant from China or, that failing, long-term credits. Cambodia's foreign exchange reserves

\*In conversation with a Western journalist in April, Sihanouk stated that Chou had shown him the complete Chinese dossier on the border conflict. Sihanouk stated that the Indians had slowly infiltrated "Chinese territory" until the CPR had been obliged to react by attacking "illegal" Indian posts. The Indians had then mounted an offensive, which had to be countered. The Chinese were surprised at the feeble resistance they encountered and, according to Chou, found themselves "inside India" with an embarrassingly successful "counterattack" on their hands.

Sihanouk reportedly characterized Chou's account as possibly a true version, though conceding that the Indians denied that they had infiltrated Chinese territory. Noting that the Chinese did not accept the MacMahon line, Sihanouk implicitly criticized the Indians for taking the position that the existing frontier was unnegotiable. Sihanouk compared unfavorably this "intransigence" with the "more reasonable" Burmese attitude on border matters.

-102-

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]  
[redacted]

had fallen, and he had been informed by the U.S. that American assistance would continue to be reduced. Although Chou let him down gently, the best that Sihanouk was able to achieve was an agreement whereby China agreed to accept in barter Cambodian raw materials such as rubber and paper in return for manufactured goods. The economic talks, however, were but a sidelight to the pageantry which accompanied Sihanouk's visit. At Peiping three of his sons were present; one was studying there, and two others had been flown from Moscow by the Chinese for the period of Sihanouk's visit.

In Peiping, Sihanouk delivered an address on 14 August calculated to repay in some measure the kindness of his hosts. He reiterated his support for the return of Taiwan to the mainland, and gave full support for bilateral negotiations with New Delhi concerning the disputed frontier. Further:

I am here to tell you that the six million Cambodians /sic/ are linked with the 700 million Chinese by an unbreakable friendship... I would like to add that our relations will become even closer because now we know that colonialism and imperialism are powerless before the will and determination of the Asian peoples to defend their freedom and their right to happiness and prosperity.

He went on to state that of the 13 nations asked to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity, only five -- China, the USSR, the DRV, France and Poland -- had replied affirmatively to Sihanouk's message. The Western countries, alleged Sihanouk, either "evaded the issue by advancing unconvincing explanations" or, like Thailand and South Vietnam, failed to reply. [redacted]

[redacted]

The published version of Sihanouk's speech does not support [redacted] dramatic interpretation [redacted]

[redacted] It [redacted]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]  
[redacted]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]  
[redacted]

[redacted], however, [redacted] may well have been the edited version of a major diatribe. From Peiping Sihanouk went on a tour of Chinese cities. Nearly three weeks later, on the eve of his return to Cambodia, Sihanouk stated that he had been advised by Chou En-lai -- whose information was from "reliable agents in Bangkok" -- that Non Ngoc Thanh had visited Taiwan where he met secretly with representatives of Thailand, South Vietnam and "an imperialist power which I need not name."\* The purported subject of the meeting was the assassination of Sihanouk.

The Chinese may also have alerted Sihanouk concerning domestic rumblings in Phnom Penh; in any case, their briefings impressed a visitor more accustomed to palace gossip and astrological predictions. In his 28 February speech on returning from China, Sihanouk recalled gratefully the information provided by the Chinese at the time of the Dap Chhuon plot, and indicated that he had received new warnings:

When I was in China I was informed of a grave affair concerning our majority party. As in the Dap Chhuon affair, I was informed...of a new subversive plot against me. I was greatly frightened, because upon my arrival in Peiping Mr. Mao Tse-tung himself asked me to do my best to avoid being overthrown. Mr. Chou En-lai... asked me to be careful because "something is being prepared against you."

[redacted] Communist embellishment of the affair was largely limited to introduction of the U.S. as a participant in the Taiwan talks. Although Thanh is believed to receive funds from South Vietnam and possibly Thailand, the Chinese Nationalists appear to have lost interest in Thanh as a means of deposing Sihanouk.

[redacted]  
~~TOP SECRET~~ [redacted]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

## VI. THE STORM

### A. Homecoming Crisis

Sihanouk returned home on 28 February 1963. It was not necessary for him to stir Phnom Penh out of its lethargy; for once, there had been ample activity in his absence. In the final week of the Prince's tour, long-standing student grievances against police and school administrators led to rioting in several locales. The most serious disturbances were at Siem Reap on 23 February. There students fought with police, paraded banners proclaiming that "The Sangkum Is Rotten," and ripped down and trampled upon posters of Sihanouk--the last an act of lêse majeste possibly unprecedented in Cambodia.

The governmental paralysis which characterized Cambodia during Sihanouk's junkets abroad was very much apparent during and after the riots. Troops were finally called in to restore order in Siem Reap, but the report sent to Sihanouk in China downplayed the extent of the violence and reportedly made no mention of the insults to the Prince himself. When Sihanouk returned to hear the whole story, he was reluctant to accept assurances that the demonstrations had been essentially nonpolitical. His humor was not improved by evidence of corruption in Cambodia's national lottery, unfriendly editorials in the leftist press, and general ineptitude on the part of the government headed by Norodom Kantol.\* At a 1 March meeting with the cabinet, Sihanouk angrily accepted the resignation of the Kantol government and announced that he himself would head the new government.

\*From mid-1961 to early 1963, Cambodia's foreign exchange dropped from \$115 million to about \$95 million, even with U.S. aid. Although various factors contributed to the drop, leftists charged most of it to graft and mismanagement.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

With the Chinese warnings ringing in his ears, Sihanouk looked closely into the reports of the rioting at Siem Reap. In a rambling address he ascribed blame for the riots to Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese Nationalist and imperialist elements, who, according to Sihanouk, had instigated Son Ngoc Thanh to cause trouble. The linking of the Nationalists with scapegoats of longer standing is interesting in view of the information provided Sihanouk in Peiping.

Sihanouk's initial reaction appears to have been to relate the riots to the warnings received in Peiping, and for this reason to discount the likelihood of leftist involvement.\* By 2 March, however, local leftists were also under suspicion, presumably as a result of information provided by Sihanouk's advisors. Sihanouk added the names of several leftist ministers to those of Thanh, Chiang Kai-shek and others "responsible" for the riots, and announced that on reflection he would not head a new government after all. Instead, he called for dissolution of the Sangkum, the resignation of the Kantol government, and new elections to the Assembly. Whether Cambodia remained a monarchy, or became a republic or people's republic, would be up to the new government. To underscore the seriousness with which Sihanouk regarded the situation, army troops secured key installations including Radio Cambodia, the information ministry, and the National Assembly.

\*On 8 January, however, Sihanouk had found it necessary to refute criticism in the leftist press of Cambodia's continued acceptance of U.S. aid. In a speech he charged the leftists with destructive criticism, observing that "the Americans have never bound our arms and legs [i.e., attached strings to aid]....The Americans have continued to give us aid even after we received aid from the USSR, Czechoslovakia, the CPR and other Red countries."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

The following morning Premier Kantol--happy to be out from under--resigned on behalf of his cabinet. In Phnom Penh and in the provinces, Sangkum groups initiated demonstrations urging Sihanouk's continuation in power, maintenance of the monarchy, and long life to the Sangkum. Sihanouk, for the time being, continued to strike out indiscriminately at Thanhists, Seatoists, Communists and imperialists. Apparently influenced by Defense Minister Lon Nol, however, he gradually came around to the view that the immediate troublemakers were leftists. In a 3 March speech he charged the "intellectuals"--Sihanouk's synonym for pro-Communists--with subverting the students. In an attempt to publicly humiliate his leftist critics, he called successively on leading leftists to form a government, only to be told by each that he could not command sufficient support. By 8 March, no less than 34 leading leftists had refused the premiership, and most of these had finally proclaimed their loyalty to Sihanouk and the Sangkum. In an address on 14 March, Sihanouk drew a moral from the affair:

There is no denying the fact that these leftists, if they took charge of the government, would be unable to run it, for they are strong /only/ at organizing mobs. Once they assumed power, the people would see that they are not "cleaner," more educated, and more patriotic than others. Thus their future would be doomed, a fact which has prompted them to refuse to form a cabinet. Now that they have shirked the responsibility of leading a government, it is better to maintain the present government.

As for me, I refuse to take charge of the government. But I wish it would strive to do its best. I will run it after it fails in its task or when the situation becomes serious.

The crisis thus completed a full circle. The Sangkum was not dissolved, Sihanouk did not resign as chief

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

of state, and the Kantol government remained in office. Cambodian leftists breathed easier, and generally did not blame Sihanouk for their embarrassment. According to one Pracheachon member, all leftists would be "dead" without Sihanouk, since the army and the police, led by Lon Nol, would jail or murder all leftists were it not for Sihanouk's restraining influence.

The March "homecoming" crisis, for all the noise and confusion, left no lasting impression on the Cambodian domestic scene. Its greatest effect appears to have been in the area of Sino-Cambodian relations. Sihanouk had been warned in Peiping that he was returning to a political crisis ("I was informed of a grave affair concerning our majority party"). His initial reluctance to accept his advisors' explanation of leftist instigation probably stemmed from surprise that his Chinese "friends" would alert him to a maneuver to which the prestige of the Pracheachon and other leftists was committed.

Whatever surge of gratitude may have filled Sihanouk's breast was probably followed by an attempt to discern more logically Peiping's motives in the affair. He probably reached the obvious conclusion that maintenance of the status quo in Cambodia meant more to the Chinese than the prospects of their nondescript leftist brethren on the scene. If so, he was vindicated in allying Cambodia in everything but name to the Colossus of the North.

In any case, the Chinese Communists added to their prestige with Sihanouk. On at least two occasion--the Dap Chhuon affair and now the Siem Reap riots--they had provided him with accurate and timely information which enabled him to cope with serious internal threats. The Chinese had generated not only goodwill, but a reputation for omniscience in the intelligence field--as exemplified by their "Bangkok report" on Son Ngoc Thanh's trip to Taiwan. Any information which the Chinese saw fit to feed to Sihanouk was now assured of a respectful hearing.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

B. Russia and China

Considering its close rapport with Communist China, Cambodia was little influenced by the rivalry between Moscow and Peiping. Cambodia's occasional participation in bloc front groups, noted earlier, involved little more than the airing of well-known Cambodian objectives, and was unrelated to issues in contention between the USSR and China. Domestically, the Pracheachon did not even acknowledge itself to be a Communist party, much less take a stand on intrabloc issues. As for Sihanouk, his affection for Communist China stemmed not from Peiping's revolutionary elan--which he viewed with misgivings--but from personality factors together with immediate considerations of Cambodia's security.

The Cambodian press rarely commented on the Sino-Soviet rivalry. Sihanouk himself appeared loath to comment on the split, lest acknowledgement of its existence cast doubt on his thesis that Communism was the wave of the future. On 16 December 1962, however, Chinese-language papers in Phnom Penh had reprinted the People's Daily article of the previous day denouncing Khrushchev. The timing of the reprints lent credence to reports that the Chinese embassy made available advance copies of the text. Five days later, the semi-official Realites editorialized that there was no cause to rejoice at the rupture between China, "our most faithful friend at the center of what was the Socialist Bloc," and Russia, "our good friend."

Cambodia's reluctance to take sides was understandable, since the USSR and its Eastern satellites, as well as China, were sources of economic assistance. It was unlike Sihanouk, however, to remain completely apart from anything as interesting as the Sino-Soviet dispute. Either to stir greater Soviet interest in Cambodia, or to demonstrate in one more area his friendship for China, Sihanouk began to side with Peiping on certain issues in contention. The first, and most gratuitous, Cambodian intrusion into the bloc's family quarrel had come in September 1962, when Sihanouk agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Albania on the ambassadorial level. Since Cambodia's contacts with Albania were almost nonexistent, the move was clearly designed to curry favor in Peiping.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In April 1963, Cambodia made its first agreement to obtain military equipment from the bloc. Until then Cambodia had ignored a long-standing Soviet offer to provide Sihanouk with aircraft and air defense equipment. In April, a Cambodian economic mission to Moscow obtained a Soviet commitment not only to assist in the construction of a hydroelectric dam but to provide military aid. The Soviets agreed to provide three MIG 17 fighters, one MIG 15 trainer, with ground support and technicians, plus 24 antiaircraft guns.

The "MIG deal" was significant not in terms of the equipment itself, but as a precedent, and as bloc insurance against any rapprochement between Cambodia and its neighbors. Rather than to compete with the Chinese, the Soviet motivation appeared to have been to break the Franco-American monopoly on arms for Cambodia, and to provide Sihanouk with the means to keep up border friction with Thailand and South Vietnam. In contrast with the Chinese, the Soviets did not go overboard in ingratiating themselves with Sihanouk. The Soviets initially refused a Cambodian request that the equipment be provided as a gift, but eventually did agree.

By 1963, the Chinese economy was experiencing such difficulties that Peiping could not afford economic bonuses to countries already committed to its line. Sino-Cambodian relations remained warm, however, as was demonstrated on the occasion of Liu Shao-chi's state visit in the first week of May. The Liu visit provided another opportunity for the Chinese to express their support for Sihanouk, and for his neutrality proposals. In their collective role as Sihanouk's confidante, protector and intelligence officer, however, the Chinese were able to use the trip to boost their prestige with Sihanouk and within Cambodia's Chinese community.

Prior to Liu's arrival on 1 May, the Chinese reportedly informed Sihanouk that they had evidence of a Nationalist-South Vietnamese plot to assassinate both Liu and Sihanouk during the state visit. The Chinese offered to provide an extra security detail for the period of the visit, an offer which Sihanouk accepted. Liu's six-day

- 110 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

tour thus included the unusual spectacle of a host country virtually turning over its internal security responsibilities to the police of a visiting state. An undisclosed number of persons in Phnom Penh--comprising largely members of the small Taiwan-oriented Chinese community--were removed from Phnom Penh as "security risks."

Western news media took notice of the strict security precautions, but the Cambodians were tight-lipped and appeared to take the Chinese warning seriously. Whether the Chinese Communists really had wind of a plot is unknown, but there was no disproving their allegation, and their past record in this area, in Sihanouk's eyes, was without blemish. In a joint communique on 6 May, Cambodia supported Peiping's claim to Taiwan and to Taipei's seat in the UN, and "highly evaluated the decision made by the CPR on its own initiative on the release of the captured Indian military personnel after China's unilateral ceasefire and the withdrawal of China's border guards." China, for its part, supported the "courageous struggle" of the Cambodian people against "imperialism and its followers." The communique went on,

The Chinese side holds that the proposal put forth by the Royal Cambodian Government in 1962 that the countries which participated in the enlarged Geneva conference undertake to guarantee and respect Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity, not only meets the aspirations of the Cambodian people but is conducive to the preservation of peace in Southeast Asia. The Chinese government firmly supports this proposal and is ready at any time to sign the two documents put forward by the Royal Cambodian Government on this question.

Sihanouk viewed Liu's visit with enthusiasm. China's failure to volunteer any new aid offer appears to have been more than compensated for by its endorsement of Sihanouk's political objectives, and by the fact that no one had been assassinated during the period of Liu's visit. At the airport Sihanouk observed,

- 111 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

His Excellency Liu Shao-chi's visit has been a success. This all-round success is definitely of great significance to our common future, because it has proved to the world what I said in Peiping three months ago, that Cambodia and China are determined to forge ahead hand in hand, and that no force in the world can check them.

C. The Two Vietnams

For Cambodia, the spring of 1963 was a period of accelerated leftward drift. There was the MIG deal in April, followed by Liu's visit in May. Less dramatic than either of these, yet far-reaching in their implications, were indications of improved relations between Cambodia and the DRV.

On returning home from China, Sihanouk had announced that Ho Chi Minh would pay a visit to Cambodia during 1963.\* In view of Cambodia's past problems in communicating with the DRV, and his concern over Hanoi's ultimate designs concerning Cambodia, it is virtually certain that Cambodia-DRV relations were a major topic of discussion during Sihanouk's stay in China. In the statement in which he announced Ho's scheduled visit, Sihanouk volunteered that Cambodia's relations with the DRV were "on the road to improvement," in that Hanoi had given evidence of good faith by supporting his neutrality proposals.

At a press conference on 11 April, Sihanouk offered contrasting views of North and South Vietnam. Whereas the DRV had accepted his neutrality proposals, South Vietnam

\*The visit was later postponed until 1964, reportedly at Hanoi's request. At this writing, no date for the visit has been set.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

had rejected them. Whereas South Vietnam was guilty of repeated border violations, North Vietnam had always respected Cambodia's territorial integrity. Sihanouk then seized upon the purported remark of a DRV commercial representative to picture the Hanoi regime in an even more conciliatory light. According to Sihanouk, the DRV representative (whom he referred to as "the North Vietnamese Minister") had recognized on behalf of his government Cambodia's sovereignty over those coastal islands claimed by South Vietnam.

Such flagrant wooing of North Vietnam was interesting for a number of reasons. It demonstrated Sihanouk's determination to write off South Vietnam not only verbally--which he had been doing for some time with his predictions of a Viet Cong victory--but in diplomatic terms as well. In so doing he placed one more obstacle among an already formidable number of hurtles confronting his neutrality proposals. Although they had remained unacceptable to both Thailand and South Vietnam, the support accorded Sihanouk by France as well as the bloc might have permitted considerable pressure to have been brought to bear on the recalcitrant SEATO powers. Instead, Sihanouk chose to court the DRV, and to remove whatever incentive may have existed for South Vietnam to placate its neighbor.\*

\*The extent to which the Viet Cong used Cambodia for sanctuary then or now is unclear. Sihanouk has repeatedly cited an inspection conducted by Robert Trumbull of The New York Times, in the fall of 1962, after a Times article had alleged the presence of Viet Cong installations in Cambodia. Following a three-day, unrestricted inspection of the border, Trumbull concluded that the only military installations in the area were Cambodian. His findings beg the issue of Cambodian border guards looking the other way when Viet Cong bands seek temporary asylum from ARVN forces.

- 113 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

In an even broader sense Sihanouk's attitude towards the two Vietnams reflected a further leftward drift. It was possible to rationalize Cambodia's tacit alliance with China, on the grounds that Sihanouk required a protector and that China was capable of fulfilling this role. This logic, however, did not extend to the DRV. Sihanouk's renewed denigration of South Vietnam, combined with his overtures to the North, appear to have been the result of pique, and to have been punitive in intent. Such a course may have been urged on Sihanouk in Peiping, though he had for some time himself threatened drastic diplomatic action in the event of further South Vietnamese border violations. Hypersensitive to questions involving his country's territorial integrity, Sihanouk appeared to have blown the question of the offshore islands out of proportion, and to have regarded the failure of South Vietnam to turn them over as further evidence of aggressive intent.

In all likelihood, a break between Cambodia and South Vietnam was only a matter of time after Sihanouk returned from Peiping in February. The South Vietnamese, however, made Sihanouk's decision easier for him. Several months of relative tranquility along the Cambodia-Vietnam border ended in the spring of 1963, when on 9 April South Vietnamese armored vehicles penetrated a mile into Cambodia and attacked a Khmer village. Sihanouk made his usual indignant protest, and secured an apology from Saigon. This time, however, Sihanouk was not to be mollified. In a speech on 12 April, he characterized Cambodia's relations with North Vietnam as having "considerably improved" while those with the South "had deteriorated." He announced the projected visit of Ho Chi Minh to Phnom Penh, but insisted that Cambodia had not yet made "a deliberate choice" between North and South Vietnam. According to Sihanouk, improved relations with Hanoi had resulted from its endorsement of his neutrality proposals and its alleged relinquishment of any claim on the disputed islands.

In mid-August, Cambodia charged that two Vietnamese aircraft had strafed a guard post inside the Cambodian border. Although the incident was less flagrant than that of 9 April, Sihanouk on 24 August announced his intention

- 114 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

to break relations with South Vietnam, and did so three days later. In his announcement Sihanouk cited not only "repeated" violations of Cambodian territory by South Vietnamese military units, but--in his role as defender of the faith--cited also "repression" of Buddhists by the Diem government.

The break in relations with South Vietnam, which carried with it the very real danger of a blockade of the Mekong, was one more demonstration that Sihanouk was more than bluff. He had threatened a break with Thailand if Thai "insults" continued, and eventually had carried out his threat. He had threatened to turn to the bloc if the U.S. "permitted" violations of Cambodian territory by its allies--and was carrying out this threat with everything short of a formal alliance. He had repeatedly threatened a break with Vietnam, and now had done so, presumably after receiving assurances in Peiping which may have included a promise of military assistance should South Vietnam attack Cambodia following a break in relations.

That Cambodia's "neutrality" was essentially hostile was accepted as a fact of life in Saigon, and there was no serious reaction to the diplomatic break. The departing South Vietnamese representative announced in Phnom Penh that his country would not blockade the Mekong unless Sihanouk took further hostile action, such as recognizing North Vietnam.

#### D. Whom the Gods Would Destroy

The wildest period of Sihanouk's rule to date spanned a period of 34 days in late 1963. With a speech on 5 November, Sihanouk triggered a train of events which brought his relations with the United States to an all-time low, all but isolated Cambodia from the West, dealt the Cambodian economy a blow from which it has yet to recover, and demonstrated anew that his undeniable gifts in the diplomatic arena were largely nullified by a lack of emotional balance.

- 115 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The November crisis was triggered by the Khmer Serei, whose few hundred diehard members lived a hand-to-mouth existence along Cambodia's borders. They continued to operate--from different locations in Thailand and South Vietnam--an estimated three mobile radio transmitters provided by the host countries. Sihanouk's sensitivity to any criticism was acute with respect to the Khmer Serei broadcasts, for he saw behind them a new Thai-South Vietnamese-U.S. plot to overthrow his government. To Sihanouk the transmitters were the lineal descendants of those provided Dap Chhuon in 1959, and he overlooked no opportunity to warn the populace against the "Son Ngoc Thanh-Sam Sary clique" and its machinations.

Sihanouk seemed to hope that the broadcasts would simply go away. When, in October, the broadcasts resumed after a period of silence, Sihanouk made the occasion the subject of an editorial in The Nationalist:

After a rather long disappearance, the Khmer Serei reappear noisily on the stage of the so-called "anti-Sihanouk theater," whose stage managers have such names as Diem, Sarit and the CIA....Every day their air waves carry for several hours floods of insults and slanders against me, chanting the most "classic" refrains, such as "Sihanouk, the usurper"; "Sihanouk, the traitor sold to the Communists"; "...Sihanouk, who leads Cambodia to war and disaster"; and so forth.

After charging that two of the clandestine radio sets had been newly provided to the Vietnamese by the U.S., Sihanouk hit out at Washington:

U.S. diplomats will undoubtedly remind us once again that South Vietnam is a "sovereign country" and, consequently, the right to control their military personnel is considerably limited.... /But what/ would our American friends say, and would they maintain their economic

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

and military aid to Cambodia if, for example, our government allowed the Viet Cong to set up in our country an "anti-Diem" radio broadcasting center and "lent" the necessary U.S. weapons and military equipment to the Hoa Hao, Cao daists, or other political refugees in Phnom Penh?...

I must warn that if Cambodian neutrality is once destroyed, it will not be the Western wave that will submerge Cambodia, but infallibly the Communist wave. Those who work unceasingly for my defeat should not delude themselves in this regard!

Sihanouk thus had the Khmer Serei very much on his mind when, on 1 November, the Diem government was overthrown by a military coup in Saigon. The coup, accompanied as it was by the murder of Diem, brought a mixed reaction from Sihanouk. In a rambling speech on 2 November he alluded to the coup as an event "which has great significance," and cited a speech of his own a few days earlier in which he had anticipated the early collapse of the Diem government. "Two days later," he mused, "everything occurred as I had anticipated." Sihanouk observed that "Although we should not laugh at the misfortune of the Ngo family... we must admit frankly that we feel relieved because Diem was a sort of thorn which pricked deeply into our hearts."

For all his ill-disguised rejoicing, the Saigon coup was a source of apprehension to Sihanouk. In common with much of the world, he saw the hand of the United States behind Diem's overthrow, and related it to stepped-up broadcasting by the Khmer Serei. If overthrow and death were the fate of a staunch U.S. ally who had outlived his usefulness, what would be Sihanouk's fate should there be a similar coup in Cambodia? In a "message to the Khmer people" on 5 November, Sihanouk brooded over the events of the past few weeks:

I must inform the clergy and my dear compatriots that the Ngo Dinh Diem government

- 117 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

fell and Diem died a few days ago and that, despite this, the broadcasting station of the Khmer Serei traitors... has continued to operate and to direct insults at me.

Since, according to Sihanouk, the new government in South Vietnam would hardly go out of its way to perpetuate bad relations with Cambodia, the continuation of the broadcasts was new evidence that the Khmer Serei were in fact controlled by the Americans.

The U.S. gentlemen are very angry with me, Sihanouk. The other day the U.S. charge d'affaires called at the ministry of foreign affairs and for hours discussed...the fact that I have groundlessly accused the U.S. government and people. Penn Nouth told the charge d'affaires that Sihanouk had accused not the U.S. government and people, but only certain circles and the CIA. He said we have sufficient proof of this organization's disregard for Cambodia's neutrality and its leader....

The charge d'affaires replied that there is no confusion because the CIA has always operated under the direct orders of the U.S. government and that by accusing the CIA Sihanouk simultaneously accuses the U.S. government....

Then Penn Nouth told the charge d'affaires: "If you say so the affair will become even more grave,...because in so saying you imply that the Victor Matsui-Slat Peou case, the arrest of two Vietnamese in possession of a transmitter in Dap Chhuon's house, and

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

the existence of Son Ngoc Thanh's and Sam Sary's transmitters are proof of the U.S. government's involvement."\*

As his speech went on (it ran more than two hours), Sihanouk's oratory became impassioned. A key theme was that the coup in Saigon had demonstrated that the U.S. had the capability to enforce its will on Thailand and South Vietnam when it was in the U.S. interest to do so. Towards the end of the speech Sihanouk dropped his bomb:

If /the Americans/ have such power over /Thailand and South Vietnam/, why did they say that they could not forbid Sarit and Diem to do such-and-such? That is why I believe U.S. aid is poisoned aid, as the Khmer Reds have said. That is why I cannot remain neutral. If I cannot remain neutral, I will have to give up U.S. aid. If I give up U.S. aid, I must change the economic structure of our country and turn our national and Buddhist socialist regime into...an almost Communist regime--that is, a Communist-model or Ben Bella-model socialist regime--so that our country can survive....

To deprive /the Americans/ of all pretexts to attack us, I wish to warn them of this: At present there is not any change. But if on 31 December 1963 the Khmer Serei radio is still functioning--that is the time

\*An editorial entitled "Washington and the CIA" in the 25 October Realites had observed, "We wish to make a distinction between a government and adventurers. We think it likely that the White House and Department of State are not aware of all the criminal activities in which this /agency/ has engaged in the Far East."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

limit--I will take appropriate steps. I will order our aged ambassadors abroad to retire, because they are too old /sic/. I wish to warn the Free World, especially the United States, that if on 31 December 1963 the Khmer Serei radio is still functioning, I will ask the United States to cut off economic and military aid and to withdraw its aid missions from our country. I will not cut diplomatic relations....I will only refuse to receive aid. I will bring in the Chinese to teach us new socialism. This is not a bluff. /Emphasis added/

Sihanouk's agitated state of mind is reflected only partly in the printed text. Even here, however, his insertion of an unrelated sentence concerning the retirement of aged ambassadors hints strongly concerning the state of his mental health. Elsewhere in his speech, his remarks took on a morbid cast. Sihanouk announced that "they" would have to kill him to prevent him from carrying out his resolve. ("If they want to kill me they must do it before the /31 December/ deadline.") He might easily have added that he had not yet begun to fight.

As early as June 1963 there had been rumors that Sihanouk contemplated drastic action in connection with the Cambodian economy. One report [ ] indicated that leftist ministers in the government had formulated plans for the nationalization of considerable sectors of the economy, but were faced with the problem of breaking through Sihanouk's disinterest in economics. This was not their only problem: Cambodia's economy was influenced by a variety of non-economic factors, including urban hostility towards the Chinese merchant class, well-founded fears of Sihanouk's eventual plans for the country, and the penchant of seemingly-responsible officials to act on the advice of astrologers.

The possibility of a more highly managed economy was openly discussed at the Sangkum national congress in

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

the summer of 1963, and one minister argued there that the establishment of an agency to supervise the export of rice would discourage speculation and curb local Chinese rice traders. The economy was generally regarded as stagnant, and each Cambodian had his private scapegoat for this state of affairs. Sihanouk, for one, considered the U.S.-sponsored commodity import program, which allocated foreign exchange to the private sector of the economy, as an incitement to speculation and graft.

Although there was widespread agreement concerning the need for economic reform in Cambodia, the sweeping socialization decree put out by Sihanouk on 10 November was as much a political as an economic measure. Sihanouk viewed his termination of U.S. aid as the end to Cambodia's neutrality, a symbolic repudiation of the West. By the same token, he felt obliged, in his search for a limbo somewhere between the status of a neutral and a Communist satellite, to reorient the Cambodian economy in a direction consistent with this political objective.

Sihanouk's speech of 10 November was essentially an emotional recital of grievances against his neighbors and the West. ("As people sing 'Goodbye, Hawaii,' I say 'Goodbye, Free World.' I must tell them goodbye.") It was notable solely for Sihanouk's announcement that the government would take over all export-import transactions at the end of the year. Essentially, this involved the nationalization of all banks in foreign trade, and these Sihanouk directed to wind up their affairs by 1 July 1964. Although the National Assembly had no foreknowledge of Sihanouk's move, it rubber-stamped his decision on 12 November.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Communists appear to have been disturbed by Sihanouk's assumption that they were prepared to assume the United States' economic role in Cambodia. Messages from Chinese officials on the 10th anniversary of Cambodia's independence were brief and made no reference to Cambodia's rejection of U.S. aid. Sihanouk was probably disturbed by this silence on the part of his "great friends." On 20 November--in an action probably designed to underscore his cozying-up to Peiping--Sihanouk

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

named an unpromising son, Prince Naradipo, as his successor as head of the Sangkum.

At the ceremony of cremation of my father, I swore not to make one of my sons king. I wish to make it plain that Naradipo is designated to replace me as president of the Sangkum. I do not want him to be king, but if the children want him to succeed me as chief of state in order to continue to help you, I thank you all....He is well educated by qualified instructors. He is now in China, where Chen I and Chou En-lai teach him.

His mother, Princess Moni-Kessor, has already departed this life. She was very virtuous, unlike the mothers of my other children, who are less serious.... Most of my wives do not have good character. But this wife named Moni-Kessor was virtuous....During her lifetime, I loved her less than my other shrewd, bad wives. She bore me a son and passed away a short time later. This son of mine does not know his mother. Fortunately, he is now educated by Mr. and Mrs. Chen I and Mr. Chou En-lai.

Sihanouk's naming of Naradipo as his successor--an act by which he doubtless intended to assure Peiping of continued influence in Cambodia--coincided with Peiping's first public expressions of support for Sihanouk's 5 November ultimatum. In a statement on 21 November, Peiping promised "all-out support" for Cambodia in the event of armed invasion by the U.S. and its "vassals." Playing on Sihanouk's susceptibilities, the Chinese communique charged the U.S. with "further intensifying its aggressive activities" against Cambodia following its anti-Diem coup in Saigon.

Although Peiping's announcement was probably heartening to Sihanouk, the failure of the Chinese to respond

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

to Sihanouk's 5 November speech with anything resembling alacrity, and the clear implication that "all-out support" would be forthcoming in case of invasion only, was somewhat embarrassing. Cambodia's usefulness to Peiping as a "neutralist" supporter had long been recognized by Communist and Western observers; it now appeared that Sihanouk's ostensible desire for quasi-satellite status was not evoking comparable enthusiasm within the bloc.

Peiping's blase attitude, together with concern among his advisors at Cambodia's estrangement from the West, appear to have had an effect on Sihanouk. On 13 November, while still awaiting assurances from Peiping, Sihanouk struck a different note. "I have already told the Americans," he stated on a nationwide broadcast, "that if they wish to cut aid before 1 January 1964, they are welcome to do so do so do /emphasis added/." Having implied that any termination of aid would be on U.S. initiative, he criticized certain aspects of the U.S. aid program while praising others. He indicated that if the Khmer Serei radio remained silent he might continue to accept U.S. aid, on a selective basis.

Frankly speaking, the Americans can cut some areas of their aid if they want to, even though the Khmer Serei hold their tongues. If they maintain other areas of aid we should continue to accept it, especially in the cultural field....

The radio station of the Khmer Serei has not broadcast for six days. Thus, if the Khmer Serei keep silent for good, then we should continue to receive U.S. aid...It is better to continue to receive aid which materializes in the building of roads, hospitals or dams.

#### E. The Final Breach

Following his nationalization speech of 10 November, Sihanouk was quiescent for about a week. His conservative

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

advisors, so often cowed by the Sihanouk mystique, sought to impress upon him the significance of his rebuffs to the West.\* Somewhat naively, Sihanouk maintained during the period 6-15 November that he was prepared to continue receiving U.S. aid provided that the Khmer Serei radios remained silent.

The calm, however, was deceptive. On about 14 November, a follower of Son Ngoc Thanh--Preap In--slipped into Cambodia from South Vietnam to a meeting with the governor of Takeo province. Granted safe conduct while in Cambodia, Preap In outlined to the governor a proposal involving the return of Thanh to Cambodia. Whether the approach was an attempt to enlist the governor in a coup plot, or whether Thanh was merely hopeful of some form of amnesty, is unclear. The provincial governor hustled Preap In to Phnom Penh, with a note suggesting that Sihanouk talk to him.

On 16 November, in the same speech in which he named Naradipo his successor, Sihanouk told a gathering in Phnom Penh that while the Khmer Serei had suspended their broadcasts, "recently...they came to Takeo province" disguised in U.S. uniforms. After rehashing his charge that the Khmer Serei were supported by the Americans, and attacking the mechanics of the U.S. aid program, Sihanouk announced,

Children, beginning today U.S. aid  
is ended. Beginning today, the Khmer

\*Sihanouk usually went through the motions of accepting advice from his ministers, and the conservatives--particularly when supported by the Queen--were sometimes able to delay his more precipitous moves. On the other hand, there is no evidence that any of Sihanouk's major decisions resulted from the influence of leftist advisors. Although these were to be found in abundance, particularly in the information field, Sihanouk made his own policies and, as has been noted, was often contemptuous of those further to the left than himself.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Royal Armed Forces are free, as U.S. aid is ended. All that remains for me is to offer a reception for our friends in MAAG who played volleyball with us....

I am going to ask General Tioulong to visit and ask for aid from the friendly Socialist countries which have said they like neutral Cambodia. Cambodia is now more neutral than before because it no longer accepts U.S. aid.

By choosing to regard the Preap In affair as equivalent to a resumption of Khmer Serei broadcasting, Sihanouk once again demonstrated that his ultimata, although sometimes modified, were not idle threats. Having made his decision, Sihanouk sought to impress upon his people the American perfidy which had prompted a rejection of aid. On 19 November, at a special rally in Phnom Penh, Sihanouk surfaced Preap In, along with a previously apprehended Khmer Serei, and questioned them personally.

After reminding his audience of the Dap Chhuon affair, Sihanouk charged that Son Ngoc Thanh--advised by the U.S. and the South Vietnamese--had sent two of his followers, Preap In and Sat San, to sound out sentiment for a coup by Thanh. Sihanouk quoted from a Security Service report, which stated that Preap In had admitted that the Khmer Serei were commanded by South Vietnamese and U.S. officers, and then demanded that the two culprits be brought to the rostrum. The following dialogue ensued between Sihanouk and Sat San:

Sihanouk: Were you the announcer of the radio that insulted me?

San: Yes, that is true.

Sihanouk: You see! I will let you off if you say two words to tell me whether the United States and the South Vietnamese governments have supported the Khmer Serei.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

San: Yes, that is true.

Sihanouk: Well! /cheers and applause/ Now I am going to let you off. But you have only to say two more words....I ask you to tell me who has provided the radios.

San: Yes, the radios belonged to the Vietnamese government, but they were provided by the Americans.

Sihanouk: You see! /shouts and applause/ As for guns, who has given them to the Khmer Serei?

San: Yes, the guns are Vietnamese guns, but they were provided by the Americans.

Sihanouk: You see, it is very clear. /shouts and applause/ Therefore I tell you that you may take off.

San: I thank /Sihanouk/ and the Congress.

Preap In, whose safety had been assured by the provincial governor, was less fortunate. Sihanouk asked the crowd what should be his fate, and interpreted the response as a demand for the death penalty. Sihanouk then returned to San's testimony and asked his listeners if they were prepared to make sacrifices on behalf of the nation. He announced that "our honor obliges Prince Kantol's government immediately to inform the U.S. gentlemen that as of today they should withdraw their economic, cultural, military and all other missions..../applause/"

With the official Cambodian rejection of U.S. aid on 20 November, Khmer-American relations appeared to have reached a nadir. The impression of a Cambodia hell-bent for satellite status was underscored when, on 25 November, it signed with Communist China a long-pending civil air agreement providing for air service between Phnom Penh and Peiping. The worst, however, was yet to come.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

For all his penchant for dealing in personalities, Sihanouk as yet had said little that could be construed as critical of President Kennedy. There was reason to believe that Sihanouk admired the President, and was not unappreciative of the red carpet treatment accorded him by Mr. Kennedy on his last visit to the UN. The President's assassination, however, came during a period of stress when Sihanouk was particularly sensitive to portents and astrological predictions. On 2 November he had remarked concerning Diem's overthrow,

Venerables and dear children, you know that 29 October was the anniversary of my birthday. On that day, I went to the Silver Pagoda to make my offering and put flowers on the grave of the late King Norodom. I prayed to my late grandfather to help his grandson triumph over the enemies of the Cambodian people.... I prayed to the late King Norodom to punish Ngo Dinh Diem quickly and efficiently because his threats against the life of our kingdom were becoming increasingly grave....

I informed the venerables and bonzes who came to Khermarin Palace on 30 October, on the occasion of my birthday, to present their wishes and spray me with holy water, that I was convinced Ngo Dinh Diem and his regime were on the brink of collapse and that they could not survive for long. They had persecuted Cambodians for years. Now they wanted to destroy Buddhism. If they dared destroy Buddhism they would quickly go to hell....I told all these things to the venerables and bonzes on 30 October. I told them that this guy was rushing to his death. Two days later everything occurred as I had anticipated.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

On 8 December, Thai Premier Sarit died of kidney failure in Bangkok. To Sihanouk, the passing of Diem, Kennedy and Sarit in such rapid succession could not be explained away as coincidence. That his prayers for the punishment of Diem and Sarit had coincided with President Kennedy's assassination appeared to confirm, a priori, that the President, too, had been an enemy of Cambodia. At the time of the President's death Cambodia observed the proprieties, including a three-day period of mourning. On 9 December, however, Sihanouk used the following language in announcing Sarit's death on the national radio:

At two-week intervals our enemies have departed, one after the other. At first the one in the South, then the great Boss and now the one in the West. All three have sought to violate our neutrality and to make trouble for us, to seek our misfortune. Now they are all going to meet in hell where they will be able to build military bases for SEATO. Our other enemies will join them. Imminent justice strikes them down. The gods punish all the enemies of neutral and peaceful Cambodia. The spirits of our former kings protect us. The death of Sarit Thannarat is a real relief.

The "official" transcript was far more bland, reflecting as it did the usual watering-down accorded Sihanouk's diatribes:

We do not wish evil to anyone, and we do not laugh at the misfortunes that afflict others, but for us who are Buddhists and who believe in imminent justice it is no accident that, in the space of one month and a half, at an interval of several weeks, the leaders of the only countries that have caused harm to independent and neutral Cambodia have died.

- 128 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

Meanwhile, Sarit's death was celebrated by a week's school holiday, two weeks of shortened work hours for government employees, the flying of flags on public buildings, and special musical programs in Phnom Penh/

When the State Department immediately protested the broadcast, Sihanouk was aggressive and unrepentant. He rejected the protest, ordered home the Cambodian ambassador to Washington and most of his staff, and ordered the chancery in Washington put up for rent. Characteristically, he stopped short of a complete break in relations: such a step might be un-neutral. Moreover, Sihanouk's wild behavior was causing uneasiness at home, to say nothing of speculation as to who was going to make up the \$30 million annual aid which had been provided by the United States. The free market value of the riel was down, and business anxiety was reflected in an exodus of capital and commodity hoarding.

As in the days following his 5 November ultimatum, Sihanouk in early December began to show signs of uneasiness over his actions. He indicated that he was prepared to negotiate a new aid agreement with the U.S. provided that the terms were more acceptable, and omitted obnoxious provisions such as those against the mingling of U.S. and bloc aid. Incredibly, a Cambodian cabinet spokesman, in aid termination talks with U.S. officials, decried the "unilateral" U.S. decision to end its assistance, and urged that aid continue for a terminal period of six months, after which a new agreement could be negotiated. He indicated that under a new agreement, MAAG and AID personnel would be permitted to remain in reduced numbers.

Although Sihanouk retracted nothing, the eleventh-hour attempt of the Kantol government to seek a continuation of aid could only have been made with Sihanouk's concurrence. Sihanouk continued to insist that he did not want Cambodia to become a Communist satellite, but thought it might be desirable to become "free like Yugoslavia." He promised that Cambodia would not become Communist if there were no aggression against it. At Sihanouk's request, the National Assembly endorsed a new plea for a conference to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality.

- 129 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Peiping's 21 November communique had stressed its support for the conference proposal, in contrast to its vagueness concerning military support.

In retrospect, the November crisis involved no action by Sihanouk which could be regarded as totally unexpected. He had warned for years that he regarded the threat of Communist domination as secondary to that posed by Cambodia's neighbors, and would act accordingly. His nationalization measures were a more recent phenomenon, but even these had been under consideration since early summer. His inordinate concern over the Khmer Serei, and his firm conviction that their activities were controlled by the U.S., were a matter of record.

The significance of the November crisis thus lay not in any single action by Sihanouk, but in their cumulative effect coming as they did in close succession. In the space of three weeks he managed to bring an end to U.S. aid, force the ouster of Western banking institutions, and bring Cambodia to the brink of a diplomatic rupture with the United States. In so doing he all but isolated Cambodia from the West, while creating a political and economic vacuum which he probably hoped would be filled by the Communists. That the Chinese were too astute to take up where the U.S. had left off was a tribute to their sagacity, not to Sihanouk's.

F. "Alone and Unaided"

As a result of Sihanouk's rebuffs to the United States, France was the only Western power with whom Sihanouk maintained anything resembling cordial relations. Only De Gaulle, by supporting Cambodia's demand for guarantees against its neighbors, had indicated that he did not share the Anglo-Saxon aversion to Sihanouk's brand of neutralism.

In late November, Sihanouk elaborated on his call for a conference on Cambodia with a proposal for the linking of Cambodia and South Vietnam into a "neutral confederation"--in effect, combining his periodic pleas for the

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

neutralization of both countries. Even the French found this hard to take, and Paris press organs charged Sihanouk with attempting to perpetuate the division of Vietnam. Sihanouk, however, argued that the Communists could not be defeated in South Vietnam, and would not permit the neutralization of all of Vietnam. ("But how can the Viet Minh adopt a neutral policy when they are already Red? The Red color can never be washed and made white.") To Sihanouk's way of thinking, therefore, the only hope for South Vietnam lay in securing Hanoi's consent to its neutralization.

By the end of 1963 Sihanouk had floated a sufficient number of schemes involving neutralization guarantees for Cambodia that the government felt obliged to clarify which one was operative. A royal communique recalled that in August 1962 Sihanouk had asked the signatories to the 14-nation agreement on Laotian neutrality to work out a similar agreement to assure the neutrality and territorial integrity of Cambodia. When the Western powers, except for France, had balked at participating in such a conference, Sihanouk had sought to achieve the same result by means of a reconvening of the nine-nation Geneva conference of 1954, and it was this plan which received Peiping's unequivocal endorsement in its communique of 21 November. On 22 November, Cambodia had formally petitioned the co-chairmen of the Geneva conference--Great Britain and the USSR--to reconvene the conference. When his "neutral confederation" scheme found no takers, it was to the nine-power conference plan that Sihanouk returned.

To Sihanouk, Britain's obstructionism concerning the conference put the British in the same class as the Americans. The British had replied that they would support any proposal acceptable to Cambodia and its neighbors--the latter a qualification that effectively ruled out any conference and infuriated Sihanouk. On 14 December, Sihanouk delivered an emotional diatribe against Great Britain which ranked with any that he had delivered against the United States.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

It was just like a race of snails yesterday when the British Ambassador came to see Mr. Sambath and told him that it is now very difficult for the British, who are the Cambodians' friends, to assist the Cambodians. British gentlemen, what is the matter with you? What problem are you facing?....

How long have the British helped Cambodia? They have never helped Cambodia....Mr. Khrushchev stated that the conference on Laos was initiated by Cambodia and so it was necessary to hold the conference in Phnom Penh....He thus honored Cambodia greatly. Our country of Cambodia was greatly honored thanks to Mr. Khrushchev. And who opposed Phnom Penh as the site of the conference? Great Britain. It was Great Britain....

They think that the Cambodians are Negroes.

Sihanouk continued in semicoherent fashion, finally announcing that he was closing the Cambodian embassy in London, though not recalling his ambassador. He left no doubt as to his personal attitude towards the British and the Americans:

To avoid disputes on the death of Sarit...I no longer want the Anglo-Saxon representatives here. This is the only way to avoid disputes. In other words, in order for us to have peace with the Anglo-Saxons, it is better for the British and the Americans not to stay in Cambodia any longer....If you want to stay, you can stay. But do not say that we invited you to stay. It is better for you to leave our country.

- 132 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

December brought no improvement in Cambodia's relations with the United States. In Washington, Assistant Secretary of State Harriman consulted with Cambodian Ambassador Nong Kimny, and suggested that Dean Acheson be sent to Phnom Penh for talks with Sihanouk.\* In Cambodia, Sihanouk quickly threw cold water on any such a move. In a speech on 18 December, Sihanouk set three preconditions to any meeting with Acheson: that the United States would withdraw its charge the Sihanouk's slur on President Kennedy was "barbaric;" that the American embassy would withdraw its protest over the incident; and that CIA would silence the Khmer Serei radio. Unless these conditions were met, said Sihanouk, a trip to Cambodia by Acheson would be "useless."

A sidelight to Sihanouk's fulminations against the West is the reaction to them in Peiping and Moscow. Although hard evidence is lacking, there were indications that the bloc was somewhat put off by Sihanouk's erratic behavior. Not until 14 December did Pravda mention Sihanouk's November appeal for a new Geneva conference, and then limited its comment to a low-keyed reference to the need to preserve Cambodia's neutrality. Also in mid-December, the Cambodian ambassador to Peiping was quoted [ ] as saying that neither he personally nor the Peiping regime was "in accord" with Sihanouk's recent actions. The ambassador added that Sihanouk--who had been undergoing a drastic reducing diet--did not look well and "should be under psychiatric care."

Although Sihanouk's baiting of the West inspired most of the headlines, within Cambodia it was not his xenophobia but his economic decrees that inspired the strongest reaction. During December, Sihanouk railroaded through the Assembly a law calling for the nationalization

\*Acheson, in his private legal capacity, had endeared himself to the Cambodians in 1962 by successfully representing Cambodia before the World Court in the case of the disputed temple, Preah Vihear.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

of all banks in Cambodia, much as he had earlier nationalized all foreign-owned banks. In supplementary legislation, the government decreed prison terms for all bank employees who refused to continue in their posts under government management. The two laws aroused considerable resentment. According to one Cambodian official, "most" government officials, including members of the cabinet, opposed the measure, and there was even muttering against Sihanouk himself. The president of the private Bank of Phnom Penh fled to South Vietnam on 22 December.

The Assembly debated the nationalization measures for several days, an unusual bit of foot-dragging which prompted Sihanouk to threaten it with legislation prohibiting debate and formalizing its function as a legislative rubber-stamp. He stumped the provinces to drum up support for the legislation, and to belabor the U.S. The Assembly could only briefly delay the legislation, however, and Sihanouk's speaking tour served as a reminder of the hold he had on the people. In the end, all banks were scheduled for nationalization by 11 July 1964.

Analyzing Sihanouk's November-December rampage, the American embassy expressed the belief that Sihanouk, "alone and in a sense unaided," had manufactured a major crisis in foreign relations out of thin air. The embassy saw four major factors as influencing Sihanouk's conduct: a conviction that the Communists will win Southeast Asia; his mental state, including apparent paranoiac tendencies; his pathological hatred of the U.S.; and--in amplification of this last point--the lack of any desire to improve his relations with the United States. Certainly the rebuff of the Acheson mission was not the act of a person who wished to restore correct relations with Washington.

#### G. Any Kind of Conference

In the first half of 1964, as for much of the year before, the criteria by which Sihanouk identified the friends and enemies of Cambodia was the attitude of each country concerning a conference to formalize Cambodian neutrality. Sihanouk's aim was commendable, and the need

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

for improved delineation of the border with South Vietnam was dramatized by a succession of serious border violations by the Vietnamese. Sihanouk, however, never settled on any one conference proposal long enough to fully explore its prospects, and jeopardized the chances of any conference by his outspoken hatred of the West, exempting only France.

In contrast to his hostility towards the U.S. and its allies, Sihanouk seemed genuinely desirous of strengthening his ties with France. His outlook here reflected both a wish to maintain the trappings of neutrality in the Cold War, and his search for a source of aid capable of offsetting in part the loss of \$30 million in American aid annually. Although French interests had been among the hardest hit by Sihanouk's nationalization decrees, Sihanouk's political objectives were sympathetically viewed in Paris. In January, Defense Minister Messmer visited Phnom Penh where he promised Cambodia 18 obsolescent tanks, 100 trucks and 18 prop aircraft. The package was comparable to that offered by the USSR the previous fall, and the American embassy in Phnom Penh viewed the Messmer mission as a welcome interruption in the stream of gifts from the bloc.

Sihanouk's preoccupation, however, was not so much with aid as with his neutrality conference. The absence of Free World support for a Geneva-type conference, except for France, prompted Sihanouk to announce on 18 February that he had a new proposal:

To show to the world our pacifism, our good will, and our ardent love for neutrality, I propose today to the United States and its two allies, Thailand and South Vietnam, a new solution which, if approved, will settle our problem and the common crisis to the satisfaction of both camps....

First, the governments of the United States, Thailand and South Vietnam will send their plenipotentiary representatives

- 135 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

to Phnom Penh...to sign a quadripartite accord according to which the United States, Thailand and South Vietnam will recognize Khmer neutrality and the present outline of Cambodian frontiers.... In return, Cambodia will promise to observe strict neutrality, not become the ally of anyone, and prevent the establishment of foreign military bases on its territory. Cambodia will also prevent the passing through and the presence on its territory of rebel bands. /Emphasis added/ \*

For a time it appeared that a quadripartite conference might actually be held. In contrast to a Geneva-type conference, where both Communist China and the USSR would be in attendance, the propaganda forum inherent in a quadripartite conference was less a problem to the United States. Sihanouk, however, began adding conditions almost every time he delivered a speech. He indicated that South Vietnam would be expected to disavow, in advance, any residual claim to the much-debated coastal islands. He stated that a country's attendance at the quadripartite conference would signify its willingness to accept an enlarged ICC for patrolling the Cambodian-Vietnam border. Not content with this campaign to turn the conference into a rubber stamp, Sihanouk observed parenthetically that Saigon's recognition of Cambodia's neutrality must necessarily be provisional, since the ultimate ruler of Vietnam would be Ho Chi Minh and not any U.S. puppet.

Sihanouk's persistence in destroying his own brain-child is not easily explained. Of all the means Sihanouk

\*This is the only statement known to the writer in which Sihanouk has conceded implicitly that Viet Cong bands were operating within Cambodia, and that more could be done to deny them transit than the Cambodian government was doing.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

had suggested for obtaining guarantees concerning Cambodia's neutrality and boundaries, the quadripartite conference was the most promising. So anxious was the Khanh regime to demonstrate its good faith that not even Sihanouk's insult prevented Saigon from replying, on 2 March, that South Vietnam was willing to attend a conference in Phnom Penh. On the following day the United States informed Sihanouk that, "subject to the views of other interested parties," it was prepared to attend a four-power meeting.

Although the Thais were not enthusiastic over the quadripartite conference, its collapse resulted not from any action by the three Western powers involved, but from Sihanouk's pique at Great Britain. Sihanouk had never withdrawn his request for a reconvening of the 14-nation Geneva conference, and one of the co-chairmen, the USSR, had supported Cambodia's request. When Great Britain, the other co-chairman, refused to go along, Sihanouk was enraged. In a speech on 2 March he denounced perfidious Albion, insisted that the quadripartite conference was no substitute for the larger gathering, and warned that if a Geneva conference were not convened by 31 May Cambodia would break off relations with the governments responsible.

There is reason to suspect that, in this period, the key to Sihanouk's behavior lay with his mental health. Examination of his speeches of February-March reveals an unusually large number of references to possible invasion, to Khmer Serei-engineered genocide against the Cambodian people, and to the questions being raised about his own sanity. Running through his speeches were hints of impending Götterdämmerung: ("We have already worked out a plan to withdraw to the jungles. The children of the Khmer Royal Armed Forces and other children already know of this plan.") Given Sihanouk's outlook, it is questionable that much could have been settled by a quadripartite conference. The remarkable thing is that one came close to being held.

An accumulation of grievances against the United States, together with fury at Great Britain's opposition to a Geneva conference, goaded Sihanouk into action during March. On 11 March, government-instigated demonstrations

- 137 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

against the U.S. and British embassies turned into a full scale riot. At the British embassy, 12 cars were overturned and burned; at the USIS office, some 10,000 books were burned. Although there were no serious injuries, total damage amounted to over \$250,000. The violence of the rioting was unprecedented in recent Cambodian history, and a further ominous note was the fact that government officials were observed leading the mobs.

A U.S. embassy postmortem on the affair concluded that although it was initiated by the government, the extent to which the 40,000-odd participants would get out of hand had not been foreseen. Sihanouk apologized for the damage, and promised compensation. He added, however, that he could not blame the rioters, that Cambodians were "habitually kind toward those who respect them, and become wicked only toward those who deceive them."

In a speech immediately following the riot, Sihanouk stated that he was abandoning the attempt to convene a quadripartite conference. He stated that he was sending a Cambodian delegation to Hanoi, to negotiate recognition of Cambodia's frontiers, and that if the negotiations were successful Cambodian recognition of North Vietnam would follow. He stated that Cambodia would not seek to conclude a military alliance with either Hanoi or Peiping, as it was sufficiently protected by China's stated willingness to intervene in case of outside aggression against Cambodia.

It soon became apparent that Sihanouk was angling for the best deal he could make with either government of Vietnam. On 16 March, he announced that because of Hanoi's failure "to give a clear answer" to his request for recognition of Cambodia's present borders, he no longer intended to recognize North Vietnam. At Sihanouk's suggestion, a South Vietnamese delegation flew to Phnom Penh for talks.

Once again there was a flicker of hope that, in the absence of a better offer from Hanoi, Sihanouk might reach some form of accommodation with Saigon. On 19 March,

- 138 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

however, South Vietnamese forces attacked the village of Chantrea, several kilometers inside Cambodia, and killed 16 Cambodians. The incident precluded any negotiations, and Sihanouk warned that if another such incident occurred Cambodia would initiate "drastic" military action. For the moment, however, Saigon's prompt apology, together with Sihanouk's pique at the North Vietnamese, delayed Cambodian recognition of Hanoi.

Essentially, Cambodia's relations with the bloc during the first half of 1964 were reflections of its deteriorated relations with the West. Although Sihanouk periodically threatened to enter military alliances with China and North Vietnam, Cambodia's estrangement from the West was not accompanied by a commensurate drift in the direction of closer relations with the bloc.

Central to this paradox was the personality of Sihanouk. On one hand, he overlooked few opportunities to be of service to the bloc, particularly to China. (In April, Cambodia pledged "firm support" and "fraternal solidarity" with Cuba in its struggle against the American imperialists; in March, Cambodia sent a message to Brazil, urging the release of nine Chinese Communist nationals "barbarously" detained by Brazil on behalf of "U.S. imperialism".) On the other hand, Sihanouk remained a confirmed nationalist, with a phobia concerning the territorial integrity of his kingdom. Given these circumstances, no great discernment was required for the Chinese to decide to let well enough alone. Cambodia was far more useful to the bloc as a thorn in the side of SEATO and the West than as a small and unruly satellite.

Sino-Khmer relations in early 1964 centered about Sihanouk's efforts to obtain aid, including military equipment, to make up for that once provided by the U.S. In March, Defense Minister Lon Nol headed a Cambodian delegation to China, where he was given red carpet treatment not unlike that previously accorded Sihanouk himself. Mao Tse-tung expressed admiration for Sihanouk's policies, assured Nol that China would aid Cambodia in case of a war, and, curiously, warned that the Khmer Serei were planning an invasion of Cambodia. (In contrast to the accuracy

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

of previous information passed to Sihanouk, there is no evidence that the Khmer Serei has ever seriously considered an "invasion" of Cambodia.) In China, the Lon Nol mission received the red carpet but nothing else. In a shorter visit to the USSR, it received a Soviet commitment to provide two more MIG fighters and additional anti-aircraft guns.\*

At home, Sihanouk sought to rationalize his unwillingness to take up the olive branch proffered by the Khanh government. In a speech on 23 April, Sihanouk alluded to a conversation he had had in Phnom Penh with Winston Burchett, the Australian Communist journalist. Although he conceded Burchett's political bias, Sihanouk apparently accepted assurances from him regarding the Viet Cong:

I found out /from Burchett/ that the Viet Cong have attacked the Khmer Serei for us. Each time they meet the Khmer Serei they attack them viciously. Moreover, the Viet Cong have told him that I should not be worried. "We pledge to attack the Khmer Serei in Kampuchea for Sihanouk." The Viet Cong have sent me proof of their attacks against the Khmer Serei.

\*Despite their need to cultivate Moscow for purposes of aid, Cambodian officials felt much closer to China than the USSR. They appear drawn to Peiping not only by racial and geopolitical factors, but by its militant anti-Americanism. According to one report, Soviet officials in Phnom Penh adopted a "distant attitude" towards one of Sihanouk's European press advisors because of his alleged pro-Chinese bias. The leftist Despeche editorialized in May, however, that, since Cambodia was "neutral" between East and West, it should attempt to maintain neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute. It noted that neither Moscow nor Peiping had sent "CIA types" to buy up Cambodian consciences.

- 140 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

In June, the United States endorsed a proposal that a UN commission be established to police the Cambodia-South Vietnam border, but Sihanouk would have no part of it. He refused to consider any settlement which did not take into account the disputed islands, although a show of goodwill on his part might very well have induced concessions on this issue from Saigon. He contented himself with assertions that the border was already sufficiently marked, and that no sanctuary was being provided the Viet Cong in Cambodia. The most logical explanation for Sihanouk's attitude is that he was reluctant to antagonize Hanoi by coming to any agreement with Saigon. Yet he had not hesitated to recall his own mission from Hanoi in March, and two weeks later had sentenced 13 alleged Viet Cong to a year in jail for crossing into Cambodia.

In early June, Sihanouk left for one of his periodic rest cures in France. A bulletin by his attending physicians there spoke of a 30-day vacation, and alluded to "a state of fatigue caused by psychological and material conditions [sic] that are inherent in...[his responsibilities]." No one was prepared to take the plunge and say that the chief of state was incapacitated. Some idea of his state of mind, however, can be drawn from a speech in early April:

If we have to leave Phnom Penh and take refuge in the jungles, dear children, I will not regret leaving my beautiful villas. [In French:] If I think only of my personal interests and pay no attention to my people's lives, I will be comparable to our intellectuals. Moreover, what is war?...When the war is ended I will come out from the jungle with incomparable glory. It will be wonderful for me. I will be a superhero and so forth, but a hero who will reign over a ruined Cambodia, a suffering people, an unhappy people and an unhappy nation...

[In Khmer:] Do not believe erroneously that I am afraid of war. At that moment

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

the children will know who is afraid of war. Remember this: when there is war, fear will make our intellectuals urinate in their pants....

[In French:] Since the day we renounced U.S. aid, we have never been so rich in arms as we are today. Ha ha ha! First of all, France gives us enormous military aid....The Soviet Union, People's China, Yugoslavia and now Czechoslovakia have asked to have their names inscribed on the list. Hee hee hee!...As the Latins say, "Si vis pacem, para bellum."

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

## VII. CONCLUSION.

It would be difficult for anyone writing about Sihanouk, whatever his bias, to conclude other than that he is his own worst enemy. His bombast, wild recriminations, and frequently undignified behavior have all but succeeded in obscuring the tenacity with which he has pursued certain fundamental goals since coming to power. In other words, while his tactics have fluctuated wildly, his main objectives are little changed since 1952.

In that year, Sihanouk faced the tasks of gaining full independence from France, of subduing the Khmer Issarak, of consolidating his own political power, and of administering the government and economy. Today he is preoccupied with essentially the same problems, to an extent which raises questions concerning his ability to recognize changed situations as they arise. Although Cambodian independence is a fact, Sihanouk behaves as though his country is in imminent danger of SEATO enslavement. The Khmer Serei (Issarak) are on the verge of extinction, yet Sihanouk regards the movement as a dagger pointed at the heart of Cambodia. His personal popularity continues at a level difficult for Westerners to comprehend, yet the Prince courts his followers like a dark-horse candidate for county clerk.

To Sihanouk's credit, he remains a dedicated nationalist. Today as in 1952, his overriding concern is for the independence and territorial integrity of his country. He has improved the standard of living of his people, and for all his erratic behavior, he has brought a degree of political stability to Cambodia which certainly compares favorably to anything to be found in Laos, Vietnam or even Thailand. He has reinforced the Cambodian sense of nationality, as insurance against the Communist triumph in Southeast Asia which he regards as inevitable.

The path which Sihanouk chose for Cambodia in international affairs was what he called neutralism, but

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

which, on examination, barely qualified as non-alignment. He has rarely been other than critical of the West on issues in the Cold War, and his professions of neutralism appear based solely on Cambodia's failure to date to align itself by treaty with the Communist bloc.

Although there has always been a leftist tinge to it, Sihanouk's "neutralism" can be said to have had three recognizable stages. The first stage spanned most of the three years up to the spring of 1955, during which Sihanouk was occupied mainly with domestic affairs, including the launching of the Sangkum. During this period Sihanouk was concerned with the problem of Communist subversion, and could not afford to antagonize unnecessarily either the East or West. He sought non-involvement as well as non-alignment in foreign affairs, and it is hardly coincidental that this was the period of Sihanouk's most lasting achievements. He secured independence, subdued the Issarak, built up a political organization, and launched Cambodia on the road to becoming a recipient of aid from both East and West.

At approximately the time of the Bandung conference in 1955, Sihanouk began to demonstrate a greater interest in international affairs. He professed to be a neutralist of the Nehru school, and periodically lectured the West--particularly the United States--concerning its inability to understand the Asian mind. Although Sihanouk enthusiastically endorsed the "five principles" of coexistence developed by Nehru and Chou En-lai, Cambodia's was always a small-nation neutralism. There was none of Sukarno's irredentist bluster, or Nehru's third-force ambitions. Probably because the Afro-Asians looked elsewhere for leadership, Sihanouk was never an energetic participant in the neutralist bloc. He could never see far beyond Cambodia's borders, and the nonalignment which Sihanouk called neutralism had a nationalistic and pragmatic aspect. He probably had a longing to play a greater role on the international stage; certainly he demonstrated a first-class inferiority complex concerning protocol matters. In practice, however, his interest was largely confined to Southeast Asia.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

The period during which Sihanouk made some effort to practice "true" neutrality covered the period from early 1955 until some time during 1959. In that year Sihanouk was shaken in quick succession by the Dap Chhuon revolt, the palace bomb plot, and the inauguration of propaganda broadcasts by the Khmer Serei. Even during his middle period, however, Sihanouk's neutralism was one of convenience rather than conviction. His ego suffered repeated bruises at the hands of the United States, particularly on the occasion of his visits to the UN. By contrast, his junkets to the bloc--beginning in 1956--were personal triumphs as well as economic windfalls. Sihanouk's vanity was such that the red carpet treatment he received in Peiping and elsewhere in the bloc generated gratitude out of all proportion to the amount of aid received.

There is no doubt that during this period he fell very strongly under the spell of Chou En-lai. The ensuing honeymoon with Communist China did not prevent Sihanouk from taking action when necessary against Communists at home, but stiffened his resolution to take a hard line in his always-delicate relations with Thailand and South Vietnam. Cambodia's relations with the United States cooled as he came increasingly to link the United States to the policies of his SEATO neighbors, and to view U.S. aid mainly in terms of the larger amounts being supplied to his enemies.

The Prince's dark suspicions concerning the United States were confirmed to his satisfaction by the events of 1959. From that time to the present, he has never tired of reciting the story of "CIA's" attempt to overthrow him, and of its alleged sponsorship of clandestine broadcasts designed to overthrow his regime. Nor has he forgotten that China and France, but not the United States, warned him of Dap Chhuon's plotting. Under the circumstances, it is not entirely surprising that Sihanouk concluded that only China could be counted upon to assist in preserving Cambodia's independence. It was in this context that he sent three sons to study in China in 1960. At the end of the year, in return for bloc economic assistance, he swallowed the bloc propaganda line whole, recognizing

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

Outer Mongolia, supporting Khrushchev on disarmament, attacking U.S. "intervention" in Laos, and even endorsing the Soviet troika proposal for the UN.

Over a period of years Sihanouk had come to the conclusion--unenthusiastically--that a Communist triumph in Southeast Asia was a foregone conclusion. His thinking on this matter is unclear; although he was doubtless impressed by his visits to China he is just as likely to have arrived at his belief on the basis of astrological predictions. The fact remains that from 1960 to the present two dominant influences have shaped Cambodia's policies: hostility towards the United States and the assumption of a Communist triumph in Asia. On several occasions Sihanouk has indicated that there are worse fates than that of a Communist satellite, and he has cited Poland as an example of a nation which has preserved its identity even though absorbed in the bloc. Sihanouk's very real fear that Cambodia may once again be partitioned between Vietnam and Thailand helps explain his fetish concerning territorial guarantees for his country, and also his willingness to accept satellite status if the Cambodian nation can be preserved by no other means.

Because of Sihanouk's penchant for airing his hopes and fears on the national radio, in speeches which have often degenerated into anti-Western diatribes, he has become sensitive on the subject of Cambodia's "neutrality." He finds no inconsistency in professing neutrality while serving as Peiping's sounding board, so long as there is no formal alliance, and is prone to point to Cambodia's cordial relations with France as evidence of its desire for ties with the West. Only in unguarded moments has Sihanouk hinted that Cambodia has in fact abandoned neutrality. Cambodia was obliged to give up U.S. aid, he observed on 5 November 1963, because he was unable to remain neutral. It was in a spirit of kicking over the traces that Sihanouk terminated U.S. aid, disparaged President Kennedy, and threw himself at Peiping with shrill threats to become a Communist satellite. But the trend away from a more-or-less true neutrality can be traced back at least to the Dap Chhuon affair.

- 146 -

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]  
[ ]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

Although Sihanouk's more dramatic tantrums have involved his relations with the United States and its allies, Cambodian foreign policy has been marked since 1960 by disorganized but persistent efforts to convene an international conference to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity. Although there is good reason to believe that Sihanouk desires that a conference be held, he has made no effort to make such a meeting palatable to the Thais and Vietnamese, and the conference may end up a casualty of Sihanouk's declining effectiveness as an international politician. Nevertheless, it should be recalled that the guarantees he seeks would be binding on the Communists as well as Cambodia's SEATO neighbors, and Sihanouk--with his child-like faith in treaties and guarantees--is most anxious to obtain recognition by the DRV of Cambodia's present borders.

Apart from the question of the neutrality conference, there is other evidence that Sihanouk has lost his sure touch in international affairs. In the early 1950s Sihanouk was at his best in obtaining full independence from France, and in uniting his countrymen behind the monarchy. He was then capable of forgiving enemies, made skillful use of communications media, and was able to keep in perspective the relative threats posed to his country by the Thais and the Viet Minh. It is hard to recognize in this early Sihanouk the prince who cut off \$30 million in annual aid on a whim, and who has so isolated his country from the West that it is now dependent on the goodwill of Communist China.

No great insight is required to conclude that Sihanouk's recent failings are closely related to his mental health. Certain of his prejudices, including his dislike of the United States, can be explained in terms of some of his experiences. Others, such as his disproportionate fear of the Khmer Serei, his sensitivity to any kind of criticism, the frequent morbid references in his speeches, and the excessive vituperation of his critics, appear rooted in Sihanouk's personality. There is a tendency among Western observers to attempt to "pigeonhole" Sihanouk: to the favorably disposed, he is a temperamental

~~TOP SECRET~~ [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

but essentially shrewd ruler, who has gained and preserved his country's independence in the face of tremendous obstacles. To his detractors, he is a petty leftist tyrant, mad as a March hare, whose limited achievements are a byproduct of Communist preoccupation elsewhere in Asia.

To come up with the "true" Sihanouk it is not necessary to reject either of these views but it is necessary to combine them. For all his popularity at home, there is ample evidence that his judgment, in certain areas, is badly impaired. He does not appear out of touch with reality so much as a victim of his emotions. The mystique surrounding Sihanouk, which contributes so greatly to his popularity in the countryside, appears to have bred a sycophancy among his advisors which precludes any effective check on his actions.

Barring a deterioration in relations between Cambodia and Communist China, prospects for a significant improvement in Cambodian-American relations are not bright. Sihanouk's hatred for the United States is deep-rooted and seemingly implacable. If his commitment to Peiping is today less than total, and presumably undefined by a formal treaty, it still represents a firm belief that Cambodia requires a champion and that China is the only one available.

In view of the recent changes in government in Thailand and South Vietnam, some improvement in Cambodia's relations with these countries cannot be ruled out. Thai-Cambodian relations in particular would appear to be susceptible of improvement, inasmuch as there is no longer a territorial matter in dispute, and Sarit is no longer premier. Any significant rapprochement, however, appears unlikely in the absence of a change in the balance of power in Southeast Asia favorable to the West. Sihanouk has alluded frequently to the inevitability of a Communist triumph, and he is understandably reluctant to offend his "great friend," Communist China, in the interest of any transitory improvement of relations with Thailand or Vietnam. By the same token, he can be counted upon to be among the last to recognize any trend against the Communists, should one develop.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]



~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

Sihanouk does not look for a long life for the Cambodian monarchy, and in his pessimistic moods ruminates on the problems inherent in conversion to a People's Republic. Basically, however, he is far less interested in what form of government may evolve in Cambodia than in preserving it as a political entity. If in the land of the blind the one-eyed man is King, Sihanouk may in fact deserve mention with the Khmer rulers of old.

It is likely that a successor regime to that of Sihanouk--presumably representing some amalgam of palace and Sangkum elements--would be more easy for the United States to deal with than is the current regime. The facts of geopolitics, however, are unlikely to bring about any dramatic reversal of Sihanouk's policies by a successor. Although a successor regime would presumably take a more tolerant view of U.S. aid, it would be no more desirous of antagonizing China than is Sihanouk, and not necessarily any more accommodating concerning Thailand and South Vietnam. The most reasonable hope is for a return by Cambodia to more of a "true" neutrality.

~~TOP SECRET~~ [ ]

ANNEX "A"

A CAMBODIA CHRONOLOGY

- 23 April 41 - Sihanouk succeeds King Sisowath as monarch.
- May 41 - Japanese-directed treaty cedes western provinces in Thailand.
- March 1945 - Japan authorizes "independent" states in Indo-China; Son Ngoc Thanh installed as Cambodian premier.
- September 45 - French return to Cambodia; Thanh goes into exile.
- November 45 - France forces return by Thais of Cambodia's western provinces.
- 7 January 46 - France recognizes Cambodia as an "autonomous state of the French Union," but reserves most powers.
- late 1946 - Khmer Issarak, supported by Viet Minh, appear as Cambodian dissident group.
- 6 May 47 - Cambodian constitution, providing for parliamentary government, promulgated by Sihanouk.
- 9 November 49 - New Franco-Cambodian treaty grants Cambodia increased internal autonomy.
- September 51 - Son Ngoc Thanh returns from exile, but French opposition to his independence activities shortly drives him underground.
- March 52 - Thanh takes to jungle; his followers merge with Issarak.
- 15-17 June 52 - Sihanouk discharges government, begins 3-year "royal mandate."
- 13 January 53 - Sihanouk dissolves Assembly, strengthening his control of government.

- May 53 - Key Issarak leader, Puth Chhay, reconciles with Sihanouk.
- June 53 - Sihanouk's one-week exile in Bangkok seeks to draw attention to Cambodian demand for full independence.
- July 53 - Sihanouk, at Riviera and New York, publicizes independence demand.
- 9 November 53 - Cambodia fully independent.
- February 54 - Continuing Issarak defections to government largely isolate Thanh.
- April 54 - Heavy fighting in Vietnam spills into northern Cambodia.
- July 54 - Geneva Conference ends Vietnam war, provides for Cambodian neutrality.
- September 54 - Thanh asks amnesty of Sihanouk and is refused.
- January 55 - U.S. begins aid program to Cambodia.
- 2 March 55 - Sihanouk abdicates as King, naming father as successor.
- April 55 - Sihanouk organizes Sangkum as organizational vehicle.
- April 55 - Bandung Conference brings Cambodian endorsement of Five Principles, launches Sihanouk as Nehru-style neutralist.
- May 55 - Cambodia concludes military assistance agreement with U.S.
- December 55 - Cambodia admitted to UN.
- 11 September 55 - Sangkum wins all Assembly seats in election.

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

- February 56 - Sihanouk, on first visit to Peiping, is promised Chinese aid.
- May 56 - Cambodia and USSR agree to establish diplomatic relations.
- November 56 - Chou En-lai visits Phnom Penh.
- 6 November 57 - Sihanouk signs "neutrality law," pledging no military or ideological pacts.
- March 58 - Sangkum wins nearly 100% of vote in Assembly elections.
- 22 July 58 - Sihanouk recognizes Peiping.
- 14-29 August 58 - Sihanouk makes second visit to China.
- September-October 58 - Sihanouk visits U.S., is offended by protocol treatment.
- January 59 - Sam Sary flees Cambodia, is accused of plotting against Sihanouk.
- February 59 - Sihanouk puts down Dap Chhuon revolt following warnings from Soviets, Chicoms, French.
- March 59 - Jungle transmitters initiate Khmer Serei propaganda broadcasts.
- 13 June 59 - Visit to Phnom Penh by Thai foreign minister brings short-lived press truce.
- 31 August 59 - Bomb attributed to Son Ngoc Thanh and Sam Sary explodes in palace, killing three.
- October 59 - Cambodia submits its claim to Preah Vihear temple to World Court.
- April 60 - King Suramarit dies; three-man regency serves as stopgap.

-152-

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

- 5-9 May 60 - Chou En-lai visits Cambodia.
- June 60 - Sihanouk sends three sons to study in Communist China.
- June 60 - Constitutional amendment makes Sihanouk Chief of State.
- September-October 60 - Sihanouk speaks at UN, again irked by treatment in U.S.
- December 60 - Sihanouk makes third pilgrimage to Peiping.
- May 61 - Sihanouk chairs Geneva conference on Laos.
- September-October 61 - Sihanouk attends Belgrade conference of non-aligned nations; takes moderate neutralist line.
- October 61 - Resumption of press war causes Cambodia to break relations with Thailand.
- August 62 - Cambodia asks that 1954 Geneva conference reconvene to guarantee Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity.
- 20 August 62 - Sihanouk observes that "China has saved" Cambodia from Thailand and South Vietnam.
- September 62 - Sihanouk threatens to ask Peiping to station troops in Cambodia.
- September 62 - Cambodia agrees to exchange ambassadors with Albania.
- October 62 - Sihanouk disturbed by Sino-Indian fighting, condemns West for "inciting India to provoke China."
- November 62 - Sihanouk warns Saigon that new border incursions will bring call for Chinese troops.

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

- December 62 - Sihanouk visits Indonesia, attends Colombo conference on Sino-Indian situation.
- January-February 63 - Sihanouk visits India and China; won over to Chicom line on Sino-Indian fighting.
- April 63 - USSR offers Cambodia MIG aircraft and anti-aircraft guns; Sihanouk's acceptance breaks Western arms monopoly.
- 1-6 May 63 - Liu Shao-chi visits Cambodia, amid rumors of Chinat plot to assassinate him.
- 27 August 63 - Cambodia breaks relations with South Vietnam; holds off recognition of Hanoi.
- 5 November 63 - Sihanouk warns that he will terminate U.S. aid if Khmer Serei broadcasts not halted by 31 December.
- 10 November 63 - Sihanouk decrees nationalization of banks.
- 16 November 63 - Sihanouk names a son then in Peiping, Prince Naradipo, as his heir as head of Sangkum.
- 19 November 63 - Sihanouk terminates U.S. aid following apprehension of two alleged Khmer Serei agents.
- 21 November 63 - Peiping belatedly promises "all-out support" for Cambodia in case of invasion.
- 25 November - Sino-Cambodian civil air agreement signed.
- 1 December 63 - Sihanouk urges neutralization of SE Asia, including South Vietnam.
- 6 December - Sihanouk disparages late President Kennedy as enemy of Cambodia.
- 3 December 63 - Sihanouk attacks "unilateral" U.S. aid termination, urges new agreement.

-154-

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

January 64 - French military mission offers Cambodia tanks, trucks, prop aircraft.

February 64 - Sihanouk offers to settle for four-power (Thailand, South Vietnam, U.S., Cambodia) on neutrality guarantee.

2 March 64 - Saigon sends mission to Phnom Penh to pave way for 4-power conference.

10 March 64 - Lon Nol military mission leaves for China, USSR to seek arms.

11 March 64 - Rioters sack U.S., British embassies in protest over delay in neutrality conference.

19 March 64 - ARVN troops kill 16 in Cambodia border village; outcry forces withdrawal of Saigon mission.

-155-

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

ANNEX "B"

COMMUNIQUE BY PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK

This is to inform all dear citizens that following the recent event which provoked discontent and dishonor in a number of families of compatriots, the latter came to tell me their sufferings. For my part, I was distressed by this news and felt pity for these families. They complained to me that His Royal Highness Prince Yuvanath, my eldest son, had gone to bed with their daughters. On learning this, I was sorry for the honor and future of those girls who had involuntarily allowed themselves to be led into losing their maidenhood. Quite at a loss to assist these brothers and sons because I was faced with accomplished facts, I could do nothing but seek ways to alleviate their grief. Therefore, I made entreaties to the parents and tutors of those girls and paid them indemnities.

To spare all citizens dishonor and grief, I must inform them that since I have noticed that my eldest son Norodom Yuvanath likes only to run after girls, I have repeatedly advised and scolded him. Whenever I did so, he promised me obedience or remained silent. But once out of sight, he became quite his old self again and did not make any change. Then I thought of founding a family for him so as to provide him with a moral principle in addition to taking other measures to cure him of this bad habit. Thus, I sued on his behalf for the hand of Miss Tea Kim Yin, a daughter of widowed Mrs. Khien Theanh.

On 20 January 1962, the wedding ceremony of His Royal Highness Norodom Yuvanath and Miss Tea Kim Yin was solemnly celebrated under the honorable auspices of Her Majesty the Queen and myself. I believed that this wedding would not only be a help to my son and a sign of happiness for the bride and bridegroom, but would



~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

also serve as a notice to acquaintances and the public that young Yuvanath had taken a wife according to tradition and that no girl should henceforth become his mistress. If a girl allowed herself to be led astray by him, she would only bring disgrace on her family, and her future would be irretrievably marred.

Therefore, I must inform all brothers and sons that on learning of this communique, they must advise their daughters and warn them against falling in love with His Royal Highness Norodom Yuvanath. As for me, in my capacity as a father, I will not allow my son to continue to do such things and I will continually advise and scold him. As of today, if certain parents and daughters do not believe me and pay attention to my warning, they should neither consider me a heartless man nor hold me responsible for such facts.

Done on 1 April 1962. Norodom Sihanouk.

-157-

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~