



## 'The Cambodian Bombing Cover-up'

— Joseph Alsop

THE SENATE Armed Services Committee has resumed its inquiry into what is called "The Cambodian Cover-up." If the committee members really want the truth — which is doubtful — they might begin by calling the Senate Majority Leader, Mike Mansfield.

The truth is that during a visit to Cambodia in August, 1969, Senator Mansfield was forthrightly informed that the U.S. was bombing the Cambodian sanctuaries then being used by the North Vietnamese Army. Mansfield's informant was none other than Prince Norodom Sihanouk. The Prince "pointed out" to the Senator that there were "no Cambodian protests" of the U.S. bombings because these were all in areas only populated by North Vietnamese troops.

★ ★ ★

AFTER his long private talk with Prince Sihanouk, Senator Mansfield gave a careful summary of his just-completed conversation with the U.S. Charge d'Affaires in Cambodia, Lloyd M. Rives. The Charge d'Affaires then wired a long report to the State Department.

Despite Senator Mansfield's denials, in sum, the contemporary evidence about what happened is crystal clear. If the Senate Armed Services Committee wants the evidence, the State Department will no doubt provide the telegram sent by Charge d'Affaires Rives back in August, 1969.

These particular facts are so interesting for two reasons. To begin with after the current row about this matter began,

the State Department feebly muttered that even Senator Mansfield had known about the "secret" bombing, and had made no protest at the time. The Senator then issued his wholly misguided denial; and no one thereafter sought to ascertain the truth of this not unimportant matter. This tells us a good deal about the way hard facts are now being handled.

To go on with, the long ago Mansfield-Sihanouk conversation is only one part of the Cambodian story, and not the most significant part at that. When the decision was first reached to bomb the Cambodian sanctuaries, the White House formally gave advance notice to the Democratic leaders of the Senate Armed Services Committee, the late Senator Richard B. Russell and his second in command, Senator John Stennis. Both Senators concurred. Neither saw any need to inform other senatorial colleagues.

★ ★ ★

MORE significantly still, the bombing of the Cambodian sanctuaries was at least in some degree a response by the Nixon White House to an actual invitation from Prince Sihanouk. Something has been said of this already; but the true story is far more striking than what has been printed.

Once again, if the Senate Armed Services Committee has the smallest interest in the real truth, all of the facts can be ascertained by government documents. These will show the whole world about military operations judged to be most important.