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The Kissinger Doctrine

By Anthony Lewis

BOSTON, Feb. 26—When the Soviet Union crushed Dubcek's Czechoslovakia in 1968, it claimed an inherent right of intervention to keep any "sister socialist state" from slipping out of the Soviet orbit. That was the Brezhnev Doctrine.

Americans were sickened by the brutal cynicism of the Soviet rationalization. But if we open our eyes, we cannot avoid seeing that we now have a doctrine to match. It must be called the Kissinger Doctrine.

It appeared first in relation to the Allende Government of Chile. In that context the doctrine could be stated as follows: *The United States is entitled to conspire against another country's constitutional government if we fear it might slip that country out of our orbit.*

Henry Kissinger put the matter succinctly to the Forty Committee, the secret operations group that he heads, on June 27, 1970. Speaking of Chile, he said: "I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."

The torment of Cambodia shows that the doctrine also takes a second form: *If a government comes to power by a coup and takes its country into the U. S. orbit, Washington will do anything to prevent a change of that government—no matter how little support it has from its own people, no matter how terrible the cost to them.*

Lon Nol overthrew the Sihanouk Government in March 1970. Whatever its role in that coup, the United States intervened quickly thereafter. In April President Nixon sent in American troops. He said the purpose was only to hunt Vietnamese Communists, not to "expand the war into Cambodia." But war has raged ever since in that once so peaceful country, with the United States playing a dominant part.

The Ford Administration is now putting extreme pressure on Congress for more aid to Lon Nol. What is the rationalization? President Ford explained today that American policy is to help "where the government and the people of a country want to protect their country from foreign aggression or a foreign invasion."

That a man as decent as Gerald Ford should accept such stuff from his advisers, and repeat it, is disheartening. For his premise of Cambodia resisting "foreign" attack is the opposite of the truth.

Americans in Phnom Penh concede that the war is a genuine civil war—Cambodians against Cambodians. Nor do they pretend that Lon Nol has much popular support. His corrupt, ineffectual government is totally dependent on the United States.

It is hard for Americans to admit this, given our historic ideals, but we are the alien intruders in Cambodia. That fact, and the feebleness of the side we support, are the reasons for the Khmer Rouge's success. The Vietnamese did play a commanding role in the period after Sihanouk's fall. But outside help to the Cambodian insurgents is now limited, compared to the American support of Lon Nol.

The U.S. has given \$1.8 billion to Lon Nol so far. Americans still direct much of his war effort, and supply it entirely. From March 1970 to August 1973, when Congress called a halt, American planes dropped 442,735 tons of bombs on Cambodia. No Chinese or Vietnamese planes have dropped bombs—or been given as aid to the Khmer Rouge.

As a new excuse for more American aid to fuel this hopeless war, Administration spokesmen say there might

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be negotiations if Lon Nol survives long enough. That is a desperate argument, and disingenuous. When the Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan, toured eastern Europe in 1974, the U.S. Ambassador in Phnom Penh, John Gunther Dean, urged that contact be made with him. Mr. Kissinger rejected the idea.

No, Mr. Kissinger's concern is not for the Cambodians, who want no more war. It is for American credibility, and especially his own, which he thinks would suffer if we "lost" Cambodia. Because the only conceivable settlement now would mean Lon Nol's departure, the war must go on. Mr. Kissinger is prepared to fight to the last Cambodian.

In The New York Times the other day, right next to the story about the latest Ford-Kissinger appeal for more arms to Lon Nol, there was a report from The Times correspondent in Phnom Penh, Sydney H. Schanberg. It told about what had happened to Cambodia in these five years.

"Cambodia before the war," he wrote, was "so rich in her food produce that even the very poor were never hungry. . . . Now it is a country of landless nomads with empty stomachs—human flotsam living amidst damp and filth. . . . The countryside is charred wasteland . . ."

That is the result of the Kissinger Doctrine—of an obsession with order and power at the expense of humanity. Whatever else he accomplishes in office, Henry Kissinger will be associated forever with the destruction of Cambodia. But Gerald Ford, Congress and the rest of us do not have to go on accepting his monstrous values.
