

# Secrecy Is Clouding American Moves on Cambodia

By BERNARD GWERTZMAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, July 6

President Nixon's recent statement that "delicate negotiations" were underway to end the conflict in Cambodia has produced considerable speculation and skepticism in Washington, but very little solid information.

The speculation has been fanned by the advance publicity given by the White House to a meeting in San Clemente, Calif., today between Mr. Nixon and China's senior envoy to Washington, Huang Chen, and the reports that Henry A. Kissinger may soon make another trip to Peking, for talks not only with Premier Chou En-lai but also—if it can be arranged—with Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the official leader of the Cambodian insurgents, who has set up headquarters in the Chinese capital.

The White House has done nothing to dispute press conjecture and diplomatic gossip that the Administration may be pressing the Chinese to persuade the volatile Prince Sihanouk to agree to cease-fire talks with President Lon Nol's Government, which deposed him in March, 1970.

But even though the Administration obviously wants to appear active on the diplomatic front, not only with the Chinese but with the French, the Russians and the North Vietnamese, many diplomats and State Department officials are privately mystified by the talk of "delicate negotiations" and

the intimations from the White House that "something is going on."

One of those deeply concerned about the speculation is Um Sim, the new Cambodian Ambassador to Washington, who paid a call on the State Department the other day to find out if the press reports about a Kissinger-Sihanouk meeting were accurate. He was told apologetically that with the exception of a few key men, State Department officers knew only what they read in the papers.

The skepticism stems from several baffling questions, not the least of which is: Why should Prince Sihanouk agree to negotiate a compromise with Marshal Lon Nol now, when the Cambodian insurgents are surrounding Phnom Penh and the American bombing, which has kept the Lon Nol Government alive, is due to end by Aug. 15?

**Kissinger Said to Deny**  
Diplomats have asserted that all the Cambodian insurgents have to do now is lie low and avoid the bombs until Aug. 15, when they will have a decided military advantage on the ground. The Administration could ask Congress for an extension of the bombing beyond Aug. 15, but the mood of Congress has persuaded most officials here that any such request would be soundly rejected.

Mr. Kissinger, who will have to bear the brunt of any negotiations on Cambodia, has said privately that the Aug. 15 deadline was a mistake since, in his view, it accomplishes nothing. He is said to agree that instead of encouraging

meaningful negotiations, the publicly-declared deadline may only lead to increased fighting after Aug. 15.

**Informed Administration Officials** said that Mr. Kissinger tried to have a deal worked out with Congress by which the Administration would agree secretly to a Sept. 1 deadline. Under this plan, Congress would have its early end to the bombing and the Administration's flexibility would have been maintained, since the Cambodian insurgents would not have known that the raids would stop by a fixed date.

Offered the Kissinger plan, Congressional leaders immediately rejected it as unfeasible, given the mood of Congress.

What is clear is that President Nixon wants very much to avoid a situation by which Phnom Penh would fall to pro-Communist insurgent forces. He is said to believe that not only would that make something of a mockery of the Vietnam cease-fire agreement, but that it would lead to concern in Saigon and perhaps lead to major violations of the accord in South Vietnam by both Government and Vietcong forces.

To avoid a military surrender, a high priority be given to the case, Mr. Nixon has ordered that case-fire and formal negotiations as soon as possible between Phnom Penh and the Sihanouk forces, as well as any other interested parties, such as pro-Hanoi insurgents who may not trust Prince Sihanouk.

The "delicate negotiations" to which he has referred are not "negotiations" in the usual sense — two or more sides bargaining at a table. Rather,

they are "delicate discussions" between the United States and various Governments and factions. The chief emphasis, of course, is on the Cambodian parties, primarily the Phnom Penh Government and the Sihanouk government in exile.

Washington has also asked all government with contacts in Peking to join in efforts to persuade Prince Sihanouk to seek a political settlement guaranteeing him some power, and not to trust to a military victory in which he might find himself the puppet of a military Communist regime.

The Chinese, French, Rumanian and Yugoslav Governments, among others, are believed to have spoken to him. So far, Prince Sihanouk, recognizing the new attitude in Washington, has played hard to get. He said in Peking yesterday that he would not meet with Mr. Kissinger and that only a military solution was feasible.

**Comparison Is Difficult**  
His statements reinforce the view of the skeptics here who doubt that a negotiated solution is possible, given the insurgents' military advantage. These skeptics assert that a cease-fire was only possible in Vietnam when Hanoi recognized that it could not take over South Vietnam by force and they see no reason to believe that the opposite is true for Cambodia.

The Cambodian situation, however, may not be susceptible to easy comparisons with Vietnam. Unlike the situation at the outbreak of the Vietnam war in the early nineteen-sixties, the United States is now on good working terms with Moscow and Peking and

has accumulated considerable experience in dealing with Hanoi.

The Chinese and North Vietnamese control the military lifeline to the Cambodian insurgents. It is inconceivable that the conflict could continue if they put pressure on the insurgents to stop shooting.

After Mr. Kissinger's latest round of talks in Paris last month with Hanoi's negotiator, Le Duc Tho, which resulted in a communiqué strengthening the Vietnam cease-fire, President Nixon's adviser on national security said that for the sake of his "emotional stability", he hoped he would no longer have to negotiate about Indochina.

It now seems that he will have to risk his stability. In a sense, he will be learning if the goodwill earned with Moscow, Peking and Hanoi will pay any dividends in Cambodia.