

Ky Sees Fall of Cambodia If Saigon's Forces Leave

By TERENCE SMITH

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WEST POINT, N. Y., Nov. 16 —Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky of South Vietnam told an audience of cadets and officers here today that Cambodia would be overrun by Communist forces "within 24 hours" if the South Vietnamese troops currently operating there were withdrawn.

He said that the small and ill-equipped Cambodian Army was facing a Communist force equivalent to four divisions and that it would continue to need help from its allies for some time.

Earlier this month, he noted, a 6,000-man South Vietnamese force launched a major new operation across the border.

The Vice President described the attack on enemy sanctuaries in eastern Cambodia by United States and South Vietnamese forces last May as "the turning point of the war" and asserted that as a result the enemy had been forced to revert to low-level guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam.

"They are back to where they were 10 years ago," he said. "I don't want to claim victory while the fighting is still under way, but I think I can say that the central effort of the enemy has been defeated."

First Stop on Four

The Vice President addressed about 1,000 senior cadets and officers in Thayer Hall at the United States Military Academy here. His one-day visit to West Point was the first stop on an unofficial two-and-a-half-week tour of the country that will take him to a number of United States military installations where South Vietnamese soldiers are training.

Mr. Ky is also scheduled to spend a week in Washington, where he is to see President Nixon and other top members of the Administration.

Although his visit is technically a private one, the public attention will do him no harm in South Vietnam, where he

is thought to be considering a challenge to President Nguyen Van Thieu in next year's elections. Mr. Ky served two years as South Vietnam's Premier but has been obscured in the political shadow of Mr. Thieu since the 1967 elections.

His day at West Point began with an honor guard ceremony and ended with a luncheon of ravioli and salad in the mess hall with the cadet corps. A battery of howitzers boomed out a 19-gun salute during the ceremony as Mr. Ky, a former air force vice marshal, stood at salute in the chilly morning air. His wife, Mai, stood behind him, dressed in a fur-trimmed brown maxi-coat over an ao dai, the Vietnamese national dress.

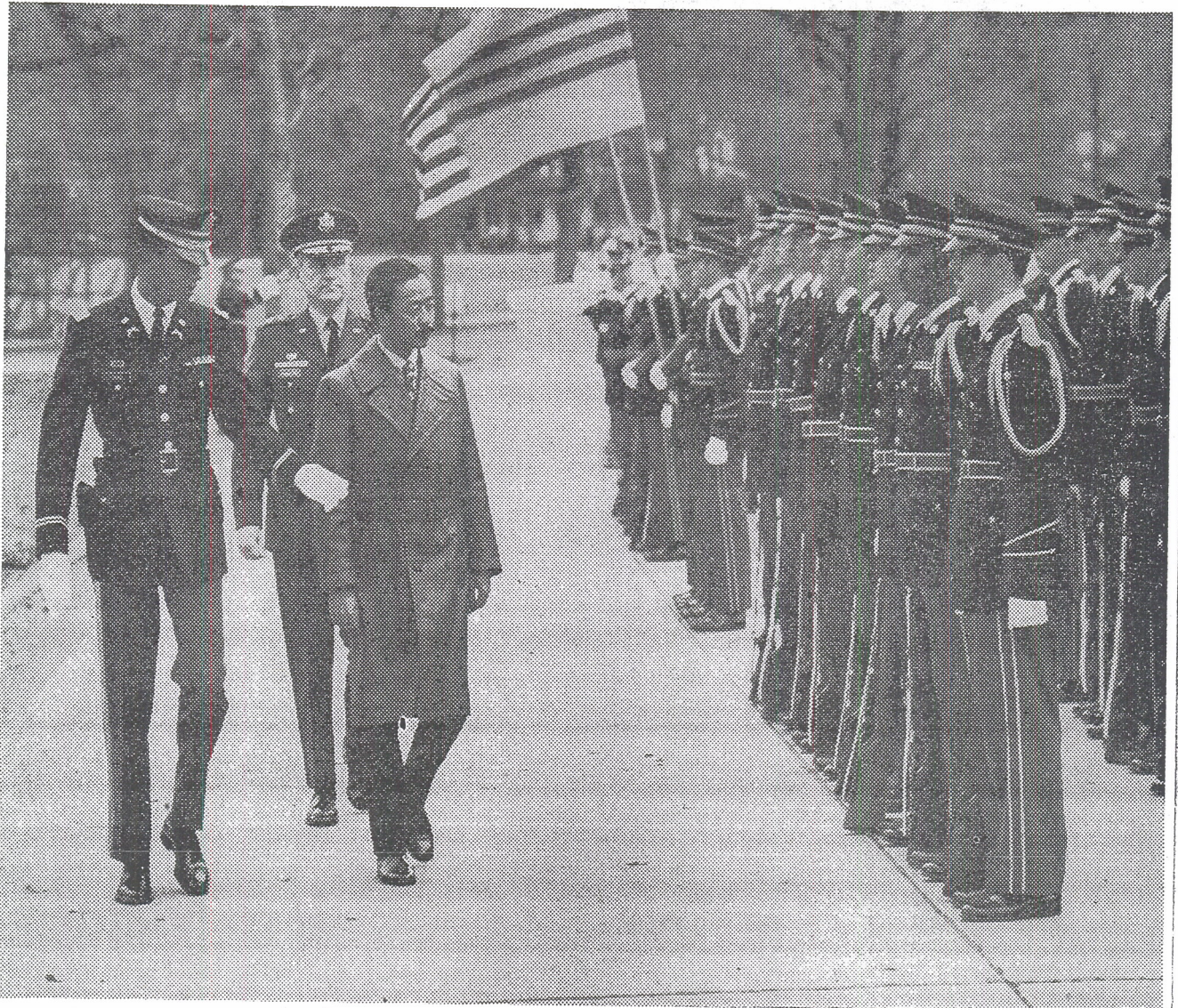
Optimistic on the War

After lunch the Vice President and his entourage were flown by military aircraft to the Naval War College at Newport, R. I. After briefings there tomorrow he will fly to the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

The Vice President spoke briefly with reporters at the start of the day, predicting that the United States combat role in South Vietnam would be over "very soon." But in his remarks to the cadets, he conceded that his Government was concerned that the Administration might "yield to the pressures of the antiwar groups" and pull out the remaining United States troops too quickly.

He declared that such a move would be an injustice to the thousands of Americans and South Vietnamese who had already lost their lives in the war.

Mr. Ky drew a roar of applause from his neatly trimmed and uniformed audience when he told them that his Government was providing free haircuts for the long-haired youths of Saigon. "They look much better when you can see their faces," he said.



VIETNAMESE LEADER AT WEST POINT: Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky reviewing guard yesterday. Accompanying him during the ceremony were Maj. Gen. William A. Knowlton, center, superintendent, and Capt. John E. Craig.

The New York Times (by Michael Evans)