



Sihanouk's War With the CIA

Jean Collins

ON APRIL 30, 1970, six weeks after a coup deposed head of state Norodom Sihanouk, American and South Vietnam forces invaded Cambodia. Many thought this would begin a new U.S. entanglement. Not so, said Prince Sihanouk in "My War With the CIA," an autobiography written from Peking exile with Wilfred Burchett. American involvement in Cambodia started in the mid-'50s, when the Dulles brothers came to call.

First to arrive was John Foster Dulles, President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, who wanted Sihanouk to join SEATO. Since this was contrary to the 1954 Geneva Accord, he declined. Soon, brother Allen Dulles, the CIA director, paid a visit armed with evidence that Cambodia would soon become victim to "Communist aggression." This didn't match Sihanouk's information and experience, which showed Cambodia's fears concerned her non-Communist neighbors.

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PRESSURES never ceased to get Sihanouk to join SEATO, and this book shows some interesting behind-scene actions of American ambassadors and the CIA.

For example, when in 1958 Saigon troops invaded Stung Treng province, penetrated nine miles and set up new boundary markers, Ambassador Carl Strom told the prince he couldn't use U.S.-given military equipment to expel the invaders,

which was "provided for the purpose of repelling Communist aggressors . . ." When Sihanouk then asked him to use his influence to persuade the Vietnamese to withdraw, Strom said he couldn't interfere in a neighborhood dispute. Aggressors must be Communist, he insisted.

Throughout the book, Sihanouk's heightened sensitivity is felt. Of this he is aware. He believes that were he European, his sovereignty would be respected. He is also understandably bitter about the coup, and faults the Western press for labeling Lon Nol's forces "Cambodians," while those who oppose that regime are called "Communists." "Presumably they are stateless," Sihanouk says. "Unless they're North Vietnamese."

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SIHANOUK is especially incensed at what has happened to his country since his exile. "Hire Asian traitors to kill Asian patriots; that is the essence of the Nixon doctrine, in the name of which Cambodia has been laid waste," he says. "If the American taxpayers could see the use to which their money has been put . . . they would be revolted."

Before April 30, 1970, tiny, rice-exporting Cambodia, living in peace and plenty, had managed to escape major ravages brought by the French and the Japanese. Since, she wasn't so lucky. (Pantheon; \$7.95).

William Hogan is on a short vacation