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BRITON BACKS U.S. ON CAMBODIA STEP

Guerrilla Expert Discerns Important Successes

Sir Robert Thompson, the British expert on guerrilla warfare, believes that President Nixon had little choice but to go into Cambodia and that the allied operation there has achieved some important successes.

Sir Robert, considered the architect of the British victory over the Communist guerrillas in Malaya in the nineteen-fifties, said in an interview here: "Cambodia has been involved from the very beginning. It has always been a war for Indochina. Prince Sihanouk himself, in his magazine, *Le Sangkum*, wrote that Cambodia's fate was tied to that of South Vietnam."

"If President Nixon hadn't moved across the border," Sir Robert added, "the Communists would have had a secure base area and could have moved into the rest of Cambodia any time they wanted to."

Sir Robert, who is 54 years old, carried out a study mission for President Nixon in Vietnam last year and has often been cited favorably by the President as an expert on combating



Sir Robert Thompson

Communist insurgency. His latest book, "Revolutionary War: World Strategy, 1945-1969," will be published here next month.

Psychological Gain Cited

In Sir Robert's view, the great psychological lift that the South Vietnamese obtained from their surprising military showing in Cambodia will prove very beneficial to the Vietnamization program, under which American troops are gradually withdrawn as South Vietnamese soldiers assume the major fighting role.

"The whole point of Vietnamization is psychological improvement," he explained,

"not just military improvement. Psychological dominance has long been a key to North Vietnamese success. They were confident and the people knew it. Now this operation, as an unintended side effect, has given the South Vietnamese confidence."

Sir Robert, a soft-spoken man dressed in a dark blue suit and an English club tie, also stressed the importance of the supplies captured by the Americans and South Vietnamese in the Communists' border sanctuaries.

'Saigon Getting Stronger'

"It will take the Communists a long time to restock, and it has given the Saigon Government 12 months to secure its pacification program in the delta," he said.

This could be a critical factor, he added. "The Saigon Government has been getting stronger, and the Communists cannot afford to continue losing control in the delta."

In guerrilla warfare, he explained, losing control of villages and their supply of men and rice has a progressive effect, leading to further loss of power.

Sir Robert, who once headed the British Advisory Mission in Vietnam, said that the key question in Cambodia is whether the North Vietnamese are able to enroll Cambodians to help them.

"They are fanning out into small units to avoid the Americans and South Vietnamese," he said. This way they can live off the land for a while.

Terror Is a Weapon

"But some time they will need new supplies, and if they don't have Cambodians to do their village organizing, they won't have the guerrilla advantage of being fishes in a friendly sea."

Sir Robert said the North Vietnamese did have one advantage. "They have shown their power and the Cambodians are scared to death of them," he said. Terror is critical to guerrilla warfare, he commented.

Sir Robert said that he believes, in general, that Vietnamization has proceeded well enough for President Nixon to carry out his planned withdrawal of American troops.

He criticized what he termed "the tendency for the Americans to overload the South Vietnamese with sophisticated military equipment that is too expensive to operate and maintain." "The American military like to Americanize the Vietnamese Army," he said.