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Cambodia Shaky

**U.S. Ambassador Running Nation,
But Student Unrest Perils Goal**

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PHNOM PENH—The student turmoil in Phnom Penh imposes yet another burden on the shaky republican government of President Lon Nol, and necessarily affects the enormous commitment that the United States has made in Cambodia.

That commitment is to strongly back the Lon Nol government for the time being and ultimately to settle for nothing less than a coalition government that is not hostile to U.S. interests.

To these ends, the United States is now spending \$1.75

million a day in military and economic aid to Cambodia—nearly \$650 million this year. The new U.S. ambassador in Phnom Penh, John Gunther Dean, has in two months made it absolutely clear to Cambodians and foreigners alike in Phnom Penh that he is, in effect, running the country.

News Analysis

result of yesterday's bloody clash between riot police and students in which the minister of education, his deputy and two youths were killed, or of a policy disagreement within the coalition Cabinet.

[Meanwhile, a young American teacher in Phnom Penh who said he had taught some of the demonstrating students, told UPI that a lone gunman, who had slipped into the school where students were holding Minister of Education Keo Sangkim and his aide hostage, killed the two officials with a .45 caliber pistol at point-blank range.]

Ambassador Dean has already become a legend in Phnom Penh, scolding high government officials, demanding economic and political changes and even ordering specific military operations.

He is under instructions from U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to "keep a strong hand in" in the support of U.S. interests in Cambodia.

A strong hand means propping up the Lon Nol government so that it can survive and continue to fight off the insurgents until they can somehow be

See INDOCHINA, A34, Col. 1

Four cabinet minister resigned Wednesday, according to political sources. Reports conflicted, however, whether the resignations were the

INDOCHINA, From A1

brought to the negotiating table.

At that time, Dean is prepared to sacrifice Lon Nol and his government, though he has not yet found a suitably popular political figure who could be offered as the U.S. half of any coalition setup.

In the meantime, the problem is how to get insurgents to the negotiating table at a time when they are slowly but steadily gaining on the battlefield and making significant political advances as well.

These political advances include the public emergence of Cambodian Communist leader Khieu Samphan, who recently made a diplomatic tour of several nations.

This troubles the U.S. embassy because Khieu Samphan is remembered by many Cambodians as a pleasant, incorruptible Marxist who served Prince Norodom Sihanouk's economics minister in the 1960s.

Government officials in Phnom Penh, including middle-level bureaucrats, generals, and even one Cabinet ministers, are now guardedly praising Khieu Samphan in private conversations.

There is an element of hope in this praise—hope for peace, and an element of weariness—with the war, with soaring inflation, with the scandalous corruption and inefficiency of the Lon Nol government.

These are the kinds of things that the student demonstrators have been complaining about during the past few weeks.

"The population of Phnom Penh is neutral," said one Western diplomat recently. "In fact, a very large percentage of it is against the Lon Nol government."

"I talk to a lot of Cambodian generals, and you'd think they'd be talking about victory—but no, they are talking peace at any cost."



AMBASSADOR DEAN
... a strong hand

"They simply don't think that this country will ever be Communist because of the peoples' deep religious commitment to buddhism. They are hoping for some sort of left-wing socialism."

Adding to the war-weariness is the realization that has now spread to almost everyone that they are fighting against other Cambodians and not against Vietnamese combat units.

When the republican government was formed and the Cambodian war began just over four years ago, it was billed as an effort to drive out the North Vietnamese invaders.

Now the North Vietnamese have only scattered advisers aiding the insurgents, yet the U.S. stake has grown and grown.

It is not clear today what specifically is the rationale of U.S. interest in this tiny nation of 7 million, except that to fail now after having made such an enormous commitment could raise doubts worldwide about American toughness and fidelity in support of allies.

U.S. officials in Phnom Penh, when asked what U.S. interests here are, bring out this argument and little else. It is an argument that Kissinger himself has written a good deal in support of.

But, having committed itself to an exceedingly shaky government, the United States is now in the position of having to sit and watch its broadest interests affected by a couple of thousand students in Phnom Penh who, by the actions in the past two weeks, are tilting the scales in favor of the other side.

Frustratingly for the U.S. mission, there is little that can directly be done about the students. Meanwhile Congress is showing increas-

ing reluctance to approve money for Indochina in general.

Ambassador Dean can virtually order certain Cambodian politicians, as he has done in the past few weeks, to stop playing internal politics—but he can't boss the students around.

Signs of unrest in Phnom Penh are growing. Not just students and teachers are affected by the inflation (123 per cent during the first four months of this year), but everyone.

Children have been reported eating leaves in some parts of the city. People who were relatively well off half a year ago are now reportedly limiting themselves to half a breadstick for breakfast.

Thievery is on the rise, as is extortion by armed soldiers. The sidewalks in many places have become the homes of refugees, thought to make up nearly three-quarters of the city's 1.4 million population.

Western military authorities judge that, on balance, the government forces lost more than they gained during the dry season.

Although Phnom Penh is cut off except for resupply convoys on the Mekong River, one can still get a decent crab souffle or juicy pepper steak at the Cafe de Paris, Phnom Penh's most expensive restaurant.

There one dines for what it might cost to feed for a month several of the hungry waifs who gather outside the restaurant's doors at dusk.

Inside, the theme from "A Summer Place" drifts softly from hidden speakers. Outside, there is the occasional muffled crump of an exploding shell in the distance.

A middle-level government bureaucrat being entertained there recently was asked what he thought about Khieu Samphan.

The bureaucrat looked around to make sure no one was eavesdropping, then leaned forward over the starched white tablecloth and whispered his treason, "You know, Khieu Samphan is a real patriot."