

intended to demonstrate their readiness to co-exist with different social regimes on their borders. But the U.S. has allied itself with Cambodia's ancient enemies—the Thais and the Viets—and sought through the CIA to overthrow him. A "Free Serei" movement aimed at Sihanouk serves as guide and tool for our Special Forces. Sihanouk, like Cambodians generally, fears the Viet, whether Communist or anti-Communist. As late as March 6, 1964, he accused Hanoi of being as "vague as the Anglo-Saxons" in replying to his request for a guarantee of his borders. But Prince Sihanouk has come to believe the Viet Cong will win and that his country's safety lies in cultivating good relations with the rebels and with Hanoi. "Our American friends are remarkable organizers, brilliant technicians and excellent soldiers," the Prince wrote three years ago. "But their incontestable realism stops short of the realm of politics, where the attitude of the ostrich seems to them to conform to their best interests."

The Cambodian attitude toward the Vietnamese war was reflected while I was there in the April 22 issue of *Réalités*

"Maybe I don't have the education or understanding, but I wonder what we're doing here anyhow," said the captain, "I'm all for killing Charley but I wonder what's the point if the Vietnamese can't get the benefit of our being here and fighting their war for them."

—"U.S. Officers Complain of Viet Unrest" by Ralph B. Kennan from Saigon in *Baltimore Sun*, May 22.

Cambodgiennes, an unofficial mouthpiece. It carried an interview with a 2nd Lt. Tram Minh Bach of the South Vietnamese Air Force who had fled for refuge to Cambodia. He defected after he was upbraided in brutal and insulting fashion by his American "advisor" in front of his own men. He said, "The Americans act like bosses and treat us like 'boys'—the word 'boy' as thus used in French is an echo of colonialism. When he was asked if he might join the Viet Cong, the 2nd Lt. replied that he opposed both Communist and American domination of his country. "The nationalist and independent policy of Prince Sihanouk is basically the best for this region," he said. "He defends his country and nothing more and he makes it progress in peace. That is an example all Vietnamese patriots ought to meditate."

An unsigned editorial in the same issue put forward a subtler neutralist view. It dealt with the nationalist demonstrations against Ky in Hué and Saigon as led by the Buddhists under Thich Tri Quang. It derided the idea of free elections in a country "Where the government only controls a fifth of the territory and a quarter of the population." It said that while the nationalists were tired of the

Wall St. Journal For Getting Out

"How must the Vietnamese spectacle impress others threatened by China? It is beginning to appear that if the war ever ends and South Vietnam has somehow been saved from Communism, we will have on our hands a nation in shreds. . . . On balance, then, it looks as if the U.S. is losing more than it is gaining in its own interest of combatting Communism and promoting freedom. . . . It takes courage to stand up to international Communist barbarians; no less courage to admit it, if such is the case, when a military-political situation has gone hopelessly sour."

—Wall Street Journal, "The Turning Point" May 24.

war, disgusted with American domination and hostile to the military junta in Saigon, they were so compromised by their own political pasts as to fear NLF reprisals if the Americans left. "In fact, all the nationalists of Hué, Danang and Saigon want," the editorial continued, "is that the U.S. allow them to replace the team presently in power while the U.S. continues to 'protect them against the Viet Cong.'" It advises true nationalists to join the National Liberation Front "so that they can counterbalance the Communist influence there and preserve the future." It draws a parallel with the French resistance where Gaullists fought side by side with Communists. This allowed the non-Communists after liberation "to bring into being a government in which the Communists had a place—but no more than that." It said the time had come for joint action between Nationalists and Communists to establish a provisional government which would ask for American withdrawal. "We sincerely believe," the editorial concluded, "that the Americans, no longer having a juridical excuse to justify their presence, would acquiesce in this demand—and would not be so displeased, in reality, to put an end to an adventure which, carried to its conclusion, as they are already sufficiently aware, would result inevitably in a disaster for them." In the Cambodian view, only joint action against the U.S. can prevent a Communist takeover in Vietnam and make possible a neutralist solution. This reflects Prince Sihanouk's own wily record, in which he has outmaneuvered Communists not by fighting them but by taking them into camp.

I had hoped while in Cambodia to speak with some representative of the NLF or at least with Wilfred Burchett, who has been covering the war from the rebel side. Burchett was in Hanoi, but from another source in close touch with the Front and recently returned from Viet Cong territory I was given a summary of its views.

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Does the Associated Press Consider Such Reporting Too Frank for the U.S. Press?

"The political instability in Vietnam is gravely damaging the prestige and influence of the U.S. in the country. . . . The contacts between the American authorities and the Generals is reduced to polite smiles and ambiguous promises and equally to continual demands for money. . . . It seems that the more heavily the Americans intervene in the war, the more their reputation with the people decreases. This is in great part due to operations against the Viet Cong in the course of which hundreds of villages are crushed. The innocent perish and the number of refugees increases."

"In the shanty-towns near the urban centers, there is developing a new proletarian class tired of the war and ready to listen to the peace promises of the Viet Cong. On the other hand, in Saigon, the Generals in red parachutist berets, displaying their rows of medals, declare themselves ready to pursue the war to final victory, with U.S. troops and money. In the meantime Vietnamese soldiers desert at the rate of 6,000 per month. [Secretary McNamara

admitted under questioning at a Senate hearing (Wash. Post May 12) that desertions have been even higher than 10,000 to 12,000 a month—IFS]

"The massive bombardments, the artillery fire, the soldiers clambering around [crapahutant] in the regions devastated by the war, have not contributed to American prestige. Words like 'the free world,' anti-Communism and democracy find no echo among the peasants. The Vietcong have succeeded more and more in controlling the economy, especially in the Mekong delta. On the other hand the great bases tend to isolate the American soldiers. A high officer declared 'We have fewer friends than we had a year ago before we began to send in troops.'"

—From an AP Saigon dispatch dated May 12 in *Le Monde* of May 13. When we failed to find it in any U.S. paper we checked with AP. We were told it was an AP special for *Le Monde*. We've yet to see the AP write as frankly for its U.S. clients.

An Interview With An Unofficial Spokesman for the NLF

(Continued from Page Three)

"It is not true that Peking forbids Hanoi to talk peace or that Hanoi forbids the NLF to do so," my informant said. "The Front is free to negotiate. Washington must understand that the Front is not a tool of Peking. The Front claims to be the sole representative of the South Vietnamese people in the sense that there is no other organized force with which to deal. Any group can join the Front if it is sincerely for independence and the end of American intervention. The door is open."

My informant said this was why the Front had never set up a provisional government, though it has a parallel administration everywhere in South Vietnam. It wants as broadly based a government as possible for the final take-over. It has no faith in elections. It doubts that they will be held and feels sure that if they are held, they will be as phony as were those under Diem. "It is wrong to think," my informant told me, "that the Front is strong only in the villages. In every mission, in every part of the government, the Front has its people. When a South Vietnamese soldier gets a 15-day pass to go home and visit his native village, he goes to an office of the Front and gets it stamped to assure him a safe conduct. When trucks go out of Saigon to Mytho they obtain a *laissez-passer* from the South Vietnamese government. But on top of this, outside Saigon, there is stamped an authorization of the Front."

Collects Taxes Even in Saigon

"The Front collects taxes in every city, including Saigon. It is already planning for the maintenance of law and order in Saigon when the government falls apart and it takes over. The Front realizes there will be a serious problem to prevent looting and killing. The day Saigon is liberated the only protection the Americans will have will be the Front. Protection will not be easy in a city of 2,000,000 seething with hatred. The problem is made the more serious because Saigon has become a city from which law and morals have disappeared. The day authority is finally transferred to the Front will be a critical one and the Front has several dozens of armed cadres trained and ready to take over control and maintain law and order."

"U.S. emissaries," he continued, "want to negotiate some way to stay in South Vietnam. They are wrong. They have to leave just as the French did. Only then can they have an embassy negotiate trade relations and discuss economic aid. But first, all traces of occupation must be ended."

"The Front wants a neutral foreign policy. It sees reunification as a thing of the distant future. Too many differences and difficulties make it impossible at this time. The

Gallup Poll Shows Rising Peace Sentiment

For the first time since last July, the Gallup poll (Washington Post May 22) showed approval of Johnson's policies in Vietnam below the 50% mark—it was 47%. More important, the latest poll showed 54% for withdrawal and only 28% for continuation of U.S. efforts if the South Vietnamese "start fighting on a big scale among themselves." If the South Vietnam government decides to stop fighting altogether, 72% think the U.S. should withdraw and only 16% think our troops should stay on. Asked if South Vietnam could establish "a stable government", only 32% answered "yes" 48% "no". The rest were undecided. The replies showed very little difference between Republicans and Democrats. Gallup reported "overwhelming approval" only for Administration peace efforts.

internal policy will be socialist, but not like China or North Vietnam; it will be another of those forms of Asian socialism of which some variant may be found everywhere in this region. The U.S. must realize that this is a struggle for independence, not a war of aggression. The Front regards Thich Tri Quang as a man of the Middle Ages who wants some way to keep U.S. troops in South Vietnam. It wants a truly independent South Vietnam. Even Ho Chi Minh's idea of a bi-federal union is something for the future."

Only by Peace and Politics

The NLF sees the Indonesian People's Conference as the possible germ of a larger neutralist confederation that might some day unite South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. So does Prince Sihanouk. The Conference last year brought together neutralist and Communist Front representatives from North and South Vietnam and from Laos with those of Cambodia. South Vietnamese neutralist exiles from Paris were also in attendance. The Conference is soon to open a permanent office in Phnom Penh which might someday play a part in peace talks. The little publicized recent visit to Moscow by the King of Laos and his Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma (*Le Monde*, May 19) indicate that they are still thinking along neutralist lines, too. Cambodia's ruler believes that only by peace and politics can Communism be contained. For 12 years the United States has tried to contain it by military dictatorship, repression and war. The Viet Cong is far stronger today than when it started. After 12 years, Cambodia's success and our failure, Cambodia's progress and Vietnam's suffering, should be enough to show which is the wiser course.

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