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## Nixon's Cambodia Action Has Divided the Capital

WASHINGTON —

President Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia — and particularly the manner in which it was done — have transformed and troubled

the spirit of this Capital. Coming on top of Moscow's direct intervention into the air war in the Middle East and Peking's increasingly aggressive policy in Southeast Asia, the Cambodian adventure is clearly regarded here as the most serious domestic and foreign policy crisis of the Nixon Administration.

There was anxiety here a few weeks ago about the war and how it was dividing the nation, but now there is a bitter and ugly

(Editor's Note: This column, which ran last Sunday in The Times, is the subject of the Anderson column directly beneath it.)

spirit, not only because honest men divide on the likely consequences of the invasion, but because powerful men in the Congress and even within the President's own official family feel that the Cambodian decision was reached with undue haste and carried out by deception.

The reason for this feeling is fairly clear. The first news of the big military operation on which United States advisers accompanied South Vietnamese forces into Cambodia, with American air and logistical support, came to Washington not from officials of the Nixon Administration but in an announcement from the South Vietnamese defense ministry in Saigon.

This was then confirmed, not by the President or the secretary of state, but by an assistant secretary of defense and then by a press spokesman at the White House.

### Sudden Lurch

Accordingly, since everybody seems to have been surprised by the sudden lurch into Cambodia except the enemy, the main question here is not what is happening in Indochina but what is happening in the White House.

There is obviously a change. A few months ago, the President was talking about unity at home, consultation and cooperation with the Congress, and compromise with the Communists on military arms control, the Middle East and other critical questions.

But lately he has been challenging the authority of the Senate on his Supreme Court appointments, scolding the college radicals as "bums," attacking such loyal and amiable Republicans as Sen. George D. Aiken of Vermont, announcing 10 days ago that peace was in sight in Vietnam and then bombing North Vietnam and invading Cambodia without prior consultation with the Congress or even an invitation from the Cambodian government.

### Capital Troubled

The Capital is angry about all this on the surface, but underneath, it is puzzled and troubled. It cannot understand or explain the events of the last 10 days. It was told, a little over a week ago, that peace was in sight at last, that the South Vietnamese were getting military control of their country and, while there were some dangers in Laos and Cambodia, the President felt confident enough to withdraw 150,000 more American troops from Vietnam in the next 12 months.

Then, within a week, everything was changed. Secretary of State William P. Rogers, who was regarded as the most candid and objective member of the Cabinet, listened to the warnings of the Foreign Re-

lations Committee against even giving major supplies of arms to the Cambodians. The only member of the committee who argued for arms for Cambodia was Sen. Gale McGee of Wyoming.

Yet the following day, without the slightest suggestion from Rogers, it was announced that American officers were going to participate in the invasion of Cambodia.

### Without Consultation

The next day, Thursday, without any consultation with the Senate, the President announced that he was sending American troops into the invasion of Cambodia. Then Hanoi announced that over 100 American planes had bombed Vietnam, and when reporters here tried to check out the details, they were asked by a top official at the White House not to embarrass the government by printing the details.

To add to the confusion, Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird warned the North Vietnamese in a public statement that if they responded to our invasion of Cambodia by invading South Vietnam across the demilitarized zone, he would recommend the bombing of North Vietnam.

Against this background, the administration authorized Vice President Spiro T. Agnew and Rogers to go on television and try to explain what the administration was doing. They denied that Rogers had wilfully misled the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and they dealt with the domestic politics of the Vietnam problem but they didn't deal with the larger political world problem.

President Nixon is up against a really difficult situation. Both the Soviet Union and Communist China have gone through a political and economic crisis at home and they are still going through a savage competition with one another for control of the Communist world.

### **Bold Soviet Line**

But lately, Leonid I. Brezhnev, the Communist party leader, with the support of the Soviet armed services, has apparently prevailed over Premier Aleksei N. Kosygin, and is now taking a much bolder line in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Mao Tse Tung, the Chinese leader, has got control of his domestic crisis and is now asserting himself in Southeast Asia.

This, according to President Nixon's advisers, is what Nixon is now reacting to in Cambodia. "Small nations all over the world," he said, "find themselves under attack from within and from without. If, when the chips are down, the world's most powerful nation — the United States of America — acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world. It is not our power but our will and character that are being tested tonight."

The heart of the political struggle here is not that President Nixon's analysis of the problem is wrong, but that he is fighting it in the wrong place. He has apparently been convinced, as President Johnson was before him, that one more military victory — this time in the Cambodian sanctuaries — will persuade the enemy to make peace. His political opponents, including many of his own advisers, think he is wrong.

President Nixon is saying it should be met in Vietnam and Cambodia. He is falling back on the old anti-communist, anti-intellectual, anti-university, anti-newspaper and television line to prove his point, and this is dividing the Capital of the United States as it has not been divided since the days of Joe McCarthy.