



Nixon Pretense Divides Capital

WASHINGTON—In announcing his decision to expand the Indochina War, President Nixon said he was going “to the heart of the trouble,” and if you accept this as true, it is easy to approve his decision. But is it true? “Our third choice,” he said, “is to go to the heart of the trouble. And that means clearing out major North Vietnamese and Viet Cong occupied territories, these sanctuaries which serve as bases for attacks on both Cambodia and American and South Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam as well.”

But the heart of the trouble is not in Cambodia, but in North Vietnam and beyond that, in the Soviet Union and Communist China. This is where the power comes from. This is what we have been up against from the beginning. The real sanctuaries, which Nixon wisely is not prepared to challenge are Hanoi, Peking and Moscow, and that being so, it is a thundering silly argument to suggest that wiping out the enemy's bases in Cambodia will get to the “heart of the trouble.”

There is a good case to be made for attacking the enemy's bases in Cambodia — always has been. Some of them are only 33 miles from Saigon.

No general with the brains of a corporal would willingly give his opponent a safe haven from which Saigon could be attacked in the night or even destroyed by relatively short-range missiles which Moscow and Peking have the power to provide.

But why can't this plain and sensible tactical battlefield case be made honestly? The President explained the move into Cambodia, not as a necessary tactical invasion — which it undoubtedly is — to reduce casualties and save the staggering Cambodian government through the coming monsoon season, but he presented it as some kind of magical stroke that would stun the enemy, wipe out the sanctuaries, bring the boys back home quicker, prove our determination to the Russians and the Chinese, and help arrange a just and lasting peace.

He asked the American people if they wanted to cut casualties, bring the boys back home, be faithful to their promises, defend the integrity and commit-

ments of their country, and support their fighting men, or whether they wanted to abandon their soldiers, their allies, their principles, and their promises. And all this, he insisted, depended on whether they supported his decision to invade the enemy's bases in Cambodia!

As a television show and a political exercise it may have been effective, but as a serious presidential presentation of the brutal facts of a tragic and dangerous problem of world politics, it was ridiculous.

No doubt the enemy's Cambodian sanctuaries will be destroyed or abandoned, and without too many casualties on our side. But unless we keep our troops there, the enemy will come back or move to other sanctuaries. This has always been the “heart of the problem.”

Geography, history and time are on the side of the enemy. It is a devilish problem. He can always retreat into other sanctuaries in Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam or even China — and wait. The question is whether we are willing to fight and wait or whether we are merely determined to pretend.

What Nixon did in his speech on the Cambodian invasion was to pretend — pretend this would get the boys back home and get the enemy to negotiate a just peace, pretend he was getting “to the heart of the trouble.”

This is what is really dividing Washington today—not that the President is expanding the war, but that he is pretending his invasion of Cambodia will end it by destroying the critical enemy sanctuaries which everybody knows really exist elsewhere.