

# Thumbs Down on Kissinger

By C. L. Sulzberger

PEKING—It is a fair guess that when Henry Kissinger returns to Peking three weeks hence, one thing he will attempt is another try at ending the Cambodian war, Indochina's most festering cancer. If so, he is unlikely to get any help from Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's former king, erstwhile political chief of state, and now head of an émigré government situated here.

Prince Sihanouk's refusal to cooperate on any basis for settlement other than scuttling the Lon Nol regime, now backed by both Washington and Moscow, seemingly blocks hope of peace. For, although the Secretary of State is much esteemed by China's Premier Chou En-lai, Sihanouk is a far closer friend of the latter. Chou has shown tender hospitality, even building for him a heated swim-

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ming pool and badminton court in this austere city.

The Cambodian Prince, a solidly built and blazingly energetic little man, received me in his large, well-guarded residence, formerly the French Embassy compound. He told me he would categorically refuse to see Mr. Kissinger. He said that in 1972 he had three times proposed such a meeting through Premier Chou, and had each time been rebuffed.

Sihanouk insists that, having been cold-shouldered, it was no longer possible to meet the Secretary. He adds: "My proposals were spurned three times. Why should I accept a meeting now? Several months ago I received a message from our revolutionary leaders [known as the Khmer Rouge or Red Cambodia] 'telling me our honor or dignity should not be engaged again in such a project. Anyway there is very little chance of reaching an understanding.'"

He explained that it would be an immense loss of face for him now to see Mr. Kissinger after his initiatives had been ignored. It would give the impression of readiness to compromise "whereas we have always insisted—and still do—on chasing the neo-colonial clique of Lon Nol from Phnom Penh." He describes his terms, in a nutshell, as an end to United States support for Lon Nol and his departure.

He would permit the "traitor" prime minister to flee with perhaps a dozen other leading "traitors" and their families in an American plane and would also proclaim a general amnesty for everyone else. This is a shift from previous pledges to have his top opponents hanged.

He assured me that all North Vietnamese combat troops were out of Cambodia although acknowledging they still regularly crossed his country into South Vietnam along the southern stretch of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. There were also North Vietnamese "liaison units," military and ordnance advisers in territory controlled by the Khmer Rouge.

He complains North Vietnam doesn't provide enough aid, and every time Khmer Rouge troops besiege an important city, Hanoi deliberately chokes off its own and transiting Chinese supplies, making it impossible to capture objectives. The Prince attributes this tactic to North Vietnam's fear of losing promised U.S. reconstruction aid plus possible resumption of American bombing.

"We've learned not to rely on Hanoi," he says. "They prefer to avoid a decisive victory and follow the U.S. plan of letting us Cambodians fight it out."

The Prince became increasingly emotional as we sat side-by-side sipping beer and tea. His son-in-law, the young air force captain who bombed Lon Nol's palace last March and then fled here, remained with us throughout our long conversation, which was in French.

Sihanouk could see nothing but protracted, continuing war. He saw no hope of settlement until Nixon's Presidential term winds up in 1976. He unabashedly hopes Mr. Nixon will be succeeded by a Democrat who might change American policy, dumping Lon Nol and resuming diplomatic relations with himself.

However, he says he won't stay on as chief of state when "independence is restored." He will retire, turn over power to the Khmer Rouge, and spend the rest of his life in China. "I am very fatigued, not so young, and disgusted with politics," the 51-year-old Prince explained.

He is most skeptical these days, detesting us, hating the Russians for backing Lon Nol, distrusting his North Vietnamese friends. He doesn't believe it possible to neutralize Southeast Asia because its countries have too many contradictory interests and policies. He says he is no Communist but foresees full Cambodian "cooperation" with China if the Khmer Rouge wins.

Should the volatile Prince stick to his present resolve, it will be exceedingly difficult for Secretary Kissinger to find a way out of the Cambodian morass when he comes here Oct. 26.