

CAMBODIA

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THOMAS J. CORCORAN
Chargé d'Affaires
Phnom Penh (1952)

Ambassador Thomas J. Corcoran was born in New York in 1920. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950 and served in Spain, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Washington, DC, and was ambassador to Burundi. Ambassador Corcoran was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

Q: *After you left Vientiane, you went to Phnom Penh. What were you doing there?*

CORCORAN: I was chargé.

Q: *Here you were an FSO-6, which is the equivalent in those days of a second lieutenant.*

CORCORAN: It was entry level, yes.

Q: *You were representing the United States to one kingdom, and then you moved to Phnom Penh, which was also a kingdom.*

CORCORAN: But you must remember that the minister, as he was then, resident in Saigon, was accredited to the kings of both countries, and he would come up from time to time to visit. I, the charge, was assigned by the Secretary of State. When the minister, as he was then, arrived, he became the minister to Laos and Cambodia.

Q: You were in Phnom Penh when?

CORCORAN: I was there for a period of only about, I guess, eight months in 1952. This was some time after the French commissioner had been assassinated, and there was a French general there also acting as the civilian commissioner for a while. Then he left and was replaced by another French general, and they split it up again.

The French forces in Cambodia at that time were pretty small. In Laos, there was very little fighting in those days, except in the south, and around some of the fringes of the very northern mountains. In Cambodia, there were two, as I recall, Cambodian movements, one Communist and one not Communist. Then the Viet Minh were also active. But it was still possible to drive from Phnom Penh to Saigon in those days. It took about four hours. You didn't want to stop everywhere en route, but you could drive back and forth in the daytime. They had watch towers.

Q: What were your personal relations with the French military, both in Laos and in Cambodia?

CORCORAN: Well, the personal relationships in Laos were very good. The French commander-in-chief of Laos was a colonel who had previously been Delattre's operations officer in North Vietnam. Then there was the chief of the gendarmery mission, and I was on friendly terms with both of them.

Q: They didn't resent American influence or intrusion into their area?

CORCORAN: They didn't, because they realized they were dependent on the American support in the main fighting in those days, which was in Vietnam. But also, most of these people had been graduates of World War II, and the gendarmery commander, whom I knew up there, had been liberated from a prison camp by U.S. Army forces. There was also the French commander-in-chief in Laos. He was a colonel, Redon. The commander-in-chief of the Lao National Army, as it was called in those days, was a French officer with the remarkable name of Stanislas D'Ottou-Loyewski, obviously one of the Frenchmen of Polish ancestry. He, of course, wasn't very popular with the Lao, but he was the commandant of their Army.

Q: Did you have any contact at all with any effort made by the Viet Minh or any of the forces opposed to try to gain some support from the United States? It's well known that certainly President Roosevelt was adamantly opposed to the reinsertion of the French into Vietnam, before he died.

CORCORAN: He was. But of course, as I've mentioned before, the least opposition to that was Lao opposition. But certainly you'd have some Lao who would complain about some of the French from time to time, but it was no great big thing in those days. You'd hear more of it in

Cambodia, of course, where you had the Democrat Party, which was in opposition to the French and also in opposition to Sihanouk. The thing came to a head there, and Sihanouk dissolved the Huy Kanthoul government. This was something called the *Partie Democrate*, which was the party in power.

Q: *Would they be coming to you to try to get America on their side?*

CORCORAN: Not as plainly as that, but they would be giving me their views on things from time to time. As I say, I was there for just about four or five very crowded months. It was clear that the main struggle was between the Democrats and the French. The French were being pretty tough, because they had small forces there, and they were afraid that if they weakened, they'd be finished. The Democrat Party was composed of a lot of people who were very tough on their side. They weren't much interested in bargaining; they thought it wouldn't get them anywhere. But they would take a pretty strong position. They got into a deadlock with the then-King Sihanouk. One day, he dissolved the government, and French troops fanned out.

Q: *This is while you were there.*

CORCORAN: The French did send troops up there at the request of Sihanouk to protect the French civilians and Europeans. The net result was that most of the people who represented the Democrat Party in the streets were high school students, teen age students. They weren't anything like the Korean students, you know; they were just French high school students. They were not that much of a physical threat. Then the king set up a royal government. One of his relatives was the foreign minister, and he presided over things for a while. But then it must have been a year later, maybe in '53, that Sihanouk, in turn, split with the French. I think it must have been in the beginning of 1953, in the winter. He took off into the Angkor Wat area, which was then occupied by a dissident, a non-Communist, in protest against the French not giving him full authority. Actually, at one point he went over into Thailand as a self-invited guest of the Thai Government, which embarrassed them. They didn't do much for him. It was a publicity effort on his part to try to get the French to give him a little more leeway, so he would be better able to deal with the elements who had formerly supported the Democrats. Nothing much came of that. Then, of course, we drifted into the Geneva period.

Q: *Outside of meeting on a social occasion, no one was coming to you particularly through the side door and saying, "Give us some help," or "We want to get rid of these beastly French," or anything like that?*

CORCORAN: No. Actually, they were pretty quiet about it. There were some people who had been in the Democrat leadership, certainly after the boom was lowered on the Democrats by Sihanouk. They complained, but they lived through it. Some of the Democrat leaders blamed the French for it, but then again, after a period of time, they got diplomatic posts here and there. Huy Kanthoul went as ambassador to the Soviet Union at one point. But he was sort of an amateur. I always felt that you had the Democrat Party, which had gotten control of the Parliament and didn't quite know what to do with it. But out in the bush, there were a couple of bandit groups and also people who later became the Khmer Rouge. Nobody quite had a hold on them. Sihanouk would talk about them.

WILLIAM J. CUNNINGHAM
Administrative Assistant
Phnom Penh (1954-1955)

William J. Cunningham was born in California in 1926 and educated at the University of New Mexico. He entered the Foreign Service in 1949. His career included posts in Prague, Paris, Seoul, Tokyo, Sapporo, Saigon, Phnom Penh and Taipei. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

CUNNINGHAM: The embassy in Cambodia on the first of July or the 30th of June, 1954 consisted of a chargé d'affaires, Joseph Montllor, a code clerk, another guy who was ostensibly an embassy staffer but was actually the CIA station chief though a very junior one, an AID representative, and a USIS officer. There were five Americans in the American country team in Cambodia at that time. All of this was going to change and a full embassy was going to be instituted there.

Robert McClintock, who was deputy chief of mission in Saigon at this time, was designated to be the first resident American ambassador in Phnom Penh. He had become aware of my work in the general services section of the American embassy and he said, "I know whom I want as my administrative officer. I want Bill Cunningham," who was at this time an FSS-11. I think I had lost the temporary ten and had fallen back to an 11. He asked me if I would like to do it and I said, "Sure." I felt confident that I could do it.

Off I went at the beginning of July to Phnom Penh. We used to have the CIA airline, Civil Air Transport or CAT, as it was known, which operated throughout Asia and it had a regular flight twice a week up to Phnom Penh. What I used to do was catch a plane Monday morning and fly up to Phnom Penh, work there until Thursday at noon, and catch the afternoon flight back to Saigon. Because I had no replacement in Saigon and they couldn't release me, I would work my job in Saigon Thursday evening, Friday, Saturday, and a good part of Sunday, then I would take off again on Monday morning to Phnom Penh to help them with their administrative work there. That was a real adventure.

The American embassy up until the first of July 1954 had been located on the second floor of a little downtown building in Phnom Penh not far from the banks of the Tonle Sap, which flows into the Mekong a few miles farther south. The office was over the top of a pepper shop that was owned by a French colonial woman, and the building faced the broad, tree-lined mall, which ran from the front of the railway station a kilometer away right down to the Tonle Sap. . She had been there for a long time and her husband started a pepper plantation. He died and she was a widow and she was selling pepper. She was a rather difficult person. There was no way that we could expand there and we had to find someplace else to put the embassy.

There was a building under construction elsewhere in Phnom Penh being erected by a Sino-Cambodian businessman. Montllor had thought of that building and said that would make a great

building for our American diplomatic establishment that was going to be set up there. "But," he said, "it is only a two story building. If we could get him to add two floors to the building it will work and we will have enough space." I got a hold of the architect who was a Frenchman. He had designed the building and I talked with him. He said, "Yes, this foundation is strong enough and we can put two more floors on top of the building."

We then got in the midst of a very complicated deal to figure out how we were going to get these two floors added to this building and get it done in time to be able to accommodate the growing staff. People were already beginning to come up from Saigon and elsewhere to report in. We had to find some kind of office space for them because this space over the top of the pepper shop was not going to be adequate.

There was a lot of AID counterpart money around at that point. I can't remember all the particulars now but I became deeply involved with negotiations with the Sino-Cambodian businessman, the architect, and the AID comptroller to figure out some way whereby we could front money for the construction of the building and then credit that against the eventual lease payments that we would make to this businessman. We worked out a deal, and work began on the building with a total of four floors, configured to requirements of the Embassy. I managed to get this worked out about September or October.

Meantime, the U.S. official establishment was growing and I had to find temporary office space, so I started looking around town. Somebody said there was an abandoned Masonic lodge in the other part of town that would make pretty good temporary quarters for us. I went and looked it over, and negotiated a lease on that.

Now this Masonic lodge was a very substantial large two-story building and it was built in the colonial style, which is to say with 15 foot ceilings and very large windows that were closed by shutters. There were no glass windows in it, and there was no way of cutting off the outside air. You couldn't air condition the building without installing glass windows. That would be too expensive of a job to do, particularly since it was temporary space. What I had to do was get ceiling fans installed in the building and somehow or other make it comfortable. McClintock was very good about this.

The fortunate thing was that we moved in there in I think September of 1954 and about that time of the year the humidity begins to decline in Cambodia, and the weather becomes cooler. It becomes bearable, if you have a ceiling fan and dress informally. I had spent enough time up in Cambodia seeing friends over the previous two years that I knew that would work. My gambit was to get everybody into the old Masonic lodge over the cool months and get the four-story embassy building completed before the monsoon hit in April. In late March, early April, it really starts to heat up. By the middle of April you are just praying for the first rain in Cambodia to cool things off.

That year I worked harder than I think I have ever worked almost any other time in my life. I was working two jobs up until November. Finally a replacement for me in Saigon arrived in November and I was then able to move full time up to Cambodia and act as the administrative officer there.

Q: You were in Cambodia from 1954 until when?

CUNNINGHAM: I think I left on the 14th of July 1955.

Q: What was Cambodia like?

CUNNINGHAM: We used to call it the poor man's Bangkok. I liked Cambodia very much in those days. It was a very peaceful country, peaceful people. There was a certain amount of guerilla activity going on up in the northwest but for the most part the rest of the country was very peaceful. It was very poor. Cambodian people are very generous and kind people, likeable people. They were then trying to recapture their sense of identity after about 70 years as a French protectorate. An International Control Commission was set up to monitor the truce in Cambodia. It was composed of military personnel from Canada, India, and Poland. The commanders of each national detachment lived in the Hotel Royale, the principal hotel in the city and the social center for the international and French colonial community there. Dinner hour in the Hotel Royale dining room suddenly became very cosmopolitan, with the staff of each of the three contingents seated at separate tables. Each had a retinue of diplomatic officers. Everyone was busy watching everyone else and warily making contact.

Of course Phnom Penh at that point changed from the very sleepy little capital of a minor kingdom into a rather, not really cosmopolitan place, but there was sort of a bustle of diplomatic activity. A lot of the French who had done business in Saigon moved up to Phnom Penh and transferred their offices up there, so that brought a lot of people in. It brought some money in and shot up the price of housing. Of course the Americans contributed to that, too.

As I say there were five official Americans in Phnom Penh on the first of July 1954. By the time I left one year later there were 90. We had a full-fledged embassy, USIS, AID mission, and a military advisory group there. I had to find office space, housing, and English speaking local Cambodian employees for practically all of them. That was a real adventure.

Q: How did Robert McClintock run his embassy?

CUNNINGHAM: Robert McClintock was a groupie. He liked to have people around him. He also had a certain dash and flair. He made a habit of dictating all of his telegrams in final form. He was very insistent upon having a secretary that could take good dictation and he would never redraft a telegram. He would have a diplomatic conversation someplace, and he would come back to the office and call his secretary in. He wouldn't have made any notes, and he would dictate a cable report to the Department on the spot and sign what he had dictated. He made that known; he was very proud of that and that's the way he wanted his drafting officers to work. He was a pretty decisive guy.

He was approachable. He was not a high posture man although he was a strong, decisive leader. I always felt that I could go into him and say, "Mr. Ambassador this is a problem and this is what I think we ought to do." He's say, "Okay, if you think so, you do it. Of course you realize that you are responsible for making sure it's the right recommendation and that it works out if you do

that.” He was not bureaucratic. He was decisive and quick. He had a quick temper, but that was balanced by a good sense of humor. I was never aware that he carried even the slightest grudge against anyone. In general he was well liked by his staff. In the year that I was there I didn’t hear any carping or criticism of him as you often hear of senior ambassadors in other places. He also watched out for the staff. It was his first ambassadorship.

Q: Did he have his poodles with him?

CUNNINGHAM: No, I think he had Seamus, a big Irish setter, with him at that time. He liked to talk about his experiences in Lebanon. I guess Lebanon came after that.

Q: Lebanon came later.

CUNNINGHAM: His wife was Chilean. He had a good sense of humor. He liked to tell a joke. He enjoyed a good glass of champagne. He had the habit also of ending his telegrams with some kind of a fillip. For example, the only example that I can recall, but it is typical, is one in which he said he had gone to see the French resident general, or whatever the top French official was at this time with Cambodia being a fully independent country, and he talked with him about this and so forth. In typical fashion, McClintock came back to the Embassy promptly and dictated his reporting telegram. The closing line of the telegram was, “and by the time we concluded our conversation the champagne was warm.”

Q: What was the attitude that you gathered from the rest of the embassy towards Sihanouk?

CUNNINGHAM: They were suspicious of him. They found him temperamental, which he certainly was, and difficult to get along with. They were bothered by the influence of the queen mother, who was playing some kind of a political role at this time, had over Sihanouk. Of course you have to understand that I was not a political officer at this point. I was a politically interested administrative officer and an aspiring Foreign Service officer, but I had no responsibility for political analysis. My impressions of things up to this point are of that category. I didn’t have access to the diplomatic traffic that was going on, and so on. I did have instincts and feelings about politics in general and in respect to Asia in particular. These instincts had been formed by years of personal interest, reading, and university education, as a summer reporter and as a witness to political life in New Mexico. I was impressed by Sihanouk, and I still am. He is an extremely clever man.

Q: I think he is still going.

CUNNINGHAM: He is a political survivor. He is still going and everybody else is gone. Sihanouk’s goal was to gain full independence for his country. That should have been what we wanted also because it was the best guarantee against communist subversion, but he wanted to do it his way, and we wanted him to do it a different way. That’s the best that I can characterize what I understood and gathered of the relationship with him at the time. We were frequently at loggerheads with Sihanouk or with his agents. As a result of that, we did not have good access to the Cambodian political establishment, whatever it was.

The best example of this is when John Foster Dulles made his swing through Southeast Asia in the spring of 1955 to set up the SEATO organization. The treaty was concluded at a conference in Manila. Dulles visited Saigon, Vientiane, and Phnom Penh en route to Manila. Phnom Penh was the last stop before he went on to Manila. He went to the palace and had lunch with the king at that time, and I know very well because I had to host his secretary and a couple other members of the party to lunch at my house and that was very enjoyable. Off he flew, either that afternoon or the next morning, to Manila. Ambassador McClintock went with him to attend this conference in Manila.

A day or two later at noontime during the siesta period – there used to be siestas when everything was shut down in Indochina in those days from noon to three – Sihanouk broadcast his message of abdication. The embassy was absolutely dumbstruck by this. Not only did we not know it was coming, we found out about it because one of the Embassy's Cambodian chauffeurs happened to be listening to the radio that afternoon. He did not speak very good English and he did not speak French at all, so there was a great deal of hustling around the embassy that afternoon to try to find out exactly what it was the Sihanouk had said on the radio about leaving office and what the implications were. The poor chauffeur was being interrogated right and left through intermediaries who were trying to establish this communication. Eventually somebody got over to the foreign Ministry or wherever, and got an official statement. A frantic telegram went off to Manila report to the secretary of State, who had just seen the king two days previously, that he had abdicated.

No one knew what this abdication meant. I said, "Well it is obvious. He can't play a political role if he is on the throne, and he wants to play a political role. He is not out of politics by any means." I don't think that was the interpretation that the initial reports from the embassy put on it at the time. I could be mistaken but my impression is that there was some other exotic rationale or reasoning that went into it. It seemed to me to be pretty obvious what Sihanouk was trying to do.

Q: He became known as Prince Sihanouk which I guess he still is kind of known as.

CUNNINGHAM: Now he is king again. The situation has now changed enough that he can play a role and grant amnesty to various people, which he has done. I always felt that many of our problems in Cambodia came about because we couldn't get on the good side of Sihanouk and I think it all originated from that early period in 1954 when we couldn't persuade him to do things our way.

Q: Yes, and then later he got very annoyed about too much of a CIA presence. I mean we came into all sorts of things and he just didn't trust us, and with reason.

CUNNINGHAM: Sihanouk is a real activist. He is somebody like Lyndon Johnson in a manner of speaking. He was going to be his own man. He was going to run things. He was in charge of his country and he felt competent to do so. He wanted to have command and he didn't want a bunch of other people telling him how to do it. He wanted their cooperation and their help. Anyway, so be it. There it is.

Q: You left there in July 1955?

CUNNINGHAM: Yes. There are two other things that I ought to tell you about so far as setting this embassy up is concerned. One is that I did manage to get that building completed in the middle of April and to get everybody in. The week after we moved in the real heat wave arrived. I made my deadline to get people under air conditioning by the time the monsoons began, and I count that as a great success. It was a real job to do it.

The last problem was with the electrical company, which was still run by a French company at that time. I believe it was private, but very likely had a preferential status under the old, and by then defunct, colonial system. As I recall the situation, the electrical companies, by then at least, in each of the three former states of the Indochina union (now four with North Vietnam) was independent of the others, but all were owned by a holding company based in France.

At the embassy, we wanted to have a backup generator in the embassy for emergency power. It had to be connected in a particular way to the municipal grid, still operated by the French company, so that the generator would kick on automatically as soon as the electricity from municipal grid was interrupted. The local manager, a very rigid colonial type, was not willing to allow us to install the automatic device between the municipal grid and the backup generator. We had the emergency generator in place. We had all the wiring in place, all the switching, all the circuitry. Everything was there except the link to the power grid of the French electrical company. The local manager would not give us permission to make that connection, and we couldn't make the electrical system operational until he did. It was April. I knew the hot season was almost upon us. The old Masonic Temple would become unbearably hot any day. The new Chancery Building was in every other respect ready for us to move in. But I could not move anyone until I could assure reliable emergency power. Were I to do so, it would represent a capitulation to the manager of the power company whom I had all along been telling that the connection was absolutely essential – a non-negotiable requirement.

I made all kinds of demarches to the manager. He was unyielding. Meantime, the weather was getting warmer, and back at the temporary chancery in the Masonic Lodge, the Embassy staff was getting uncomfortable and restive. I had put myself between the rock and the hard place.

Finally I got word that the general manager from Paris was going to be in town so I requested an appointment with him and I went to see him. I went to see him and it was interesting. He spoke excellent English. (The local manager did not.) I explained the problem to him and he turned to the manager and asked him in French "what's going on here?" The local manager went into his routine about the incompatibility of our installation and the municipal grid and the technical impossibility of allowing the connection we requested. The general manager said, "That's nonsense." He then turned to me and said, "Mr. Cunningham, that will be taken care of. Go back and tell the ambassador it is all set. We are very grateful for what you Americans have been doing in this part of the world and we will always support you here. There is no technical problem; no reason why this shouldn't be done." I immediately went back to Ambassador McClintock and said, "You've got to send this guy a thank you note." He came through for us. That was a very good event for me.

The other major problem was getting English speaking Cambodian employees. There weren't any Cambodians in Phnom Penh who spoke English at that time. They had been under French occupation and acculturation for 70 years, and many spoke excellent French. We had to have English speaking local employees. Finally somebody said to me, "You know, during the war the two western provinces of Cambodia were ceded to the Thai and the Thai occupied them. When the war ended these provinces were returned to Cambodia. A lot of the Cambodians who were living there moved to Bangkok. English is the lingua franca of Thailand. There is a community of Cambodians living in Bangkok, and maybe now that the French are out some of them would be willing to come back." I don't know who it was that told me this; it may have been the CIA guy in Phnom Penh. He said, "Maybe you could recruit some of them. You go to Bangkok and see Jim Thompson who knows these people."

Q: *This was the silk guy.*

CUNNINGHAM: The old Jim Thompson from the Original Thai Silk Company. The legendary OSS operative who later disappeared mysteriously in Malaysia at Cameron Highlands. I got orders, went to Bangkok, and looked up Thompson at his Thai Silk shop one afternoon. I explained the situation to him and he said, "Okay, I'll help you. Come to my house tomorrow afternoon, at such and such a time", and he gave me the address. I went and I saw Jim Thompson's beautiful house in Bangkok, on a klong, filled with all kinds of magnificent oriental furniture and art. It was a virtual museum, and I've not seen the likes of it since. Thompson had there a leader of the Cambodian community in Bangkok who spoke very good English. I brought someone from the American embassy in Bangkok with me because if this were worked out we would have to have some kind of processing to go through this hiring arrangement. I explained the situation to the man Thompson had invited to meet me, and I had a long conversation with him. He said, "All right. I'll find people for you." I told him that this representative of the embassy in Bangkok was the person whom should be contacted; I've forgotten now who that officer was.

I went away and within a month somewhere on the order of ten to 12 English speaking Cambodian employees who were recruited in Bangkok had moved to Phnom Penh to join the staff of our embassy. It was very rough for them reintegrating into the community. Some of them were Sino-Cambodians I believe and it was a big change of lifestyle, living standards, and all the rest, but that worked out. Many times since everything collapsed in 1975 and Pol Pot came to power, I have wondered how many, some 20 years later, still were there and what suffering they might have endured. They did come to Cambodia of their own free will, but I was the agent of their decision.

Q: *'74 wasn't it?*

CUNNINGHAM: Yes, '74. There was a period of course in between when we had no relations with Cambodia at all. I wonder how life turned out for those people, but anyhow you can't foresee all of these things. They took a chance. I just hope that they were dealt with fairly by the American government and taken care of because they did make a sacrifice to be there. I never retained any contact, with them, but my conscience won't let me forget them. They worked for the Embassy loyally, as did the Czech staff we were forced to let go in Prague in 1950. All are

part of the family to whom our country is indebted, but who are mostly unknown to our people. May God give them all peace and rest.

SAMUEL CLIFFORD ADAMS, JR.
Education Officer, ICA
Phnom Penh (1955-1957)

Ambassador Samuel Clifford Adams, Jr. was born in Houston, Texas in 1920. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Fisk University in 1945, his Master's in 1947, and his PhD from the University of Chicago in 1952. He served in the US Army from 1944 to 1946. His postings include Saigon, Phnom Penh, London, Lagos, Bamako, and Rabat, with an Ambassadorship to Niger. He was interviewed by William J. Cunningham on February 2, 2000.

ADAMS: Sometimes, yes, but not all the time. For example, the first time I went to Angkor Wat, there wasn't any curiosity at all even though I took six people.

Q: You took six people from the mission?

ADAMS: Yes. They were not persons way up there. They were all white but we sat on the steps of Angkor Wat, the first Americans who got to go through it.

Q: Really.

ADAMS: They didn't know what Angkor Wat was about. You see what I am talking about?

Q: Yes. It was just emerging from the jungles in those days.

ADAMS: You also had the possibility of the Viet Minh attacking, or different things of that sort.

Q: You had no fear of that at all?

ADAMS: No. I had no fear.

Q: What is your opinion of the U.S. policy toward Vietnam in the final days of the French empire there?

ADAMS: The whole thing was a big tragedy. Have you talked with our friend here who was in Laos?

Q: I don't know who that is.

ADAMS: He is a member of the Houston Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is embarrassing that I can't remember his name.

Q: That's all right. I can't come up with names that I want to remember all the time either.

ADAMS: He also taught over here at the university.

Q: He taught at the University of Houston?

ADAMS: No, there's another one. There's a Catholic university.

Q: Do you mean at Saint Thomas?

ADAMS: Yes. His name was Cunningham. Do you know who I'm talking about?

Q: Yes. I do, right.

ADAMS: The thing about it, I had a Jeep, which I could use to travel around different places on my own. I could get gas for it and things like that. That's what life was about.

Q: Now, of the people whom you helped to go on to advanced education at that time, have you any recollection or knowledge of what happened to them? Did they come back to Vietnam eventually and go into official positions or leadership positions of some kind, or have you ever been in touch with any of them subsequently?

ADAMS: There's a thing [for which] the King of Cambodia decorated me.

Q: Oh, really!

ADAMS: I was the first American to be so honored. What I did had the single most influence on Cambodian education. All of this was a different posture than most Americans experienced with the Cambodians at that time.

Q: Yes, it was.

ADAMS: I remember the first time that I was accompanied by fellow Americans. I was making a trip to Phnom Penh that was an entirely different experience.

Q: Do you mean for the Cambodians?

ADAMS: Yes, because one thing about it, the attitude of the Americans for the Cambodians, was not very respectful, you know. The Americans thought the Cambodians were doing things wrong. But, I got decorated by the Cambodians. I was the single most important influence on Cambodian education and that kind of stuff.

JOHN M. ANSPACHER

**Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Phnom Penh (1956-1958)**

John M. Anspacher was born in New York in 1918. He received a bachelor's degree in political science from Columbia University. He served in the U.S. Army during World War II. Mr. Anspacher joined USIS in 1953. His career included positions in Germany, Cambodia, Vietnam, Mali, Ethiopia, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed in 1988 by G. Lewis Schmidt.

ANSPACHER: [...]My first offer was Laos. I said I had a family and the children were about to go to school. And they said, "Laos is out, try Cambodia." I agreed. And I looked around and, strangely enough, found one of the Embassy people in Bonn who had served in Cambodia. Heaven only knows when or where. Oh, I guess he'd served in the Saigon Embassy when Cambodia was still consulate.[...]

I left Germany, at the behest of the Agency to go to Cambodia as Public Affairs Officer, which was my first PAO post. I had never been to Asia. My only real qualification for the job was my language, since French is the language -- the lingua franca -- in that part of Southeast Asia. This was a novel experience: crossing the Pacific for the first time in my life, going into an area that I knew nothing about, where I felt the only rationale for my being there was that I could get along and could find my way around. I also knew something about the information business and the propaganda business. I insist this is what we have been in all these years, despite the fact that a lot of people raise their eyebrows when we say "propaganda." I did wonder what I was letting my family in for; I had no idea. The American Ambassador to Cambodia at the time was Robert McClintock. You have to be a certain kind of person to get along with the late Rob McClintock. He and I had our problems. But I had more problems with members of his staff than I did with him, really.

There we had another kind of effectiveness on a much lower scale of sophistication. We were back to the horse-and-buggy stage in many instances, for distribution of our product. Our entire films and publication distribution problem was solved by boat, for example. We'd go up the rivers and the canals to distribute the publications and show films that were done in French mostly, more than in Khmer, the native language of Cambodia, although eventually we had them translated into Khmer. We depended to a large degree on the Manila Reproduction Center for our magazines. At that time -- I think this is no longer true -- we had to depend entirely on calligraphy for preparing our magazines. They were all done by hand, letter by letter, phrase by phrase, which is how Khmer is written. Now there is a Khmer-language typewriter.

Q: Was the level of literacy in Cambodia such that the magazine was reasonably effective do you think?

ANSPACHER: Only to the upper level of individuals to whom we could have appealed in French. I don't think too many of the peasants, who made up the majority of the population, read even their own language. So going to the trouble of writing in calligraphy may have been a waste of time. But it was something I inherited. And since it was only a monthly magazine, we were under no time-pressure. We were not trying to do anything overnight with the Wireless File. We

were doing features, in an attractive way, I do believe.

We used to joke about this but it's perfectly true. The magazine was usual taken apart and used to paper the inside of the walls of the bamboo shacks in which the peasants lived which means they probably got only half of what we were trying to say, because the other half was up against the inside of the wall. If they looked at it long enough and were attracted by the pictures, they might try to figure out what the words meant. Effective? I don't know. How to you tell? I've always had a particular feeling about how to test effectiveness. We'll get to that later on if you're still interested.

We had some effect in terms of impressing the people with who we were. We were not the French, because only a handful of us spoke enough French to get along and it wasn't French-French. It was American French, with all due respect to those who spoke it. The Cambodians knew we were not Russian. They knew we were not French. we must have been something else. And we showed the flag and explained why we were there and what we were trying to do. And if they listened and understood, yes, we were effective. But how do you test it? You ask them, they say "sure."

Q: Did they have any -- that you could measure -- did they have any visible attitude towards the Americans as opposed to other nationalities? Or couldn't you judge that either?

ANSPACHER: No, I think this is generally true in Cambodia, Laos, Upper Burma, Upper Thailand. There is the word for the foreigner, the "farang." And anybody who's white and large-nosed is a "farang." But it would have taken more intensive questioning on their part for them to realize that we weren't from another planet. They'd been cut off from everybody but the French. And if we weren't French we must have been something other. It could have been anything. They had no so-called "attitudes" towards the Americans.

I think as the aid program progressed and we started to get those bags of wheat or whatever it was with the U.S. flag on them, the people began to make the connection between the "farang" who was talking about New York, Washington, President whatever, and then the flag. They kind of made a connection. But this was about as far as it went. I'm talking about the peasantry now.

Dealing with the Cambodia "elite" is another matter. There we had a little bit of a problem because there had been some infiltration by French communists, one of whom was the editor of the local paper published by the Ministry of Information. About the only way we could get anything into the newspaper, except the most innocuous little feature article, was by writing a letter to the editor.

And thereby hangs a rather sticky-wicket tale. You can edit this as you please. Our Political Officer, later an Ambassador, wrote quite fluent French. He and I had not got along for years. I had known him during the war when we also had had our differences. Well, I started a series of letters to the editor which were reasonably effective in the sense that at least they got published. At one point, he decided to take issue with something I had said, so he wrote his own letter to the editor, taking issue with me, by name. I went to the Ambassador and said, "Let's get our ducks in a row. This really isn't the way to do business. One of us is going to speak for the Embassy. You

want him to do it, let him do it and I'll stop. But as long as I'm doing it, if I'm going to get shot down I'd rather be shot down by a Cambodian or something else, but not by one of my own colleagues."

My "colleague" had not signed his own name. So whether or not it was he who had written this letter attacking me and my proposition was unclear until we found the carbon of his letter in his desk drawer. That was the evidence that I took to the Ambassador, who by that time was no longer Rob McClintock, but Carl Strom. Do you know Carl Strom?

Q: I met him when he was Ambassador to Korea.

ANSPACHER: Yes, he was Ambassador to Korea before he had come to Cambodia. He was a very fine person.

Q: A mathematician I believe.

ANSPACHER: A mathematician, an astronomer, and an orchid grower. If these are qualifications for an Ambassador, fine. He did rather well, because he struck a most undiplomatic note with Sihanouk. They just liked each other. They would talk about orchids and astronomy. And, of course, astronomy is something that the Cambodians can talk about because they gear a lot of their culture to the way the moon rises and sets and the way stars and planets move and the cattle eat or don't eat, on certain festival days. So he and Sihanouk got along quite well despite the fact that Carl Strom spoke almost no French. Sihanouk spoke passable English.

One of the things about Sihanouk that I remember, as long as we're just recollecting here, was that I heard him conduct a conversation with Carl Strom and our Military Attach in English, with a Cambodian aide to Sihanouk in Khmer, and with me in French, simultaneously. All three languages at once. I always had a great respect for Sihanouk. He was awfully hard to deal with. But I have felt for years that he probably is the only person who's ever going to get Cambodia out of the mess it's in now. How he's going to do it I'm not sure. And he was not the same kind of -- I'll use the phrase and you can edit it out if you want -- he's not the same kind of SOB, our SOB, as Ngo Dinh Diem was. Awfully hard guy to deal with, mercurial, unlike Diem who was diabolic. But Sihanouk was mercurial. You never knew which way he was going to go. But we got along quite well, Sihanouk and the American Embassy, generally speaking. We got along better under Carl Strom than we did under Rob McClintock because they were two different kinds of people.

Let me see. We made several good friends in Cambodia. We tried hard to project not only American culture but other western cultures, too. For example, we once had a Christmas choral singing Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus."

Q: Was Sihanouk Catholic as many of those upper class were?

ANSPACHER: No, he was not. He was Buddhist, deeply Buddhist. As I say, Carl Strom's wife had organized a "Hallelujah Chorus" for Christmas, in which guests from other western Embassies participated. Everybody invited several Cambodians, those who might understand

what the "Hallelujah Chorus" was all about. I had invited the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, French-educated, a lovely person. We went to his house for dinner down the street. The dinner, I might say, was almost inedible but then most Cambodian meals were. You know, when you see the rice for dessert crawling along the plate, you begin to wonder.

Q: Yes!

ANSPACHER: On the way over to the Ambassador's home for the concert, I was trying to explain to the Chief Justice about Handel and the "Hallelujah Chorus." And I thought I had made my point until he turned to me and said, "That's all very interesting. Will Mr. Handel be there tonight?"

At which point I was absolutely speechless. The last 15 minutes of conversation had absolutely gone over his head. He didn't have the foggiest notion of what I was talking about. I said I didn't think so; he was otherwise occupied. A lovely evening was enjoyed by all.

Now, as to effectiveness, I have another anecdote. Towards the end of my career there we were at a Country Team meeting one morning when the Ambassador's secretary stepped in and spoke not only to the Ambassador but to the (CIA) Station Chief. It seems we had a Soviet defector in the front office. He wanted out of the Soviet embassy. After considerable maneuvering for a day and a half, he was sequestered in the Station Chief's home, which was down the street from mine. Eventually, a day or two later, he was spirited out of the country in the trunk of a car. He was driven to Saigon and flown to Rome and on to the United States. I found out these details after I had come back to the U.S. in conversations with aforementioned Station Chief, who by that time was also back in Washington. I asked how this had all come about and how it all had worked out. Well, he said it didn't work out as well as CIA would have liked. This guy finally wanted to go back because the Russians were holding his wife and daughter and they weren't going to let them go. CIA had got everything they wanted out of him and so they let him go back, I was told.

I asked, "What did you get out of him?" He said, "Well, not an awful lot. You might be interested, however, you personally might be interested, in his comments about USIS. This defector had said that, in the American Embassy in Phnom Penh the one agency or element of the American Embassy with which the Russians were most concerned, in terms of its effectiveness on the Cambodian elite, was USIS." I said, "I wish I could use that, but I'm not quite sure how." Is it good or bad that the Soviets think we're good? But I thought that was an interesting comment. If they thought we were effective we probably were because they were very sensitive to effectiveness.

I rather liked the Cambodian people. They had a wonderful relaxed attitude about them. I've always felt that if you did it right in Cambodia you could wear a pair of shorts and sit by the side of the river. If you waited long enough you could feed yourself. Sit under a palm tree to shade yourself from the sun and the rain. Coconuts would drop in your lap. Fish would jump into your lap. You'd scratch the earth and drop a kernel of rice and you could eat for the rest of your life. You really didn't have to do anything. And that's about the way the Cambodians operated.

But they thought the westerners, the French particularly and I guess we too, kind of "nuts" for running around the way we did and getting all excited about things. They didn't get that excited about things. If they had grievances they went to see Sihanouk's father, the king, and told him. They'd all gather there once a month, a fantastic fascinating sight. They'd all line up to go into the palace one by one and do their obeisances and tell the king what was wrong. It could have been a land dispute or a man wife dispute or the children, anything. The King would sit there and listen and wave a wand or give an order and things would get fixed. And this seemed to be a pretty reasonable way to run a government. It might even work in our country.

The Cambodian experience was my first introduction really to operating a whole program. We had little or no radio output. We showed films but we didn't make any. We had our monthly magazine, but nothing on a daily basis, because getting a newspaper or a new bulletin out on a daily basis would have been a waste of time. We didn't try to "compete" with daily news on any regular basis unless it was terribly important. If there was a matter at the United Nations or in the United States Congress that was particularly germane to Cambodian livelihood or the Cambodian future, we would put out a special release. Only on rare occasions would it be printed. But at least we put out enough copies so that we could distribute it to certain so-called "elite" individuals.

Q: Were there any daily newspapers in Cambodia at all?

ANSPACHER: No, there was a four-page weekly and that's about all. It looked very much like our high school newspapers used to look, maybe better written, but the typography was not much better.

And there was almost no radio. Those few homes which had receivers listened to Cambodian broadcasts from Saigon radio. The government thought it had a radio broadcast capability, but it was so old and so badly equipped and so out of whack most of the time that they were off the air more than they were on. I suppose that if Sihanouk or the King had something to say, the station would somehow get up enough current and enough technical capabilities to put the Prince or his father on the air, a very practical way to program. The rest of the time neither the station nor the "audience" seemed to care much.

Now, USIS of course, had a branch post in Battambang, up at the head of the Mekong River.

Q: That wasn't Siem Reap was it?

ANSPACHER: Yes, it was up near Siem Reap, near the site of the ancient ruins of Angkor Wat. As a matter of fact, the PAO's wife was usually detailed to take whoever happened to be in town, from the Deputy Director of USIS to the Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, up to Angkor Wat. So the PAO's wife got to know more about Angkor Wat than she really ever wanted to.

But we used to go to Siem Reap just so that we could say that we'd been there. I had to go to the branch post from time to time at Battambang. We had a nice little operation there, very low key. We had exhibits in the windows and this was about all we did. Our branch PAO talked to as

many people as he could, provincial governors and so forth.

We also had six English teachers, from the English teaching branch of USIS.

They were out in the countryside. We have had some trouble with teachers who are on contract. They're never quite convinced that they "belong" to the American Embassy. The American Ambassador really does have the right and the authority to do with them as he pleases if they run afoul of his policies. So we had a little problem with them, but really not much.

Anyway, we had these six English teachers, who were very helpful to our program. I found that if you could keep them on a reasonably straight and reasonably narrow path, so they didn't stray too far afield from what they were supposed to be doing, they were probably the best public opinion analysts we had in countries like this.

Q: That's very interesting.

ANSPACHER: I have always found that you could use these kinds of person-to-person contact people, without making it obvious that you were using them. It's what I call the "old envelope" technique of public opinion testing. For example: Don't carry a clip board and don't ask a series of questions. Get into conversations and as soon as you get back to where you are staying put he notes down on the back of an old envelope and send them to me. I don't care what form they're in. You can write them in Khmer if you want to. Just your impression of what this guy was saying when you talked with him.

Q: I suppose it's because an English instructor finds that people who are taking their lessons are really interested. They will enter into a conversation voluntarily and by virtue of extended conversational exposures a camaraderie develops between people and then you can pick up things that you yourself might not expect you were going to pick up. But you get them in conversation.

ANSPACHER: Yes, and they will ask questions. How do you say "communism" in English? You know, that kind. Why do you want to say it? Also the English teachers did not live in Phnom Penh proper. They lived out in the countryside, at some risk to their intestines I'm sure, if not their sanity. They lived with the people and they made friends and they talked with them -- about anything and everything. That's what I wanted to find out: what these people were thinking and/or saying. They would talk about their crops but they also talked about "government." They talked about the economy, albeit on a limited scale. To them the economy was how much does rice cost and how much can I get?

I want to make this patently clear. This was not an intelligence-gathering operation. It was just public opinion testing, public opinion polling so to speak, albeit not in terms of statistics. I didn't think that was important. What was important was what are people saying if you talk with them without the clipboard.

Now, this is very much an aside. It has nothing to do with me. I am pretty well persuaded that if we had the capability of infiltrating -- I'm not sure this ought to be on the tape. Suppose we had

somebody who could pass as a "contra" today live "fight" with the "contras" for a week and a half, I wonder what we would find out about the commitment of those guys to what we think they're fighting for. Do they consider themselves "freedom fighters?" Leaving aside the former Somoza guardsmen, are they in it for the cigarettes, the food, the wherewithal and the fun of firing weapons? I don't know. But I'm not at all convinced that they are absolutely persuaded of the rightness of Mr. Reagan's "freedom fighters" war. That's beside the point. Anyway, that kind of public opinion analysis or reporting I find more valuable than all the structured studies that we have perhaps carried out.

Q: Certainly I think it is so far as that kind of people are concerned.

ANSPACHER: Yes. I'll get to another experience of that nature in Ethiopia.* I frequently tried to persuade agronomists and cattle farmers and veterinarians and brick makers, teaching people how to do this and that. These are Americans who also sit around in the evening with nothing else to do and talk with the local populace. I said I'll give you all the old envelopes you want if you only use the back of them. Every week or ten days when you come back here for a fresh suit of clothes turn in the old envelopes. Let me see what these people are talking about. To some extent it worked, not always. AID people were frequently either un-understanding, or felt it was an intelligence-gathering operation with which they didn't want to get involved. I tried to explain the difference between that and intelligence; sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't.

Anyway, my experience in Cambodia came to an end largely because I appealed to the Agency after whatever two or two and a half years. We had adopted our little girl in Germany. She was still a citizen of Germany and I wanted to get her naturalized. I thought that I had better get her back to the United States before she got too much further away from the age at which I could do that without complications. She was still only four or five. So we came back for a tour with USIA as editor of the Far Eastern Press Service.

Q: What were the years that you were in Cambodia?

ANSPACHER: I've got to reconstruct that now. It must have been -- let's see. Eisenhower was in office in '52. So it must have been, say, '56 to '58.

[...] Another such "memorandum of conversation" I wrote had been from Cambodia. We can back-track a little bit. I came in to our office one Monday morning in Phnom Penh to find waiting for me the pilot of our USIS power boat, which we used to take films and publications and whatever we had up the river to show the hoards of fascinated peasants who would gather on the shore -- just as they did in the day of the old Mississippi steamboat.

The pilot came to me and said, "We've got to do something about this boat. The Ambassador ordered me and the boat out yesterday with 47 people aboard. That boat can't carry 47 people, especially if they're smoking the way they were smoking. I've got a full 55-gallon drum of gasoline on that craft. These people were all over that boat. I couldn't see where I was going. They were lying all over the boat, obstructing my vision and the running lights and so forth.

So I said, "We've got to do something about this." It just so happened that the Naval Attaché

from the Embassy in Saigon was also responsible for Cambodia since Cambodia didn't have much of a Navy. What it did have he could deal with. He was due in town the next week or so. When he got in I asked him to take a look at this boat and rate it for passengers. And he stipulated, 23 or 24 passengers with life preserves and that's all.

I went to the Ambassador as gently as I could, because talking with Rob McClintock this way was not the easiest thing in the world. I told him in words to this effect that something had to be done about this boat. It is rated for 24 people, I said, and that's all it can carry. "You really can't ask my pilot," I continued -- at this point he cut me off. He said, "I can ask your pilot to do anything I damn well please at any time of the day or night with that boat which belongs to me." Wait a minute. We've got real problems here.

So my first "memorandum" to the Agency said, in effect: "Make up your mind whether this boat belongs to the Ambassador and he can do with it as he pleases, in which case you better absolve us of all responsibility, or it belongs to USIS, and you straighten this out back in Washington." Well, we did get that straightened out in favor of USIS. But it was touch and go for a few minutes.

ANSPACHER: [...] Can I go back to Cambodia for a minute? One of our cultural events was the Benny Goodman band complete with Helen O'Connell and some of the great musicians of Benny Goodman's band. Prince Sihanouk considered himself a saxophonist, of course, which made the event really successful where it counted most.

Q: I remember that.

ANSPACHER: He wasn't in Goodman's class, of course, but he did consider himself a competent saxophonist. We put on a concert out in the palace grounds, with 25,000 steaming -- and I mean it was hot -- steaming Cambodians listening to Benny Goodman. Of course, their rhythms and our rhythms, as you know from your time in Asia, are wholly different. They have a different set of tonal values -- I don't know enough about music.

Q: Five tonal.

ANSPACHER: It's a five-tonal language and it's a five tonal music system. In Vietnamese as in Chinese you can say the same word five different ways in one sentence, make a sentence out of one word just by changing the tone. I don't think they understood a word or a note of Benny Goodman's band. Certainly not a word of Helen O'Connell. But they had a wonderful time. And I'm sure they're still talking about it. They don't pronounce his name right. They don't really whistle "Sing, Sing, Sing." But they had a great time.

The prince asked to play something with the band. Goodman agreed, holding his ears. So they played something which Prince Sihanouk called "a fast." So Benny Goodman played something fast. I guess Sihanouk came in about three beats too late. But that's all right. At any rate they all had a great time.

MARSHALL GREEN
Regional Planning Advisor for the Far East
Washington, DC (1956-1960)

Ambassador Marshall Green was born in Massachusetts in 1916. He entered the Foreign Service in 1945. He served in New Zealand, Sweden, Korea, Hong Kong, Washington, DC, and was ambassador to Indonesia, Australia, and the Republic of Nauru. Ambassador Green was interviewed about his work in Cambodia by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

GREEN: Cambodia has not been a central part of my career, which has concentrated on Northeast Asia -- China, Japan, and Korea -- and also the Pacific Islands and Indonesia. However, as far as Indochina is concerned, I was drawn into events during three assignments: 1) as Regional Planning Advisor for the Far East (1956-60); as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East (1963-65); 3) as Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific (1969-73). Most of my comments will relate to (3) above, because of major differences between the White House and State Department over U.S. Cambodian policy, including President Nixon's decision to commit U.S. ground forces in the Cambodian incursion of 1970. I believe that my account of that period contains information that has not appeared in any publications to date.

The first section, which is rather short, relates to two trips which I took to Cambodia when I was Regional Planning Adviser (in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs).

Q: *What period was this?*

GREEN: I held that position from 1956 to 1960.

Q: *This was during the Eisenhower presidency.*

GREEN: Yes, that's right. I was working for Walter Robertson (Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs), whose job was then taken over in 1959 by his deputy, Jeff Parsons. I made two trips to Cambodia during this period. In 1956 my wife and I took a trip through the whole area just after I was named Walter Robertson's Regional Planning Advisor. At that time Cambodia was pretty isolated, had bad relations with (the Republic of) Vietnam and Thailand, on two of its borders. It had no relations with Laos, which is a rather wild country and hard to understand. Cambodia had been a French colony (Protectorate) and the officials we met there spoke French. When we visited Cambodia in 1956, we stayed with Mac Godley who later became Ambassador to Laos after being Ambassador to the (former Belgian) Congo. The Ambassador to Cambodia at this time was Rob McClintock.

I'll mention a few things about Rob McClintock, because they tell you something of the problem we had with Cambodia. He was one of the brightest people in the Foreign Service, but he couldn't help parading his superior knowledge and intellect before others. In the case of Cambodia, this was a very serious drawback, because there was only one man in Cambodia who was supposed to excite any kind of veneration and respect -- or to be in the headlines. That was

Prince Sihanouk. As the Prime Minister and the Prince, he was completely in charge of the country. The whole history of Cambodia during the last half century has revolved around Prince Sihanouk.

During this first visit I heard that Rob McClintock conducted business in a way that grated on the nerves of many Cambodians, especially Sihanouk, whom he addressed without the deference which Sihanouk expected and which was his due. Rather, McClintock had a habit of carrying a field marshal's baton with him, which he used at the staff meeting I attended to emphasize his points.

Q: Oh, my God, no!

GREEN: We had problems with Sihanouk, on and off, all during the time that I was Regional Planning Advisor (in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs). As Regional Planning Advisor, my principal aim was to develop some kind of constructive relationships between all of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region with which we had strong commitments: military, economic development, or exchange student support. However, all of these countries were at each other's throats. So I spent four years trying to bring about a certain degree of reconciliation.

As I think I've told you before, Stu, Washington at that time could best be described in its relationships with East Asian countries as being the hub of a wheel, with spokes going out to all of these different capitals: to Tokyo, Seoul, Manila, and so forth. But there were no relationships between the ends of those spokes: between Tokyo and Seoul, between Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, between Phnom Penh and Saigon, between Phnom Penh and Bangkok, and so forth. And, of course, Burma had no relations with anybody.

On my second trip to Cambodia in 1959, as assistant to J. Graham (Jeff) Parsons, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, I recall that we first visited Burma and then Bangkok. I left my wife there while Jeff and I flew up to Vientiane, Laos. From there we flew to the ancient Laotian capital, Luang Prabang, which is really out of this world. That's where the Prince Heritier (Crown Prince), who was really the King or the ruler of Laos, lived. But he had no control over eastern Laos, which was under Hanoi's control or over northernmost Laos which was under Chinese control.

But my point about the visit to Laos was that Laos was so distant in time. Jeff and I had an audience with the Prince Heritier -- all three of us on separate divans. At a command from the Prince Heritier three servants came charging into the room and prostrated themselves on the floor, sliding the last five feet or so, holding up cigarette boxes. We each took out a cigarette. Then the Prince clapped his hands and three more servants came running in, holding up lighted bricks to light our cigarettes. This is the kind of service you can't get in Washington. (Laughter.)

As we left the palace, we were serenaded by what passed for a military band. It looked like something out of "Babar and the Elephants." If there had been monkeys and elephants playing instruments, I wouldn't have been the least bit surprised.

Then we flew down to Saigon (where Lisa rejoined us) with the idea of our going on to Cambodia the next day. In Saigon we learned from Ambassador Trimble in Phnom Penh that Parsons would be seen, not by Sihanouk, who was in Paris, but by Son Sann, who was the Acting Prime Minister. This shows you how influential we were in East Asia at that time.

Trimble mentioned that all the diplomatic corps was invited, including the Chinese Ambassador. This would have been Peking's Ambassador. Standing State Department instructions in those days prevented any American official from attending any party where the Chinese Ambassador was a fellow guest. So we immediately wired back to Bill Trimble asking whether the Chinese Ambassador was actually attending. At that point a tropical storm knocked out all communications and we had no way of getting our message through to Phnom Penh, not even through French rubber plantation owners, which was another possible channel of communications. However, all communications were out.

Jeff thought this over and decided to send me alone the next day to do the honors on his behalf.

So the next morning I set off on a special executive plane provided us by CINCPAC (Commander in Chief, Pacific). As we approached the Phnom Penh airport, to my horror, I could see what seemed like the whole cabinet and diplomatic corps lined up near the point of landing, plus a military guard of honor. A "march past" was obviously scheduled with the troops all dressed up with their pennants and other regalia.

When we landed, and I stumbled out of the plane, there was the Cambodian Chief of Protocol. He asked, "Ou est M. Parsons?" (Where is Mr. Parsons?) I had to explain Mr. Parsons had a "crise d'estomac" (stomach ache) and could not travel on the plane "car il manque un w.c." (as it lacked a toilet). The Cambodian officials were crestfallen. They dismissed the band and all of the rest of the welcoming party. I went to the Embassy car waiting for me, and there was Ambassador Trimble. He was absolutely ashen-faced. He said, "Didn't you get my telegram?" I said, "No, what telegram?" He said, "I wired that the Chinese Ambassador wouldn't dream of going to any party where an American official was going to be the guest of honor." I said, "Well, we never got it." He said, "What are we going to do? We've got to go ahead with this big party." I said, "Let's send the plane back." It wasn't very far -- the round trip would take about two hours. The next thing we knew, two or three hours later, Jeff Parsons arrived with my wife, with Jeff lamely explaining to the Chief of Protocol that he had been miraculously cured.

There was a big ceremony out at the airport. Jeff went through all of the honors denied me, while the Cambodians acted as if nothing was amiss. That evening we attended a lavish dinner at the palace seated at the longest table and the finest napery I had ever seen, all under a row of massive chandeliers. Jeff Parsons had the seat of honor, next to the Acting Prime Minister. Everyone was served course after course of exotic foods -- all, that is, except Jeff. All he was given was a bowl of boiled rice, out of thoughtful consideration for his indisposition. That's the way the Cambodians got back at him (Laughter), and it gives you a sampling of how we deal with Cambodia and how Cambodians deal with us.

Q: Let me ask you. In 1956, where did Cambodia rank in Pacific or East Asian affairs?

GREEN: I would say that it ranked rather low until we became more involved in the wars in Indochina after 1963. We were increasingly concerned over how North Vietnam was violating Cambodia's neutrality, largely in the form of its Ho Chi Minh Trail to South Vietnam which led through Cambodia.

Q: But couldn't we prevail on those who had signed the Geneva Accords of 1954 to reaffirm support for Cambodia's neutrality?

GREEN: Nothing effective could be done through diplomatic channels because of Hanoi's obduracy. Since both Moscow and Peking were competing for influence with Hanoi, they refused to take issue with Hanoi's position in this matter.

Q: And I assume Cambodia lacked the military power to keep the north Vietnamese out.

GREEN: Absolutely, and that's why Sihanouk felt so strongly that Cambodia's only hope for survival as a nation lay in trying to gain as much international support as possible for Cambodia's neutral status. With that I agreed, much as I disliked Sihanouk personally with his vanities, prickliness, squeaky voice, and long periodic absences from Cambodia to take "the cure" on the French Riviera. He was nevertheless revered by many Cambodians as "the soul" of his country.

CURTIS C. CUTTER
Vice Consul
Phnom Penh (1957-1959)

Curtis C. Cutter was born in California in 1928. He entered the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included positions in Cambodia, Peru, Brazil, Spain, and Washington, DC. Mr. Cutter was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: Well, you were in Phnom Penh from 1957 to 1959. What was the situation there at that time in Cambodia?

CUTTER: I felt that in many ways the U. S. position there was questionable. We had sent an ambassador named Carl Strom to Phnom Penh. He was a very fine, honorable gentleman, but he was an officer at the end of his career. He was a mathematician, a very precise sort of person. He had been mainly an administrative officer most of his career in the Foreign Service. He had absolutely zero rapport with Prince Sihanouk, who was, as you probably know, an entirely different kind of character, very open, outgoing, very spontaneous. Strom was almost the direct opposite. He was almost introverted and a very serious, point by point kind of person. There was very little personal relationship between the two men, at a time when Prince Sihanouk was Cambodia. Strom, I think, was also somewhat intimidated by both the Department and our Vietnamese policies at the time. He seemed to feel that in some way what he was doing in Cambodia was meant to support what was happening in Vietnam. He felt he could not take a different line than was being taken there.

Q: He was somewhat deferential?

CUTTER: Deferential, yes. I can give you an example. Carl Strom and I played a lot of bridge together. We even won the worldwide bridge tournament. So as a junior officer he gave me a lot of access which I would not have had otherwise. Even though, after a year, I had moved to be the consular officer, he let me sit in on lots of meetings of one kind or another and all of his staff meetings. So I had an interesting view of what was happening at the post, although, of course, as a junior officer, I wasn't in any way able to have much influence on what was happening. But one incident occurred in, it must have been 1958. The Vietnamese were rather aggressively trying to realign the frontier between Cambodia and South Vietnam. There was an incident where they had moved some border posts five or six kilometers into Cambodia and then put them in again. Sihanouk wanted the missions in Phnom Penh to send representatives to see what had happened, because, obviously, the Vietnamese were encroaching on his territory. He wanted to document this for the international community.

When this request came to our Embassy, the Ambassador met with his staff, especially the military attachés, to decide what should be done about it. There were some strong opinions -- mine amongst them -- that if this were true, then Sihanouk had a legitimate case, and that we ought to go there and take a look. If there were real evidence that this had happened, obviously, the position that the U. S. ought to take was that this was unacceptable, and we should talk to our Vietnamese friends about rectifying the situation. But after some correspondence back and forth between the Embassy in Saigon and the Embassy in Phnom Penh, it was decided that, in fact, it would be very bad if we went down, if we made our presence at this event. The Ambassador refused to send anybody along. A number of missions did send people, and it was fairly clearly established that the Vietnamese were moving these border posts. This was the kind of thing we did. Actions in favor of the Vietnamese, which began to alienate Sihanouk.

Q: Well, you said that you felt rather strongly. Obviously, you were a junior officer and carried little weight. But did others at the Embassy feel that way, too? I mean, was this the sort of thing where maybe we should get out and be a little more active for "our" country, you might say?

CUTTER: Well, at least it seemed that there was a question of equity involved here. There was a great possibility that the Cambodians, in fact, were the injured party. Of course, the whole pressure of U. S. policy at that time on Cambodia was to get them out of their neutral stance. The harder Sihanouk resisted that, which he did, the more pressure was exerted on him to do it, and the more entrenched our attitude became that Sihanouk's policy was really unacceptable. There were people in the Embassy who took a different line -- for example, the political officer, Bob Barrett, subsequently an ambassador in Africa. Bob was, I think, one of the people in favor of our taking at least a more neutral position on this and trying to see where the facts lay. But the military and Agency [CIA] representations there didn't feel that this was in the US interest.

Q: They were trying to keep the Vietnamese content, I suppose.

CUTTER: That's right. And Durbrow [Elbridge Durbrow], who was our ambassador in Saigon at the time, was very strongly opposed to our doing anything that would upset his clients.

Q: You hear of those cases called "clientitis." Sometimes a little "clientitis" helps. On the Cambodian side, we should have been a little bit more responsive, rather than just to the other side?

CUTTER: Well, it seemed clear to me as a relative newcomer to this game that Sihanouk actually made a lot of sense. And that what he was trying to do: keep Cambodia uninvolved in the bigger battle that was going on in Indochina made a certain amount of sense from the Cambodian point of view and that if we were to look at it at all sympathetically, we would be trying to reinforce his position within Cambodia, rather than to weaken his position and allow other kinds of forces to move in.

Q: Was there concern about the communist forces within Cambodia at that time?

CUTTER: At that time they were not a serious problem. There were some small, guerrilla operations, but I did, in fact, drive everywhere in Cambodia in my own private vehicle. I visited all of the rubber plantations. I had a boat and took trips up the Mekong River almost up to the Laotian border. You never felt a great concern about your personal safety. There were some areas, that is, a few areas between Phnom Penh and the coast, in that little mountain range near the Gulf of Thailand, where there were still some active guerrilla activities. This is 1957-59. But in general the country was not in a state of unrest at that time. As a matter of fact, it was very prosperous.

Q: Well, were you there when William Trimble came as ambassador?

CUTTER: I was there.

Q: Was this a change?

CUTTER: Well, it was certainly a change in personality, to some extent. But, again, they sent an officer at the end of his career, a very distinguished officer, but one who had very little sympathy, I think, for Cambodia or its situation. And, once again, was not the sort of person who could have made any direct, personal connection to Sihanouk.

Q: He was a soft-spoken, Baltimore gentleman?

CUTTER: He was a soft-spoken, Baltimore gentleman but who believed in very strict, protocolary kinds of behavior and ran the post as though it were a post in Europe, actually, and was not a person who could have developed the personal rapport with the Prince that was absolutely the essence of foreign policy in Cambodia. You know, we would have been much better off having sent a young, 40-ish officer who wouldn't have minded partying until the wee hours of the night, occasionally.

Q: Well, then you left Cambodia. I take it there were no major incidents when you were in Cambodia?

CUTTER: No. Well, there was the beginning of an incident because of a warlord, not a left wing,

but a right wing warlord, Dap Chuon, who had his headquarters in Siem Reap, which is the town right near Angkor Wat. This was a favorite place to take high-ranking American visitors because he was so blatantly pro-American. I remember taking Senator Hickenlooper in to see him. Dap Chuon got a kind of dreamy look on his face. He said: "Senator, last night I dreamed a dream of a giant eagle which spread its wings over my country and came to rest down here in the jungles to protect us." He said, "You know, it's amazing. Here you are, here with me. You are another symbol of this protection that we're going to fall under." Of course, the Senator ate this up. Dap Chuon was very good at this kind of thing. He knew how to work on people. Eventually, of course, Sihanouk couldn't tolerate his independence and eventually he closed down his operations. He did close down his operation but found in the process that Dap Chuon was on the payroll of the Agency and had direct contacts with people in our Embassy who were then PNGed [declared persona non grata] from the country. So this was just one other element in developing a state of mind in Sihanouk which was very, very negative towards the United States.

Q: You might add for the record that Sihanouk now, in 1992, is playing a limited role but is currently the Chief of State of Cambodia.

CUTTER: And it'll be a very important role, at least as important as Juan Carlos' role was in Spain, because he has that ability to mobilize people that practically no other politician has. He was one of the most popular leaders I've ever encountered. I watched him campaigning in those days, watched him addressing the people. He was immensely popular -- and still is, I think.

WILLIAM W. THOMAS, JR.
Economic Officer
Phnom Penh (1958-1961)

William W. Thomas was born in 1925 in North Carolina. He joined the Foreign Service in 1952 after completing his studies in North Carolina and serving in World War II. His career has included posts primarily in Asia, including Laos, Taiwan, and China. Mr. Thomas was interviewed on May 31, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: You left and went where?

THOMAS: I went to Cambodia.

Q: You were there from when to when?

THOMAS: From the end of 1958 to the spring of 1961.

Q: What was the political situation in Cambodia when you arrived there in late 1958?

THOMAS: Sihanouk had claimed that there had been an attempted coup with an American participating in it. Therefore, the situation for the embassy was quite bad at the time.

Q: What was the embassy like when you arrived there?

THOMAS: It was small with a small military mission, and an AID mission which was fairly active. But it was bigger than Bangkok was when I was in Bangkok, but by no means as big as Bangkok was at that time. There were a lot of French still in Cambodia, about 5,000 French there who came there because they had to get out of Algeria. They felt it was very receptive to Frenchmen. We had a few American businesses there...Standback. We occasionally had a ship coming in, but very occasionally.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

THOMAS: Carl Strom, he died about ten years ago.

Q: How did he run the embassy?

THOMAS: It wasn't a very active embassy. He worried about Vietnam a lot. It was mainly a quiet embassy. I was one of two economic officers and also the embassy's Chinese language officer.

Q: This was part of our pattern, wasn't it, to put Chinese language officers all around the periphery of China to keep an eye out. In that role, as a Chinese language officer, what were you doing?

THOMAS: Ordinary political reporting on the Chinese community, which was quite large. There were in those days somewhere between 3 and 5 million people in Cambodia and Phnom Penh was maybe half Chinese. So there were about 4 or 5 hundred thousand Chinese in the country.

Q: How were they looked upon? At that time there was some unpleasantness going on in Malaysia wasn't there?

THOMAS: It was called the insurgency.

Q: There was essentially a Chinese insurgency going on in Malaysia at this time.

THOMAS: Yes, very active and the last Japanese doctor with the Chinese forces surrendered himself in 1990.

Q: How did we view the Chinese community in Cambodia at that time? Did we see this as a fifth column from Communist China?

THOMAS: We were pretty well informed on who was who in the Chinese community. We had a lot of friends there. Taiwan had a bank there that closed the week I arrived, but it was a first class bank. There were Communists there. I took a trip with a Cambodian friend up to the northeast near what later became the Ho Chi Minh trail and walking the street I heard somebody say, "Long live Chairman Mao." In a minute the voice said, "The People's communes are good." It

was a myna bird that somebody had taught to say these things in Chinese.

Q: How did we view Sihanouk at that time?

THOMAS: Sihanouk was a very complicated question and still is. According to the paper he has prostate cancer. Anyway, he was more complicated then than he is now because he had more to work with. He was still, for practical purposes, the king. There were people who were with him and would switch to the other side and back and forth. There was always somebody against him.

Q: At this point we were reaching a real crisis that was coming up in Laos and everybody was getting very edgy about southeast Asia, weren't they?

THOMAS: Well, yes, but as usual the things on the ground didn't seem as bad as they seemed 2,000 miles away. We got very little press. The French press was about the only active press agency. Well, the Chinese had reporters in Cambodia, but they stayed away from us.

Q: What was the view at the embassy of Sihanouk at that time?

THOMAS: That he was somebody that we could work with and probably better than probable alternatives. Some people liked the alternatives, but that was up and down. The alternatives were not a very enlightened bunch. We were not all of the same view.

Q: In that whole area, we were going through a phase that may continue on, but certainly in Laos...did you have the feeling that the CIA was a power unto itself there?

THOMAS: Not in Cambodia at that time.

Q: You didn't have that feeling that they were off running in their own little shows?

THOMAS: They may very well have been, but they concealed it if they did. It was quite different than from Laos when I was there.

Q: Yes, Laos was basically a CIA country.

THOMAS: Well, there were a lot of conspicuous CIA people there in Laos.

Q: Was there any pressure that you were feeling that was coming from Washington that you have to do this with Sihanouk or do that?

THOMAS: There were temptations to be activist. Vietnam was very strong on being activist. In some cases they asked us to do things that I presume we didn't want to do. But as a general economic officer I wasn't involved in that.

Q: What were some of the economic/commercial things?

THOMAS: Very minor. There were some American exports. Sihanouk liked to make movies and

buy cameras and stuff. There were rubber, rice exports, which were beginning to compete with ours. We ran the petroleum which Cambodia needed. We suspected that some of it was going up out of sight into the mountains on the Vietnam border, but it was very difficult to pin anything down on that.

Q: Was the Cambodian economy self-sustaining?

THOMAS: Oh, yes. Rice for export. They produced beer. Rubber for export. A few things like sapphires. It really wasn't a very active economy, compared to Thailand.

Q: What about our relations with South Vietnam at that time?

THOMAS: They had an embassy in Phnom Penh which was very active. They were also fingered by Sihanouk of having been involved in the same "attempted coup" he had accused us of being part of in 1958. We didn't see much of them. The city was full of Vietnamese and there were certainly areas in the countryside around the big lake in the middle of the country, where there were quite a few Vietnamese. Some of them were pro Viet Cong and some were not, there were lots of both. There were maybe 500,000 Vietnamese in the country at that time.

Q: Did you feel a real dislike between the Vietnamese and Cambodians at that time?

THOMAS: There was more than I thought there was. There was a massacre later on after I left where the Vietnamese cathedral was pretty much sacked by a local mob. I was amazed they didn't get along well. But then you don't always see things. We didn't have much to do with the Vietnamese except our Catholics who went to the same church.

Q: How about events in Laos? Were you watching those at that time?

THOMAS: No, we weren't paying much attention, we had our own things to do. We thought Cambodia was much more important than Laos. I changed my view later when I got assigned to Laos.

Q: When did you leave?

THOMAS: I left in 1961.

Q: So now you had the Kennedy administration in.

THOMAS: It came in while we were there.

Q: Did you get any feeling while in Cambodia about the new administration coming in?

THOMAS: Harriman came and paid us a visit. He was Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs.

Q: Did you get a feel of how the visit went?

THOMAS: I think it went all right, as we had predicted in the embassy. Bill Sullivan came with him and Mike Forrestal. The three of them came on the trip.

Q: Did they see Sihanouk?

THOMAS: I presume they did, I don't remember. If they hadn't I guess I would have heard about it. I can't see Sihanouk missing the opportunity either.

Q: You didn't feel that with the Kennedy administration coming on and being activist and all any sort of blow torch being put to our activities in Cambodia as compared to before?

THOMAS: No, I think it was a successful visit and nobody got any mistaken ideas about it. I presume Harriman told them how important Vietnam was.

Q: Well, then in 1961 you moved to the next place.

ELDEN B. ERICKSON
Cambodia Desk
Washington, DC (1958-1962)

Elden B. Erickson was born in Kansas in 1917. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in China, Algeria, France, Laos, Japan, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Canada, and Germany. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

Q: You left there [Laos] in 1958 and came back to Washington where you served from 1958-62. What were you doing?

ERICKSON: In Southeast Asian Affairs, I was economic officer for Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam for the first two years. Then I was in charge of Cambodian affairs for the next two years. Again it was mainly working with AID programs and the Embassy as far as the economic side the first two years.

Q: The first two years would still be within the Eisenhower administration.

ERICKSON: It was very difficult to get any decisions even on the AID programs at that time.

Q: What was the problem?

ERICKSON: Every case had to be made in a half-page memo. Then Eisenhower would be on the golf course or something and you would wait, wait and wait. We couldn't even send instructions out because we couldn't get decisions.

Q: Also the President had some heart attacks. But your impression was that...

ERICKSON: Getting instructions out, as I recall, was difficult. However, getting them cleared through the State Department was probably just as difficult as getting them out of the White House at that point.

Q: Was it that nobody had the feel or just administratively tied up?

ERICKSON: I think it was administratively tied up. Certainly there was a lot of feeling, knowledge and care in the East Asian Bureau. Parsons came back to be Assistant Secretary of the Bureau and that is one of the reasons he asked me to come back and work on Laos.

Q: What was your impression of the AID program from the Washington point of view?

ERICKSON: It was just as bad or worse then from the local point of view in Vientiane. The paperwork, the administration, the decision making, everything that went into it....interminable meetings...to get anything done, any decision was very, very difficult. The hearings on the Hill were interminable in those days too on AID at least to Southeast Asia...I think everywhere. We were spending a lot of money at that period too. We had big programs. But everything was snafued. Maybe it still is.

Q: You didn't have any feel that there was really any strong control on what we were going to do, etc. ?

ERICKSON: No. For Southeast Asia it was just hold on to the real estate. So what if you waste money. At least it didn't go to the communists. That was the whole purpose.

Q: Half way through...the Kennedy administration came in in 1961...by that time had you become the Cambodian, Laotian Desk officer?

ERICKSON: Yes. That was in 1960. I wrote parts of Kennedy's speech on Laos which he gave in January 1961.

Q: All of a sudden, Laos got on the front burner during this particular period. You had Harriman running around and doing some things. What was your impression when the Kennedy administration came in?

ERICKSON: I recall not too long after he took over there was a big meeting in the White House and Ambassador Parsons came back almost white because a decision was made that it was infeasible to support any kind of military operation in Laos. Of course, having worked all these years and our policy being never to let Laos go down the drain....the military said they couldn't support an operation there. So the decision was that we would not do so. That was the decision and traumatic from our little area view.

Q: We are talking about support in operation...there had been talk about putting troops into Laos. One problem was that there was no air field. There was nothing to support them, so you

couldn't. But this never was in our thinking was it?

ERICKSON: It wasn't in our thinking except we kept repeating this determination not to let the Pathet Lao take over. The Lao couldn't keep them out even with our support. When we decided not to support them, it was like the writing on the wall, eventually they will take over.

Q: But Kennedy was making speeches about the domino theory and there were meetings with the Soviets. Were you sort of backstopping these efforts?

ERICKSON: I was really on Cambodia at that time rather than Laos. Chris Chapman was in charge of Lao affairs during this period.

Q: Well, what was happening in Cambodia in those days?

ERICKSON: We had the best relations we ever had when I was in charge of Cambodia. Prince Sihanouk had come to the United Nations and I was escort officer for him in 1961. He was in great form. The only time I ever saw Eisenhower in person was when we went to see him during Sihanouk's visit. Also Sihanouk had a big reception in the Waldorf Astoria Towers for Khrushchev. Every leader of the bloc countries was there including Khrushchev. Sihanouk got so annoyed because all of the press and his invitees clustered around the communists, particularly Khrushchev, and ignored him. I was at the UN when Khrushchev took his shoe off and pounded the desk.

Sihanouk was totally in charge with virtually no opposition except isolated Khmer Rouge at that time. He was determined to keep it that way. But he wanted aid from both sides and that didn't sit well with the Department either.

Q: What was our analysis of Sihanouk in those days?

ERICKSON: That he was just a flighty type, interested in playing one side against the other. I didn't agree with that and was always arguing with my Vietnamese counterparts.

Q: Your Vietnamese counterpart was the desk officer?

ERICKSON: Yes, in the Southeast Asia Bureau. Ben Wood at the time. He was one of my best friends, but we argued all the time that Vietnam would run over Cambodia, and they finally did.

I think Sihanouk was a dedicated patriot and has proved to be. But that was not the opinion in the Department at that time.

Q: It still occurs, but particularly during the entire period of the cold war that we are talking about, there was pretty much the feeling that if you are not completely with us you are against us.

ERICKSON: It was that way.

Q: And Sihanouk was trying to walk that tight rope. How did we view the Khmer Rouge at this time?

ERICKSON: They were totally against us. They were the big threat.

Q: Did we realize how virulent they were at that time?

ERICKSON: I think so. They were considered just like the Pathet Lao in Laos. But Sihanouk was more able to control them than Souvanna Phouma.

Q: Were we giving any aid to Sihanouk?

ERICKSON: Oh yes.

Q: What was your impression of how the aid was working?

ERICKSON: Well, it was much better administered and well run program than the Laos program. We had some very good people at that time in Cambodia.

Q: How about Harriman? He was Assistant Secretary for Asian Affairs for a while. Did you have to deal with him at all?

ERICKSON: I don't remember dealing with him here in Washington. I remember only in Paris, during the peace talks in Paris when Bill Sullivan was with him.

Q: This was later on?

ERICKSON: This was later on. I was sent to Cambodia to see if we should renew diplomatic relations. That was in 1969. That was when I was in Personnel. That was my only contact with Harriman personally. But he was active in Cambodian affairs always. He was understanding and favorable to Sihanouk.

Q: What was the impression of the staff of East Asian Affairs that you were getting?

ERICKSON: As far as I know they all thought very highly of him. At least my Southeast Asian colleagues.

Q: They felt he had good access to the President?

ERICKSON: Yes.

Q: What about Dean Rusk? Did you get much of a feel about him or were you too much removed?

ERICKSON: I really don't have a feel for him. Acheson was out. Acheson was also interested in Cambodia. He, occasionally, would come in to see me when I was in charge of Cambodia. We

would talk about the situation just for his enlightenment. He wanted to know what was going on.

Q: So he really was keeping up with things?

ERICKSON: Well, he was invited again later to Cambodia. I remember he wanted to know if one of his wife's paintings would be an appropriate gift for Sihanouk. He was genuinely knowledgeable and interested in Cambodia.

ARCHIE M. BOLSTER
Disbursing Officer
Phnom Penh (1959-1960)

Archie M. Bolster was born in Iowa in 1933. He received his BA from the University of Virginia and served in the U.S. Navy from 1955 to 1958 as an overseas lieutenant. His foreign postings included Cambodia, Tabriz, Tehran, New Delhi and Antwerp. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on January 24, 1992.

Q: What was your first assignment in the Foreign Service?

BOLSTER: Well, strangely enough they needed volunteers to become disbursing officers. I had never done much of anything of this type but they said the advantage was for the two of us who volunteered for this out of my class, would be the first ones to go overseas and the others would be posted in Washington. So the two of us indeed did go overseas. George Clift went to Havana and I went to Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The rest of our colleagues stayed in Washington. I was already back from Cambodia and ready to go to Persian language training when a lot of my colleagues were still on their first tour in Washington.

Q: What was the situation in Cambodia? You were there from 1959-60. This must have been a rather interesting time.

BOLSTER: Well, it was and we were fortunate enough to be there at a time when there was a bit of a lull between various period of upheaval in Cambodia. We were able to travel around by car and things like that. There were a few incidents that started to occur about the time we left. Tire slashing and things like that that were clearly done to put some kind of pressure on the US. But we were able to live a fairly normal life there.

Q: How did you feel about being a disbursing officer? Did you feel out in right field as far as the Embassy was concerned?

BOLSTER: Not really because it was an executive job like so many things are and you have a staff of people who are trained to do all the accounting, the writing of checks, etc. You are responsible for the conduct of the office and financially responsible for all the millions of dollars that you control in that job, but as long as you run it properly it is really quite a manageable job.

After I got my feet on the ground and got fairly use to the job, I then began to ask for other types of work so that I could broaden out my career. So I was able to go up sort of half days to work in the political section helping with summaries of the press. They used to send in a weekly airgram. I don't know if anyone ever read it, but there was a weekly summary of the local press. It took a lot of reading. I couldn't read Cambodian, obviously, so there were translators who translated specific Cambodian language articles into French. So I read those translations and the French language press and summarized the main points. That was an interesting activity to get into and I was included in all of the normal types of receptions, work cocktail parties, etc.

Q: Who was the ambassador at that time?

BOLSTER: William Trimble.

Q: What was his style of operating?

BOLSTER: I found him a very organized and proper person who was not very easy to get to know at the beginning in an informal way. But he was a very caring and decent person. Very nice to deal with when you got to know him a little better. I always felt a little bit sorry for him because he had come into the Service under the Wriston program having risen fairly high in the Civil Service in Washington and then went to Bonn as DCM. From there he came to Cambodia as Ambassador. I always thought that was quite a cruel transition for someone to go from Germany to tropical Cambodia. Also dealing with Sihanouk was a real chore because he was so hard to get to analyze, it was hard to predict what he would do next.

Q: He was erratic as least from our standpoint.

BOLSTER: Very erratic from our point of view. From his point of view he was simply being flexible in dealing with situations as they arose.

Q: I heard stories that everybody used to watch his weight because at a certain point he would start a diet and then he would get really erratic.

BOLSTER: Well, I have also been to rallies where he spoke before tens of thousands of Cambodians...he would do these things fairly regularly and every once in a while when something was not going his way he would resign. He would tell everyone that he had done his best and tried his hardest and you still are not satisfied so he quits. Then, of course, there would be moanings and wailings and everyone would demand that he change his mind. Then he would agree to keep on.

He played the crowds. He was looked upon as almost a god by the people in rural Cambodia. I have heard stories of him going on trips and everyone just bowing down to the ground in front of him and believing that everything he said was not just word from their prince, but a god.

Q: Despite all the convolutions Cambodia has gone through, he is still around.

BOLSTER: Yes, it is really incredible. It was like turning the clock back seeing him go back to Cambodia last year. He is a real survivor, you have to say that for him.

C. ROBERT MOORE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Phnom Penh (1959-1962)

Ambassador C. Robert Moore was born in Illinois in 1915. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. His career included positions in Turkey, France, Cambodia, and Syria, and ambassadorships to Mali, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea. Ambassador Moore was interviewed by Dayton Mak in 1988.

MOORE: I suspect that Cambodia was the most colorful of the posts that we went to. Again, we always had an uncertain relationship with Prince Sihanouk. He was generally the head of government. He had abdicated as king, having been put on the throne by the French. He had abdicated in favor of his father, so that he could take a more active political role. He was, again, a strong nationalist, thinking almost exclusively in terms of what some course of action meant for Cambodia. I suppose we felt offended sometimes when some of the things that we may have proposed or suggested that he do were rejected, but I always felt convinced that he was thinking, as seems quite natural, of Cambodia and not of whether something would please the United States.

I always remember attending a ceremony where he had invited the chiefs of mission. I was chargé d'affaires at that particular time. We had the Russian there, and we had the French there, and we had the Vietnamese representatives there. Sihanouk made two statements, I remember, with his high-pitched giggle, saying in front of the French and Russian ambassadors, "Now when we send our students to Russia, they all come back non-communists, and when we send our students to Paris, they go to the Place Pigalle and they all become communists." He tittered and thought that was very funny. Then he told the Vietnamese representative in the assembled group that when the Vietnam war was over, if Vietnam should ever be united, that would be the end of Cambodia. Vietnam would simply devour Cambodia, as it had tried to do centuries in the past. So he, I think, had a good vision of the fate of his country, but what he really hoped to do was to maintain a Cambodian identity, even though he realized, I think, that Cambodia could never be completely independent and free from foreign influences. It was also a very colorful country.

His father, the king, died while we were there, and the funeral ceremony was something that I suppose will never be seen again. It was held six months after his death. His body and bones were encased in an urn of mercury, which was placed on a wooden dragon, a huge 30- or 40-foot dragon, preceded by elephants, and the ancient Cambodian costumes, as they paraded through the city, ending up at the funeral bier, where the fire was set, and the urn and the bones and the body consumed. USIS took film of this particular ceremony and the ceremony that proceeded the next morning when the royal family went to the site of the cremation, and then selected charred bones of the deceased king to be put in various smaller urns, one to be thrown in the Mekong River, another to be put in a stupa, a tomb, memorializing his life. I forget where the third was

supposed to go, but it was amusing, because one of the princesses, as filmed, picked up one bone, looked at it, didn't like it, threw it back, and took another. All of this is preserved on the film. The unfortunate fact is that under congressional limitations, USIS is not permitted to show these films in the United States. It's a great pity, because these are ceremonies that will never be repeated.

As I say, it was a colorful regime. Also, one had to get used to daily changes in the attitude of the Prince towards us, because he was convinced that there were two American policies. One was that of the embassy and the other was that of the CIA. He was quite paranoid on the subject and seemed convinced that we were out to destroy him.

I remember one time in the embassy, we thought it would be a good idea to sit down and put on paper what we thought would happen if anything ever happened to Sihanouk - who would be the successor. I guess our political officers made a few inquiries around and produced some kind of a paper. But a few days later, the editorial in the leading newspaper said the United States was looking for a successor for Sihanouk. Sihanouk himself had written this editorial and, of course, felt that this was another evidence that we were out to displace him.

The day I arrived in Cambodia, a member of the National Assembly had been executed for alleged complicity with the CIA.

Several weeks before I arrived, another incident took place which had some influence on the general atmosphere. A big present had arrived for the Queen, bearing a card of the American contractor who had been building the new highway from Phnom Penh to Sihanoukville on the ocean. While the chief of protocol was opening the present, the Queen went to another room for a moment, and when she returned, the chief of protocol had been blown up. It was a bomb concealed in the package. Of course, while anything so obvious should not have suggested American complicity, nevertheless, there were many who felt that we might have been involved in that attempted assassination of the Queen.

Then a few months after I arrived, the text of a letter in the alleged handwriting of the former foreign minister who had defected and was living abroad in exile and appeared in the Indian magazine "Blitz". The letter was allegedly written to my predecessor and implied a very close relationship between the two and complicity of the two in plotting the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk. The ex-minister asked him to thank the ambassador for his help, and wished him well.

Our ambassador, Bill Trimble, heard that the letter was going to be reproduced in the Prince's newspaper the next day. He flew to Angkor Wat, where the Prince was staying at the moment, and confronted him with this report. The Prince acknowledged it was so. Finally, although he wouldn't agree not to publish it - indeed he did publish it the next day - he did permit a counter-argument to appear in the press. Well, we brought in a handwriting expert to show that this was a forgery, and while he was convinced that it was I don't think we ever really convinced the Cambodians because it was very, very well done. The only place where the fabricators of the letter failed was in knowing that my predecessor had left Cambodia. Obviously, if they had been the close friends that the letter suggested, the writer would have known that my predecessor had many weeks before left the country.

So we lived in an uncertain atmosphere. But it was a beautiful country, and we used to enjoy the seashore. The Prince was extremely good in taking chiefs of mission or acting chiefs of mission around the country in his DC-3 as he inaugurated projects, and he had a great flair and a great sense of taste. If we inaugurated an American-financed school one day, we would have luncheon and would be flown out, and drink champagne, make speeches. Then the next day it would be balanced by a Soviet or a Chinese project in which flattering remarks would, of course, be voiced.

So it gave us a chance to see quite a bit of the country, under really a very remarkable leader, whom I have always admired much more so, I think, than most of my contemporaries. As I say, I think I found Cambodia the most fascinating of the posts.

WILLIAM C. TRIMBLE
Ambassador
Cambodia (1959-1962)

Ambassador William C. Trimble was born in Maryland in 1907. He received a bachelor's degree in history from Princeton University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1931. His career included positions in Spain, Argentina, Estonia, France, Mexico, Iceland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Brazil, and Germany, and an ambassadorship to Cambodia. Ambassador Trimble was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: Well, now, coming to your next assignment, you were assigned as Ambassador to Cambodia.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: I have you serving there from 1959 to '62.

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: How did that assignment come about? You've had these sudden switches from Europe to Latin America, but all of a sudden off to Cambodia.

TRIMBLE: That was because I had reached the career minister class, and been deputy chief of mission in three posts, and had the experience of being Chargé for a year and a half at another one.

And Bob Murphy, who was in the Department told me, "You ought to have an embassy. You're nearly 51 now. It's about time you got an embassy."

I said, "Yes, I'd like one."

As there wasn't much open, Loy Henderson, who was in charge of administration and Under Secretary, had suggested I go to Laos, but David Bruce said, "No, it's not good enough for him."

Then when they found out that Cambodia was coming vacant Loy said, "Well, we'll start you out there. It's a post that's opening and there's not any others at this time. Will you take it?"

I said, "Sure, I'll take it." And I had French, which helped. And so I went to Cambodia, which was completely different from anything I've ever experienced before.

Q: Could you tell what was the situation of Cambodia? You arrived there in 1959. Obviously, it was a fast-moving situation later on. But at that time, what was the situation?

TRIMBLE: Well, Sihanouk had been King, Prince Sihanouk, Norodom Sihanouk, but then resigned in favor of his father and mother -- their picture is up there -- and became Head of State, which was something of an anomalous situation. His father was King. He was Head of State and Prime Minister. He really hated the Vietnamese and the Thais, although less so.

Q: Was this his? Or was this endemic to Cambodians, too?

TRIMBLE: Cambodians, too, I think. You see, Cambodia -- this is going into a little history -- had been a very large country, and at one time in about the 11th century, had owned much of what's today Vietnam, part of what's the Malaya Peninsula and Thailand, Laos, even probably Burma -- it's not very clear. It was a very big country at that time, and the Cambodian had great engineering skill. They built the great temples, irrigation canals and reservoirs and roads. They had quite a high culture. Unfortunately, most of the literature has been destroyed.

There economy was based on slave labor, that is, of military prisoners taken in defeats of the Thais, Barbarians or Vietnamese. But then as it became weaker, the Thais and the Vietnamese started pushing, and they're more aggressive. Its military power had broken down and they had softened. The Thais and Vietnamese would take some land here and take some land there and that encroachment continued until the time the French came and established the protectorate of the Southeast Asia Empire, in the 2nd half of the 19th century. By then Cambodia was very much reduced in size and probably would have been taken over completely by the Vietnamese and Thais if the French had not maintained it as part of their Southeast Asia Empire.

And the French did quite a lot. They built roads. They governed the country pretty well. They brought in their language, which all Cambodians who had any education spoke. They didn't do much in schooling. They started schools, mostly primary, but no university or anything like that. But they encouraged interest in the history of the past and especially archeology. The King was a puppet, really, after the French took over. And they built an administration, and they established a forest and water service, which some of the leaders when I was there had studied under. It was one of the few schools of higher learning available to them.

Then the Japanese occupied Cambodia, and after the Japanese went out, the North Vietnamese and the so-called predecessor, Khmer Rouge, the Viet Minh, they were called, came in and tried to take over and communize the whole country. They defeated the French. The French had to get

out. But Sihanouk, I will say this for him, developed a national spirit, and got together a Cambodian army of sorts, that defeated and forced the Viet Minh out. His was a dictatorship, although having a parliamentary facade. A very interesting man. He spoke very good French. He had attended a lycée in Vietnam. That's the only secondary education he had. Very mercurial. Great love for his people; they loved him. He talked to them and he used to tell dirty stories to them and so forth, which I never could understand because he spoke in Cambodian, and he'd visit around the country. Temperamental, highly intelligent, but really not well educated. I remember going to one of his villas, where he had invited me for a weekend. I always like to look at people's libraries and see what's in them, Oui, La Vie Parisienne and a couple of things like that in it, but not much. He wasn't a reader. But he was Head of State. And I used to see him, oh, at least once a week.

Q: He was the person you had to see, really, to get things done.

TRIMBLE: He and the Foreign Minister, Son Sann, now one of the leaders in the resistance. I liked Sihanouk, and I think he liked me, but we often disagreed.

Q: On what?

TRIMBLE: He was playing the United States against China. He was scared of China. He was not scared of the United States. We had a large AID mission, much too big, and we were doing all sorts of things for them. The Russians built a hospital, the French built a port, and we built a road. I don't know how many million dollars we put in that country. Because we were very close to the Vietnamese, that is South Vietnam, he thought we were taking sides and didn't trust us.

Also, he had a French advisor -- I've forgotten his name now -- who had been a member of the French Communist Party and very anti-American. Sihanouk used to edit a weekly newspaper, French and Cambodian, which often criticized the United States. Then he did not like my predecessor.

Q: Who was this?

TRIMBLE: Carl Strom. He didn't like him, and Carl was not suited for the job, because he didn't have any French to speak of. Now, to go back a little bit. There was a fellow named Rob McClintock. Have you ever heard of Rob McClintock? A brilliant officer who spoke excellent French. But he was a prima donna, and Cambodia wasn't a big enough country for two prima donnas, one the Head of State and the other the American Ambassador.

So he was moved and replaced by Carl Strom who came from somewhere in the Middle West. He was an old-country, Scandinavian-American type, and completely different. I was sort of in between. So I got along well with him, because I wasn't a prima donna, nor a somewhat stolid type.

Q: Well, I understand. How effective was he? You had this balancing act. At that time, did you figure he knew what he was doing? Or how did his playing with the People's Republic of China and all -- we're talking about 1959 and 1960.

TRIMBLE: Yes. He tried to play us against the Chinese all the time, getting aid from both. And he was scared, as I said before. He was scared of China. He wasn't scared of us.

Q: Well, how did you feel about his dealing with China. What did you see as the Chinese threat to Cambodia at that time?

TRIMBLE: About nine centuries ago, the Chinese had established a protectorate in what is Cambodia now. And he didn't want that to happen again.

Q: That was way back.

TRIMBLE: Way back before the French --

Q: Way back.

TRIMBLE: Yes, it was nearly 1,000 years before.

Q: The Vietnamese are basically the Chinese now.

TRIMBLE: Yes. Yes, they are. Well, the Cambodians are more Indic which is a different race. They're somewhat like the Indians, although almost all are Buddhists. The Vietnamese are Buddhists and Roman Catholic. Also they are quicker and more intelligent than the Cambodians. The Cambodians were the hewers of wood during the Protectorate, drawers of water. The French used the Vietnamese in administrative positions, using Cambodians in the forest and water service. As I said, he disliked the Vietnamese and the Thais and was scared of both. But he didn't play too close to us because he thought the Chinese wouldn't like that. After all, we didn't get along with the Chinese at all then.

Q: Because we had no relations.

TRIMBLE: No, or even talk to them.

Q: We've used them as a major menace.

TRIMBLE: Yes, very much so.

Q: What sort of instructions were you getting from Washington during this period? Because you're talking about a period -- you came in in '59 under the Eisenhower Administration, and you stayed on through a solid chunk of the Kennedy Administration.

TRIMBLE: I sent in my resignation, which is always done when a new president comes in. However, Mr. Kennedy wrote that he wanted me to stay on, which I did. And so I stayed another year under Kennedy. But, by this time, I'd been there almost three and a half years and living conditions, health conditions, were not very good. Our children were home in school, of course.

I remember that the first year I was there, 30 members of the staff -- roughly 30, including wives and children -- had to be medically evacuated from the AID mission, which was very large; the Embassy, which was much smaller; USIA and military mission, for malaria, dysentery, all sorts of things. The second year, about 30 more people. And I thought in the third year, "My Lord! It's going to hit me next or, worse, my wife." So I asked to be transferred, and they finally did.

Q: Well, let's go back to this. While you were there, though, Laos became a tremendous focal point because it was a period of Laos, of course, but it seemed like the Soviets and the United States and China all were coming together in Indochina, but particularly in Laos at that time.

TRIMBLE: Particularly in Laos with China.

Q: And how did that impact on you?

TRIMBLE: Well, Laos, of course, is a much smaller country and less advanced than Cambodia. We tried to bring about some sort of a political settlement in Laos. Our Ambassador was working hard on it there, and we saw all his messages back and forth. Governor Harriman also went to see about it, and I worked with him when he came to Cambodia. We particularly wanted to diminish the Chinese influence in Laos, which we couldn't because they had a very strong Communist Party supported by the Chinese. But, remember, the Chinese and the Russians were not working together very well.

Q: Well, I mean, did we see it at that time?

TRIMBLE: Yes.

Q: Did we see that there were those --

TRIMBLE: Friction between them? Yes.

Q: For some time we looked upon this as being pretty much a monolithic block.

TRIMBLE: We did look upon it as a monolithic block, but actually when you got down to a little place like that, you can see the differences between them.

Q: Well, how did you see it?

TRIMBLE: The Chinese are much more subtle in their dealings than the Soviets. Russia is a little heavy-handed, demanding. And we didn't have any real intelligence on either group, what's happening in their embassies. We tried to, but we didn't have much success. The Russians were backing the Vietnamese, the Ho Chi Minh group, as also were the Chinese but not to the same extent, and they resented the greater Soviet role. There was a difference between them you see, on Vietnam, and that flowed over into Cambodia, too.

But the direct question was Vietnam, and the Russians, particularly working to get South Vietnam away from us and establish a sphere of influence. We sensed some friction, but I never

could pinpoint it exactly, because we didn't know enough about the relations between the two.

Q: Well, speaking about the intelligence operations, later on that whole area became a hotbed of CIA activity. How was it at that time? This is an unclassified interview, but almost everything that's happened has been disclosed. But how did you view the CIA?

TRIMBLE: I'll tell you, since you ask that question -- my voice is starting to go out on me -- while on home leave before going to Cambodia, I was in the Department for briefings and so forth. The CIA liaison officer for Southeast Asia called to see me on "a very important matter." On the assumption that Sihanouk was becoming pro-commie and particularly pro-Chinese -- which he wasn't -- the CIA Station Chief in Phnom Penh had been instructed to establish contact with Dap Chuon, the strongly anti-commie Governor and military commander in the northern Province of Siem Reap, and to provide him through a South Vietnam intermediary with a sum in gold. Well the central government, Sihanouk's government, got wind of Dap's disaffection and sent General Lon Nol, afterwards President of the country, up there and he defeated him. The gold was found as well as incriminating evidence that it had come through Vietnam and the name of the CIA contact. And all that had been done without the knowledge of my predecessor. He knew nothing about it until he was called into the Foreign Office and given hell, and shortly removed.

As soon as I heard about this, I went over to see Alan Dulles and said, "Look, I'm not going to have any more of that! If I go there, I want to know exactly what your people are doing. If not, I'm not going to take the post. I'm not going to have someone doing things surreptitiously while I'm chief of mission." He gave me his word, and it stopped.

Actually most of the work of the CIA in Cambodia was on China. Cambodian students would go into China and they'd get information from them and so forth. But it was not so much on --

Q: So it's more almost a debriefing operation.

TRIMBLE: Yes, it was, but the Dap Chuon operation was stupid, very stupid.

Q: This brings up something. I'm not sure if it was in this time or not, but we were having people like Harriman and, maybe, Bobby Kennedy, I don't know. But, I mean, we have all sorts of people who were coming out, particularly when the Kennedy --

TRIMBLE: The Kennedys didn't come out.

Q: The Kennedy people were coming out.

TRIMBLE: Afterwards. Not in my time.

Q: But Sihanouk, I mean, everybody was looking at these leaders and saying, "Do we have a charismatic person who's going to hold a certain line against communism?" Sihanouk, from what I gather, often does not make a very good impression. He sort of giggles, and he looks like a dilettante.

TRIMBLE: He's smart.

Q: He may be smart, but I mean, did you find yourself in the position of visitors coming to you, of having to say, "All right. This guy trots around with a poodle, and he talks, giggles and all that." I mean, was this a problem for you, the appearances?

TRIMBLE: It was a problem for me that Time magazine called him a "tootling saxophone player" or something like that. He did play the saxophone, but that hurt him. And they called him -- what was the name they called Sihanouk?

Q: Playboy Prince or something?

TRIMBLE: Playboy Prince or something more -- "Snooky." "Snooks," rather. He hated all that. Very sensitive.

Q: How about the impression he made? Were you getting some high-level visitors at the time?

TRIMBLE: Yes. He had a great admiration for President Eisenhower, who had received him when he went over for the United Nations in 1958. He had sort of a "my grandfather" type of impression of him. He liked him very much. And I was with him when he saw Kennedy, and he also liked him very much.

Q: How did that meeting go?

TRIMBLE: Well, that was in the fall of '61 at the United Nations. When Sihanouk had been at the United Nations before he had been treated as a "small potato," and the press hadn't been very nice to him and so forth. As I was on home leave, I arranged for Governor Stevenson, then head of the U.S. Delegation to receive him, and give a dinner in his honor. The President also received him. I was there and he thought the President was perfectly wonderful. They got along very, very well together. Oh, it was just -- I couldn't have been more pleased because it was just the kind of high level treatment that Sihanouk delighted in and sincerely appreciated.

Q: Well, how did the President feel about Sihanouk?

TRIMBLE: I don't know. I think he probably had read some of my dispatches describing what Sihanouk was like. I discussed their meeting in the interview I gave for Harvard's oral history library some years ago. The President turned on great charm, which Jack Kennedy could, and Sihanouk was in seventh heaven. On his way back to Cambodia, he took a train to the West Coast for a stop in Hollywood.

Q: Were you with him?

TRIMBLE: No. I flew direct to Phnom Penh. Oh, I even got a bunch of reporters to interview him at the New York airport. Some of them weren't real reporters at all, but USIS types, but he thought they were. He just loved it. I had also arranged for a special convoy with police escort to

drive him from the airport to his hotel against the traffic and all. I mean all beautifully worked out, and the President couldn't have been better nor could Stevenson. So everything was fine.

Then he got to Hollywood. There had been a Buddhist convention in Cambodia, international convention that spring, and one of them, an American Buddhist, from Hollywood and a screwball, got a group of movie stars to give a dinner for Sihanouk, John Wayne and some others. Well, one of the guests, a woman, came up to him, "We don't know who you are, little man, or where you're from, but we love you." And John Wayne lectured him on communism. Oh! So all this good work President Kennedy has done and everything else was -- he got back perfectly furious with Americans and it took me months to get him back on track. That was the kind of thing which would enrage him.

Q: This is the type of thing that we don't really understand the problems. But this, of course, is what an ambassador has to do to understand how these things impact and all.

TRIMBLE: He came back through Japan. While in New York we had been working on him to make a conciliatory statement towards Thailand for he had liked the Thai Ambassador, and the Thai Ambassador had also been at that dinner given by Governor Stevenson. So he made a nice statement only to be informed by a Japanese reporter on arriving in Tokyo that the Thai Prime Minister had said, "Just like cold soup, it doesn't mean anything" That made Sihanouk furious and he got the Cambodians started building trenches in the streets of Phnom Penh for fear of a Thai attack or something. It was just one of those awful, awful -- all this work we had done, everything fine and then boom, the plug was pulled out.

Q: You mentioned our aid program. What was your evaluation of what we were doing and the net effect after looking at it?

TRIMBLE: Well, the counterpart funds of our AID program were used largely to support the Cambodian Army. Now, the French had a military mission there, and we had one. One of my jobs was to try to keep them from getting in each other's hair. The French was a training mission. Ours was to teach them how to use the equipment we supplied. And there was French resentment against the United States because we hadn't supported them in the Vietnam War.

So soon after I got there, let me see, it was an Army Day celebration or something around -- I forget when it was -- May or June of 1959, the American Military Mission gave a big reception, and invited the French. I, as the Ambassador, made a speech, and gave it in French. I talked about how France had helped us in the Revolution and Lafayette and how as an undergraduate at college I'd been in the ROTC and worked French '75s. And the French loved it. Fortunately, I had a very good chief MAAG, and he got along well with the French, too. So that was straightened out. But it was a little sticky for a while.

Q: Were we giving any other type of aid there?

TRIMBLE: Oh, Lord, yes! We built a big highway for them, and unfortunately it was a pretty poor one. It was built under contract with an American company, and they couldn't find enough stone for the foundation so they used what they called laterite, which is a very soft material. It

looks like stone, but lacks the strength of stone. There was a stone quarry about 20 kilometers off the road, but they didn't work it. They used laterite instead. Of course, when the first rains came.

Q: Just sort of sank?

TRIMBLE: Oh, part of it washed away. Khmer-American Friendship Highway. So I insisted right away that they send over the Army Corps of Engineers to inspect the thing, and there was an investigation of the aid to the contractor. Congress also got into the act and some members came to see the road. It was pretty bad. Under another project a team of foresters was sent out to make a survey of the forest resources of Cambodia, hardwood, teak, and so forth. They did a good job of it, but the Cambodians didn't know what to do with the survey. Then we wanted to help them improve the quality of their local cattle, so we got some bulls over, flew them over to impregnate the cows. Something happened, because the semen didn't work. I don't know whether it was the air transport, but the bulls couldn't do their thing. Again we had an agricultural group from the University of Georgia -- I think they were some professors it wanted to get rid of anyhow -- to teach modern methods. But they didn't accomplish much. But we had a number of very good projects such as malaria eradication, and repair of a great, Khmer Period reservoir to store water for irrigation. The best thing we did was the establishment of a teachers' college and that was very well done. I don't remember how many dollars we spent, about \$120 million a year or \$130 million, something like that.

The AID mission people, by and large, were very able, very nice people, very good people. But some of the things we did were useless.

Q: Ill-conceived is the --

TRIMBLE: Yes. And that's true of any AID mission. The idealists and one or two others have their own little thing to push for. It was too bad, because I think AID did a very good job, by and large, certainly in the Marshall Plan. Anyhow, I was very pleased to get home.

JAMES R. LILLEY
CIA Officer
Phnom Penh (1961-1964)

Ambassador James R. Lilley was born in China in 1928. After serving in the US Army from 1946-1947 he received his bachelor's degree from Yale University in 1951. From 1951-1958 he worked as an analyst for the US Army. His career includes positions in China, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, Philippines, Laos, and ambassadorships to South Korea and China. Ambassador Lilley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in May 1998.

LILLEY: I had been thinking about this. After the "Bay of Pigs" disaster [abortive CIA-led attempt in 1961 to overthrow Fidel Castro in Cuba], I became really rather disillusioned. This occurred when I was on home leave in 1961. Then the CIA personnel people said: "Look, there's

this job in Cambodia which is just 'made for you.' You have access to China. For the first time in your career you will be working against a Chinese Communist Embassy there. There are a lot of good people you can work with. Come back."

Q: This was at a time when you had the President of the United States studying maps of Laos and giving lectures to various people.

LILLEY: He called this country "Lay-os." That is true. I remember that vividly. I remember that friends of mine were up in Laos then. We had a paramilitary operation going on. It was just developing. That was when we all thought that, "America can do it." We were working with Montagnards, minorities who lived in the mountains, who would fight the Vietnamese communists and actually kill them. We thought that we could do it with six "Case Officers." This was conceptually very attractive, and we were just getting into that. We had radios all over Laos. We had people working with us who wanted to fight the Vietnamese. They hated them. The Montagnards weren't like the lowland Laos. These hill people were tough. They were led by Vang Pao and company. We then had a very modest effort.

At that time I went to Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk was turning hostile to the U.S. He was an arrogant, difficult, shrewd, cunning leader. He was the head of what the western press called the "peaceful paradox." He sat there in Cambodia and played the Vietnamese off against the Chinese, the Americans against the Chinese, and the Russians against the Vietnamese. He played games like this and was pretty good at it. He maintained the fragile neutrality of his country.

So we went to Cambodia. Again, I was in the Embassy. We got into some really interesting operations running up into communist China, at the beginning of the collapse of the "Great Leap Forward" [in the late 1960s]. We knew that we could talk, often directly, to the people that we sent into Southeast China. We were able to read letters from relatives inside China which the Chinese in Cambodia received from them. We began to put out reports about the real disasters of the "Great Leap Forward," including starvation and organization. We reported these events from Cambodia. We were outstripping Hong Kong in terms of intelligence collection. In fact, we were outstripping almost everybody, because we had a nucleus of agents who worked against China.

Then, of course, Sihanouk turned very hostile to the United States. He caught CIA in an attempted coup d'etat against him. This was set up by a Japanese-American guy attached to our Station there. This was the so-called "Dap Chhuon" plot centered in Siem Reap. The Cambodian authorities exposed the operation. In this operation we were working with the South Vietnamese. Then, when Liu Shao Qi [Chinese Communist leader] came through Cambodia in the spring of 1963, the Cambodian authorities rounded up all of the members of the Chinese community who were not pro-communist and temporarily put them in concentration camps. The Chinese communists went to the Cambodians and said: "These guys worked for the Americans. Deport them to China." The Cambodians did that to some of them.

That really hurt our operation. We went over to the "stay behind" mode [reduced level of activity]. Then I was moved to Thailand.

Q: Didn't Sihanouk sever diplomatic relations with the United States at one point because of the

CIA activities?

LILLEY: That came later. That wasn't so much because of the CIA. The CIA involvement in Cambodia started back in about 1959, with this "Dap Chhuon Affair" in Siem Reap. A Japanese-American, was the Case Officer for this operation. His name became the word for "spy" in Cambodian. When the uproar over this incident died down, Sihanouk turned also against the DCM in the U.S. Embassy.

Q: Who was this?

LILLEY: I don't recall his name. He was a big, tall guy who used to row for Harvard and had a big, gaunt face. He scared the hell out of the Cambodians, so they "picked on him." They publicly attacked him but couldn't do anything to him. Then Phillip Sprouse came to Cambodia as Ambassador. He was an "old China hand." He spoke excellent French and was a bachelor. In Washington they said: "This is the man to deal with Sihanouk. He is European trained and a 'China hand.' Sihanouk is pro-Chinese." Sprouse was hit by one of the exposed CIA operations. As a result, he virtually shut down the CIA Station in the Embassy, but some of us were able to stay on and continued to work.

Sihanouk was becoming steadily more hostile to the United States. In fact, he had turned hostile to the U.S. in 1961. This was related to the "Dap Chhuon Affair," but it was more the result of the fact that he had made his decision to turn to the Chinese communists to stave off the South Vietnamese. The MAAG [U.S. Military Assistance and Advisory Group] was still in Cambodia. The Chinese communists let him know that if he wanted to work more closely with them, he had to cut back on relations with the United States, because the Chinese communists, of course, were hostile to the U.S.

Q: For you, as an officer in the CIA Station in Cambodia, had Sihanouk become more or less "the enemy?"

LILLEY: Well, I don't really think so. He was a formidable opponent when he chose to strike out at us. We had to protect ourselves and the people who worked with us. However, I think that there was always a kind of "charm" about Sihanouk.

Q: This was especially the case in the past, and he's still doing things in Cambodia today.

LILLEY: I saw him when I was in Beijing as American Ambassador in the 1989-1991. I used to see him regularly. In the 1960s, he was just a "very strange guy." He was caught in this "vortex." He knew that he was struggling and that his country had been occupied by the Thai and the Vietnamese at one time or another. He felt that his control over the country was slipping away from him. In his view the Thai and the South Vietnamese were his enemies. It's a long story, but at that time, when he was there in Cambodia, he was turning against the South Vietnamese, the Thai, and the Americans. He was leaning increasingly toward Russia, communist China, and North Vietnam.

China was then his first love, because the communist Chinese, and particularly Zhou En-lai, Mao

Tse-tung, and others, handled him beautifully. He was "entranced" with Zhou En-lai. In effect, Sihanouk became "their boy." They set up an aid program for him, including a plywood factory, built a railroad for him, and built a textile factory for him in Cambodia.

We were hostile to the Chinese communists then. However, we were getting a real insight into what was happening in communist China. We "survived" the arrests that resulted from Liu Shao-Qi's visit and the deportation of a couple of our agents from Cambodia. We "survived" this and kept most of our network of agents virtually intact.

Then some time in 1962 Ambassador Sprouse left Cambodia, and was scheduled to be replaced by Ambassador Randolph Kidder. Ambassador Kidder was given his "agreement" by the Cambodian Government and presented his credentials to the Cambodian Foreign Minister. However, he was never allowed to present his credentials to Sihanouk. Sihanouk became very unpleasant. He kicked out the MAAG, and you could just see him closing in on the Embassy. This wasn't so much attributable to the CIA. It was a result of the Vietnam War. By 1965 or so Sihanouk had become very hostile to the U.S.

Q: When did you leave Cambodia?

LILLEY: In 1964.

PETER M. CODY
Acting Director, USAID
Phnom Penh (1961-1964)

Peter M. Cody was born in France in 1925, received a bachelor's degree from Yale University, and served in the U.S. Navy. He entered USAID in 1954. His career included positions in El Salvador, Cambodia, Laos, Paraguay, Ecuador, the Philippines, Lebanon, and Washington, DC. Mr. Cody was interviewed by Melbourne Spector in 1991.

CODY: Victor Morgan, after I was there a year, moved on and went to SAIS, the Johns Hopkins' economics program, and I became the Laos desk officer. Then I had more contacts with people like Sheppard and others up the line. At the end of my normal two years' tour plus a couple of months, I was asked for by Charles Mann, who was the mission director in Cambodia, to come out and be his program officer. On my last trip to Laos, I had stopped by Cambodia and he had made this offer.

So I went. Cambodia was, again, a fascinating place to be, because this was during the days of Prince Norodom Sihanouk when he was walking a tightrope between East and West. We had diplomatic representation and aid programs from all sides, in addition to the International Control Commission which had been set up by the Paris Accords of '54 which divided Vietnam in half and oversaw "peace" throughout Indochina. The Commission had a neutralist Indian chairman, as well as Canadians, and Poles, a tripartite commission to oversee the divisions

established in '55. But then we had a Russian aid program, a Chinese aid program, a Czech aid program, other Eastern bloc countries, plus the heavy French influence that was still there. We provided military assistance in the sense of materials, but the French provided military assistance in the sense of saying how to fight. So you had both the military missions, and you'd come in contact and see all these people. Lots of little anecdotes about those kinds of things. It was an fascinating place to be.

Sihanouk was at that time quite adept at walking this tightrope. He eventually threw us out. Whether he jumped the gun or whether he had no alternative, I'm not sure. I think he jumped the gun, but I obviously was not privy to all the influences that were on him particularly the Chinese.

Q: *What do you mean, jumped the gun?*

CODY: He threw us out using the excuse of incursions of U.S. forces in Vietnam. By that time we had military advisors. I don't think we were formally engaged in combat at that time. We had military advisors with Vietnamese units and they would occasionally, in hot pursuit, chase Viet Cong across into Cambodia, particularly in that area called the Parrot's Beak, where that piece of Cambodia sticks into Vietnam. Sihanouk would object violently to this. So eventually he asked the two AID missions, military and economic, to leave. Subsequently he threw out the embassy as well. So he abandoned this policy of walking the tightrope. I think he probably did it sooner than he had to and it wasn't a good idea, but I wasn't privy to all the inside information as to what pressures he was under from the Chinese and the Russians and the North Vietnamese and others to do this.

Q: *Isn't it interesting, in the fall of 1991 he's back in a position of power in Cambodia.*

CODY: It is interesting. The times I've seen him recently on television, he sort of looks like a caricature of himself. He was a fascinating man. All the things they said about him were true, about him being a playboy and a womanizer, but he used most of it to political advantage. He played the saxophone. He'd put on plays in which he'd act and make his wife act. He's make the Cabinet act. It was sort of *de rigueur* that the diplomatic corps had to go watch. And he'd make us all play volleyball and rig the teams so that he would play, but he would win, because the foreign teams, you were either... (end of tape)

Sihanouk used to rig these games so he would have a bunch of eighteen-year-old players with him on his side, and he'd wipe us out every time, and then he'd be so pleased that he was on the championship team. He did the same thing in basketball. But he made political capital out of this. I enjoyed him and enjoyed watching him. I attended numerous events where he presided. I played basketball and volleyball against him and occasionally was on teams of people who went to see him on business. He once invited what amounted to the US country team with their wives to a social "mid-week" at his villa at Sihanoukville (before and again after Kompong Som) I can't say I knew him well, but at the time he knew certainly who I was. I don't know if he would now.

When I first arrived in Cambodia, we had an old-line ambassador and pretty good relations with the embassy in general. The ambassador was Bill Trimble. He wasn't all that impressive, but he was a nice enough person. He was replaced by a fellow named Phil Sprouse, whom I really think

was one of the best ambassadors for whom I ever worked. Sprouse had been one of those unfortunate people who had helped "lose" China. So despite the fact that he was a senior FSO and should have been ambassador sometime before, he had only recently been DCM in Brussels to a political appointee, where I guess Sprouse did all the work. This was his first ambassadorial assignment. He was one of those people that if you were on his good side, he gave you an awful lot of support. I suspect if he didn't care for you that much, maybe he wasn't all that supportive. But I got along with him very well.

I should back up a second and say that when I arrived in Cambodia, I was the program officer, but was to have an overlap with my predecessor for three or four months. Charles Mann hadn't been so happy with this man, and that's why he wanted me to come out earlier. That was just the moment that ICA,(International Cooperation Administration), became AID,(Agency for International Development). This gave the mission the opportunity to let go of people who they thought weren't doing that well. So they did it by selecting who was going to stay, rather than selecting who was going to leave. But when the list came out as to who was going to stay, which was only a week or two after I arrived, this other program officer's who preceded me, name was not on it. So he was a rather and understandably distressed and arranged to leave right away. Instead of having a three- or four-month overlap where I was going to study French and generally get my feet on the ground, I became the program officer.

In a very short period of time the mission director in Burma for some reason left, so they asked our deputy director, Stuart Baron, to go to Burma and serve as the acting director, which meant we had a temporary vacancy for the deputy director. So Charles Mann asked me to be the acting deputy director. That happened for about a few weeks and suddenly Charles Mann was called to Washington on consultation. So within the time that I presumably otherwise would have just been studying French, I became the acting director of the mission.

I'll tell you a little anecdote, if you want anecdotes on this. I was then, I think, thirty-six years old or thirty-seven, and I was feeling quite pleased with myself. This was a mission with \$20 million in the early sixties, which was a lot of money. The deputy of the Public Safety Division had a little party in which there was a buffet and you sat down at bridge tables to eat and there were four people, but all in-house. Sitting across from me was the wife of the newly arrived public safety advisor. They had just arrived, and she looked at me and said, "What do you do?"

I said feeling quite pleased with myself, "Well, I'm the acting director."

She said, "Yeah? Acting director of what?"

I said, "Of the USAID."

She said, "Big deal!" So that put me in my place a bit.

Anyway, it was a fortuitous circumstance. Then Stu Baron was transferred, I think to Africa, as director in Morocco. In any event, he was transferred out. First Charlie Mann was transferred out and he was replaced by a political appointee, a fellow named Curt Campaigne.

Q: He was probably one of the tycoons.

CODY: Yes. He came from the outside. There's an international veterans' organization with headquarters in Brussels, and he was the executive officer for that organization. He was a very nice man. He wasn't all that interested in the job or working hard at it. He was interested in the concept and the content. So he was happy to leave a good bit of the work and daily management tasks to his deputy. But shortly after he came there, Baron was then transferred. I became his acting deputy and then I was appointed officially as the deputy of the mission. So by the time that Phil Sprouse arrived as the new ambassador, I was the deputy. So my relationship with Sprouse was as the deputy and later as the acting director for about six months. Sprouse was very supportive to me, both in terms of working with Campaigne, but in terms of working with the economic section. I remember we had a visit from [Senator] Mike Mansfield and Senator Boggs and Senator [Claiborne] Pell. He asked me, rather than the State economic officer, to give the economic briefing. You can imagine how the State economic officer felt at that stage. But anyway, it was a good relationship.

As I say, eventually Sihanouk asked us to leave as a result of one of these border incursions. He sent us a note which said "any more aid, no matter how small, would be an insult to the national dignity". We thought that was fairly definitive statement. It really wasn't what he meant. He meant that we should get rid of the AID name and call ourselves the office of technical assistance and move in the embassy or something similar. But we really took him at his word and we stopped practically everything. We immediately stopped our technicians from working with the Cambodians and sent them out of the country as soon as possible.

I might point out what the AID program consisted of. It was \$20 million, \$15 million in commodity import program and \$5 million in technical assistance. We had 118 direct-hire employees, I remember, because I was responsible for each one leaving. In those days, as you recall, AID hired vocational training advisors and sanitarians and engineers on a permanent career basis on the theory that there was always someplace in the world where you needed that skill. If you no longer needed a sanitarian in Cambodia, you would need him in Thailand or elsewhere. So we had all of these people. I guess the 118 did include some people from the Bureau of Public Roads, but they were US government employees. They were direct-hire; though they weren't AID direct-hire. That did not include contractors. We had relatively few contractors; a few International Voluntary Service and university people.

So \$15 million was commodity imports. Of that \$15 million that generated local currency, we used roughly \$10 million to support the military budget. Some would have alleged that it was a phantom army, in large part. And \$5 million to support the technical assistance efforts. So we had a \$10 million technical assistance program in 1961. That's a fair-sized program by today's standards, and a \$10 million budgetary support, if you want to call it that, allocated to the military. Lon Nol was the Minister of Defense, the general who eventually threw Sihanouk out.

We stopped all the AID financed goods that were en route. This turned out to be a big headache later on. So if the goods were on the dock in Cambodia, we had them put back on the ship. If they were on the high seas, we diverted them to another port, Saigon or Manila or Jakarta, or any other place we might need them. The only exception we made were the participants (students).

We had at least 150 or so Cambodians studying in the United States.

One interesting project on which we were working when the program closed, we had designed a technical training school and we were training the whole faculty in the United States, the administration and the teachers. We had 101 Cambodians studying in the U.S. at places like Long Beach State College, L.A. State College, and the agricultural school up the coast of California. We were just, en masse, going to staff that college with U.S.-trained Cambodians. It would have been interesting to see how it would work, but unfortunately it didn't happen. We had built the buildings. There had been a school there before, largely staffed by the French and the Canadians, but it was a small operation.

Q: Were these Cambodians in the United States?

CODY: They were in the United States.

Q: Then you didn't let them finish?

CODY: That was the one exception. We gave them the option. If they wanted to stay and finish, they could. If they wanted to go back to Cambodia, they could. Overwhelmingly they elected to stay. What's happened to them, I don't know. It would be an interesting thing to see. I suspect practically all of them still stayed in the US. Maybe a few later on went back to Cambodia. Then we had Cambodians studying other subjects. We had 101 of these just from this one school, and I've forgotten how many we had from other schools. We had a considerable number studying agriculture at the University of Georgia.

So we just closed down the mission. Except for the BPR who went to Bangkok we evacuated most of our people, technicians and all the families, to Hong Kong, We kept a core staff of management, program, and controller people in Phnom Penh and Saigon.

The one project that we still had going, and we negotiated for quite a while with the Cambodians as to whether they wanted to keep it going, was the rehabilitation of the Khmer-American Friendship Highway. This is a highway of 150 miles or more from Phnom Penh to the coast, to what had become Sihanoukville, which was before and again now is Kompong Som. Kompong is a word that appears in many names; it means "boat landing." There we had a contract with Vinnell Corporation to build the road. I'd forgotten, but we did have this contract. Vinnell is either from Washington State or Oregon. It's a big contracting outfit. We debated a long time, and finally the Cambodians sent us a note saying, "You can continue to build the road if you want to." That wasn't good enough for us. The State Department and AID had agreed that we would have done it if they asked us to do it, but we did not consider "if you want to" as a request.

By this time Curt Campaigne had departed, had been transferred to Guinea, and I was left as the acting director. My immediate major job was to sell this equipment to the Cambodian Government. We knew we couldn't move it out of Cambodia very easily. So I spent six months negotiating the sale and collecting the money.

Q: To whom did you sell it?

CODY: The government of Cambodia for \$1.8 million. Eventually I received a fat little check in my hand. I had Bureau of Public Roads people and Vinnell people on call in Bangkok, who came over occasionally, but basically a local French contractor named Le May, who had been a subcontractor to Vinnell, and I and a Belgian technician named John Ichx, who had been a third country national employee of the mission, an accountant well versed in the local scene, did all the work for selling the equipment. I came to know every desk in the Ministry of Public Works and every desk in the Ministry of Plans and every desk in the Ministry of Finance, and every desk in the Central Bank. First we were paid in local currency, then we had the funds exchanged into dollars, which turned out to be the much easier task. I don't think AID or State ever really recognized the effort that went into securing that check. A couple of times I was called out for such mundane chores as serving on an evaluation panel. The ambassador had to argue like mad to have me taken off of the panel. "You've got to come on the panel. It's your turn." Anyway, we the equipment was sold.

It was interesting, because in the process, all the USAID people except me left Phnom Penh. A few staff members remained in Saigon. In fact, my family was in Saigon and I used to visit there. I kept an office in Saigon. But I was eventually the only American left in the AID program in Cambodia. The military aid program had gone the same time that we did. The embassy had been cut back and the experienced staff replaced so the people in the embassy were all new. They didn't know anybody in the Cambodian government other than their designated contacts at the Foreign Office. I was the only American that wandered around town. I was the only American who was known to very many people, and it was rather fun that way. Then even after I had finished my work and was transferred, I came back on TDY on a few occasions. It would start a rumor every time that the AID program was coming back.

Q: Because you came back.

CODY: Because I came back. The other big headache beside selling the road building equipment was that we had diverted all these goods financed under the commodity import program. The problem was that the local suppliers had paid down-payments on them. So there was a big mess at the Central Bank and no one knew how to straighten out all the paperwork and payments. The local importers had made their deposits at the bank D'Indochine and through the Barclay's Bank and the Chartered Bank, two British banks and a French bank and the Central Bank. So I spent a lot of time working on that and we finally had it more or less straightened out, though I think some of the local importers lost their shirts. I was the acting director until about June of '64.

Q: How were your relations with Washington through all this?

CODY: They were good.

Q: They understood what you were up to?

CODY: Yes, I think so. They weren't all that interested. I think they had written Cambodia off, but they didn't give me many problems other than to try and transfer me out which both the Ambassador and I thought was premature. In any country, as a senior AID person, you deal with

three individuals or three sets of individuals. One is your ambassador and his embassy staff. Two, your regional director in Washington and his staff. You don't deal with State in Washington except through that group. If State officers come to the mission, you usually have meetings with them, but you're basically dealing with State Washington through your AID regional director and locally through the Ambassador. Third, you deal with the host country. The ideal situation is to have good relations with all three. That doesn't normally happen.

In Cambodia, Sheppard had gone by then, but I had good relations with Poats. Poats was head of the Far East region for AID. I had good relations, certainly, with Sprouse, and after he left I had less close relations, but they were still good relations, with the embassy, with the chargé they had there. I personally had very good relations with the Cambodians. The Deputy Minister of Plan, Plek Chat and I got along fine. The Director of the Central Bank, Son Sann, is the head of one of those three groups in Cambodia, the right wing. Our relations were good. I thought he was an old man then. I don't know how old he must be now. We're talking about the sixties and he was one of the older people. I never received any harassment from the government. They always took their time to accomplish things. Part of this was just the French colonial system. I enjoyed being in Cambodia in that era. And there was no war in Cambodia. There's a war now. It was the war in Vietnam and Laos. My family was eventually brought back to Cambodia because my wife and two daughters had left a movie theater fifteen minutes before a bomb went off in Saigon.

Q: So you brought them back to Cambodia.

CODY: I convinced State to let me do so. Then after I brought them back to Cambodia and there was a riot at the embassy, in which nobody was hurt. It was just organized to make a statement. At that point they were evacuated to Japan.

So anyway, the thing came to an end and I was made the director of the Office of Vietnam Affairs in Washington. Those days, Vietnam was an office in the Far East Bureau. Just after I left that office, it became a bureau in and of itself, and I think Jim Grant became the director.

MAX W. KRAUS
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Phnom Penh (1961-1964)

Max W. Kraus was born in Germany in 1920. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956 and served in Italy, Cambodia, Zaire, France, and Switzerland. He was interviewed by Cliff Groce in 1988.

Q: Direct transfer?

KRAUS: Direct transfer. I went on a direct transfer to Phnom Penh as deputy PAO to Darrell Price, originally. Then he left and was replaced by Art Lee. I stayed in Phnom Penh from the end of 1961 until spring of 1964.

Once I got used to -- over the cultural shock and the climate -- the climatic shock in Phnom Penh -- I liked that tour very much. It was one of my most memorable and enjoyable tours.

Q: That was before the tragedy?

KRAUS: Yes, I mean this was when -- well, I was sort of in Phnom Penh until the end of, what I would call, the good period for the Americans.

When we had very good relations with Sihanouk. In fact, in a way, USIS-Phnom Penh was almost the ministry of information for Cambodian government. We put out a monthly newsreel which was distributed by the Cambodian government.

Q: French or Cambodian?

KRAUS: I think it was in Cambodian. Stan Moss was the motion picture officer at that time, and he was very good. Stan and his successor, the late and lamented Ralph White, also did some marvelous documentaries.

For instance, one of them was a film about the state funeral for Sihanouk's father which we called: "A Nation Mourns its King." Stan Moss also did a wonderful documentary about the Cambodian Royal Ballet which earned us a lot of brownie points with the Cambodians, because the Royal Ballet was the apple of the eye of Sihanouk's mother, Queen Kossunak.

These were wonderful pictures. We also -- in our cultural center every year -- we had a competition for Cambodian artists. The prize winning paintings were then printed in a calendar, which we distributed. I still have one of the paintings.

Things started going sour for us in 1963, after the coup d'etat against Diem in Saigon, because Sihanouk decided that, if we permitted this to happen -- and probably even were involved in the overthrow and killing of Diem, our leading ally in southeast Asia -- then we were no longer a reliable protector.

Sihanouk and his predecessors had always felt that the once mighty Khmer Empire would completely vanish from the map and be swallowed up by the hereditary enemies, Vietnam and Thailand, unless he had some outside power which played an important role -- or dominant role - - in Indochina to protect him.

At first, it was the French, but after Dien Bien Phu, Sihanouk decided that the French had had it and he leaned on us. We had a very big military and economic aid mission there. We had a big English teaching program and had a lot of Cambodian students who went to the states. Jeff Sandel headed the English teaching program.

One of the people with whom I had lunch yesterday at DACOR, Mary Gray, also worked in Cambodia on the English teaching program. She was with the Asia Foundation.

Anyway, Sihanouk decided that he no longer could trust us -- after the overthrow of Diem -- and

that he better look around for some other protectors. He started cuddling up to the Soviet Union and China and things went downhill very rapidly.

There was a "spontaneous popular demonstration" against the embassy and USIS office building and the USIS and British Council Libraries, during which they completely smashed things up. I already had my transfer orders by that time. Again, direct transfer from Phnom Penh to Stanleyville in the Congo.

Q: Another contrast?

KRAUS: Yes. Before I could leave, I sat in the office for a couple of extremely nervous hours wondering whether the mob would break into our building and kill us or beat us up or so on. It never happened, and, in retrospect, I know why -- because, this riot was always under very strict government control.

In fact, it was controlled by two cabinet ministers from the control tower of a riot control truck which we had given to the Cambodians and, which was parked out there, still with the clasped hand symbol of AID on its side.

Since our landlord in the USIS office building was the chief of the Cambodian Air Force who was also Sihanouk's personal physician and, since he had just paid to have the building completely repainted, he was not going to allow a mob to come in there and ruin his paint job.

CLAYTON E. MCMANAWAY, JR.
Assistant Program Director, AID
Phnom Penh (1962-1964)

Ambassador Clayton E. McManaway, Jr. was born in North Carolina. He graduated from the University of South Carolina and served in the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps. He served in Phnom Penh and Saigon, and as Ambassador to Haiti. Ambassador McManaway was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: In 1960.

McMANAWAY: Right. I was greatly influenced by what he seemed to represent at the time. My politics have changed since then. It was shortly after his inauguration and that stirring inaugural speech that I received a call from the government. I had sent off the usual barrage of letters after finishing graduate school. One of the people I wrote to was AID [Agency for International Development]. I got several jobs later from people who originally turned me down saying they would keep my application on file. I didn't believe it but it turned out to be true. I got three jobs that way. This one was with AID. They had a program to bring in some new blood in the executive field. I didn't know what that meant, but I took it. I went down [to Washington] and stayed with the government from then on. I started with AID and went to Cambodia.

Q: You were there from 1961-64?

McMANAWAY: I joined AID in 1961 and I was a year in Washington attending a training program, but it was terrible. In fact there were seven of us and we revolted and went in and complained about the program. We were a bunch of Young Turks. We all, with possibly one exception, got out of the "executive" field, which turned out to be administration, and went into program work, which was the substantive work for AID. So we were there for a year. I had a terrible experience of getting out of there.

Q: I am trying to catch the spirit of the time. What was the problem?

McMANAWAY: Well, AID was being strongly affected by the Kennedy Administration. It was being reorganized extensively and it was my first run in with government personnel systems. I found out by accident that they were about to force assign me to Togo without even telling me about it. So I went to Personnel and asked what I could do about this. He said, "Well, you could turn it down." I asked how many times could you do that. He said, "Well, about three." I said, "Well, I turn it down."

Q: Why not Togo?

McMANAWAY: It was of no interest to me. I wasn't interested in Togo. It didn't seem like a very interesting place to be and didn't have much of a program and didn't seem like a place to get started. My attention had been attracted to Indochina because of what was going on.

Q: We are talking about Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam.

McMANAWAY: It seemed to me that was where the action was. I knew they were recruiting junior people for Cambodia and I somehow got an appointment with the mission director who was visiting on consultation. He offered me a job and I took it. This was all outside of channels. When I went back into channels no one would act on it. The people I was being trained with wouldn't back me up because they didn't want to fight personnel. The personnel people who were handling African assignments called me a traitor. They were vicious. I had to write up my own memo to Personnel saying that I had been offered this job and I had accepted it and threatened to resign. Once I wrote it down, the whole system sort of collapsed and they finally gave in.

Q: It was a lesson, I take it.

McMANAWAY: It certainly was, I had never dealt with government personnel people before. Of course, AID was a terrible organization anyway, even in those days. It seems to have gotten worse and really should be done away with in my opinion. We should start over.

Anyway, I finally made it out to Cambodia in 1962.

Q: You were there until 1964.

McMANAWAY: About. I was there until Sihanouk kicked us out.

Q: What was your job when you went out there?

McMANAWAY: I was in the program office.

Q: Which means what?

McMANAWAY: In that situation I was an assistant program officer. We had a program officer and a deputy and a few other assistants. We were the OMB [Office of Management and Budget]. You had the technical bureaus, divisions, all pushing their programs. The program office put it all together and had to ultimately justify it. So the technical bureaus had to justify it to us first, so we asked all the hard questions about the programs. Then we supposedly looked at the overall policy, the development policy.

Q: What was your impression and what kind of work were we trying to do? I have always had a question about any of the AID projects because many of them depend almost on the personalities of the people there. If you happen to have a Forestry man there at the head, all of a sudden forestry is the big thing. How did you find the situation?

McMANAWAY: There was the usual sort of mixed picture. When we were kicked out, which is an interesting story in itself, we decided that surely there would be somebody going back in and we discovered as we were getting ready to leave that the files were in terrible condition. We sort of knew that anyway, but didn't realize how bad they really were. So we decided we would write a history of the AID program in Cambodia for the benefit of anyone involved in a renewal of an AID program there and for the record. We did that in Saigon for a long time and then finished it up when I went back to Washington.

We discovered in the files going back to the earliest days of AID programs projects that we were launching at the time almost identical in education, etc. I remember being horrified to find in the files a project agreement with the government of Cambodia that was almost an exact duplicate of a program we had designed and were very proud of in the field of education just the year before. The previous program had been done years before and nothing had ever come of it.

The French had refurbished a canal system that the Khmer had built back in the 9th and 10th centuries. We went up and refurbished that and then found out that the farmers weren't using it...this showed how much we knew about the country. We finally sent an anthropologist up to the lake, which is the lake that the Mekong backs up into [the Tonle Sap]. We were trying to get the farmers to do double cropping. Well, they were already doing it using the rise and fall of the lake to do exactly what we were trying to get them to do with the irrigation. So they didn't need it.

There were dire predictions that everything would collapse when we left. The road that we had built down to the bay would be impassible, etc. None of those things happened. I didn't think much of our AID program.

Q: How did you see the political/economic situation during this 1962-64 period?

McMANAWAY: Well, Sihanouk was in firm control at that time, although he had a couple of [threats to his rule]. He had developed to an art this business of saying that he was going to resign and then everybody would beg him not to whenever he got into trouble. The incident that caused us to leave really began with some very anti-American speeches that he had made. I don't remember why he got on this kick, but we were having a good deal of trouble with him. Then Kennedy was killed and things got worse right away. Sihanouk said some things that were [out of line]. I think Averell Harriman at the UN called his statements barbaric which really set him off. We got a letter from him saying that he would not accept another dollar of aid from the United States and that he couldn't promise police protection beyond January 13 or something like that, which, of course, meant we had to get out of there. We began withdrawing quickly. I was not involved in the consultations with the ambassador or between the embassy and the State Department, but we had already taken a couple of actions that couldn't be reversed and suddenly got a cable from Harriman saying to stop everything. We got the cable, I think, on a Friday and then waited and waited and didn't hear anything more. But obviously there were second thoughts about the whole thing.

Q: You had this hold on but I take it the process was still going forward and you were getting ready to get out.

McMANAWAY: Oh, yes. We moved ahead and left on the deadline.

Q: Again looking at it at that time, how were relations between the AID mission and the embassy?

McMANAWAY: They were reasonably good. The ambassador was away. He had had some kind of ailment and was out of the country.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

McMANAWAY: Philip Sprouse. I, of course, didn't have much direct contact with him being a very junior officer. I had more contact with the DCM [deputy chief of mission] who was a bit of a stuffed shirt. He loved to edit out all split infinitives and that sort of thing. That was his major contribution to our submissions as far as I could see. So we had a chargé at the time. We had a very strong deputy director in the AID mission, Peter Cody, who was a political appointee. You may recall they brought in about ten business tycoons about that time [as country directors] and I think they all failed. This fellow's name was Champaign, I think, and he failed also. He wasn't terribly good. But we marched ahead and left. I think the State Department was not happy with what we did. I think they felt we had jumped the gun and we might have been able to negotiate our staying which they would have preferred.

Q: What was the feeling towards Sihanouk?

McMANAWAY: We were very upset with him at the time. People were angry with him and thought he had behaved very [badly]. Kennedy was well regarded and he had just been

assassinated and Sihanouk was making his ugly remarks about being happy with the whole thing. They were terrible vitriolic anti-American speeches and anti-Kennedy speeches. So nobody had any respect for him. He was a small, fat fellow with a high squeaky voice. He was called snoopy. There were a lot of rumors about the kinds of things that went on in the palace.

Q: I used to hear stories that he would go through these crash diets and all hell used to break loose.

McMANAWAY: He would go to France once a year to go on some kind of a special regime. Then there would be trouble at home and he would come flying back and be very dramatic and histrionic. There were a lot of stories about his sexual promiscuity and how he would do a lot of visiting around the countryside and nod to a girl in the audience and his goons would go get her for him. One hilarious thing that happened was Sukarno visited and stayed about a week. The day after he left the front page of the main newspaper had a marvelous photograph of these young beauties lined up at the airport all being decorated for their services to the state.

Q: Sukarno of Indonesia was notorious for the same thing.

McMANAWAY: Yes, the two of them together.

Q: Cambodia wouldn't have been big enough to handle them both.

McMANAWAY: We didn't take Sihanouk very seriously.

Q: But he is still in the action one way or another. At that time was anybody talking about what later became the Khmer Rouge?

McMANAWAY: No.

Q: Were we concerned about a spillover from Vietnam?

McMANAWAY: I don't think so at that time. There was something going on. There was one fellow, but I don't think it had anything to do with the Khmer Rouge, up around who was a rival of Sihanouk's. But there was nothing like a Pol Pot.

ROY T. HAVERKAMP
Political Officer
Phnom Penh (1962-1964)

Roy T. Haverkamp was born in 1924 in Missouri. He served in the U.S. Air Force in World War II and later earned degrees from Yale University and Cambridge University. Mr. Haverkamp joined the Foreign Service in 1952. His career included positions in Korea, Sweden, Japan, Cambodia, Congo, Benin, Vietnam, Guinea, the United Kingdom, Jamaica, and Grenada. He was interviewed on April 11, 1994 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Q: What was the training like? How did you find the Cambodian language?

HAVERKAMP: If you had a little talent and studied it was not complicated. It was not a tonal language like Thai, Lao and Vietnamese. Tense was not an important factor in the language. If you got into the Poli, the language of the Buddhists scriptures, and the Royal Family, it was totally different. It was important because even if you could speak a few words badly you had a different relationship. Many of our colleagues felt that all you needed was French. True, you could say things in French which would have been very difficult and complicated to say in Cambodian because they were still making up modern words. But you did not have the same kind of personal relationship as you had if you could speak their language.

Q: How many were taking Cambodian?

HAVERKAMP: Three of us.

Q: For the State Department that is not an inconsiderable number. Cambodia was becoming important in the early sixties, wasn't it?

HAVERKAMP: Well, it was becoming important always as a sideshow to Vietnam and in its relationship with China.

Q: You went out to Cambodia when?

HAVERKAMP: I went out in the Spring of 1962.

Q: You served there until 1964. What was the situation at the time you went out in Cambodia?

HAVERKAMP: When I first went out, of course, it was before the Tonkin Gulf incident, but it was after Prince Sihanouk had decided that the United States misunderstood the situation in nationalist terms in Vietnam and made probably a decision in his own mind that we, like the French, were not going to stay the course and that we did not have a viable government in South Vietnam. He believed there was not a government in Vietnam after Ngo Dinh Diem that was strong enough to bring unity and make an effective resistance to the Communists. Since he couldn't move his country he felt he could not get too close to us, but could use both our economic aid and our influence with the government of South Vietnam.

We had a large AID mission there. We had a large embassy there. We had a MAAG mission led by a Major General. We were very active all over the place. But Sihanouk was already beginning to denounce us and early on, I think late in 1962 or early in 1963, he made a proposal to the French, the British and the US to neutralize Cambodia and keep the Vietnamese war in Vietnam. After some time we went back with a very stilted, bureaucratic reply which in effect meant that such a thing was not possible and the answer was no. The French came back and said the same thing in very flowery language saying that this was another brilliant example of Khmer diplomacy, etc., however there are a few things we need to work out. Well, what we were saying was that the Vietnamese would not like us to do such a thing because the Vietnamese were

telling us, and it was true, that the Viet Cong were moving in and out of Cambodia. Sihanouk could do nothing about this and didn't like it anymore than we did.

Later on there was a very widely read book which you may know called "Strategy" by Colonel Harry Summers, about the Vietnam war. I think it is the best book I have read analyzing what happened to us in Vietnam. He said basically that an insurgency in a revolutionary type war should be fought by the local people. In other words, the Vietnamese in the south should have been taking care of the Viet Cong. What we should have done was to use main force units of our own to prevent main force units from the North coming into South Vietnam. Although doing that, because of the terrain, would not have been an easy matter either. But I think Sihanouk felt that was the thing that we did not understand in Vietnam and did not have going for us. He may also have drawn a parallel in his own mind with the role of public opinion in France in ending French intervention in Vietnam.

I don't know what we really accomplished having an embassy and all these people in Cambodia. Towards the end, early in 1964, Sihanouk said that he didn't want American aid. What the Chargé, Herb Spivack, a fine guy and very able, said was that we would stop all the ships at sea as well because there was a large pipeline. But that was all we could get out of it.

Cambodia certainly did not have the strength to antagonize, much less challenge the Vietnamese Communists. To survive with a restricted sovereignty, they could only pacify them and cross their fingers. Sihanouk knew the Communist Vietnamese were recruiting some of his own people. As unattractive a personality he was to us, he was the only one on the horizon who could maintain a reasonable unity in Cambodia. One of his worst mistakes was to keep his military weak and corrupt since he did not want to have a strong military force which he would have viewed as a challenge to himself. He counted on his support from the peasants, the Buddhist monks, and those in government and the private sector dependent on him.

Q: What job did you have?

HAVERKAMP: I was in the political section.

Q: Who was your ambassador?

HAVERKAMP: Our ambassador when I arrived was Bill Trimble who was a Europeanist. He left a couple of weeks after I arrived. Then Ambassador Philip Sprouse came from Brussels as our ambassador.

Q: Another Europeanist?

HAVERKAMP: No, he was a Far Easterner. He was a Chinese language officer and had been on the China desk in the days of the McCarthy era in the fifties. He was a Chinese expert, although he had also served a long time in Europe.

Q: How did the political section work? What were you looking at then?

HAVERKAMP: Well, there was one person who determined everything that went on in Cambodia and that was Prince Sihanouk who was then head of state. If you wanted to get anything done or wanted to influence policy, it had to be done with Sihanouk, directly or indirectly. That at the time was no easy job, because our role was to gain support for what we were doing in Vietnam which was based on our understanding of what was happening in Vietnam which was contrary to Sihanouk's understanding of what was going on. You could of had somebody with the greatest persuasiveness, finesse, charm and language skills, etc., but as long as the Vietnamese situation was as it was in Sihanouk's mind, we weren't going to make much progress, unless we in some way would guarantee Cambodia's neutrality. This was much more evident after the fall of Ngo Dinh Diem in Saigon. Sihanouk recognized Diem's unassailable nationalist credentials and his toughness. After Diem's fall he believed there would be a series of governments by generals coming to power by coups. This he believed would be to the advantage of the communists and weaken further our position. I believe these convictions led to his canceling our aid program.

Q: You arrive there and are obviously the new boy on the block. What was your impression of how the embassy political section/ambassador viewed Sihanouk?

HAVERKAMP: One of our problems that you had to work against constantly was that Sihanouk had a personality and character that was very irritating to us because he would shoot off his mouth and let himself be carried away in nonsensical vituperation against people, countries or whatever. Once he said that all of his enemies are being killed by God. There was Thanat in Thailand, Ngo Dinh Diem in South Vietnam, and then President Kennedy in Washington, they are all burning in hell together. Something like that. He was shrill, wordy, vituperative, confrontational, and hysterical in tone. But behind it all was a shrewd understanding of what was actually happening in Vietnam and what effect it was going to have on Cambodia. His view was to keep what little was left of Cambodia, which he inherited, to keep it intact. But Vietnam under anybody was going to be a menace to his Cambodia. I think everybody in the Embassy agreed with this assessment. Washington was another matter. The administration always seemed to believe there was some clever way to change Sihanouk's mind. Since we were bound to prevail in Vietnam, it was only "reasonable" to believe we had an unassailable case to make. Mrs. Kennedy's visit to Angkor was one unusual approach we made later.

Q: The one thing that anybody who served in the area knew was that the Cambodians and the Vietnamese hated each other.

HAVERKAMP: Yes, there was no love lost. The Vietnamese looked down on the Cambodians and the Cambodians feared the Vietnamese. If you go back into history you will find that the southern part of Vietnam belonged to Cambodia until the middle of the 19th century when the French came in. Much of Central and Southern Vietnam had been given to the Vietnamese by sons or nephews of the king who wanted to anticipate their inheritance and to get the Vietnamese to cooperate with them in exchange for a little part of Cambodia. Other parts were captured by Vietnamese moving down from the North.

Q: What was the name of the empire?

HAVERKAMP: The Khmer empire.

Q: Is it in hindsight that you are saying that Sihanouk behind all this front and facade really understood the situation? Were we at the embassy seeing that maybe this guy has a policy despite all that was going on?

HAVERKAMP: I think, as I said, that the facade, the personality, was more of a handicap. The personality and the attacks against the United States were gratuitous, untrue and inaccurate, but most people tried to get by them. They were carried in FBIS and were reported to Washington. I think Washington understood but was absorbed totally on Vietnam. But again we were hampered because our policy was to defend what we were doing in Vietnam. He was convinced that what we were doing was not going to succeed because we had no government that could unify the people in South Vietnam in their effort against the North. The North was stronger, more unified and had, above all, good nationalist credentials because it didn't have foreigners fighting in Vietnam. It had foreign support, but the troops in the field were Vietnamese. If they felt Cambodia was a sufficient irritant, they would have taken it over one way or another, either through an enlarged cadre of Cambodian communists, who were their allies, or by marching in on their own.

Q: What would you do as a political officer if you weren't talking to Sihanouk?

HAVERKAMP: The Ambassador, rightly, was the only one who negotiated with Sihanouk. We reported on peripheral things, on what was done after it was done. One of the language officers who was the best at the language would listen to speeches and report them. Some did balanced exercise type analyses and commentary. We had an army attaché, a colonel, who was very good and coolly objective in reporting. When the South Vietnamese would make a charge that the Viet Cong were using Cambodia or if there was an incident where the South Vietnamese were accused by the Cambodians of coming into Cambodia they would take the military attachés down to see it. He was very honest and reported what he saw. For instance, "I saw tracks and there are no track vehicles in Cambodia that would make that kind of track, an American vehicle that we gave to South Vietnam would".

We were fighting off early at one point people like Ambassador Lodge in Saigon who advocated that we should consider carrying out aerial attacks in Cambodia. Herb Spivack, very cleverly and very graciously went back and said, "If you do, would you mind telling us first so we can get out?"

Q: How about the Khmer Rouge? Were they much at that point?

HAVERKAMP: They were not the force they later became and I don't think we knew very much about what they were doing. Some of them were still in Cambodia, some had fled. Sihanouk, as all dictators, was paranoid about people who were against him. He said once he found that students that he sent to study in communist countries always come back good nationalists because they were appalled by what they see and don't want to be part of it, but those who go to the West, particularly to France or the United States, come back communists. Well, it wasn't true of those who went to the United States.

Q: And also, they were intellectuals and it was fun to be a communist.

HAVERKAMP: Also, communism had an answer to everything in a dictatorial framework. Yes, for intellectuals and for people who only understood government in terms of authoritarianism, not of compromise, sharing, etc.

Q: When you were there, what was the role of the French? Were we close to them or were they sort of off to one side doing their thing?

HAVERKAMP: I think social relations between Ambassadors and some people in the embassies were cordial. Where we had a common interest we might make a common approach, but it was one of those places where the French had a very special status and where they certainly were not going to give it up to us. I don't know of any real underhanded things that the French did to us like they had done earlier in Vietnam or some posts in Africa. There were also "non-official French" who were Sihanouk's advisers and who ran his party newspaper and had other advisory roles on his own immediate personal staff. You could talk to them and profit from their understanding and their knowledge of what was going on. They were also not unrealistic people. They were pretty shrewd by and large. President de Gaulle maintained a keen interest in Vietnam and was convinced that his relations with the government in Hanoi helped make him a world figure and hence a European of greater stature. It seemed to me he was waiting for us to withdraw so he could become the leading external influence in Southeast Asia.

Q: The big event while you were there was the impact of the killing and the coup that ousted Diem and also the Gulf of Tonkin and we were just beginning to put major forces into Vietnam. How did you all see it from your embassy and how was it reflected in Cambodia?

HAVERKAMP: In Cambodia, the death of Ngo Dinh Diem for the man who mattered, Sihanouk, was good and bad. He didn't like Diem because he realized early on that he had nationalist credentials as good as anybody else in Vietnam and he was effective. But as he began to lose control, Sihanouk was happy and unhappy. He was happy because a potential enemy was being weakened, but unhappy because it meant another more dangerous enemy, North Vietnam, was becoming stronger vis-a-vis the South. That was the point at which he probably decided that he had to move even closer to China to protect himself against an expanding North Vietnam. He had done some of this earlier on when somebody came in late in the fifties and moved a border marker further with Vietnam further into Cambodia. That was a critical turning point I think for Sihanouk for judging what was going to happen in Vietnam and according to our Ambassador at the time, the point at which Sihanouk recognized the Communist Government of China.

The Tonkin Gulf incident was just after I left Cambodia.

Q: Did you find when you were there that the attitude of our Far East Affairs in Washington...Harriman and Rusk and the desk officers...did they seem to understand Cambodia or did you feel that nobody really paid much attention to what happens in Cambodia?

HAVERKAMP: I think that they paid attention to what happened in Cambodia, but they worked

on the assumption that we would prevail in Vietnam and our job in Cambodia was to keep Sihanouk from doing anything to harm us or the South Vietnamese or to aid the North. As I said earlier, Sihanouk by 1963 had come to accept the opposite assumption. Washington saw Cambodia as a sideshow and believed it was as much in Sihanouk's interest as in ours to keep the communists from taking over in Vietnam. Whereas Sihanouk's view was that he had to accommodate himself to whoever was likely to prevail.

Q: How about the media, the press? Did you try to get people to view what Sihanouk said with some perspective?

HAVERKAMP: I don't know that we ever made a conscious effort to do that. We were always interested in what he told them. He certainly would make an effort to charm them and appear to be very frank with them. Remember this was before the days of spin doctors. We tried to be objective while stressing developments and ideas favorable to us.

Q: I guess what I am trying to say is that after a while you got used to Sihanouk spouting off at the mouth. It certainly could raise the blood pressure in any red blooded American. The newspapermen would just come in and out and report this and make things even more difficult for us in dealing with Cambodia. Did you ever try to put the newspaper people or other media people in the picture and say, "Okay, you have to understand this man does this sort of thing but...?"

HAVERKAMP: Oh, yes. But it was hopeless. We were very aware that for Sihanouk the truth wasn't what happens, the truth wasn't what the newspapers say about it on him. He had people scanning newspapers from all over the world. If he ever found an article about himself he didn't like, he would get up and make a speech denouncing that country. It happened all the time. Sometimes people would, in an amusing kind of way, say that if you want to drive this guy around the bend all you do is plant newspaper stories around the world and he would go stark raving mad.

I remember one of the problems that came up while we were there was that his son Ranariddh, who seemed to be the most rational and intelligent of his children, went to the United States on an official visit. Some newspaper here said that this is the favorite son of the Prince who will succeed him. Sihanouk immediately became hysterical and said that another son who was 12 or 13 years old was his chosen successor and he was sending him to live with the Zhou En-lais in Beijing.

Q: Did you feel you were in the center of anything?

HAVERKAMP: I didn't feel that the embassy could make any worthwhile difference. I think embassies have two functions, to understand and defend your country's interests any place you are. But you have to do that in a local context. When you misread the local context you are going to be less effective in trying to persuade people to do what we would like them to do in our interest and Washington would not be receiving accurate and realistic information on which to base policy. In other words, the war in Vietnam was not going to be lost because of Cambodia.

Sihanouk had to judge what was going on in Vietnam, not for sentimental reasons or idealistic reasons or whatever, but on a very clear understanding of how the power equation in Vietnam was working out and who was going to come out on top and how he was going to have to accommodate himself to them to keep them from taking any more of his country. He looked to China as his big protector against the Vietnamese and not the United States, because he did not believe that we were going to win. To me at that time it would have been inconceivable that if we decided to go in with the number of troops and weapons and the commitment that we made there that we would not have prevailed.

Q: So at this point which you might call sort of a hinge time just before we really came in with full might, you left.

HAVERKAMP: When I was in Cambodia there were 16,000 Americans in Vietnam and they were advisers, although we had people flying in AT6s with Vietnamese "observers". Early in the Johnson administration after Tonkin we made our big commitment.

Q: That was an early Air Force trainer.

HAVERKAMP: Yes. They used them as attack planes in Vietnam. Kennedy was assassinated in 1963 and in 1964 Tonkin Gulf happened around the time I left.

JAMES G. LOWENSTEIN
Staff of Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Washington, DC (1967-1974)

Ambassador James G. Lowenstein joined the Foreign Service in 1950. He served in France before joining the U.S. Navy in 1953. He reentered the Foreign Service in 1957. His career included positions in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Yugoslavia, Luxembourg, and Washington, DC. Ambassador Lowenstein was interviewed by Ambassador Dennis Kux on June 6, 1994.

LOWENSTEIN: Now the meetings with Sihanouk, when we first went there, were very interesting because in those meetings, Sihanouk kept saying, "Look, I know that you are bombing Cambodia. It is perfectly okay with me. You go ahead and bomb the North Vietnamese and Cambodia all you like. Just don't say anything about it, I won't say anything about it. For God's sake just shut up. Forget all this compromising my neutrality business, it is okay, but just keep quiet."

Mansfield had a strongly held view that Sihanouk was the only one in Cambodia who could hold things together. Part of his irate reaction to the war in Vietnam was as a result of its extension to Cambodia with the result that Sihanouk was toppled from office. I personally don't think the US had anything to do with replacing Sihanouk, but the fact is that what we were doing in Vietnam created an environment in which it was possible for those who wanted to topple Sihanouk to do so on the theory that they would then be supported by the United States, because they claimed

that they were going to pursue the war more aggressively than Sihanouk had. Mansfield felt that Cambodia was doomed the minute Sihanouk was overthrown and, indeed, he was right. I agreed with him. It was very easy to see that that would happen.

Q: What were his relations with Johnson?

LOWENSTEIN: His relations with Johnson were okay. I mean, they agreed to disagree over Vietnam.

Q: Did you go around and get briefings in Washington?

LOWENSTEIN: No, we didn't do much of that. Then, of course, there was the journalist part of it, how facts would emerge that were not the product of analysis. The most dramatic, I suppose, was how we discovered all the illegal air operations in Cambodia which was the subject of the report of April, 1973. Now we had gone to the embassy and been assured that the embassy had no role in these operations and that it was somebody else, the Cambodians, the Thais, or our imagination. It wasn't happening. I was off interviewing a POW in French, that is a Khmer Rouge POW in a prison camp, to see what he had to say about what was going on. That is also the kind of thing that we would do. Dick was wandering around downtown Phnom Penh with a lady journalist from either the AP or UPI who had a radio, a five dollar pocket transistor radio. She said, "Listen, do you want to hear something interesting?" She turned on her pocket radio and there were American pilots talking to an American air controller. We knew from all of our experience in dealing with air operations in other places what these call signs meant. What they meant was that the embassy was vectoring the fighters. It was as evident as it could be. Furthermore, the radio's range made it impossible to argue that we were listening to Thailand. We were listening to a plane that was fifteen miles away.

So we went in and confronted the embassy, and you will see this not only in the report, but in the appendix to the second volume of Henry Kissinger's memoirs there is an account of this and the problems between us and Tom Enders, who was then DCM in Cambodia. So, we went back to the embassy and said, "Now look, this is what we understand from what we heard from a transistor radio and other things and these are our conclusions just looking at the facts." The answer was, "It is none of your business."

So, we sent Senator Symington, who was chairman of the relevant Subcommittee, a message through the embassy saying, "Here is what we found. This is what the embassy tells us. Our view is that we shouldn't leave here until the embassy gives us a briefing on exactly what they are doing, which was a violation of law, incidentally, and exactly what the air operation situation is here." We got back a telegram from Symington saying, "Wait right there, I will straighten this out." So we waited there, through a couple of nights of bombing raids, incidentally, in which we were taken out of our hotel to the basement of the embassy along with all the other Americans.

Symington went to the Secretary of Defense and didn't get any place; went to the Secretary of State and didn't get any place. And, as I recall, he finally went to the President and said, "This is

what these guys say, this is what the law says, this is what this Committee is considering in terms of legislation and they are going to stay out there until they get the briefing." So after about four days, we finally got our briefing and that is what led to a huge legislative brouhaha that really meant the end of these illegal air operations in Cambodia.

While we were waiting, incidentally, I attended a dinner given by the American press at which they drugged my soup with hashish and I was unconscious for 48 hours. So it was just as well that we had to wait because as I said to somebody...in fact we were invited to the French embassy, the French Ambassador there was an old friend of mine and invited us over to dinner. I said, "Look, I can come to dinner, but I can't eat anything except some soup and you will have to forgive me for having a hand that shakes so much but this is what happened to me." He said, "Don't worry about it, the same thing happened to me the day before the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs arrived and I couldn't even stand up when he got off the plane."

I'm trying to think of other incidents where facts were brought to light by accident rather than by analysis. Fragging was one, air operations over Cambodia was another. Well, there were a lot of them but they don't seem to come to mind. Military briefings were very informative because all kinds of things were said that were so obviously not true that you could tell what was being covered up by what was being said. It was a very curious thing. Dick had been in the military for a short time. I had been in the military for three and a half years and had been to a lot of staff briefings and had to do a lot of briefing myself. And I had been all through the Naval War College routine. So I had a pretty good sense of military presentation and military vocabulary since the military had this wonderful habit of inventing words to cover things that they don't want to say, so they use another word. "Terminate with extreme prejudice," of course, would be the great example. Although that was a CIA term, it could have been a military term. So it was very easy for me at a military briefing to figure out exactly what they were saying. Whereas, someone who hadn't had a long exposure to the military, would have found it a bit more difficult.

The week before we invaded Cambodia, Dick and I were sitting in a hearing and I think Rogers was testifying. It was on the subject of what we were going to do in Cambodia. After the hearing finished, I remember we went to Fulbright and said, "There is something going on out there and we think we should go." So we went. By the time we got to Hong Kong, it became even more clear. The next morning we got on a plane and ended up in Vietnam. The following morning we found ourselves in a helicopter from a base in western Vietnam with the general who was directing the invasion of Cambodia. We actually went in with the troops and watched these guys crossing the border and running through Cambodian territory. Now, of course, when you do things like this...and we did a lot of things like this, a lot of things in helicopters, motor bikes, etc. -- when the military says that they are only shelling or bombing military targets and that there has been no "collateral" civilian injuries and you have been in a helicopter over the place that has been leveled, this kind of claim is not only patently absurd, but demonstratively untrue. And this was the kind of thing that the military kept getting themselves into. A tremendous pressure to produce results that led to tremendous distortions of the truth. My own theory is that this is how the United States got into all this trouble in the first place because the civilian leaders in Washington kept getting reports from the military that weren't true. And they didn't seem to have any way of going behind them and finding out what was really going on. So they were getting a distorted picture.

So, it led me to conclude that whenever you get into something like this, the executive branch, especially the White House, ought to have its own independent investigatory group that would make sure that the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense were really getting the facts and not just the results of military reports being passed up the chain of command with no checking within that chain of command.

Let me give you an example on the third point. The way we discovered that the United States had illegally trained some Cambodians who were alleged to be native soldiers was that we were walking along a street and ran into one of these guys. I can't remember whether it was Dick or whether it was me, but one of us said to this fellow in French something like, "Where is the hotel?" Instead of answering in French, the guy said, "Say again, sir?" Well, it didn't take a genius to know where he had learned that phrase and it wasn't in the Cambodian army because we weren't training the Cambodian army at that point. So that is an example. And then we discovered that these were the Khmer Krom, who had been in Vietnam, who had been shipped over. These were Khmers who were basically Vietnamese who were part of the South Vietnamese army who had been trained by the Americans. So that is the way you find out that kind of thing.

Q: You tell in an earlier session how you found in Phnom Penh through somebody's girlfriend who was listening to a radio...

LOWENSTEIN: Well, she wasn't somebody's girl friend, she was a well known correspondent, Sylvana Foa, who today, incidentally, as we speak is the UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesperson. She was then a UPI correspondent. I went through that incident before.

Q: Yes, but that was by chance.

LOWENSTEIN: That's by chance. Let's take the using as many sources as possible part of it. When we were trying to find out exactly how many sorties we were flying over Laos and Cambodia, and who was flying them, the information was not given to us. I can't remember whether this was on security grounds or they didn't know, or the records aren't kept here, or it is none of your business, or we need authority from Washington, or whatever it was. But we didn't get it. When we stopped in CINCPAC, we were around there for two or three days and at some point somebody said to us, "You know, we have this fantastic computer and it logs in every single sortie in Indochina. It has an account of exactly when the pilot takes off, where he is going, what he has done and when he gets back." We said, "Well, that is interesting, we would like to see that." So they said, "Sure, sure, it is marvelous, you will be impressed." They took us into a big room and there was the computer. We said, "Well, just as a test case, what if we asked you what sorties had been flown in Laos last month." The guy said, "No problem." He punched a sheet and out came a map of Laos with every sortie listed. As I recall we went through all of the sorties in Laos and probably Cambodia as well. That is where the figures come from in the report that we did on the subject. They came from the CINCPAC computer. Now those guys who were sitting off in a room far removed from the theater of operation, knew more than anyone else in

the world, except the Pentagon to which they sent their reports back. They knew much more than anybody in the theater in Vietnam or Okinawa.

Q: They didn't know that the Pentagon didn't want you to know?

LOWENSTEIN: And they didn't know that. There was another interesting incident in CINCPAC where we were trying to find out military assistance figures. We were trying to find them out without much success. We were at dinner one night with someone and he brought along a friend of his. This fellow said, "Meet Frank so-and-so from the comptroller's office in the Pentagon. Frank plays the computer the way Paderewski plays the piano." We said, "Oh, that's interesting. Since you can play the computer, can you pull up the figures on exactly how this military program works, what the funding is, the commitments were, where it came from, etc.?" Again we got the whole story. Now this fellow did know what we were supposed to be told and what we weren't to be told and that, of course, was something that we were supposed to be told because that was a congressional authorization. The fact is, nobody else knew how to do it. He also explained how this stuff was presented in order to meet various legislative restrictions on amounts, conditions, etc. So, indeed, he did know how to play the computer like Paderewski plays the piano. And the point is, that was where you get the information. It wasn't as available as easily anyplace else.

Q: One thing that puzzled me in your congressional discussions is the fact that you were later hired by Kissinger. It was my recollection that this was regarded, although you said it wasn't partisan, as a highly anti-administration effort trying to undermine the effort in Vietnam, etc. And you guys were very effective because of the things that you turned up, concrete incidences in which the administration was caught out, not telling the whole story. How come you got hired?

LOWENSTEIN: I really can't answer that question. All I know is that when I went in to see Fulbright and said that I was going to leave and that I thought I would go to a business school or something, he said, "Well, I am seeing Kissinger tomorrow, do you want me to ask him whether he would like to have you back in the Foreign Service?" I said, "Well, sure ask him, see what he thinks." And I was told that the reaction was very favorable. At that point Eagleburger was working for Kissinger and made the same check and said that Kissinger would be delighted to have me back. In fact he wanted me to work on speeches.

Q: It still surprises me.

LOWENSTEIN: Well, I like to think it's because he thought the reports were really very good and some of them weren't criticizing the administration. The first Cambodian report in fact said that we thought the Cambodians really were worth supporting and we never in any report implied that the invasion had made inevitable a Khmer Rouge victory. What we did say was that it had driven the Khmer Rouge further into Cambodia because they had to get out of where they were as the US forces went across the border. So they were geographically in a deeper penetration than they had been in some ways. They were always along the Thai border and the Vietnamese border, but there was some movement into places they hadn't been before. Our argument on the Cambodian invasion was that there hadn't been any true consultation with the Congress, which there was supposed to have been and that militarily it seemed to us that it would

prolong the war in Vietnam. If you go back and look at that first Cambodian report and the press reports on that first Cambodian report, you will see that in fact the administration used it as an argument that even we had agreed with them on certain things that they were saying about it.

MARK S. PRATT
Desk Officer for Laos and Cambodia
Washington, DC (1968-1973)

Mr. Pratt was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Harvard, Brown, Sorbonne and Georgetown Universities. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he studied Chinese and was posted to Hong Kong. Throughout his career Mr. Pratt dealt with Far East and Southeast Asian affairs, serving in Taichung, Hong Kong, Vientiane, Paris, Taipei and Guangzhou (Canto), where he was Consul General. His Washington assignments also concerned Southeast Asian matters. Mr. Pratt was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Today is the 2nd of December, 1999. Mark, you came back in January 1968, and you were on the Laos-Cambodia Desk-

PRATT: -until 1973. Again, a five-year assignment.

Q: When you came back in 1968, could you give a feel for where Laos and Cambodia were in the Washington complex? Had the Vietnam War sort of almost overwhelmed this area, or was there a substantial group looking at this and figuring out what to do about it?

PRATT: Well, obviously by 1968 the emphasis had been on Vietnam for some time, but Laos and Cambodia, the office of which was located right across the hall from the Vietnam Desk, was obviously very much involved in what was going on in Vietnam. In many cases, as I discussed earlier, there were efforts certainly to try to keep them somewhat separate and to try not to militarize, shall we say, the situation in Laos and Cambodia the way it was being increasingly done in Vietnam.

Q: Could you describe a little bit of the structure in the Department of State, where you fit in, and then we'll talk about the issues?

PRATT: Well, of course, this changed several times during the time that I was there, but there was, of course, under the assistant secretary, a deputy assistant secretary who handled Indochina, and I think that that was only Indochina, French Indochina, that is. And then the other deputy would handle the Southeast Asia or China or Japan. The biggest office was called the Vietnam Working Group, rather than just the Vietnam Desk, because of course it was also working on North Vietnam as well as South Vietnam, and it was seeing this as also an operation which had to include more about what the Defense Department was doing and then of course later on what the negotiations in Paris were all about, or even pre-Paris, the concept of negotiations which at that time was already being urged by Harriman on Johnson.

Q: What were you doing? Start at the beginning. I'm sure it evolved and changed.

PRATT: Well, in the beginning I was the deputy office director on the Laos side. There was an office director, and he had two sections under him, one Laos, one Cambodia. I was sort of the action officer on Lao matters. The head of the office was Tom Corcoran, who had his own experience in Hanoi before in the 1950s and also in Cambodia and Laos, so he was a well-grounded hand for Indochina.

Q: Oh, yes. One of our earliest oral histories was with Tom.

PRATT: I see. Well, Tom was a very good, savvy officer who knew the substance and was concerned about being as effective as we could be, and he was not carried away by any of the particular enthusiasms of the morning.

Q: Well, this is one of the things. Talking about enthusiasms, did you have the feeling where you were that one of the things we had to do was to almost sit on the CIA because, as we've talked about before, Laos had such a major CIA establishment there by that time?

PRATT: No -

Q: Talk about the relationship.

PRATT: Well, the relationship was basically that we felt that there was no chance or very little chance of doing what was best for Laos and Cambodia; we merely had to avoid the worst. And this, I think, is something which many officers in the Foreign Service gradually come around to realizing is the primary function of experts in the foreign affairs side when they look at what the elected representatives of the United States will be doing, and therefore how do you minimize the damage? How do you keep things from getting worse? So that was our approach. And the biggest threat did not come from the CIA. The CIA was already being slapped around by the military in Vietnam. It was already waning. All the operations which they had previously done - and done fairly well - in the Highlands, and I knew some of the people in Saigon who had been involved in those efforts, just as I knew some of the people in Laos, many of whom on the CIA side I thought were very savvy and very effective . . . So no, we did not really consider the CIA to be the major part of the problem. We sometimes considered some of the leaders - I mean, Shackley would have done things, and Devlin also.

Q: Robert Shackley.

PRATT: Shackley and then also Devlin, who went out there at that time. Some of these persons were being too responsive to the pressures put on the CIA by the military, by the Pentagon, to accomplish what we considered to be excessively "adventurist," activities, wasting and damaging the assets which we felt we had in Vang Pao and elsewhere in Laos. So it was really the militarization of the conflict in Vietnam and the lack of understanding of what the military problem in Vietnam really was. I'm sure when you've interviewed a lot of people who had been in Vietnam, many of them will be blaming the political leaders for not permitting this, for not

permitting that, handling the military incorrectly, and the whole concept of the Vietnam "complex" within the military is something which I think certainly deserves much more attention and a much better look than it's ever gotten and probably ever will get, because the military is, I think, not very good in examining itself and in understanding its own shortcomings. Obviously, a lot of our political leaders deserve their criticism as well. I do think that Lyndon Johnson was very ineffective in having a good foreign policy, and I think he kept on Dean Rusk, primarily because he liked his Southern accent, far longer than Dean Rusk should have been there. I think in addition to that his handling of the military - because most Southerners, you know, generally have nothing but the greatest of confidence in military people, despite the Robert E. Lee's idea of what they are trying to get in their generals. And so I think that our biggest problem was really trying to have knowledge about the area and knowledge about the people involved, knowledge about how things were set up, and a feel for the people there that was almost totally lacking in the American military. I don't think that's necessarily true for some of the top civilians in the Department of Defense. We had some very, very good people, particularly later on, when President Nixon was in. I think Secretary of Defense Mel Laird was really a very, very good Secretary of Defense and had in his ISA office a group of very, very competent people. And of course nobody can fault Elliott Richardson as a Secretary of Defense, either.

Q: You came there just as the Tet Offensive was hitting?

PRATT: Yes, I was in Washington when the Tet Offensive hit.

Q: You were in the bureau. How was this perceived when it started and as it developed.

PRATT: Well, of course, it was perceived primarily as an aspect of the political situation within the United States and the relationship between the government and journalists, which were both, of course, we thought, being rather badly handled. And one of the reasons for their being relatively badly handled is that they were being handled as part of an attempt to manipulate rather than as, let's say, getting a good policy which is going to be effective and then letting the chips fall where they may. It was already the beginning of, shall we say, "spin" running programs. And I think this is in part what some of the military complain about, but the point is they played their own role in this, to my mind. And what some of the most dishonest people giving the worst reports back as to what was going on were in the military. That goes from Westmoreland in particular. We all hoped that Abrams would turn this around, but he didn't.

Q: Well, this, of course, is one of the basic problems with the military, in that it's in the culture that they have to give a positive view of what they're doing, rather than say, "We're losing."

PRATT: That's right.

Q: I think I've mentioned before during part of this period, 18 months from 1969 to 1970, I was consul general in Saigon. I would get these military briefings as I would travel around, and these were sort of well-rehearsed, canned briefings which were all supposed to show that I, the officer, and the command that's doing whatever it is, is doing a good job, even if it's not their fault that the job isn't being done well.

PRATT: That's right. I quite agree. Now I, of course, was under the influence, when I was Laos, of the John Paul Vann school as well as the CIA school, because these persons, whom I would see most when I would go to Saigon as well as, of course, seeing my fellows in the embassy, and I visited a former colleague of mine who was with me together in Laos, Tom Barnes, who was in Ben Lam. And I visited him up there and ran into John Paul Vann [Ed: see Neil Sheehan, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and American in Vietnam*], who came in, and so forth. And there was no question but that the persons who knew Vietnam best were persons who could have found much better solutions than those which the military adopted when they came steaming in. For example, their concern about a field of fire going up a road there meant that they would chop down rubber plantations. Okay, well this alienated not only the French planters but it alienated all their workers because it destroyed their livelihood. And there they were trying to fight a war in which they required the support of the people they were dealing with, and they did the very things which destroyed the support of the very people they needed. So we felt that this was one of the biggest problems, and I know that the military thinks that they are merely in an engineering-type approach, dealing with matter and not dealing with human beings, and they don't think that that's part of their job, just as they don't think that, say, pacification or anything of that sort is part of their job.

Well, you can imagine what would have happened if you had tried to tell Eisenhower that when he had to deal with the French and they were invading France and had to say "To hell with all the French." Come on, you can't do that. Or for example, you've got McCloy and you say, "You don't have anything to do in Germany. The army has defeated Germany; now we turn it over to the Department of the Interior." You know, come on, the American military has been able for centuries to do the task which it's called upon to do. It's only now that they're saying, "Listen, you elected people have no right to tell us to do anything we don't want to do." And I think this was the major mentality, and one sees it still. I mean, everybody is saying how marvelous General Colin Powell was and how he restored everything from the disastrous . . . how marvelously he helped us recover from the Vietnam syndrome. Well, I think not. I think what we're seeing now in Kosovo and elsewhere is the continuation of the military's concept that it is what decides is supposed to be done and it's going to take any war that they're given and try to turn it into the war that they like. And that's why, of course, we continue to have the American military able to fight a big Soviet invasion from Eastern Europe into Western Europe. Richard Pearle yesterday was saying that he thought that it was appalling the way we're now developing all of our equipment basically designed to fight a Soviet invasion. And the procurement timing is many years, and therefore, by the time any of this stuff is produced, even if it might have made sense at the time it was started, does not make any sense. And there's no effort on the part of either the President or the Secretary of Defense to try to shorten procurement time to keep up with the very rapid change of technology. Well, the military, I think, is very much that way. It's very set in its way and believes that it should tell the civilians what war is, who the enemy ought to be, what they are supposed to do about them.

Well this was our major problem about Laos and Cambodia, particularly Laos. Later on, of course, in 1970, the big problem was the invasion of Cambodia. That was, of course, one of the crucial things which called me off from doing time in my Laos work to doing also Cambodian work. And this is a time when-

Q: About the spring of 1970.

PRATT: -the spring of 1970 - and this is when Rogers also asked for the formation of a special working group on Cambodia, to look at various aspects of this. This is just when, of course, Kissinger was grabbing a hold of things from his point of view and changing the whole structure of how the Asian approach was done.

Q: Well, I'd like to go back again. Let's talk about 1968, maybe to the spring of 1970. We're talking about your perspective at that time, and we're talking about the military. Now, by this time, the American military had had thousands of officers of various ranks serving as advisors. Serving in Vietnam you almost had to, even though it was a relatively short tour, get your ticket punched to move on. So I would have thought that you would have had the feeling that there was a pretty solid cadre of people who knew Vietnam in the military - or were they so isolated that it didn't seem to give you that type of expertise?

PRATT: Well, I think that they were also shifted. And of course the ethos was such that those who did know anything about it were generally sidelined. As you know, the whole concept of command was such that people had to go in there with a particular type of command, and then once they punched that ticket, then they were rotated out.

Q: It was six months. There were usually two assignments in a year, which was a disaster.

PRATT: Well the point is that also they were not highly valued for acquiring the knowledge and abilities which were required by the situation. They were highly valued for the way in which they could deal with Tan Son Nhut Air Base. I think if anybody in the future looks to see what the ratio was between - what do they call it? - nose - and tail? - that the tail, of course, was wagging this dog very early on, and the enormous layers, and the enormous bureaucracy of Tan Son Nhut Air Base -

Q: You're talking about the Pentagon -

PRATT: Pentagon-MAC-V headquarters there at the airport.

Q: It was huge.

PRATT: Which was huge, and which, of course, the military ran this for the benefit of themselves. And all the people who were also working on this, in large, large numbers in Washington, viewed this as their way - though some of them would say, in a cynical way, "Good Lord, if we keep this up, maybe we can turn this from a two-promotion war into a three-promotion war." Then again, they would say, "Let's go off and make our inspection tour leaving the 28th of this month and we'll come back on the 3rd and we'll be able to get two months' combat pay." So they were viewing this war as part of their fiefdom, part of their way of getting something for themselves. This was no longer a concept of trying to win the war we had, even trying to understand the war and the enemy that we had. Now, admittedly, I think that certainly President Johnson was no great help. I mean there are some things that . . . Pulling a cheap trick like the Tonkin Gulf incident, if that is indeed what it was, was something which does nobody

any good. Saying that he's going to fight this war without raising taxes, without putting any kind of strain on anybody - this also is no way to fight a war.

Q: Including not drafting people in colleges and all of that in order to keep the pressure off the middle class.

PRATT: No, you have to enlist the people rather than viewing them as the enemy. And we created not just the enemy in Hanoi; we created an enemy in the United States - by the way, in which we did not handle what this war really was. Now I think that in many ways it was a much more laudable war in that it was very much concerned to avoid too many casualties, one of the first times we ever considered that as part of what we were doing, but we were avoiding casualties of the enemy as well as for the U.S. for the benefit of the U.S. electorate, not for the benefit of the war that we were involved in. And in addition to that, we were trying to help escape what this war really was by coming up with mythology like that of Dean Rusk saying, "This is part of the world Communist movement, and it's all run out of Moscow, and everything we do in Vietnam is hurting the leaders in Moscow and the leaders in Peking who are in the chain of command from Moscow down to Hanoi, and from Hanoi down, of course, to Saigon." So I think that the concern to fight this as a creation for public relations and media purposes, rather than seeing it as something that was a factual question and a problem which we had to first understand better ourselves and then to try to explain it better - this is, I think, also the fault of the top leadership. And obviously poor President Johnson was very badly trained to see this, and he did not have, I think, advisors of the caliber of, let's say, General Marshall and other people of the Second World War period who could have given him much better advice. Bunker was not bad, but Lodge was a disaster.

Q: Mark, going back to this time when you were there - in the first place, what was the feeling at that time, by you and your influence group, that you were influencing - you know, I mean your working group that you were dealing with this? I mean, what you said now, was that apparent, and how well did you think that the Department of State, through the Foreign Service and maybe other experts brought in, was serving the cause or not serving the cause? We're talking about 1968 to the spring of 1970.

PRATT: Well, the talks in Paris had started, and Laos was one of the subjects which was occasionally included in that. We were not against holding the talks. In fact, we thought they'd probably be useful, and that, of course, was a small part of the problem which we were playing a more direct role in, and therefore we were encouraged to spend more time working on that than on, for example, what the military were actually doing. There was not much advice from the State Department asked for by the Department of Defense. The American military have never been very terribly fond of political advisors. I mean, they say they want them, and they try to get them to sit in a corner of the room and not interfere in what they would call their military matters. They are not quite as bad, perhaps, as doctors or lawyers, but they do feel they have a profession, and while I'm quite prepared to admit that they do, I think they occasionally misunderstand, as some doctors do, that they have to deal with the whole patient, the whole problem, and not just that part of it which they would like to have it limited to. So we did indeed feel that what we were trying to do was constrain them as best we could, and obviously by the time when President Nixon came in in January of 1969, we felt that there was perhaps a better

chance of having an influence go from the political level to the military level and have the military understand better what its real problem was. However, we did not see that this took place that rapidly, because everybody else was sort of deferring to the military and its concept of what their war was. And of course they were chafing at the bit because they kept feeling that they were being kept from doing things which, as a military, they ought to be able to do, at the same time that they felt they couldn't criticize these decisions because they came from the lawful commander-in-chief. So everybody was very unhappy with what was going on: we because we thought the military did not understand what it really ought to be doing - and many of us were very much in favor of having direct pressure applied to Hanoi and doing effective measures such as bombing the rail lines into North Vietnam, blockading the ports, as was done to save the Christmas bombing -

Q: Of Haiphong.

PRATT: But the problem we had there was that at every point Dean Rusk would go in and say, "Ah, the Chinese are still just acting as agents of Moscow, and they're all together in this, and if we try anything above such-and-such, then the Chinese will invade, as they did in Korea." And we were saying, "Come on, the Vietnamese would never want the Chinese in," because the old saying of Ho Chi Minh, that it's better to be in French shit for a few years than in Chinese shit for centuries. So we did not see the Russian and Chinese connection the way in which some of the political figures at the top were apparently presenting it.

Q: What was the East Asian Bureau called in those days?

PRATT: East Asia. It was before they added the Pacific.

Q: In the view of the professionals - not of Dean Rusk, but in the view of the professionals - you did not see China as ready to move across the Yalu into North Vietnam and come down and attack.

PRATT: Definitely not. We saw even the strains between the Chinese, who were building the roads in Northern Laos, and the Vietnamese, and how the Vietnamese wanted that road construction from the point of view of having supplies come in, but they did not want a large Chinese presence. At that time already, as you know, or later on perhaps, we were trying - and certainly the minute that Nixon came in we were trying - to get the China connection going in a separate way from the way in which it had been viewed by Dean Rusk, as merely a spin-off from the Vietnam one. Fortunately, President Nixon himself had already seen the importance of China. He had written about it in 1967, I believe it was.

Q: A Foreign Affairs article.

PRATT: The Foreign Affairs article, yes. So we realized, although he put India there instead of Japan or whatever it was, nonetheless he had recognized the importance in Asia of China, and we figured at some point we therefore would be able to have a more sensible China policy and not necessarily trying to split China away from Vietnam, because we were sure that China would continue to support the unification of Vietnam, because that, of course, was ideologically

connected with their concern about Taiwan. Therefore, that was not something that we could do; however, we could expect Peking not so support Ho Chi Minh's desire for the creation of the greater Indochinese state, in which Vietnam would rule Laos and Cambodia and Thailand.

Q: Well, now, I take it from what you are saying that your view and the view of others was a feeling that the Johnson-Rusk administration was by this time a spent force and maybe had gone down the wrong track and that you looked forward to the Nixon Administration. Of course, Kissinger was an unknown quantity at that time.

PRATT: That's right, and certainly unknown for Asia, and insofar as known at all for Asian matters, shall we say, it was China that he was considered to be not very well informed about. I had friends from Harvard who ridiculed Kissinger's approach to China. He went to them and asked for briefings, and he said "Maybe I will take all afternoon to talk about China." And at the end one of them turned to the other and said, "Well, he does not know much about China, does he?" And he said, "He did not express the right views about China." And the other one said, "He didn't even ask the right questions about China." So Kissinger has been very good, I think, as his own publicist, but no one had very much knowledge of what he might do, despite the fact that he had made several trips to Vietnam, and some people say that he did ask some of the right questions there.

Q: When it happened, how was the Nixon-Rogers connection, this new administration? Did you have a feeling it was taking hold and beginning to do some of the right things?

PRATT: Well, we learned very early on that it was Kissinger who would be grabbing hold. Of course, we knew that Nixon had his own views and was very much a key element in all of this, and therefore you could not really move without having some idea in your mind as to how his mentality would look at this problem. But nonetheless, it was Kissinger's emergence which startled, I think, Rogers. And very early on, of course, came to the attention of Elliott Richardson. If you can ever interview Elliott, I think you'll find that he'll be a very, very good source on what was going on there. But the minute Nixon came in, the State Department, basing itself on what Nixon had written and a bit of what he'd said about Asia, tried to start work going on China. And there was a speech, I think Rogers gave one in I've forgotten what the sequence was, but there was one by Rogers in Australia and another by Richardson in New York, which we sort of wrote and sort of suggested be given, which sort of tried to point to a maneuver concerning China. And of course, there was an immediate response from Kissinger and a directive from the White House that nobody should talk at all about China and this would be off limits. So then it became very clear that whenever something looked significant and important, that Kissinger would probably want to grab a hold of it. This also turned immediately, of course, to the Indochina situation. Kissinger grabbed a hold of that.

Q: Well, did you all get hit by this flurry that Kissinger did on purpose of wanting position papers on everything of the State Department, which was according to everyone, including I think Kissinger, was basically designed to tie up the State Department while they went ahead with their own policy?

PRATT: Well, yes, and in addition to that, the whole approach to the papers, in that you were

expected to give your options, and they were supposed to go from the silly at the top to the silly at the bottom, and everything was always aimed for "option 3b" or something of the sort, which would be neither the high nor the low.

Q: Well, the classic one was "abject surrender, nuclear war, or something in between." The something-in-between was always the one that . . . These could be gussied up, but basically that was how these things were designed.

PRATT: So of course you spend your time spinning this, and these were often long papers, and they had generally very short time fuses. It was a little bit later, this time when I was involved in doing these, because we had to do even more than anybody else because we very quickly became first . . . the Vietnam Working Group was put under Bill Sullivan. Bill was not permitted to tell either the assistant secretary, Marshall Green, or Secretary Rogers what it was he was doing in many areas because he was considered to be working directly for Kissinger. That was when it was a Vietnam Working Group reporting directly to Kissinger. Then it was expanded-

Q: The policy, was this before 1970.

PRATT: Yes, 1969. And then it was expanded to be the Indochina working group, so that Bill Sullivan, instead of being just the deputy assistant secretary-type setup, it was a separate office, and he was then put over the Laos and Cambodia, although Laos and Cambodia continued for a while to be still reporting to Marshall Green on some matters, and Marshall Green was kept in the loop for a while there. Then later on almost everything had to be handled through the Working Group, and as you know, that's a time when Kissinger was also establishing, or refurbishing, the inter-agency committees, and by that time the inter-agency committees were doing most of the work. That was the WSAG - the Washington Special Action Group - the Forty Committee, and the Senior Review Group.

Q: At a certain point during this period we've blocked out, when you were in Laos and Cambodia, was it sort of understood that essentially you were working for Kissinger, and not for the State Department, and was there a Laos-Cambodia man or woman over in the NSC?

PRATT: Yes. In fact, there was one for each. The Laos lost out; that is, the man of Cambodia was General Haig. General Haig sent his man, General Vessey, to Cambodia, and he tried to hold on to that. Of course, Kissinger was himself handling much of the Vietnam thing at that time, and the NSC tried to get into its hands Colonel Kennedy.

Q: Richard Kennedy.

PRATT: Richard Kennedy, yes, who was, of course, a deputy to Haig, and he wanted to be able to get a similar control over the Laos side of things and wished to have the Lao communications and all the rest of that be funneled through him, but the Defense Department said, "We are not involved in war in Laos. We won't touch it." CIA said, "Listen, we are doing the bidding of the U.S. Government, including the Department of State, in Laos, but we are not doing this as a regular CIA operation; therefore, we do not wish to be point man."

Q: This was sort of disingenuous, wasn't it?

PRATT: No, it wasn't. It was part of the internal U.S. Government bureaucratic fight. I remember when Laird went up to testify on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, he took Bill Sullivan and myself up there and said, "Well, of course, the Defense Department has nothing to do with Laos. If you want to ask questions about Laos, you ask the State Department." Because the fiction and, to a certain extent, the reality was that the American ambassador in Laos was running the operation, and whatever the CIA did, they did it at the behest of the American ambassador. If there was bombing in Laos, they had to go through the ambassador's office. You had your Mort Dworkin and so forth working as bombing officers. So Laird was very meticulous about this and said he would not be held responsible for this, that they did not have the command structure, they had no generals in Laos, and so on. This was part of the basic U.S. policy, which was to support Laos as an entity which should be considered as neutral as it could possibly be and could be returned to the neutral provisions of the Geneva Agreement. And therefore, this was something which got very down to the nitty-gritty of what policy should be. But the NSC didn't much like that, because it liked the Ollie North type approach.

Q: Being in control of everything right at the center.

PRATT: Well, primadonnaism - in other words, it's *my* country. In other words, it's not that there is a U.S. Government. These are all fiefdoms spinning off from Henry Kissinger, who distributed them as grand duchies to his various minions, and then they would try to use the other structure and play them off one against the other. It was very Byzantine, but as you'd guess from the way in which he had this Washington Special Action Group, Forty Committee, and Senior Review Group, with basically the same participants, and then different people would talk differently. If you got to the Forty Committee, then you'd have Richard Helms and probably Mitchell attending.

Q: Helms was the head of CIA. Mitchell was -

PRATT: Attorney general. So I would attend meetings on Laos, and because of the CIA role there, you'd have Helms. And because Helms was there, you had Mitchell. And then it would turn into the Senior Review Group, and it would be a different representative from the Department of State and so forth, but Hemming would always be in the chair, and he would generally walk in and say, "I've just talked to the President, and he believes we . . ." From there on. So this was a very different type organization. It was not from the President, who as you know was most reluctant to talk to many people, a very shy person, and therefore was delighted to deal with just one person and then feel that he had the real control going out in various areas. And Kissinger, of course, was very good in signaling both that he would do exactly what Nixon wanted and secondly in implying - even when it was not true - that he had just raised his own ideas with the President and the President supported them totally.

Q: You are a Foreign Service officer, and in a way almost by instinct and by training, Foreign Service officers are supposed to figure out where power is in various countries where they serve and what buttons to push. I mean, was it pretty quickly apparent how this was working, and how were you, as a Laos officer, getting your . . . I mean, what were you doing in order to get what

you wanted or what to get? Or was it all orders coming down to you?

PRATT: Oh, no, no. So much of the orders, we tried to make sure that we drafted the orders we wanted to get. And it was networking that we did, and we developed, as backup to the inter-agency approach, a network of people - and obviously when Person A was posted elsewhere, then we'd have to make sure that he introduced us well to the next person coming in - and we also had to work out something at our inter-agency level which we would then have to sell to other bosses.

But we had some very bright people. We had, for example, Jerry Britten over in ISA, who could sell things to Laird. I mean he had access to Laird and would tell his immediate superior, and they had some pretty good ones. And we would generally try to I shan't say cook things, but we would try, since we were the ones who had the best knowledge, most detailed knowledge of what was going on, to try to make sure that we came up with, shall we say, the most sensible policies we could. For example, when we discovered that General Lavelle was bombing parts of the Chinese road - I was the one who detected that from some of the military traffic - we would then get to ISA. ISA got to Laird; Laird got to them, and they had the man fired, because to begin with he was manipulating an oversight in how some of the various lines on the map were drawn, and he was anxious, of course, to avoid any kind of restriction on what he was doing, and from his point of view, if people that said that China was really running this whole thing or Moscow was running it using China, then obviously hit the Chinese. Well, that, of course, was just the time when we were trying to push to get our own dialogue going with the Chinese and say, "Listen, we can eventually agree at least on some things concerning Southeast Asia." So we, indeed, had our own little team, and we'd often get together just before some of the bigger meetings because the bigger meetings would generally include other people on Cambodia, other people on Vietnam, and so on, and therefore the Laos side would be I shan't say a sideshow, the way Willy Shawcross put it [Ed: Sideshow: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia] ... and yet it was something where we knew that we had to be aware of what the big Vietnam questions were, because they'd be the things finely discussed. Then at the very end there might be a little fillip concerning what was going on in Laos.

Q: Could you explain who Lavelle was?

PRATT: Well, General John D. Lavelle was the general in charge of the Air Force engaging in operations in the Indochina sphere, and he was eventually removed and disciplined for violating his instructions.

Q: He was up in Thailand.

PRATT: He was in Thailand, yes. His was in Udorn, Thailand, which was the 7/13 Air Force headquarters for the Indochina area.

Q: Well, in 1968 and 1970, what were your prime concerns, and how were things going as you saw them in Laos?

PRATT: Our prime concerns were to try to keep the American military from doing things which

would complicate unduly Souvanna Phouma's efforts to have Hanoi restrained by his actions with Moscow and Peking. In other words, his effort to convince both Moscow and Peking that he was not being un-neutral for, shall we say, bad reasons, from their point of view - that he would like to be as neutral as he could be and he wanted the Chinese to be involved, he wanted to have good relations between Laos and China. He believed that was important, and he could not do this if he appeared to be an American pawn. And therefore we had to have Laos look like something other than an area in which the American Government was just acting as though it was the colonial power and Souvanna Phouma was our puppet. This permitted him to remain on until he, of course, turned things over to his brother.

But there was no need, we felt, for many of the incursions they wanted to do using American troops into Lao territory. We did not mind what the CIA was doing, which was trying to block certain guerilla operations - in other words, provided it was aimed at the Vietnamese. And similarly in the north, Vang Pao, and also in the far north, the other Thais up there. So that we considered to be far preferable to the way in which the American military operated. We therefore had to keep the Defense Department happy. As I say, the Defense Department at the upper level, particularly Mel Laird, was very sensitive to all this and for the most part not very well prepared to accept the more outrageous demands from MAC-V, you know, of widening the war just to be able to widen it. So that was the major framework - trying to maintain Souvanna as best we could because we felt that it was valuable in itself, of all else, and we were very concerned, particularly when we had people like Bill Sullivan around, very concerned about the people of the country concerned, in trying to minimize the sufferings. We also, of course, had to do work a great deal on such things as the AID program for Laos. We supported the currency, so we'd go to the World Bank and IMF to work out supports for their exchange program. The second largest AID mission after Vietnam was in Laos. So we had across the board a whole range of things which we were trying to do, but the principal thing was to maintain the viability of Laos and to try to minimize the suffering of the people there, who were not actively involved against the U.S. - quite the contrary. And then to have against the Vietnamese use of Laos the kind of operations which would cause the minimum concern for Souvanna. Souvanna said that if you're hitting against the Vietnamese and it's clearly against the Vietnamese, they say they're not in Laos, well, they can't say they've been hit and they can't blame me for that because they say they're not even there.

So this is of course . . . we then permitted use of American Air Force in Vietnam and then operations in northern Laos in support of that. This is when we put in directional radar in the mountains of northern Laos, and of course we had Vang Pao and his people as our marvelous troops were extracting the airmen. They were operating throughout the western part of North Vietnam as well as in Laos to pick up pilots, and so we had a number of operations which we were trying to control to make sure they served the purposes which had been decided upon. And I must say that the American Air Force and military did a very great job in all of that.

Q: Was there any concern in putting these directional radars - because later one of these ones was old and rotten -

PRATT: That's right.

Q: Was there any concern about the isolation and the protection?

PRATT: Yes, a great deal, which is why, of course, this was something which we had to work out with Vang Pao and I think it was the father-in-law - because he had several wives, and it was the father of one of them who was the chief in the area in which we put in the first one. And so, yes, one had to make sure that we knew the terrain, that we knew what the assets were and making sure also that this would be something for which the Meo would also feel that they wanted to fight.

Q: During this time, 1968-70, who was our ambassador in Laos?

PRATT: Mac Godley up until 1973. [Ed: G. McMurtrie Godley, career Foreign Service officer presented his credentials on Jul 24, 1969 and left post on Apr 23, 1973.] So let's see. I'm trying to think. Bill Sullivan, of course, was for a while, and then he came back.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the so-called "bombing officer," the operation there, was well under control, that they knew what they were about and this was not something where it might get out of hand, although you talked about the Air Force?

PRATT: We knew that there were efforts on the part of the Air Force to push the envelope, and they would be prepared to be far more understanding if bombs got close to an inhabited village than the bombing officer and the ambassador were. But any failure on that score would be something which could be laid at the ambassador's door, and if reports came in about that, then there was a remedy - not that we reprimanded him, but he knew that there were people back in Washington watching over this. And so even Mac Godley, who liked to be very much a generalissimo, was aware that he was sent out there with an organization back here which gave him his orders and that he was expected, if he didn't like them, to come in and request that they be changed. But not to violate them. And as you know, I think most Foreign Service officers are far more respectful of orders and will indeed go in and try to get them changed if they think there's something wrong with them, and will not just disobey them because they think they're crap.

I think that's also for example when, say, they questioned even the loyalty, Foreign Service officers had generally been quite trustworthy from the point of view of loyalty, something that you cannot say for some of the military.

Q: Well, now, in the body politic, this was the period of demonstrations and all. Did you feel any repercussions of the antiwar movement on the Laos operation at this particular time, or were you off to one side?

PRATT: No, we were right in the middle of it. I went up and talked to people. For example, I went up and talked to Reischauer and others at Harvard. When I came to Providence, my current wife was married to somebody else, and she gave a party in which they included the usual academic types, most of them not knowing very much about Asia, not really caring very much about Asia, but they were very passionate about all of Indochina. And of course I would get it in the neck. But yes, the whole question of the reputation of the Vietnam War was very

problematic, particularly in intellectual and political circles in the United States. Certainly not very much was being done successfully to handle that, and this was true particularly, in think, under the Johnson Administration, but even under the Nixon Administration, when the effort was indeed made and both Kissinger and Nixon, I think, made some very cogent arguments, nonetheless, the ferment was very much there.

Q: Something we may have touched on before, but let's go to the 1968-70 period again. What was your feeling about the whole of our effort in Vietnam? Was this a worthy cause, or was this in American interests, and all that?

PRATT: Well, I think we basically considered that this was one of the more, shall we say, principled wars that we were involved in. We were not fighting it from any narrow aspect of U.S. interest. We did not have a defense agreement with the Vietnamese people or anything of that sort. It was not part of a treaty organization like NATO. It was not right on our doorstep, and so forth. We were therefore doing it for relatively high-minded reasons, trying to prevent - just as we would have done, obviously, if East Germany had attacked West Germany. We would have had far more cogent reasons for intervening, but the point is we had the same reasons that we should have had for preventing Stalin from moving as far to the west as he did. And this, I think was something which was in the minds of people, that we had let this take place in Eastern Europe and we shouldn't permit something similar to be done in Asia. I don't know whether that was what the French really felt they were doing; I'm sure some of the French did. Others, of course, really thought that the French had been merely involved in holding on to a colony for commercial and other reasons. But I don't think that that was what was in the minds of many of the French. *La mission civilatrice* is something which very much influenced the French as well. So the fact that the French couldn't do it - well, if the French had not been able to prevent Stalin from moving in to take West Germany, then perhaps the U.S. ought to be involved. Well, I think that this was part of the mentality. Now it's one thing to say you have a laudable goal, but the next question is what are your chances of doing it and what is the means you may have to use to accomplish this. We thought those second two questions were not well addressed. We obviously had felt that the earlier period, immediately following the departure of the French, had been badly managed.

Q: That was 1954-55.

PRATT: 1954-55-56, when for example the earlier Geneva agreements, which we'd been somewhat involved in, they called for elections et cetera and polling for reunification. Now should those have been provisions in that agreement? Well, we weren't determining what was in that agreement. And should we have tried to find some better way of handling this afterwards in order to blunt the obvious intent of the Indochinese Communist Party in Hanoi to replace the French to begin with and maybe even to move on Thailand next, because there was a Thai aspect to the Indochinese Communist Party as it was formed in 1931, and Ho Chi Minh had his first assignment in Thailand, where he was an organizer. So how are we going to see the problem for what it is and then try to determine how we best can handle this? And this is something in which I don't think we did a very good job.

Q: Well, now, let's turn to spring of 1970. In the first place, I can't remember the exact timing

because there was this rather infamous attempt by the South Vietnamese to invade Laos - Operation Lam Son 719 executed in February and March of 1971 or something.

PRATT: Something of the sort, yes, and it was up in what was often called the Triangle area.

Q: Did you get involved in that? The idea was that the South Vietnamese were going to go into Laos to block the Ho Chi Minh Trail, wasn't that it?

PRATT: That's right.

Q: And Lam Son 719 or something like that was operating. I mean, you must have been involved.

PRATT: We were, and we, of course, recommended against it, only the decision was made based upon MAC-V, that, one, it would be a great success and it would be something which nobody would really notice. Of course it was noticed, and it was not a great success. So this is precisely what, say, Bill Sullivan, of course, was, he thought, one of the best persons to give advice on this sort of thing. I believe he was still in Laos at that time, and he argued against it and really challenged MAC-V et cetera - that they had been engaged in this, that, and the other thing along that area and had never been able to do very much, and the losses, not only Vietnamese but in American operations (because Americans were going in with the Vietnamese) - and the American losses would be totally out of whack with what they could expect to accomplish. And indeed, that's the way it turned out. So often when we make our recommendations we knew full well that they might not be accepted. We were, after all, only one factor in this.

Q: This essentially was an invasion of a foreign country, and so sitting on the Laos Desk, as this happened, did this have any repercussions? I mean, was there much consideration or some office talk about this?

PRATT: There wasn't. The fact that it wasn't a success was what the most important repercussion. You notice they didn't try it again in that area of Laos. But there was, you see, a lot of this went down to disputes about borders, and there was a little area where the DMZ came in, which was disputed, and some of the people were saying that this is what is being used by Hanoi to be able to say that it's not using Lao territory because it claims this little area, which goes around the DMZ, and therefore, we have just as much right to move in there as the Vietnamese have to say they're not in Laos because it's an area which had a peculiar background in the French time. I think there are some maps in INR where they worked on this. We tried to say that this is not what the Vietnamese had in mind. This is not something which is part of their mentality. They're going to deny it no matter whose territory they may eventually recognize it to be. But then again, they also considered all of Indochina to be their territory, from the point of view of what the Comintern gave them as their marching orders in the 1930s. So this was something which obviously caused Souvanna some pain, and of course it was in an area which they had absolutely no pretense to control and also an area which the Lao Communist movement could not really claim to control, because it was indeed in the non-Lao-inhabited areas. It was the Lao Tung, the tribal people, who existed on both sides of the border and so on. So this was something which was a problem, but it was primarily a problem because, of course, it was not very successful.

Q: Well, let's turn to the events of the spring of 1970, when there was a joint South Vietnamese-American incursion into what was called the Parrot's Beak. What was the initial reaction you heard about it, and then what were you doing?

PRATT: Well, we were involved very much. As I say, Rogers had established a little group to work on Cambodia, and this was before everything was being handled by Kissinger. And so one of the things that we were working on, and I was, of course, next door to the person who was the principal action officer on Cambodia, but was whipped into it because we had to write so many papers about Cambodia. And one of the key things was that we were trying very hard to convince the White House that Sihanouk, despite his failings, was more of a positive element than a negative element. We didn't think he was quite like Souvanna Phouma - he was not as much of a gentleman. Souvanna Phouma called Sihanouk "*ce prince mal élevé*" - 'this badly raised prince.' We knew that there were problems with him, but still we considered that he had no personal interests and no national interests in permitting his country to be taken over by the Communists of Hanoi any more than Souvanna did. Therefore, the thing was how to make sure we kept him as much of an ally as possible, because he had prestige, he had international connections, he had support of many of his people. These were assets which nobody else in Cambodia could readily lay claim to. So we were checking on him as he saw the increased operations of the Vietnamese in his own country. On one occasion, when he flew to a province bordering on South Vietnam to the north (I don't remember what it was), and he was asked to leave, and he felt that this was something which was going too far. The Vietnamese were already using Cambodia, from the northern route, as a supply route for parts to the Third Corps.

Q: This was around the Mekong.

PRATT: Well, west of Saigon. It was not up in the upper highlands, Danang and so forth. And so we also knew that he had been permitting the use of the port of Sihanoukville, also using then army trucks to convey some military equipment, again to the more southern parts of Vietnam, which the Communist was using. And we knew that he was not totally aware of this or was not totally aware of the volume. There was a big dispute between CIA and MAC-V over the importance of this, and it was the CIA which was charged with looking at port capabilities, checking on the ships going there, how many of them, checking on what the capacity of the cranes were to offload and so on, and therefore estimating the tonnage. Well, they got the tonnage wrong because they got the Belgian company's specifications for different cranes from those actually being used. However, they were fighting against MAC-V's claims that the tonnage was everything that was being used by the Vietnamese Communists in the southern part of Vietnam. In other words, nothing was trickling down from the North, and therefore, all of this tonnage was what their figures were. So as usual, you had two intelligence organizations arguing about the facts, neither of them right and both of them having their own reasons. Well, I don't know whether the CIA had any ulterior motive, but I think they really wanted to show that they felt that they were capable of making this kind of analysis, with photography and querying Belgian firms and all the rest of it, and come up with a correct figure. But in any case, MAC-V won the game, because by that time, of course, we had Al Haig beginning to grab a hold of the Cambodian side of things. And so of course they then decided on moving in to disrupt. We, of course, were opposed to this with then advising our political bosses to keep in good contact with

Sihanouk while this was going on. But at the same time that we were advising that, MAC-V back in here in Washington was dickering with Lon Nol to depose Sihanouk.

Q: Were you aware of this?

PRATT: We were not fully aware of their intrigues in Phnom Penh, by no means, but we knew that there was something going on, and we knew that Lon Nol was making a play. And of course you had a much more distinguished and important figure, in a way: Sirik Matak, who was, I think, a fairly honorable gentleman. And so indeed you had people who were viewing Sihanouk as complaisant and supporting the Communists, whereas the State Department considered that he was doing as best he could to try to hold onto things. And there were certain things he felt he couldn't do and there were things he felt that he could try to do by other means. And his whole departure from the country, his talking in France - which we could not get a kind of good readout which we could then play to our top leaders - and then, of course, his conversations in Moscow - and we lost contact with him there; we didn't even try to see him in Moscow. And of course his plane was going from Moscow to Peking when MAC-V moved and Lon Nol took over.

Q: Well, now, we talked about mindsets, but it strikes me that the military is always looking for that particular point that if you push a button you either knock out this road or you do this and that will change things dramatically. Do you have the feeling that the military got fixed on the supply side of Sihanoukville and all that?

PRATT: Yes, that was almost their total motivation.

Q: There seems to be a sort of an undercurrent - it's a very American thing, in a way - that there has got to be a gimmick, something that will unravel the puzzle, and if you just push somewhere . . . I mean, this is not just military, but our military respond to this idea that "this is going to be the key." Were we in CIA and State both sort of saying "no"?

PRATT: Well, I think CIA was at that point pulling out of this because they had originally been very, very important in the whole operation in Vietnam and the upper highlands and the organizing of troops there. They had, I think, been relatively supportive of the Green Beret approach, but they had seen the American military move in and destroy the whole concept of irregular-type things in favor of spit and polish and parades and so on. And so I think by that time they had seen that if it worked at all they wouldn't be involved in it and they'd get none of the credit for it, and therefore they were sort of washing their hands. And this is when they began also to do the same, certainly, for much of Laos, although they were still hoping, I guess, in Laos that they could still retain some of this. And in Cambodia, of course, they had not been involved in much other than up near the Lao area, where they had gotten some Cambodian troops, which they had organized through Lon Non, Lon Nol's brother, and they were involved in certain operations in the Bolo Lands and other parts of southern Laos against the Vietnamese, using these Cambodians tied in with Lon Non, who was probably even more unsavory than his older brother.

But the other key thing was, I think the American military has always wanted to have "their" man. In other words, they've not been very relaxed with political figures who themselves are

aware of various complexities. They want to have their man whose mind is as simple and direct, military as their own. As you know, the American military picked Phoumi Nosavan in Laos. In the first place, they love military men, and I think that's going to be part of what we're going to have difficulty with in Bosnia and Kosovo. They're probably going to be in favor of the military leaders in Kosovo, just as they apparently almost all the military went out to Bosnia and was impressed by the Serbs there because they felt that the Serb military people were disciplined and behaved like true military men were, whereas the Bosnians were-

Q: Were always committing war crimes.

PRATT: That's alright - they don't mind war crimes. As we can see, there was not much impetus on their part to do anything about Calley and the other people doing war crimes on our side, so they were always very indulgent about that. But they do like the military mind, and this, of course, is exactly what Haig thought that he had found in Lon Nol.

Q: Did you find that there was any sort of residual resentment against Sihanouk on the part of the CIA because he had made a big point, back in the early 1960s, I guess, of kicking all the CIA out and made this not a place that the CIA could maneuver in. Was that around or not, I mean the feeling about Sihanouk?

PRATT: A little bit, a little bit, but I think, because I have known some of the people who had been there in the station in Phnom Penh, and many of them ended up with a considerable amount of respect for Sihanouk, so yes, he was difficult, but you know, the CIA, these are people from Yale and probably even from Harvard, and therefore they understand that people can disagree with them. They hadn't gone to West Point, where everybody agrees with you, and if they don't they're the enemy. So I don't think that they were nearly so . . . As I say, they were already cooperating with Lon Non and using the Cambodians for matters in Laos. And admittedly this was the southern part of Laos, which had originally been part of the same old kingdom of Champassak that, after all, you know the old Lao kingdom of Champassak claims the northern part of Cambodia as having been part of the kingdom of Champassak in the 16th and 17th centuries. So indeed, the CIA has been involved there, and they found- [end of tape]

Q: So you don't think the CIA was a problem.

PRATT: No, I think the CIA people working at Tan Son Nhut Air Base and Saigon might have submitted an analysis of Sihanouk and what was going on which would not be supportive, but we did not feel in Washington that the top figures... because we had some very astute and I think broad-gauge people at CIA who participated in the Indochina working group. And they were always very sensitive to the more sophisticated aspects of international politics and so on. So they were probably pretty divided, just as there were certain persons in the Department of State who were divided as well, and they probably were supportive of this because they resented the fact that, while Sihanouk now had been very unhappy with Ambassador McClintock, who arrived with a dog under his arm and so forth-[Ed: Ambassador Robert McIntock, career Foreign Service officer, presented his credentials on October 2, 1954 and departed post on October 15, 1956.]

Q: That's McClintock. He did that in Beirut, too.

PRATT: Well, anyway, the fact that he had difficulties with Sihanouk . . . Well, almost everybody had difficulties with Sihanouk. Sihanouk was a difficult person. But persons who really looked at what a leader of a country, with all of his failings, if he's able to accomplish something, then use his abilities, because you've got nobody else who's going to have comparable ones. Some people felt that Sirik Matak might be able to do that because, after all, he was related to the royal family. He never was able to take off. He never was able to compare with Lon Nol. Lon Nol, of course, was basically also able to say that he was the man of the Americans. But in any case, to get back to the whole question of Sihanouk, we had, I think, certainly in the East Asian Bureau, a general agreement that he was better than alternatives, and the State Department being what it is, you know, if you can get something which is better than something else, you generally go for it. You don't say, "Let's see if we can get the perfect solution, and if he isn't perfect, we'll make him perfect" - which is what I think the military believed. We also had seen the problems of trying to shape Phoumi Nosavan and having him with his military backers turn into the perfect leader. It gave us a disaster in Laos. And Souvanna Phouma, who was a prince in the sense of *noblesse oblige*, was able to accomplish things which Phoumi Nosavan never could have. This is something which we felt, you know, there again, the American military went along - in fact were perhaps the principal impetus behind removing Diem - and then of course they were the ones who were always looking for the person to replace him, and one after the other they found disasters. And so we at the Department of State were looking out there and seeing what these appalling figures were that had gone one after the other. Then we saw the other side, the French, saying, "Ah, Big Minh is the one who really can handle this." And then finally at the end, Polgar running in to the ambassador and saying, "Maybe we can get Big Minh to solve the problem for us now."

We did not find that the American military were very good in running foreign countries, particularly when they select a fellow general to do it.

Q: Well, now, let's talk about the incursion, as it was called. How was this seen when you got brought into it - I mean, the accomplishments, and then what were we about?

PRATT: Well, of course, we considered that the major accomplishment was the fact that Sihanouk was brought down and it polarized things. Two, we were just beginning to see what the Cambodian Communist movement - the new one, the one that started in 1966 - what that was beginning to do. We were monitoring, for example, the fact that they had moved west of the Mekong and were having their communications run by the Chinese and most of the communications going outside to Peking and equipment coming in from China. So one was seeing that you were dealing with a change. Now that, of course, was stimulated by the incursion. Secondly, we were looking at the general situation in the United States, and you know, it's very difficult to predict what foreign country the Americans can get an enthusiasm for. Who would have thought that Tibet would be such a great spot for Americans to be picking for a place to fight a kind of battle. Well, Cambodia? Cambodia was far less important than what was going on in Vietnam, but we had enormous demonstrations here, and I went with my colleague, who was the principal action officer on Cambodia, down on the Mall, and we talked with the people there, and of course they were enjoying this as a bit of an outing as well, so my Cambodian

colleague turned to me and said, "Well, you know, if they knew as much about what's going on as we do, they'd really be worried!" So our basic concern was that this was not going to be very effective and, secondly, that it would have repercussions which would be ones we could never really handle.

I made a trip out to Cambodia as well as Laos in 1970.

Q: Was this after this?

PRATT: This was after this, yes. Of course, things were by then polarized and things were then also getting into the usual Asian corruption mode. How could they best utilize the American support? Was there any way of trying to restrain, let's say, the exploitation of this war for their own benefit, trying to keep the war from being done for the purposes of war. And so this was what we were concerned about because we didn't think they'd leave the troops there. We thought that it would end up, the bombing and all there rest of it, causing more havoc and sort of putting Cambodia into the pot, rather than being more like Laos, which was tied in with but could still be handled separately and you could come up with a final solution which probably then would have Sihanouk around and you'd have some areas where the Vietnamese would still be operating but you'd at least not have sacrificed Cambodia in the process. We could not have envisaged what the Khmer Rouge would eventually do. We didn't think that Cambodians would be quite that bloody-minded. We knew they'd be much worse than the Lao because the Lao are basically a rather benevolent Buddhist people. The Cambodians are a more bloody-minded Buddhist people. But the thing is that we did see that this was "Vietnamizing" the Cambodian situation even more than . . . But they even held on to Laos and keep Laos from being so completely Vietnamized, but Cambodia was basically destroyed as a separate *Gestalt*. It was put within the framework of a kind of satellite of the U.S.. Lon Nol could never have the prestige that Souvanna Phouma had, including in, shall we say, Hanoi because Souvanna Phouma still had sufficient prestige in Hanoi. His younger brother would be the person who was still there, and he would go through the procedures of having the younger brother take over from the older brother and, you know, having things move a little bit more humanely. And of course also foreign support.

Q: Did you sense, after the initial incursion, a sense that it didn't quite work on the part of the American military, or was there sort of a positive attitude maintained?

PRATT: Well, we knew that one thing had been accomplished, but we felt that in the first place, Sihanouk was going to Paris, Moscow, and Peking to accomplish the very things that we sent the troops in to do - in other words, to cut down Vietnamese utilization of Cambodia for the southern part of Vietnam. And so we felt that this incursion and of course the seizure and the breaking of the route from Sihanoukville so that indeed that part was no longer used, nonetheless, that did not block the utilization of the northern route, and therefore we felt that Sihanouk could have accomplished everything that was being done by Lon Nol without the disadvantages of having Lon Nol around our necks.

Q: What was the reaction from our embassy in Phnom Penh at this point?

PRATT: Well, it was told to shut up.

Q: What?

PRATT: *It was told to shut up.*

Q: Yes, but I mean, when you went out there, what were you getting?

PRATT: Oh, I was getting the fact that they were finding it very difficult to find somebody to deal with because, of course, you had Lon Nol there. He was really the top figure. You had Sirik Matak. I believe at that point one still had Sami San. You had some fairly prestigious people there, but the political structure had been so much a personal garment tailor-made to fit Sihanouk that you didn't find it easy to change that and have another political structure put into place. Lon Nol thought he could do it somewhat through military means, but he didn't have the prestige among the royal family and with top, very intelligent people like Song San to be able to tell them what to do and to run his own type of government. So you had considerable disorder.

Q: Were we seeing the Khmer Rouge in this first period as being basically a Chinese tool rather than a North Vietnamese operation?

PRATT: Well, first we were seeing it as Sihanouk saw it as a rather disruptive student group. These persons were all students - the top leaders, anyway - who had been paid for by the Cambodian Government and the French Government, who had gone off to Paris and studied there. Some of them even became members of the French Communist Party and came back, of course, and had their own little movement inside Phnom Penh and working in various ministries of Sihanouk's. And so they were indeed considered the left fringe of the returned students, but of course they then left Phnom Penh, went into the woods, and of course they had to fight against the Vietnamese Communist Party, which had organized the Cambodians and which was, indeed, the old Communist Party movement which traced its history back to 1931, to the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party. This is not what Salatsar, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary had as their background. They, of course, had not been involved in the early anti-French Indochinese War. They did not have direct connections with Hanoi. They were rather anti-Vietnamese, which is why, of course, they initially went together with the Vietnamese part but then split off and had their communications handled by Chinese and so on. So the Chinese were merely a matter of convenience. None of them were of Chinese origin that we know of. Some of them, I think, were Vietnamese. I think Ieng Sary may have had some Vietnamese blood. But we didn't know too much about that Communist Party, just as we had difficulty in trying to tell people about the Lao Communist Party. Fortunately we'd had a RAND study and another book by Joseph J. Zasloff [Ed: perhaps the 1969 RAND research memorandum "Revolution in Laos: The North Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao"] on the Lao Communist Party, which pinpointed the real party as opposed to the Neo Lao Hak Sat, which was the front organization. But we were having our problems because, of course, MAC-V considered them all to be run out of Hanoi, and we found it very difficult to try to convince them that, you know, Sihanouk says these people are different, they aren't tied in with the Vietnamese. They were not giving any significance whatsoever to the movement of their headquarters and the communications center from east of the Mekong to west of the Mekong. They saw no significance to any of Chinese connections; from their point of view it merely showed that China was supporting Hanoi and what Hanoi was doing. Of course,

the suborning of Thai and all the rest of that along that border area was not something which they were able to see as it really was. And of course they were totally taken by surprise later on, when the Vietnamese attacked Cambodia. Why would they do that? Of course the Cambodians were trying to get the Vietnamese out of the Parrot's Beak .

Well, in any case, at that time, we did not consider that either the Vietnamese or the Cambodian Communists were a major threat. After all, if the Cambodian Communists required support from Peking, then Sihanouk was perhaps best able to figure out how to get them to give the minimum support, and maybe Sihanouk would not even have permitted support if he had been still sitting in Phnom Penh - but of course he wasn't. So that's another aspect, we felt, of the dangers of getting rid of Sihanouk, because Sihanouk would be able to make sure that this was seen as a Cambodia versus Hanoi type problem rather than a Communist movement inside Cambodia which other Communists, particularly in Peking, might feel they not only could but should support.

Q: You talk about MAC-V. Did you feel that MAC-V was sort of its own entity, or was this a reflection of the Department of Defense? You're talking of you as a trained political officer trying to operate with power centers. Where did you feel things were coming from?

PRATT: Well, there was a big movement within particularly the Army staff, and of course that influenced the Joint Chiefs. So indeed, there were people in the military who would be prepared to go that route, and they were constantly supporting MAC-V. But it was the usual thing of a war being considered with rather narrow blinkers.

Q: You're putting blinkers on it.

PRATT: So you'll find people with those blinkers, including in the Department of State, because you get people who, shall we say, have never been to Asia, and of course they're inclined to say, "Well, there's only one way to fight a war; there's only one kind of war, that was what there is, and that is, you kill as many of the enemy as you can and lose as few of your own as you can."

Q: Did you find within the Asian Bureau in the Department of State, was there a division between the real Warists and the other ones who said this is more complicated?

PRATT: Somewhat. And even for example in the Vietnam Working Group there were some, particularly those who were closely tied in with the American military, who were inclined to take the position of the military, and of course were incensed with the way in which Sihanouk was permitting his territory to be used by the Vietnamese. And the fact that he didn't want to have it used by the Vietnamese and was trying the best he could to have it not used by the Vietnamese was something which they probably did not give much credence to. I mean, after all, who are these people who are doing something that we don't like. I mean, do we have to give them an order every time or shoot them if they don't? Well, maybe we do.

So Sihanouk did not have as good a reputation here as he did in Paris, and after all, he'd been somebody who had fought the French and won against the French, basically. The French did not want him to become king, or when they made him king they did it because they thought he was

young enough so he would do everything they told him to do, and they found out that he didn't. Well, nonetheless, they eventually came around to seeing that he wasn't as bad as all that, and they found him flamboyant and interesting, and besides, he spoke French - whereas, of course, Sihanouk didn't speak a word of English, or wouldn't speak a word of English. He did speak English. He understood English pretty well. So Americans, and particularly the American military, did not respond easily to a prince like Sihanouk. He was quixotic, he was artistic, he had a lot of the character which we don't consider a part of a serious political figure's character.

Q: You know, I'm not an Asian hand, and as I say, my time in Vietnam I was really basically a Balkan hand, but I remember sort of in the corridors and in the Foreign Service - this is before he was deposed - Sihanouk was considered a pain in the ass by an awful lot of people in the service, and you'd here stories about, you know, you had to be careful about him because when he was on a diet he was particularly difficult to deal with and he ought to go back to France and sort of slim down for a while and then come back. I mean, he was a little bit of a figure of fun. Did you find this? You were dealing with a serious person, basically, as far as you were concerned.

PRATT: As I say, we considered him both. In other words, he was a great figure of fun, and of course, as you know, he used to himself engage in operas and plays and required members of the diplomatic corps to attend these dreary evenings occasionally. So indeed, he was a figure of fun, and he was quixotic and he was mercurial. And when I quoted Souvanna Phouma, even his fellow Asians felt that he was often rather hard to take. However, we had noticed, we had had his career from the 1950s on to look at, and when it came to really matters of great importance for Cambodia, he was a serious political figure, and even Souvanna Phouma recognized that, although he found he had bad manners, the way he treated Souvanna, and there was a famous story of Boun Oum, of course, who would have been Sihanouk's elder, visiting Stonsang [Ed. ?], and he was greeted by Lon Nol, who welcomed him to Cambodia, and he said, "Oh, on the contrary, I feel as though I am welcoming you to Champassak." And when that got word back to Sihanouk, he forbade any further contact with Boun Oum. Well, you know, the little petty things he was quite capable of, and yet the basic fact that he was indeed aware and associated himself with Cambodia meant that he was a serious political figure, much more so than Lon Nol and of course Sirik Matak and Song San were both potentially serious figures. And of course Matak stayed to be executed, and Song San went off to Paris and was involved with the new emergence of Cambodia following the fall of the Khmer Rouge.

But this indeed we kept arguing because we said, "Yes, we recognize his defects, we recognize how difficult he is to deal with," but you know, what else had you got? You have a system, a royal government, which is basically based on Sihanouk. All the people serving at his pleasure. You have no representational organization that means anything. These people are all emanations of Sihanouk, and nobody would dare go against him. And at least he's somebody who's considered to have some legitimacy, which is not what you'll get with a number of other political figures who are going to be equally authoritarian. So we argued that he has sufficient entrée in Paris - he can get the French to support him. The Russians probably like him even less than we do, but they nonetheless are going to see that maybe there's nobody else who favors their interests that much unless something comes from Hanoi to Moscow, say, "Block this man because we intend to do the following." So Moscow apparently gave him a fairly cool hearing

when he went through, and then, of course, he hit Peking, and the Chinese eventually, of course, supported him through all this period despite the fact that they didn't like him one bit. If there was anybody who would consider him to be frivolous and all the rest of it, it's going to be a good old Chinese Communist system. And his womanizing - well, Mao hid his womanizing, too, but it was rather different. And on the rest of it, of course, they would consider him undisciplined and lacking in any kind of solid ideological base.

Now, how they could be supportive of the Khmer Rouge is a different matter. That's one of the things I asked him when I was in Paris, of course much later. This is a time when Zhou Enlai's widow went down there and sort of conveyed prestige to them by her visit. And the person who was my interlocutor in Paris was sent there as ambassador. So how the Chinese could consider this Khmer Rouge group to be anything other than a group of ideologically deviant thugs, I don't know. And obviously in the end they finally did feel that they had to drop their support. But when it came to Sihanouk, we realized that the Chinese would be ambivalent also, but the point is, would they not prefer this? The fact that they were opposing the Vietnamese in Cambodia indicates that if they could have had Sihanouk, they would have stuck with him. They would not have supported Pol Pot's régime against Sihanouk if Sihanouk had been there, and that's in the end what really toppled Lon Nol. It wasn't the Vietnamese because the Vietnamese did not have any means at that time to go beyond the utilization of the border area. So this was our view, and I think it would have been borne out if you could have replayed history and changed that one decision of deposing Lon Nol and invading Cambodia.

Q: During the period after and up through 1973, when did you leave this job in 1973?

PRATT: In 1973 I went first on a quick trip to attend the international conference on Vietnam and the last of the negotiations for that, and then was posted there in April.

Q: Posted where?

PRATT: In Paris. There was one important even of 1970 which I think I ought to fill in, and that was after Sihanouk was in Peking. The Indochinese people's summit conference was convened. Sihanouk attended for Cambodia, of course -

Q: He was out of power by this time.

PRATT: Yes. This was held in what they called the Vietnamese-Lao-Chinese border area. Some say it took place in Canton. Others say it took place in Nan Mei - Guangzhou, of course, now. And I don't know whether it's ever been fully established from the Chinese side just where it did take place. But this was, I think, a significant development which I was never able to convince the Department of State was that significant. In fact, INR wrote it in as "old wine in new bottles." I said, "No, this is China giving its blueprint for what is going to happen if and when Hanoi takes over South Vietnam. This is time when Zhou Enlai" - because Zhou Enlai attended, and I said, "You don't have Zhou Enlai attending this kind of thing unless there's something in it for China and unless it's important." And this is when I believe the Chinese said they were going to be supporting the non-Vietnamese-controlled Communist movement, the Pol Pot movement, and they were going to say that it was nominally under Sihanouk. This is when they insisted on

having direct access to the Lao Communist movement, and not just the French organization of the Neo Lao Hak Sat headed by Souphanouvong. And they were therefore laying down their markers. While Hanoi could expect to reunite Vietnam and control all of Vietnam, it was going to have to leave Laos and Cambodia sufficiently independent so that China could maintain its paternal relations with two Communist movements. In other words, the expanding of the real Indochinese Communist Party. Now several years before that they had nominally disbanded the Indochinese Communist Party and referred to it just as the Lao Dong and said it was limited to Vietnam. And in fact they said there were two movements, one in the north and one in the south. Obviously that was not correct, but in addition to that, operationally speaking, they had retained strong movements in both Laos and Cambodia, and therefore they were reporting in to the Central Committee in Hanoi, and some of these persons were members of the Central Committee in Hanoi, and they were therefore under the direct discipline of the Vietnamese Communist Party, or Indochinese Communist Party as it was rechristened.

Q: Well, now, turning to the peace process, during the 1970-73 period, what were you doing?

PRATT: Well, we were back-up for such aspects of the negotiations in Paris as involved as involved Laos and Cambodia. Originally, of course, it was just Vietnam, and that's all that Henry was running to his special Vietnam Working Group. But then as early as Harriman even, Harriman said that we had to whip up positions on particularly Laos, because of course it was where the road went and there would be aspects of the Vietnam agreement which would include discussions of such things as the utilization of Lao territory by Hanoi and so on. And I think what he said afterwards, one of the major reasons for this is that we are very much at a handicap in negotiating with the Communists because they don't mind coming in every single week and repeating exactly what they said the previous week, but we get bored with that. We constantly want to say something different. We want to say something new, we want to try to get things moving, et cetera, whether they want these things to move or not. And therefore we find that we through boredom, without listening to ourselves speak, undercut the only real method of dealing with the Communists. Now of course, while Averell Harriman was not the most brilliant diplomatist in the world, nonetheless, he certainly was one of those who had the longest experience, particularly of dealing with Communism from, I guess, even from Stalin on. So part of what we had to do was whip up a few little things, of which I think some of them were supposed to be zingers, in that they should annoy the Vietnamese, who were saying we're not going to discuss this, it has nothing to do with it, we have no Vietnamese in Laos, et cetera et cetera - their usual line on this question. But at least it would mean something different. Each week we had enabled something new. So this, I think, is one of the key things that we kept on doing to have fodder for the people in Paris.

Q: Before the plan of peace accord, all this was going on. Actually the military situation wasn't that awful, was it, in South Vietnam?

PRATT: We considered that basically the political situation was very bad. We considered that they had a rather feckless régime and corrupt and not coming to grips with what the real problems were, and the American military had never wanted to fight that war and certainly didn't

want to fight it the way in which the political leaders thought it ought to be fought. And so it was a bad situation. It wasn't even the Tet Offensive in 1968 that let one see just how problematic this was, but even earlier than that. So lo, these many years later, we did not believe that the U.S. had come any closer to having a real idea of what the problem was and how it could be handled. That is, we thought maybe when the Christmas bombing took place that this would be an indication - and all it was just an indication - that they were finally convinced by China and others to take what they had and the good prospects that that gave them for getting more.

Q: Well, as you were sitting on this Indochina task force, was there the feeling that if we wanted to do something we had better start mining the harbors, going after the guts of the thing rather than just nibbling at the edges?

PRATT: Yes, and we, of course, as I said earlier talking about Dean Rusk, we never thought that China would follow through on a major program, say, sending troops in the way they did in Korea. This was not so important to China. Now obviously we wouldn't want to get off on Yunan and Guangxi borders, so it's not a question of our occupying North Vietnam. But there was a lot more that we could do that would not bring necessarily any Chinese movement. But the point was if you're not prepared to do that, we said, you know, what you're trying to do is not the way it can be accomplished - just as, for example, in the case of Laos we felt that trying to fight a frontal war with the North Vietnamese troops in Laos was a no win situation. Laos just did not have the manpower to take this kind of killing battle. You had to do non-positional warfare. You had to be guerillas and just do what you can do with a very much smaller force and don't delude yourself into thinking there's any way of turning it into the major positional warfare along the lines of World War II.

Q: What were you getting from the embassy about the Thieu government in Saigon during the 1970-73 period?

PRATT: Well, ineffective, internal fighting. I mean you had Ky, who was a flamboyant figure, but not very -

Q: He was vice-president.

PRATT: And you had Kanh, who was not much better. I knew these persons somewhat in Paris afterwards, because of course a lot of them popped off to Paris. Thieu, of course, went to Hawaii, but I think I met with him once in Paris. But these were not impressive figures.

Q: Was there almost a two-track reporting system? At the top the ambassador was Bunker for part of the time, and what was coming there, and then sort of the more junior officers who were out in the field - were they sort of reporting, not the official back channel, but you know, you were hearing . . . I mean, were you getting sort of a dual picture?

PRATT: Oh, very much so, and of course we would get the standard view in Saigon, which we then called "Saigonitis," where they were under the discipline and they all had to hew to the same line, or else. I don't think this was Bunker's imperial way of doing it.

Q: You didn't have that feeling.

PRATT: You didn't need that. But the people out in the field were the ones who felt that they were having difficulty in getting their voices through, and they said, "Maybe you think everything's going Jim Dandy in Saigon, but if so it's not being translated into progress in the boonies." And this was where, I think, all the corps coordinators and the people out in the various provinces and so on were very helpful to people like us because we would hear their side of the story even though that side could be filtered so badly coming into Washington from the places like Ben Long.

Q: How would you hear their side of the story?

PRATT: Well, they'd come through Washington.

Q: So this was, in the Department of State parlance, "in the corridors" rather than through the official telegrams and all.

PRATT: That's right. There were occasional reports that they let through - trip reports that people did - and they were so informal that they didn't really try to argue anything in the way of policy but all had to be implicit in the trip report.

Q: I wasn't a reporting officer when I was in Saigon as consul general from 1969-70, but I didn't get the idea that Bunker was particularly sitting on things, but there was a huge almost machine that would grind up and pasteurize anything that came through the official reporting process. And these were people sitting in Saigon. It's like reporting on the what's happening in the United States by reporting from Washington. But still, I'm sure the process was one that ended up reflecting the Saigon view of things.

PRATT: Well, I think it reflected - because I talked to the people coming in from Saigon, who mentioned all of the things that they might like to have been able to report, particularly of course, for example, reporting on both the way the U.S. military was acting and also what the Saigon military was doing, and that, of course, was something basically off limits; in fact, that was the reason why I told Phil Habib that I was not really terribly anxious to go to Saigon unless I would be able to be reporting - since I would have been in charge of internal politics - unless I could report on the political activities of the Saigon military, I would figure that I had such a partial approach to it, even with the dissidents and the Buddhists and so forth, that it would quite unimportant compared to what the various Saigon generals were doing to each other. And he said, "Oh, well, forget about that. When you come down after you get here we'll decide what it is you can work on." And this is when I told Bill Sullivan that, well, "I think I'd prefer to go back to Vientiane," because there I knew that there was no ban on my dealing with the military, not from the point of view of what they were doing militarily but what they were doing politically - in other words, not pol-mil but mil-pol. And I was basically as much as told by Phil Habib, "Listen, I can't even get my hands on this, so how do you expect to be able to do it?" That, I think, was part of the big problem. The embassy was kept away by the enormous military establishment from the most important political actors on the scene, the military.

Q: I have the greatest respect for the fighting prowess and the sacrifices made by the U.S. military, but over the years, in one place and another, including being an enlisted man in the military, I have been . . . the system is not very good for political sensitivity and reporting what's happening. Did you find that the reports that would come out of our own military tended to be - after you sort of looked at it - to be almost discounted because you didn't think they were very good?

PRATT: Yes, and as I say, I agree with you about certainly the heroism of many of the people - not of all, by the way, of course, because as I mentioned as early as last night, there were a lot of people who merely considered this as a pathway to promotion and maybe they could even turn it into a three-promotion war rather than coming to grips with what their war was. Now admittedly they had big problems back in Washington, but if they had only explained to Washington what their problems were, then they would have to decide whether they were going to fish or cut bait back in Washington. But they kept saying, "Oh, no, can do, we will do it. Just give us the order and we will carry through," et cetera. And it obfuscated the difficulty of the real challenge facing us. But there again, as I said, I think individual reports, sometimes a trip report and so on, would show quite a bit, and individual reports from some of the military, when they came back here and they would be telling us what their experience had been, were very cogent. It's just that the general military ethos was, I think, bad. They really were not able to tell who their real friends were. They considered American civilians to be the enemy and the press to be perhaps first in this group of enemies, and they considered all of the toadying Vietnamese military men, provided they had their shoes shined and gave a sharp salute, to be their kind of boy. But of course they were the ones who were the most responsible for the terrible situation we had and the fact that we weren't able to come to grips with it.

Q: And also the real fighting Vietnamese generals tended to be pushed aside by the Tu cliques, weren't they?

PRATT: That's right. And of course they were anxious, and that's understandable in a way, to try to get the U.S. to fight the largest part of the battle and to have the largest part of the casualty and to be able to save their own military equipment, et cetera et cetera. It was not ever the kind of partnership which earlier on I believe the CIA had with some of the people in the Highlands, but of course they were dealing with non-Saigonese Vietnamese as well as *montagnards*, and therefore the very people that the French had found to be useful (because after all so much of the French Army was made up of Tai Dan and other *Montagnards*), was the group that the CIA found that they could deal with. And of course that's precisely what the American military wished to get rid of. In other words, they were much less concerned about proper prosecution of the war than about having what they considered to be a good U.S.-type military. It reminds me a bit of the complaints we are getting out of Kosovo and Bosnia, and we don't know how to handle this sort of thing. We aren't trained for that. Well, you had not such complaints coming out of the military who went into Germany or Japan after World War II. They would still do what they were told to do, and they wouldn't be crybabies and say, listen, we've never been trained to do police work or try to get bridges back up again and the economy going and so forth. None of that was particularly obvious after World War II. In Germany, some of our best administrators there were military. Often, they were indeed not career military; they were colonels brought in from running a brokerage house or something of the sort or businessmen, but many of them were

career military, and they did a damn good job.

Q: One thinks of Lucius Clay and all this. These were not fighting generals.

PRATT: Well, even if they are fighting generals, they're also generals, and they have enough sense to know how to manage something and to follow the orders they were given.

No, we really were wondering just how long this was going to play out. We had very little optimism about its coming out the right way or our way because we didn't think that we were prepared to do what would be required. Now of course you had the other dogmatists on the other side who every time there was a new directive coming out saluted and said, Oh, this is going to solve the problem for us. But Asian hands who had been working on this sort of thing for a long while felt that, yes, something can be done, but it can't be done using the methods which we are being given.

Q: Did you think that we suffered a bit from gimmickry? There was always a rather easy solution to solving the problem. I think when I went out to Saigon, I remember the military saying, "boy things are really going to turn around because we're going to give the villagers the M-16 standard military rifle." It was this type of thing, and there was always one solution to things.

PRATT: Yes, and of course, as you may be aware, one of the key things about the whole route area was the attempt to devise brand-new gimmicks - gadgets, I mean, physical objects - which would report on the use of the trail and call in the aircraft and all the rest of it, all these sensors and the rest of it that they set their little boys in the laboratories to whip up. And none of them did work terribly well, certainly not nearly so well as the Vietnamese coolie carriers. And I think also the other was the other gimmicks that could have a slogan tied to them. It became part of sloganeering and to guess all we've got to do is to motivate the villagers, and so I mentioned what Roger Hillsman said way back then, 1963, that it's going to be so easy because all you do is just have the village chiefs understand that they're working also for Saigon and have all of the mandarins at the county level realize that they also must be defending the people, the individuals in their area. You know, you don't remake an Asian society that way, but that's precisely what the military thought they could do. They, I think, sincerely believed that they do their reengineering of human beings, and it's called Parris Island for the Marines, and once you get them through there you come out with a totally different human being, and that's what you have to do to these Vietnamese. And I think they just did not understand the nature of the problems that they faced.

MARSHALL GREEN
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Washington, DC (1969-1973)

Ambassador Marshall Green was born in Massachusetts in 1916. He entered the Foreign Service in 1945. He served in New Zealand, Sweden, Korea, Hong Kong, and Washington, DC, and was ambassador to Indonesia, Australia, and the

Republic of Nauru. Ambassador Green was interviewed about Cambodia by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: Now, as I recall, you left the Far East Bureau to become Ambassador to Indonesia from 1965 to 1969. Did you have any dealings with Cambodia during that period?

GREEN: No, but neither did the U.S. government have much contact. That had much to do with some ill-advised CIA operations against Dap Chuon, a Cambodia provincial governor, which led to Sihanouk's refusal to receive our newly appointed Ambassador to Cambodia, Randy Kidder. (So in effect we had no diplomatic relations with Cambodia from 1965 to 1969.)

On August 17, 1965, shortly after my arrival in Indonesia as Ambassador, President Sukarno of Indonesia announced before a huge national day gathering, including delegations from China and North Korea, the formation of a new Peking-Pyongyang-Hanoi-Jakarta-Phnom Penh axis. In actuality this did not mean that Cambodia had abandoned its neutrality or that it had closed ranks with the Asian communist countries in any way. What it did signify was Sihanouk's personal friendship with Sukarno and his desire to gain greater leverage in his dealings with Hanoi.

Q: You mentioned that normal diplomatic relations were restored between Washington and Phnom Penh in 1969, and, as I recall, this was the result of goodwill missions President Johnson sent to Cambodia, one of those missions being headed by Chester Bowles, our Ambassador to India at that time. Now early in 1969 you were detailed to our delegation at the Paris Peace Talks on Vietnam. How did Cambodia feature in those talks?

GREEN: Surprisingly little, to the best of my memory. Of course, it was at that time, early in 1969, that the U.S. was beginning a series of secret B-52 attacks against Viet Cong sanctuaries in Cambodia. But at that time we knew nothing about those air raids, either in Paris or in the State Department. (Secretary Rogers may have been informed. I just don't know.)

Q: Yet Sihanouk must have been aware of these B-52 raids involving Cambodian targets. Why didn't he protest?

GREEN: I can only suppose that, if he did know, he kept quiet about it, because there wasn't much he could do to stop the raids and he wouldn't want to advertise his inability to do so. Moreover, if he did know, he might have derived some satisfaction that the hated Vietnamese in Cambodia were being bombed.

Q: But there must have been some American officials in Phnom Penh who knew. Here you are sitting in a country which was...

GREEN: You would think so, Stu, but in fact no American in Phnom Penh or Washington was in the know except for very few in the White House, DOD and probably CIA. Besides, we had no official relations with Cambodia at that time.

Let me now turn to a major development that occurred in September 1969 when Sihanouk visited Hanoi to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral. While in Hanoi, he entered into certain secret agreements with the North Vietnamese Prime Minister regarding the amounts of North

Vietnamese supplies Sihanouk would allow to be shipped through the Cambodian port of Sihanoukville to Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces operating in easternmost Cambodia against the South Vietnamese. The amounts involved were not large.

Q: How long did this so-called Hanoi-Phnom Penh understanding last?

GREEN: Not long. Some weeks after Sihanouk's trip to Hanoi, he tried to visit two northern provinces (Mondolkiri and Ratnakiri) but he found that he couldn't even enter these provinces which were under the tight control of Hanoi. That's when Sihanouk suddenly realized the true dimensions of the problem he faced in keeping the Vietnamese out of his country. It was probably at this point that he decided on the fateful trip to Moscow and Peking that he undertook several months later.

Q: How did our government react to all these developments?

GREEN: I don't recall that we were aware of all the foregoing events until a bit later. On the other hand, we had a number of practical problems in our relations with Cambodia, problems that involved Congress.

It was in October 1969 that I first met with Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield at the suggestion of Secretary Rogers (and presumably with White House approval).

One of the practical issues was to find out whether Congress would be likely to approve the funds needed to meet Cambodian defoliation claims against the U.S. I can't recall the origin or reasons for those claims but I do recall that both Mansfield, and subsequently Nixon, believed such claims should be paid by the U.S. In fact, John Holdridge, an FSO detailed to Kissinger's staff, phoned me to say that the President reacted very favorably to the idea advanced in a memo I wrote. I mention this point specifically because it shows how closely the White House and State were cooperating on Cambodia at this stage, both together and with Congress.

Another issue I discussed with Mansfield was the question of assigning any CIA personnel to our Embassy in Phnom Penh. State was opposed, while the White House favored it. But both CIA (Dick Helms) and Mansfield sided with State on this, and the idea was dropped because of Sihanouk's hyper-sensitivity to the CIA after the ill-fated Dap Chuon incident.

Q: Turning to the fundamental issue of Cambodia's future, how did the U.S. plan to cope with the way North Vietnam seemed to be taking over parts of Cambodia. You mentioned two provinces already under their effective control, as well as the Ho Chi Minh Trail and Viet Cong privileged sanctuaries in areas of Cambodia bordering South Vietnam.

GREEN: At that stage -- that is in late 1969 and early 1970 -- the White House and State seemed to be agreed on doing all we could to uphold Cambodia's neutrality. That seemed to be the only effective way of preserving Cambodia's territorial integrity.

With the approval of Secretary Rogers, I met several times with French Ambassador Lucet in Washington to discuss how best to promote international support for Cambodia's neutrality, since

the French seemed to be so keen on the idea. I also visited Paris to discuss this issue with Froment-Meurice who was my counterpart in the Quai D'orsey (French Foreign Ministry), and the French were seeking to promote support for Cambodian neutrality with China through the efforts of their Ambassador in Peking, Etienne Manac'h.

Q: Wasn't there some kind of international group composed of representatives of Japan, Indonesia and Malaysia that was seeking agreement among all the principal powers on respect for Cambodia's neutrality?

GREEN: You're right, but I can't recall the timing of this international group's efforts. I think it was a bit later that they visited Washington as well as Moscow, Peking, London and other key capitals. But their effort got no positive results because of Hanoi's strong opposition conveyed to Moscow and Peking. Anyway, it was all a futile exercise because of what was about to happen.

Q: What was that?

GREEN: Sihanouk left Cambodia in late January 1970 for France where he planned to spend a couple of months on the Riviera for health reasons. He did this often, but on this occasion he may have had in mind to extend his absence from Cambodia in order to visit Moscow and Peking with regard to North Vietnam's operations in Cambodia. Anyway, Sihanouk departed for Paris, leaving the government in the hands of General Lon Nol and his Foreign Minister Sirik Matak.

During Sihanouk's absence in France, there were growing student-led demonstrations in Phnom Penh against corruption involving the Sihanouk government in general, prominently including Princess Monique, Sihanouk's wife, who was running gambling casinos. There was also resentment against Sihanouk's inability to keep the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. Overall, it was clear that the better educated Cambodians were tired of Sihanouk's rule and had no trouble in gaining the support of students and the military. The peasantry was not involved, remaining loyal to Sihanouk.

Starting with demonstrations in Svay Rieng Province, followed by the sacking of the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong Embassies in Phnom Penh by thousands of youth (probably with Lon Nol's connivance), Sihanouk angrily left France for Moscow on March 13. It was at that stage the views of State and the White House began to diverge.

The deposing of Sihanouk by unanimous vote of the National Assembly on March 18 marked the beginning of a new era in Cambodia, which the State Department saw as fraught with dangers but which the White House saw in terms of opportunities to build up Lon Nol and strengthen the FANK (Cambodian army). President Nixon asked me to draft several personal Nixon-to-Lon Nol telegrams containing rather extravagant expressions of friendship and support. I was concerned that Lon Nol would read into these messages a degree of U.S. military support and commitment that exceeded what our government could deliver on (given Congressional attitudes in particular).

I also regarded Lon Nol as lacking the qualities needed to lead his country out of its mess. I

further downgraded him for having sent his family to Singapore for its safety, while the U.S. kept its Embassy families in Phnom Penh partly in order to show our confidence in the Lon Nol government.

Q: But hadn't things progressed to the point where any restoration of Sihanouk was out of the question?

GREEN: You're right, Stu. A solution based on Sihanouk's restoration was by then out of the question, at least for an indefinite time. So what to do?

This prompted me to prepare a recommendation in the form of a 4-page memorandum reviewed and approved by my colleagues in State, including INR. With Rogers' approval, it was sent to Al Haig, Kissinger's deputy, since he was emerging as the key man in the White House on Cambodian policy.

The memo analyzed Peking's and Hanoi's conflicting interests and motivations with regard to Cambodia. Peking, for example, probably saw its interests served by an Indochina composed of separate "independent" states, whereas Hanoi seemed bent on making all of Indochina subservient to Hanoi.

As to U.S. policy, I warned against active U.S. intervention in Cambodia since that would inevitably connote a continuing U.S. responsibility to sustain its government and that could not be achieved without a sustained large deployment of U.S. forces there -- an eventuality which was politically impossible given the mood of our Congress and people. Under the circumstances, our policy should be one of "waiting on events, saying little except acknowledging our broad support for Cambodia's neutrality." (France was still hoping to entice Sihanouk back to France and thence to have him return to Cambodia possibly with Soviet and even Chinese connivance.) As to South Vietnamese cross-border operations against communist sanctuaries in Cambodia, that should be encouraged but without any U.S. involvement, for we must do all possible to support the case for Cambodia's neutrality and territorial integrity.

My memo was ignored/rejected by the White House. Haig, in fact, urged U.S. intervention, and the President, and then Kissinger (somewhat reluctantly), agreed.

At about this time (early April 1970), differences arose within the State Department over the issue of U.S. military weapons assistance to Cambodia. All of us were opposed to U.S. force involvement, but Bill Sullivan (my deputy who was also chairman of the Interagency Task Force on Vietnam) favored sizeable U.S. arms assistance to Cambodia, insisting that all such assistance had to be overt. Concealment was both impossible and politically unacceptable. I argued that Congress would never approve arms assistance to Cambodia, at least not on any meaningful scale. Rogers supported Sullivan until he learned of how strong Congress' opposition was.

Q: So what could be done to deal with the build-up of Vietnamese communist sanctuaries in Cambodia? After all, we were committed to a policy of Vietnamization; yet it was going to be most difficult to carry through successfully on that policy, if the communists could operate increasingly from bases in Cambodia.

GREEN: Well, I felt that rather than trying to arm and equip the Cambodians (something Congress strongly opposed), we should encourage the South Vietnamese to conduct raids against these sanctuaries in Cambodia. However, Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams evidently sided with the White House in believing that the South Vietnamese were unable to conduct successful raids against these sanctuaries without strong U.S. support. My reaction to that thesis was: well, if that's so, then our Vietnamization program was a clear failure -- and we will never be able to get out of the Vietnam quagmire.

It was at that point, around April 20, 1970, that Lon Nol sent Nixon a long telegraphic request for weapons to defend Cambodia. The request far exceeded levels which even the White House felt our Congress would support.

So, at that point, Nixon evidently came up with a stratagem to gain strong Congressional approval for the secret plan he had evidently been drawing up with the approval of Bunker and Abrams (but completely behind the back of the State Department, including Rogers). He sent Rogers on April 27 (I believe) to the Hill to gain Senate support for a strong South Vietnamese attack against the sanctuary areas in Cambodia. I accompanied Rogers.

Rogers told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that we had just received a request from Lon Nol for U.S. military equipment. Senator Fulbright asked for specifics about what kinds of weapons, and in what quantities.

At Rogers' request, I then read out the list of specific requests. Fulbright exploded: "Why that must amount to over half a billion dollars!" Then Rogers said: "You tell them, Marshall, what we figure it all adds up to."

I told the Committee that it amounted to \$1.4 billion.

This shock treatment had its calculated effect. Said Senator Church (with the nodding assent of his colleagues): "I have no objection to South Vietnamese involvement in Cambodia. Cross-border operations are okay. Here, in fact, is a good place to test the effectiveness of Vietnamization." Said Senator Cooper: "The President now has support for Vietnamization. Let's not destroy that."

Now, what Rogers didn't tell the Senators (evidently because Rogers didn't know) was that the White House was not just seeking Congressional endorsement for South Vietnamese attacks against the sanctuaries but also to have these attacks supported by U.S. ground forces. All this was, of course, to lower Rogers' standing with Congress: either he knew and was artfully deceptive, or he didn't know and was without influence.

Q: When did you first learn of Nixon's decision to commit U.S. forces in the Cambodian incursion?

GREEN: Let's see. I learned of it the day before the incursion was launched on April 30. So that would be at the WASAG meeting on the morning of April 29. I was astounded when Kissinger

mentioned the President's decision to commit U.S. ground forces. When I registered my objections as State representative at that meeting, Kissinger said the operation was already approved by the President. I could see what a spot the decision put Rogers in with the SFRC.

Rogers was subdued when I called him about the WASAG meeting. I gathered he had just given his reluctant consent to this ill-advised operation.

I was with Rogers in his hideaway office on the 7th floor of the State Department late in the evening of April 30, listening to Nixon's announcement over TV of his rationale for ordering the incursion including U.S. ground forces. As Nixon concluded his maudlin remarks about the U.S. otherwise appearing as a "pitiful, helpless giant," Rogers snapped off the TV set, muttering, "The kids are going to retch." He clearly foresaw how the speech was going to inflame the campuses. That was several days before Kent State.

Q: That was the incident when the Ohio National Guard fired on the Kent State campus protestors, killing three.

GREEN: Shortly after the President's TV performance, there were several of Kissinger's staff who resigned in protest. Less spectacular was the letter of protest signed by 200 in the State Department, including 50 FSO's. However, not a single member of my bureau (EA) was among the signers, for which reason Rogers rewarded me by naming me chairman of a new special group on Southeast Asia, which held weekly meetings for the next 18 months, and submitted analyses and recommendations to the Secretary of State. It had little influence with the White House.

Q: Returning to the morning of May 1, 1970 -- the day of the incursion, what, in fact, was the State Department's responsibilities in supporting the President's decision?

GREEN: As usual, in such situations, we in State, responsive to White House direction, immediately set about the task of giving diplomatic, VOA and other PR support to the President's decision (including explanations to Lon Nol why he was not consulted on the incursion). As a May 9 WASAG meeting in the White House basement concluded, Nixon wandered in and took an empty seat next to mine at HAK's conference table. He turned to me and said something to the effect that, whereas I had opposed the incursion, he appreciated the fact that I loyally carried out the President's decision.

Q: Was that a compliment or a threat?

GREEN: Probably both. All during May, I was the leading State Department briefer on events leading up to, and justifying, the incursion. I had to put up with some heckling in the State Department auditorium, but, by and large, the briefings went well, since we were assisted by a lot of "factual" information supplied by our intelligence regarding enemy losses of ammo dumps and the like in sanctuary areas. But the Senate, especially the SFRC, reflecting the angry mood of the media and campuses, finally passed the Cooper-Church amendment on June 30. By then, a reluctant Nixon had already ordered the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Cambodia. I suspect Rogers had some influence on that decision.

Meanwhile Alex Johnson under White House pressure, had set up an informal group of legal and pol-mil advisers to figure out ways in which the U.S. could most effectively provide aid to Cambodia in the face of all the legal restrictions now in force. Tom Pickering proved to be the most effective member of this group which abided by the letter, but not the spirit, of Congressional restrictions.

From May onward, two of my particular headaches (which put me at odds with HAK and Haig) were: (1) White House efforts to involve Southeast Asian countries, especially Indonesia, in support of the Cambodian military; and (2) Al Haig's missions to Phnom Penh.

With regard to (1), the White House tried to supplement the paltry \$7.9 million MAP program for Cambodia, established by presidential determination on May 21, through Indonesia and Thailand providing Cambodia with some of their MAP-funded equipment. However, the White House refused to face up to the fact that, under law, such transfers would have to be paid out of Cambodian MAP funds. The State Department was committed to report to Congress all such MAP transfers by September 30, 1970, and periodically thereafter.

The issue was further complicated in the case of Indonesia by how these White House pressures were creating some serious internal political problems within Suharto's government.

At some juncture, I can't recall the date, Kissinger, before leaving Washington for the weekend, left with me a request to send a priority telegram to Ambassador Swank in Phnom Penh instructing him to seek Lon Nol's approval for (a) Indonesian military teams to provide field training for FANK, and (b) Thai AF planes to deliver supplies by air to FANK field forces. In carrying out HAK's request, I included a sentence in the telegram to the effect that it was only fair to point out to Lon Nol that costs for such Indonesian and Thai support were chargeable to Cambodian MAP funds. Lon Nol rejected the proposal out-of-hand. HAK was furious.

Q: Well, I can see why he was, but you, as a State Department official had to answer to Congress on all these matters.

GREEN: Yes. Moreover, it was not just a question of being honest and avoiding serious misunderstandings, but also a question of how such Indonesian and Thai involvement would spread the poison of Cambodia into other parts of Southeast Asia. Clearly our sights had to be set on damage control.

Earlier I mentioned Al Haig's missions to Phnom Penh as being my second biggest headache. I tried unsuccessfully to have a State Department Cambodian specialist accompany Haig on his trips to Phnom Penh. I received only the skimpiest of oral reports from Haig about his trips, which left Mike Rives upset because he was excluded from Haig's meetings with Lon Nol. A more fundamental objection to Haig's missions was the way he was deliberately undercutting Rives and, after November 1970, Coby Swank. He arranged to establish an exclusive CIA channel between himself and Tom Enders, Swank's deputy, who was considered to be more activist and gung-ho (like Haig). From then on, it was Haig who was running the "sideshow," step-by-step building up our defense assistance team, replacing Fred Ladd (the sensible military

adviser Alex Johnson had originally selected) with the loud-mouth bumptious General Mataxis, and generally undercutting any credible Cambodian claims to being neutral. Spiro Agnew's trip to Phnom Penh in late July 1970 was a PR disaster, with photos in the world press showing Agnew escorted by highly visible machine-gun toting SS men. Rives' efforts to get these men not to display weapons so openly resulted in Rives being fired from his job. Haig had been spoiling for an opportunity to have Rives removed.

Q: Did you visit Phnom Penh during the period 1970-71?

GREEN: Yes, twice. My first visit was in early July 1970, accompanied by my wife. We were traveling with Secretary Rogers, but for some reason he decided to stay in Saigon and sent us on to Phnom Penh for three days before rejoining his party in Saigon. Lisa and I stayed with Mike Rives. He had only a few officers on his staff at that time. In fact, he had no chauffeur, so that when he took us to the Paris Restaurant (excellent cuisine) the first evening, he drove the limousine separated from Lisa and me by the glass partition. (It's funny how little details like that remain fixed in one's memory.) Another thing I remember about this visit, which was the first of any Washington official during that period, was the good conversations in French that Mike Rives and I had with Lon Nol and Sirik Matak. Of the two, Sirik Matak was more impressive with his considerable experience in diplomacy (Japan and the Philippines) and with his command of governmental operations, for he was in real charge of the Cabinet, just as Lon Nol was of the FANK.

I had good, detailed briefings by Mike Rives, Fred Ladd, Andy Antippas and others in the small mission.

They had mixed feelings about the foreign press corps and the visits of U.S. congressmen and other VIPs. The views of such visitors tend to be too assertive, hawkish and optimistic. The visitors seemed to be surprised how much better things looked in Phnom Penh than they had been led to believe. In fact, one group of five House members I met in Phnom Penh were irritated with the State Department for being so cautious about their visiting Cambodia.

It was clear to me that Mike Rives had his problems with the foreign press whose numbers had dwindled from 100 in May down to 40 while I was there. These problems seemed to be related to Mike's shyness and unfamiliarity with how to handle the press. Mike also needed an experienced administrative officer who spoke French.

On the other hand, Mike was highly knowledgeable, hard-working and courageous. He clearly deserved far more appreciation for his accomplishments than he got from Al Haig and the White House.

Aside from my Embassy briefings, by far my most interesting conversation was with French Ambassador Dauge, who had a wide range of information sources (businessmen, missionaries, planters, government advisors). Dauge pointed out that the North Vietnamese in Cambodia treated the populace discreetly, never stealing, paying for their food and services, ever seeking good will and honoring the name of Sihanouk which resonates well with the peasantry making up 85% of the Cambodian population. At the same time, the North Vietnamese have made no

real effort to set up political cells, relying for that purpose on the Khmer Rouge, long opposed to Sihanouk.

Dauge attached more importance to the Khmer Rouge than did any other official I met in Cambodia. In his words: "Hanoi has been carefully training Cambodians in Hanoi for the express purpose of supporting the Khmer Rouge against Sihanouk, eventually bringing Cambodia under North Vietnamese domination." (Quoted from my diary.) Dauge continued: "These Khmer Rouge, unlike the North Vietnamese, are not making the pro-Sihanouk pitch that the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces are making in Cambodia." It is a "curious dichotomy" he concluded, "though I feel that Sihanouk has no future in Cambodia," one reason being Sihanouk's turning to China rather than to North Vietnam.

I mention the foregoing in some detail because, quite frankly, I did not comprehend then, or for some time thereafter, the importance of the Khmer Rouge, or who they were or what were their goals. I guess I had them confused with the Khmer Krom, the Khmer Serei and the Khmer Communists. They were not conventional communists but rather extreme zealots out to remake the whole nation in the bloodiest manner.

At the time of this July 1970 visit, there was a strong nationalistic upsurge, with young Cambodians flocking to the colors. Phnom Penh was spotlessly clean and superficially peaceful, though ancient Khmer-Tonkinese hatreds boded ill and there were thousands of Vietnamese refugees crowded into holding areas along the Bassac River banks. Atrocities against Vietnamese refugees were widely reported, as were Vietnamese atrocities against Cambodians.

I was well aware that the FANK was no match for the well trained and armed North Vietnamese and that the best we could hope for was to keep as much of Cambodia out of North Vietnamese control as possible and to retain as much of Cambodia's spirit of nationalism and appearances of neutrality as possible. In any case, we had to live with the realities of strong Congressional and public opposition to the U.S. getting further involved in Cambodia.

Flying back to Saigon, Lisa and I rejoined Secretary Rogers' party headed for the Far East Chiefs of Mission Conference in Tokyo which I chaired. Since there were no U.S. representatives from Cambodia at the conference, it became my responsibility to provide the overall assessment of prospects in Cambodia. The record of that meeting has me concluding that, "Cambodia faces a tenacious and resourceful enemy, a collapsing economy and insufficient outside assistance." However, these are somewhat offset by "true nationalism, Buddhist antipathy toward the atheist aggressors, and a countryside generally hostile to the North Vietnamese and their puppet Sihanouk..."

When I visited Phnom Penh in May 1971, in the company of Jack Irwin and Bill Sullivan, we were concerned, as we said in our report, "how the weight of official Americans in Phnom Penh, both civilian and military, were helping to suffocate Khmer nationalism and enthusiasm." We recommended that the size of our mission not exceed 100, that marginal programs be phased out, and that DOD should consider waiving end-user check requirements in order to keep down the numbers of Americans in Cambodia. By May 1971 a supplemental appropriations bill provided for well over \$200 million in both economic and military assistance for Cambodia. Khmer

leadership was more seasoned, having withstood many challenges. However the leaders were less sanguine, more sober about prospects. Rather than seeing victory in the offing as they had in 1970, they were gearing up for the long haul, with FANK now 200,000 strong in comparison to 35,000 in 1970.

Yet more and more of Cambodia was passing under NVN control so that only Phnom Penh and the land corridors to Sihanoukville and to Thailand via Battambang were relatively secure.

It remained pretty much that way through my remaining time as Assistant Secretary, with U.S. bombers pounding away at NVN positions largely in eastern Cambodia. The fate of Cambodia was now inexorably linked with the fate of Vietnam. It might have been otherwise.

Q: It seems to me that this whole tragic saga throws a lot of light on personalities, as indeed all such crises do. First of all there is the question of Nixon and Kissinger. Of the two, who would you say was the more determined to go ahead with the U.S. ground force involvement in the Cambodian incursion?

GREEN: I would say Nixon, because he had an absolute "thing" about being the tough guy (like General Patton), especially so that the North Vietnamese would not take us for granted and would eventually be willing to settle on a peaceful solution. And, of course, Nixon had a lot of people in Saigon, both U.S. and Vietnamese, who agreed with that tactic, including Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams.

Kissinger, in order to solidify his standing with the President and to weaken that of Rogers, was the President's willing accomplice in carrying out the fateful decision. But I cannot see Kissinger as urging the president to make the decision he did, for it brought Kissinger a lot of grief, as he must have known it would. Shawcross' "Sideshow," a best seller, is a blistering attack in the Nixon-Kissinger policies toward Cambodia, with Shawcross' comments about Kissinger being excessively unfair.

Q: Your mention of trying to keep down the number of American officials in Cambodia reminds me of a long interview I did with Andy Antippas, who...

GREEN: Oh, yes, I remember him well as one of the best informed officers we ever had in Cambodia.

Q: Andy said that we were also flying advisers into Phnom Penh in the morning, but they would leave at night. The idea was that they didn't stay overnight, so they didn't count on the total number. That sort of circumvention of Congress was being too clever by half.

GREEN: You're right; and of course people on the Hill including investigative staffers (of whom there are plenty) know, or get to know, all about such shenanigans. You can't operate that way.

Q: What about the problem Coby Swank faced when he must have known that Al Haig was bypassing him in order to deal with Coby's deputy, Tom Enders?

GREEN: Coby just learned to live with the problem. It didn't affect his standing with the State Department. On the other hand, Tom Enders was running risks by his by-passing official channels in dealing directly with Al Haig. Tom Enders has always been an ambitious officer, but he could see that, while events were elevating his standing with the White House, they might have the opposite effect with the State Department. I know, because Tom broke down at one point and confessed to me how all these events were affecting his sense of duty toward the Secretary of State. This was no play-acting performance. He was genuinely in anguish.

Q: Let's talk about the role of the foreign service officer when faced with carrying out a presidential decision with which he disagrees. I recall there were several on Kissinger's staff, including one FSO (Bill Watts), who resigned over the president's decision to commit U.S. ground forces in the Cambodian incursion of April 30, 1970.

GREEN: Alex Johnson has an interesting passage on this subject in his book, The Right Hand of Power. He points out that some 50 junior FSO's, none of whom served in Southeast Asia, addressed "a protest letter" to the Secretary of State over this decision. They were perfectly entitled to do this through the dissent channel, so long as it remained private and confidential. But they naively xeroxed multiple copies for a maximum number of signatures. Copies of this letter reached the press. When Nixon found out about this, he ordered the Secretary to fire all who signed. Rogers and Alex eventually calmed the President down and none were fired.

Q: Yes, but to get back to those who did resign on Kissinger's staff. How about you? After all you opposed the President. Did you at any point consider resigning over his decision?

GREEN: Yes, but then we FSO's are like our military -- we carry out orders once those orders are determined and issued. Moreover, in my case, I managed to stay on to fight further battles over our Cambodian policy, at least insofar as successfully opposing White House efforts to involve Thailand and Indonesia in its losing proposition.

Q: I think that's a good place to stop, unless you had any further involvement in Cambodia after 1973.

GREEN: Only in 1981 when I chaired the State Department's Advisory Panel on Indo-Chinese Refugees. By that time, the war in Vietnam had ended disastrously, although the disaster was even greater in Cambodia where Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge was still visiting some of the worst horrors in modern history on his fellow Cambodians, as well as on Vietnamese who were trying to flee from Vietnam through Cambodia to Thailand.

I surreptitiously spent a day in a part of westernmost Cambodia which was not under Pol Pot's control. But all of that is covered in the report issued by our Advisory Panel in 1981.

L. MICHAEL RIVES
Chargé d'Affaires
Phnom Penh (1969-1970)

Laos/Cambodian Affairs
Washington, DC (1973-1975)

Michael Rives was born in New York in 1921. He received a bachelor's degree from Princeton University in 1947 and joined the Foreign Service in 1950. Mr. Rives' career included positions in Germany, Vietnam, Laos, Guatemala, France, the Congo, Burundi, Cambodia, and Indonesia. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

Q: That's excellent. Then, in '69 you were up for grabs, is that right?

RIVES: Yes, there was no assignment for me, so I took my vacation, went home, and I was sitting on the beach when I got a frantic call from Washington. It was Tom Corcoran, who was then the Laos-Cambodian desk officer, Country Director, and he asked me if I would be interested in being Charge, reopening the Embassy in Phnom Penh. The Department was not very enthusiastic about this idea... it was Tom's suggestion. They wanted somebody more junior than I was. But he persuaded them, and I came down to Washington, and it was agreed that I would reopen the Embassy in Phnom Penh.

Q: Can you give me some details about why the Embassy was shut down and what the situation was when you got out there?

RIVES: Well, the Embassy had shut down, as I remember, the reason Sihanouk gave, was the interference by CIA. I think he was just fed up with America. He'd been infuriated, particularly by Rob McClintock when he was DCM in Saigon before he became Ambassador to Cambodia, who invented the name "Snooky." It gets back to people, you know. Sihanouk never forgave that.

Q: I just might point out, as a diplomatic representative, it's never a good idea to make disparaging remarks about a chief of state, because it gets back to you.

RIVES: Well, I don't mean to criticize McClintock, necessarily, because I admired him. He was a brilliant ambassador.

Q: He was a brilliant ambassador, but this was not...

RIVES: But he did foolish things like that... Anyway, for various reasons they were closed down. I think they had been closed down five years when I went there. Actually, the last Ambassador who was supposed to go there and didn't make it, was Randy Kidder. He got there, but they would never accept his credentials. So he had to leave. He retired.

Anyways, when I was called in and asked to go out there, there were two people who were very interested. One was, of course, Marshall Green, the Assistant Secretary, and the other was Senator Mike Mansfield. Before I went to Cambodia, I was sent to see Senator Mansfield. It was understood by Sihanouk, and Senator Mike Mansfield insisted, that there would be an Embassy opened at the Charge level, and that there would be no CIA. If there was the CIA, the Embassy

would be closed.

Q: Really! This was Marshall Green and Mansfield?

RIVES: It was Senator Mansfield, I think, who made the condition, the agreement with Sihanouk, that there would be no CIA.

Q: He had talked to Sihanouk, then?

RIVES: Apparently. And also that my general job would be to reestablish relations, and after it had built up, when things got better, we'd send an ambassador. So I went out there, and Elden Erickson had been out there already. He was waiting for me. He'd been out looking for buildings, that kind of administrative thing. So I moved into the local hotel at that time, and opened our Embassy there in one of the cottages. I had been there about two or three weeks or something when Senator Mansfield came on a visit. Meanwhile, I had called on the Foreign Minister, of course.

Prince Sihanouk gave a luncheon for myself and Senator Mansfield, just the three of us. We had a very pleasant lunch, and at the end, Senator Mansfield was really very kind. He got up and gave a little speech and told Sihanouk that he was hoping for better relations. He pointed out the fact that Sihanouk and I were of almost an identical age, and that he'd known me for years, and etcetera like that, and he hoped we'd get to be good friends. So that was a wonderful introduction to Sihanouk...

From then on, things were pretty normal. You know, I had established some contacts and did my political reporting. I was completely alone there for a while, except for a secretary and then I finally acquired a little staff. We found a building on the river front and moved in. We used the servants quarters in the back for office space. We had no furniture, although we were told we were going to get some. The press became interested. Once in a while they'd come visit.

But the thing that really got things going as far as the Cambodian situation went, was the secret bombing of Cambodia, of which I was completely unaware. At night Phnom Penh used to shake, literally. You could hear it. But I assumed it was on the border. And then one day one of our air attacks destroyed a Cambodian outpost up north, and that really did cause quite a furor. It was all publicized, so it was known.

That evening, Sihanouk was giving a large party at his house. When you went to one of Sihanouk's parties, you were prepared to spend the night, because he not only had a good party, but he would join the orchestra. He was a very good musician, played three or four instruments, and of course, nobody could leave until he gave the signal. So as long as he was happy playing, we all had to stay there.

That evening I went there prepared for the worst. The Chinese were there, and the Russians were there, and the French were there, and everybody else. They were all looking to see what his reaction would be to me. At first, I wondered whether I should go, but I thought, "What the heck, I'd better go." So I went, and this was typical of Sihanouk: he played it straight. He met me, and

everything was wise and well, and I danced with Princess Monique, you know, and all that kind of stuff. All to the disappointment of all the other foreign guests. I think they expected him to snub me, you know, raise hell because of what had happened -- which he'd done already, privately. Afterwards, the press became more interested, there were more and more press people. And then, of course, there was the famous incursion into Cambodia.

But before that happened, we used to go... (I just want to make one point clear here: Sihanouk was an interesting person, and I think we'd misunderstood him for many years. It was just about the time I went to Cambodia that I think the Department and the Government as a whole began to understand what Sihanouk really was. He was a patriot. What he did was for Cambodia, not for himself, and there were no real ulterior motives except for that.) When I was there, we used to go out in the country to open a rice mill or new plantation or something like that, from time to time. It became really rather a joke between me and the French Ambassador and the British to see who would be insulted that day, because we all took our turns. Every time he had an opportunity... He'd attack the United States one day, and then the next day he'd attack the Russians, and then he'd attack the French, and then he'd attack the Chinese, and then he'd let the British have it. So we all took our turn. We all braced each day when we went in to see who got criticized. But it was that way. It was deliberately done.

Q: How would he insult you?

RIVES: He'd attack us, and he'd criticize the attitude of the United States for what we were doing in Vietnam, and he'd criticize the French for not helping them enough, and the Russians for being brutes, or something like that.

Q: Would this be in public speeches?

RIVES: Oh, yes!

Q: He wouldn't come up to your face...

RIVES: Oh, not at all! He'd make a public speech during the opening of a rice mill or something. He'd drag in one of us at each occasion. We would all be sitting there waiting, because we were all ordered to be there, you know. We'd all ride in convoys, and we'd sit there in the blazing sun, and then he'd insult us! But it was a balancing act, and he did it very deliberately.

Q: It sound a bit like Sukarno used to do, but only to the United States.

RIVES: Yes. And then, of course, the other thing I was supposed to do, which I never succeeded in doing, was to try to get him to accept our intelligence information about what the Viet Minh and the Viet Cong were doing. I gave that information to him and to the Foreign Minister regularly, but he would never acknowledge it, and he never did anything that showed he was taking action against them. He was not playing the Viet Cong game, but I think he realized he couldn't do anything about it.

Q: We were talking earlier about the North Vietnamese, not the Khmer Rouge. The Viet Cong

was pretty much limited to within Vietnam, wasn't it?

RIVES: Well, the Viet Minh trail came through Cambodia.

Q: The Ho Chi Minh Trail?

RIVES: Yes, the Ho Chi Minh Trail came down through Cambodia.

Q: You were there from when to when?

RIVES: I got there in about September of '69, and I was removed in December of '70.

Q: Did you go to see Sihanouk from time to time in person?

RIVES: Oh, yes.

Q: Can you talk about how one dealt with him. What was the Washington attitude toward Sihanouk? Or were there attitudes toward Sihanouk?

RIVES: I didn't have anything to do with this until just before I went to Cambodia, but my impression was that they all saw him as sort of a nuisance, a pest, amusing in some ways, dangerous in other ways, you know... a mixed reaction to him. Very few people, I think, understood him until about the time we reopened our Embassy. Except for somebody like Mansfield, who was always, I think, rather in his favor. And I think that some of our ambassadors appreciated him, what he was doing, but I don't think Washington really understood him.

Q: What about when you were together with him? Would you go see him man on man? And how did he do?

RIVES: Yes. He was always very polite, and we discussed whatever business I had to discuss with him. The only time I think he summoned me was after that bombing.

Q: What did he do?

RIVES: He gave me hell. He said the United States [action] was inexcusable, etcetera, etcetera.

Q: What did you say?

RIVES: There was very little I could say, except that I would find out what the facts were of why we had done this. There was no getting around it.

Q: This was about when?

RIVES: I don't remember exactly when it was.

Q: Were you able to fly to Saigon from time to time to find out what was going on?

RIVES: No, I never went to Saigon in those days.

Q: Why not? Was this two different worlds?

RIVES: It was pretty much two different worlds. I think I'd had visits from a few people in Saigon during the year, but there were completely different policies, and as I say, I was pretty much alone in Cambodia in the beginning there, so if I left, we'd have to close the Embassy, virtually.

Q: In 1969, were visitors coming out from Washington at all?

RIVES: No, not at the beginning.

Q: Did Alexander Haig ever come out?

RIVES: Yes, but that was later, that was after the bombing started... after the Incursion.

Q: I would like to get a little of the chronology. You arrived there in September of '69. The war was going very strongly in Vietnam, and America was beginning to Vietnamize the thing. But we had the B-52 bomber raids that were going on there, the so-called "Secret War." Of course, it wasn't secret...

RIVES: Well, a lot of people didn't know about it. I was never told about it... this was sort of typical. This is another way in which Sihanouk played his game. He knew what was going on more than I did, and yet he never made an issue of it. Not to me. So I think he was accepting of certain things. A tacit acceptance of what we were doing, hoping we would help him, while criticizing for something when it became as obvious as the destruction of a Cambodian outpost.

Q: Did he or other people go out and visit the outpost?

RIVES: Well, they had photos and all that.

Q: How about the press?

RIVES: They weren't terribly interested until about the time of the Incursion.

Q: When you say you went out and did your normal reporting, what does this mean?

RIVES: Well, about talks with the Foreign Minister and all, meeting with the French, who were very cooperative. They had a general, I can't remember his name now, who was military attaché. The French were still important there, in a way. French was still the official language. And the French still had connections with military there, and the French general had very good contacts, so he was very good, very open about the information he had. And I tried to get to know Cambodians and other people in town. I also made visits a couple of times to rubber plantations way out in the Parrot's Beak... (In fact, I'm going to see the manager of the plantation where I stayed. He's coming to see me in Boston this month.) I traveled around as much as I could. I

went to Angkor Wat, actually, and Sihanoukville (the port).

Q: In Sihanoukville, was part of your brief to take a look and see what type of stuff was coming in?

RIVES: We tried to find out, but we couldn't find out anything in those days. We knew what was coming through, and a lot came through the pipeline.

Q: A lot of military equipment was coming into Sihanoukville. Would you see trucks heading off...

RIVES: Not really. At least I didn't. I didn't have enough staff, really, to send them around to look. I didn't have any attachés or anything at that time. And when we went to Sihanoukville, quite often it was at Sihanouk's invitation. He had a beautiful villa there, and he would summon the diplomatic corps down there, and we'd have a swim and that kind of thing.

Q: What were you getting out of the Department? Here we were, waging a major war; all attention was focused on it; and on one front... you were sitting in the rear of one of our opponent's fronts. You must have been getting lots of stuff from the Pentagon and from everywhere else...

RIVES: No, virtually nothing. No, because I just think they were just waiting for things to settle down. This had all occurred within a fairly short time. Now, while I was there, there were several embarrassing incidents. There was the famous incident of the ship...

Q: The American Eagle. The reason I know the name of the ship... I was the Consul General in Saigon. I remember Admiral Zumwalt and I were trying to figure out what to do about that damn ship! Would you explain what the problem was?

RIVES: You remember these people had seized it.

Q: Two Americans. They weren't really ideological. They were sort of kooks.

RIVES: Yes. I think they were cracks. One of them disappeared completely. We never saw him. The other turned up in Phnom Penh and we turned him over to the authorities, but then he escaped and was never heard from again. I think one, obviously, was killed, and one ended up in California.

But anyways, the ship arrived and I was told there was nothing to hide there, it was all innocence. The Russians were making noises, as were the Chinese, so I invited the diplomatic corps to come down and look at the ship. So I went down to Sihanoukville with an entourage... I think the Russians refused to come, as I remember, or the Chinese... So we went aboard, and the thing was loaded with napalm! It was extremely embarrassing. Having been assured by Washington there was absolutely nothing to worry about.

Q: I know. Admiral Zumwalt was at that time Commander of Naval Forces in Vietnam. I was

called to his headquarters to say this was a mutiny. Mutinies are consular problems. I asked the question, "What's on the ship?" They said, "Napalm." I thought, "Oh, God!"

RIVES: Well, Washington never said anything.

Q: Never told you. We knew it!

RIVES: Everybody took pictures, the press were all there, naturally! A great day! I said, "So what? It's not coming here, it's going off to Bangkok." So they finally released it after a good deal of uproar. That was the main excitement then. Then, of course, we had the Incursion.

Q: Did the Incursion come after Sihanouk was deposed?

RIVES: Oh, yes,

Q: Can we talk about how you viewed the stability of Sihanouk? And also talk about the deposition.

RIVES: Sihanouk, you know, was always Number One. And he had these plots against him continuously. There was a very good system set up. What always happened was when somebody went too far, Sihanouk would exile him, usually to Paris. He'd have to stay there for a year or two, and then he could come back. This had happened to Lon Nol before. Of course, there was a group of people who were very much against Sihanouk. One was Lon Nol; one was Prince Sirik Matak, one of his cousins; and others, including the Foreign Minister, whose name I can't think of right now.

Sihanouk went off to Paris -- he hadn't been there for quite a few years -- to take the cure and so on... As soon as he had gone, Lon Nol and Sirik Matak and the Foreign Minister, a triumvirate, took over the government. They announced that there had been a coup. (A little later, the Assembly voted Sihanouk out, too. They got the Assembly to vote it, all very legal.) And they sent word to Sihanouk that he was out.

Sihanouk sent back an angry telegram telling them heads would roll, he was returning immediately. If he had returned immediately, he would have won. Because, I'll never forget, the night this all happened, I was out to dinner somewhere, and on my way home to the Chancery in my car, they were painting all the streets. The lines on the sidewalks were all being freshly whitewashed, and the flags were all being put up to welcome home the Chief of State. If he had done it, he could have won. But he didn't. He went off to Moscow. And in Moscow he got the word that the Assembly had voted him out. Instead of coming back again, he got mad and he flew on to Peking. That was the end.

Once Sihanouk had been thrown out, the triumvirate called me in. We had a long talk, and they asked for help. I reported this to Washington. The decision was made that we should extend some assistance. But limited assistance. This was the Nixon Doctrine, which was, you remember, "We'll help those who help themselves when they need help." So this is the way things stood.

Lon Nol used to call me in periodically, and we'd have a good chat. He'd ask for a lot of equipment, warships, B-52s, you know, and all that kind of stuff... and I told him no. At that time, since we were not openly giving them help, we entered into a very convoluted arrangement whereby the Indonesians turned over all their Russian weapons to us, which we then flew in by chartered aircraft to Phnom Penh, and gave Indonesia American equipment. The press, of course, heard about this, and they were lurking in the background. But I was instructed, and I was perfectly honest with them, and I said that I didn't know anything about American arms.

Q: I was in Saigon at the time, and I can recall, they were going around collecting all the captured AK-47s in order to ship them up to Cambodia.

RIVES: That's right. They came in by chartered aircraft, those, and also the weapons from Indonesia. Quite a lot of stuff came in. And about that time I started getting my first attaché. I had a military attaché and an air attaché. Eventually I got Jonathan Ladd, who was a retired Green Beret Colonel, who had been called back just for this special mission. He and I got along beautifully, because we felt the same way about what we should do about Cambodia. Which was to follow the Nixon Doctrine and help the Cambodians just as much as we possibly could. But if they fell, they fell on their own.

Q: I want to make this clear, because it's often maintained that the CIA worked up a plot to get rid of Sihanouk and Lon Nol. When you were there, there were no CIA people.

RIVES: Until after the Incursion. As far as I know, there was no hanky panky...

Q: How did we see the coup?

RIVES: It really surprised everybody. The French, who as I say had good connections, were completely stunned. They agreed with me that if Sihanouk had come back he would have won.

Q: It was seen as part of the natural forces within Cambodia. These were people who had wanted power, too...

RIVES: Oh, yes. They'd been in the wings trying to get hold of power for years.

Q: And Sihanouk gave them an opportunity by being out of town.

RIVES: Yes. This was the first time they'd really been able to pull this off.

Q: Excuse [the digression]. Back to passing the arms on, and your beginning to build up a small staff, which was essentially, what, military liaison?

RIVES: Yes, and CIA, and, of course, USIA came in, too. At this early stage, things were still fairly well under control, as far as I was concerned. There was no equipment. We had no direct communication with Washington. We went through the PTT, which closed down at midnight every night. Washington, of course, was getting more and more alarmed, because they couldn't get the endless telegraphic traffic which they loved. So we finally got to the stage, unfortunately,

where the Incursion took place.

Q: The Incursion took place in the Spring of '70.

RIVES: Right.

Q: Which caused campus riots, Kent State, and so on. Before we get to that, what were you getting about the North Vietnamese role in Cambodia at that point?

RIVES: Very little. The North Vietnamese were in Cambodia. They had an Embassy there, too, in Phnom Penh.

Q: Was there a feeling, though, that there were parts of Cambodia that were essentially off-limits even to Cambodians because they had been taken over by [the North Vietnamese]?

RIVES: Oh, yes. The French told me that. It was fairly well known. And when I went to that plantation in the Parrot's Beak, the manager told me, he said, "At night, this is a Vietnamese base. There's nothing I can do about it." In the daytime his workers went out and did their rubber thing, and we were able to drive around. But at night, we stayed in our compound. What went on outside...

Q: Did you get any feeling from your reporting and contacts with Cambodians about (a) how they felt about the Vietnamese in general, and (b) the North Vietnamese presence there?

RIVES: I think the Cambodians have always hated the Vietnamese. They look down on them because, after all, Vietnam was part of the Cambodian Empire at one time. They disliked them very much. They rather admired the Chinese. But they hated the Vietnamese on the whole. And so when things went bad, after the Incursion, they turned. They destroyed the North Vietnamese Embassy, which was within sight of Sihanouk's palace, and then there were those slaughters of Vietnamese, throwing bodies in the river, and all that kind of thing that went on.

Q: Before the Incursion, what was the role of the Khmer Rouge at that time?

RIVES: You never heard of them very much. They existed; there were a few reports about them, but I don't think they played much of a role inside Cambodia until after they started moving in.

Q: Let's talk about the Incursion. We're talking about the Spring of 1970. Could you explain how you were informed, how you were prepared for what was happening?

RIVES: I was informed after it took place. It wasn't entirely Washington's fault, because I was all one-time pad. I'm sorry, we did have coding machines, but we had no direct communications. When the PTT opened up in the morning, we got our cables, and I was informed what was taking place, and to tell Lon Nol. So I immediately typed up the message and went to Lon Nol to deliver it. The press were all waiting there with TV cameras. I went in to deliver the message. Of course, Lon Nol himself was not all that pleased to be told *ex post facto*. But he accepted it, and when I came out, the press were all dying to get the hot poop. So I just showed them the bare

facts. There was an incursion...

Q: For someone coming to this years from now, what was the Incursion we keep talking about?

RIVES: President Nixon decided there would be a limited attack into Cambodia, supposedly to capture the Viet Cong headquarters, which was never found and apparently didn't exist, but apparently we thought that it was there. It was a limited incursion, supposed only to last three or five days, something like that, to accomplish the objective and take out... The second objective, of course, was to include the newly trained Vietnamese troops to see how well they did. (They apparently did very well.)

The result of the Incursion was two-fold. One, it failed in its objective of finding and destroying [the Viet Cong] headquarters; but it was very successful as an attack. What it did do was to push the Vietnamese back. Now, the Vietnamese had known this was going to happen a couple of days before, because the French general told me when the Incursion started, "The Americans had better move fast, because the Vietnamese are pulling back from the front towards Phnom Penh, and they're not going to succeed very well unless they do something in a hurry." I informed Washington about this. Something strange was going on, I knew. The President kept his word. The Incursion lasted, what, three days, I think it was, and then they pulled out. As I say, I hadn't been informed, and nobody was supposed to come towards Phnom Penh, and, of course, the place by then was swarming with reporters, who came to see me. Of course, I was perfectly innocent about the whole thing, and I said, "There are no American troops around here." At which point, an American helicopter started circling around Phnom Penh with Charlie Whitehouse in it. You know Charlie Whitehouse. He was the Deputy Ambassador in Saigon. I sent a perfectly furious telegram to Washington about people flying over Phnom Penh while I was telling the press there were no [Americans] there.

Anyways, that settled down, and then the Cambodians turned on the Vietnamese. There were quite a few slaughters, I think, here and there, and bodies floating down the river. At this point the press was really very anti-Cambodian. And anti-me. They criticized our government for allowing the Cambodians to do these horrible things to the Vietnamese, and why wasn't I doing anything about it. When I tried to explain to them, one of my favorite reporters, a very good one, Henry Kamm of the *New York Times*, who had been out there for years and was very able, kept attacking me. I would ask him, "Henry, what started all this?" If the Vietnamese hadn't been in Cambodia, hadn't started this, nothing would have happened." Well, they wouldn't admit that.

This went on like this for months until one day, the *New York*... no, it wasn't the *New York Times*... the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and a couple of other papers' [reporters] came in and asked me why I wasn't doing more to help the Cambodians. I explained there was just so much we could do, and we believed in the Nixon Doctrine and all that. At that time it was very amusing, because now they wanted me to say something publicly. I said, "Well, you're the ones who have built up all this anti-Cambodian feeling. Why don't you change it?" They said, "Our headquarters censor what we write, and they've taken a certain attitude, and it's up to them to change it." I said, "Well, that's your worry." So that was the press attitude.

Q: Also, wasn't the press beginning to suffer...

RIVES: We lost two or three people, yes. You see, they were so used to the War in Vietnam... When they went out there they went out in military convoys; they were protected by the American Army, and helped out... When they came to me, I told them, "Don't go out there, you're being foolish." Well, at the very beginning, the Cambodians, all these young kids, dashed out, full of enthusiasm, and they won a couple of skirmishes. From then on, it was all downhill. The press went out, and the press got captured and shot. Do you remember, Flynn's son...

Q: Yes, Errol Flynn's son, Sean...

RIVES: Yes, Sean Flynn. He's never been found.

Q: I remember, there was another reporter from the St. Louis paper, a rather well-known correspondent, he wasn't killed. He was captured and somehow got out.

RIVES: One of them managed to escape, I think.

Q: I was at the other end packing up his effects. We thought he was dead. We were getting ready to ship them home, when all of a sudden he showed up...

RIVES: Well, about half a dozen were killed...

Q: Don't you think this also changed the attitude of the press. All of a sudden they were no longer able to sit back and snipe away.

RIVES: Yes. They criticized me for not doing enough about the press, too. [For not] going out and rescuing them. Well, I don't know how I was supposed to do that. It didn't worry me very much. Anyways, that was that part of it.

Right after the Incursion started, Washington kept after me, didn't I want more people? And I said, "No. I'm perfectly able to do it by myself. A small Embassy is better." Meanwhile, also, I kept getting these messages from CINCPAC by the rear channels, via a full captain who would come up from Bangkok carrying messages to deliver that they didn't want to go through the State channels. So I'd get these things and send messages back. Admiral McCain kept pressing me to accept special communications facilities to communicate directly with him. I said no.

One day, on a Saturday night, I got a message from Marshall Green saying, "A C-141 is arriving tomorrow from Manila with full communications facilities, including operators." Then at the close, "You will not object." So I got the message.

All my traffic had been coded -- Goodness, I've forgotten what it was coded -- something Khmer something. It meant that only the top floor and the President saw it. Marshall Green had to go up and get permission to read it. What I didn't realize at this time, the President and Mr. Kissinger were running everything in Washington.

So, anyways, I was ordered, and this huge plane arrived with all these generators,

communicators, everything like that, they were all plunked in my little embassy. (We were instructed, also, to find a bigger building.) From then on, as far as I was concerned, it got more and more difficult. The CIA sent in their own communications thing. And the military sent theirs in. So I had three systems of communications, none of which spoke to each other, all operating in this tiny embassy. I really didn't know what the other people were sending. I kept getting messages from McCain about the back channel, and I refused to use it. He'd send me these outrageous messages, and I would reply through the State Department channels so that Marshall Green...

Q: What was he trying...

RIVES: Well, McCain was trying to help, but doing things that I didn't want done. He wanted military advisors. He wanted his special representative from his headquarters on my staff, which I wouldn't have. So I would reply to him through the open channel, through the State Department so Marshall Green would see what had been going on. It infuriated McCain to the point where he sent Ambassador Koren, my ex-boss in Brazzaville, who was then POLAD in CINCPAC, to see me, accompanied by an admiral. I must say, they were very nice, both of them, we had a very nice visit, and Barney Koren let me know very clearly that I was really getting into trouble if I opposed Admiral McCain. Well, I did. I wouldn't give in. He never got his special [representative] there. But things were getting more and more difficult.

I had another long talk with Lon Nol one day, at his request. He asked me for a lot of things, again. I did a foolish thing, in a way. I laid down the law to him, according to what I thought. I told him what the Nixon Doctrine was, and we were going to help him, as I had repeated before, but he was not going to get all this stuff. My mistake, then, was that I reported this to Washington verbatim. Within 24 hours, General Haig arrived.

Q: He was with the National Security Council, Kissinger's Deputy.

RIVES: Yes. He arrived with an interpreter, a young Army major from Saigon who could hardly speak French, and he went to see Lon Nol, and he refused to allow me to accompany him, which undercut my authority. I never did know what he said to him, completely. He came back and sent a telegram, which I was allowed to see. He said Lon Nol had burst into tears, which I had a hard time believing, but maybe he did.

I have always felt that from that time on, it didn't matter what I said, I was not really believed in Cambodia. I think he went in there with orders, and he may not have promised B-52s, but he probably told Lon Nol, "Don't pay any attention to what Rives said. We'll back you up, don't worry about it, we'll take care of you," and all that kind of stuff, you know... Anyways, after that, it was much more difficult, because, as I say, I don't think I was believed when I said that they weren't going to get things.

Before he went, I remember Haig said to me, "What do you think we should do about Cambodia?"

I said, "I think we should help them just the way we're helping them now, but if they can't do it

alone, we should let them go down the tube."

He was furious! "What do you mean?!"

I said, "It isn't that I don't want to help Cambodians. I think if they can't do it themselves, we should let them go and be beaten. We're trying to fight communism in Southeast Asia, I understand that. But in Africa, when the Russians lost Guinea, they pulled out. They faced facts. We should do the same thing here if we have to." Of course, that didn't go over very well.

So anyways, after that, more and more staff came. We got a larger building. And it became more dangerous, of course. The Viet Cong were fairly close.

Q: When you say Viet Cong, who are you talking about? The North Vietnamese army?

RIVES: Yes. What they had done was pull back from the frontier until they got really quite close to Phnom Penh. Of course, the Cambodians then attacked them and got beaten like mad. It was about this time, also, that they started bringing in the Khmer Rouge. At that point we really started hearing about them, and they started playing a role in the fighting. But we didn't have any idea how badly things would go.

Finally, in the autumn, I was informed that an ambassador was coming, Emory Swank. I was asked to stay on as DCM. Usually when an ambassador comes, you know, he brings his own DCM, but I got a personal message from Marshall Green asking me to stay on, so I agreed to that. Coby Swank arrived and we settled in. He took over my house, and I got a new one. That kind of thing. Things were going on fairly well. The Embassy kept growing and growing. An AID expert came in and came out with a perfectly ridiculous recommendation for aid, which, I must say, I felt a little ashamed of myself, but as soon as this AID man had gone with his huge recommendation, I wrote a letter to Marshall Green saying it was ridiculous, he shouldn't get half of what he recommended, and I must say, Marshall agreed with me.

After Coby Swank had been there about two or three months, I was suddenly informed that I was being transferred to Washington. I didn't understand why. Meanwhile, I forgot to say, what led up to all this, I must backtrack...

Before the Ambassador was appointed, Vice President Agnew came out on a visit, a one-day visit. He arrived, and, of course, the military were all panicking about security. An advance party of Secret Service people came, who set everything up, and the CIA man, through his connections, actually got us permission to sweep the Presidential Palace. Can you imagine that happening in Washington? Anyways, they swept the Presidential Palace, at least most of it. When the Vice President came, I was at the airport. We all met him. They wouldn't allow him to ride in a car, so we had our Hueys...

Q: Helicopters, yes.

RIVES: He sat in the middle, the Secret Service man sat on his right, and I sat on his left, so that if anybody shot, they'd have to shoot through us. There was a man on the machine gun, you

know. There was no room, so my legs were hanging out in the open... Anyways, we flew in and landed at the Presidential Palace, there was an honor guard, and all that kind of stuff. Then, we went in to have our meeting, and we went into a room which hadn't been swept. Well, of course, I didn't know which rooms had been swept. The Secret Service pushed Lon Nol and me out of the way, dashed in, guns at the ready. If anybody was in there, they were going to shoot him. Then we were allowed in and we had our conversation.

Then we went out to have a State luncheon. There was a U-shaped table. At the head were Lon Nol, the Vice President, and, I suppose, the Foreign Minister. I was just round the corner. We were having lunch. There were no Cambodian security men allowed inside the dining room, only our Secret Service people and the servants. Right behind the Chief of State and Agnew were sliding doors, which were closed; in front of these was a man with a submachine gun pointing at Lon Nol's back. I summoned the Secret Service man over and said, "This is going too far. Get rid of that man and do it more discreetly." So they put a man there with a pistol, and at least it wasn't pointing at his back. Of course, all the other Cambodians could see this. I thought it was pretty incredible.

After the luncheon, I asked [the Vice President] if he wouldn't come and visit the Embassy, you know, raise morale and show the flag. But, no, that was too dangerous, they wouldn't let him do that, so we flew back to the airport and off he went.

So I went back to the Embassy, and I was catching up on my work for the day. I was working about 10 o'clock at night, something like that. Andy Antippas was in the office with me. The Secret Service man came in, stood in front of my desk, and asked me how I felt things had gone. I said I thought they had gone very well. The Vice President had done just exactly what he should have done. He said the right things. (Oh, there had been an exchange of gifts, too, after the luncheon, but the Secret Service had been so anxious that we had never got to give ours. The [Vice President's party] had just left them. They picked up theirs but then just dumped ours.)

Anyways, the Secret Service man kept pushing me, and finally I said to him, "Well, if you want to know, I thought you were a little too much of a presence, too obvious." And I explained this thing about the Uzi submachine gun. Then the man started [ranting], "Why the hell do we need to do anything with these little bastards! They're using us... We're protecting them..." and all that kind of stuff.

I said, "You know, it goes both ways They're serving our purpose, and we're serving their purpose. All this protecting thing... I wasn't worried about the Vice President. You can't believe that the Cambodians would let anything happen to the Vice President of the United States, on whom they depend for everything. That's the least of my worries."

The conversation went on in this way for quite a little while. I have an unfortunate habit, I think, when sometimes I want to be rude, I can be. And so I decided it was enough conversation. So I started reading my papers again. I had my glasses on, and I looked at him like that, and I went like that, and I cut him off. He stood there, in fury, I gather, and then he left. That was the end of our conversation.

To go forward again, I was removed, got my transfer orders, and it was afterwards that I found out. I got back to Washington, I was assigned as Director of African Affairs in INR, put in exile. I knew something was wrong, but nobody would tell me anything. I found out later what really had happened. I'll cut it short. Andy Antippas worked for me in the Department also. He got more and more vibes about what had happened. And then I called Barney Koren, who was then in the Pentagon, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Information, I think. He checked around his [contacts]. Meanwhile, also, Marshall Green had been replaced. He was an Ambassador. Mack Godley was supposed to become Assistant Secretary. He never could get approved, but while he was getting his briefings, he called me in one day. Of course, I had been called back from INR and put in charge of Laos/Cambodia. He said to me, "You're number one on the White House blacklist. I've just been over there, and I've been ordered to remove you. You cannot get any posting in the State Department in which the White House has a say. I don't know what you've done, but you'd better find out and do something about it."

So I called Koren, and he asked General Dunn, who was Agnew's Chief of Staff. Dunn had been an officer in World War I, in the Artillery, under Barney Koren. So Koren called him, and he confirmed what I had been hearing. What had happened was, when the Secret Service came back, they wrote a report on me in which they questioned my loyalty as an American. So when Coby Swank was on his way out to Cambodia, he stopped and saw the President at San Clemente, who ordered him to remove me forthwith. I don't blame him, and I don't blame Agnew for doing that, because their lives are protected by the Secret Service. They didn't know who the hell I was, so they just removed me.

The two things I resent are, one, the Secret Service had so much power. (This is one of the things... when I would see all these things about police power on the television sometimes, I have a certain visceral sympathy for people in trouble.) The second thing was my disappointment in the Department. Nobody said anything. I was put in INR. I was "protected". Marshall Green never said anything to me. Nobody ever said anything to me.

Until I went to see General Dunn. I explained what I had heard had happened, and he said, "That's right." I said, "What am I supposed to do about it? I'm not going to retire. If worse comes to worse, I'm going to sue." He said, "You don't have to do that." Then he called up the Department of State, the Director General of the Foreign Service, and said, "Rives is clear."

I came back to the Department, and I ran into Arthur Hummel, who was acting Assistant Secretary, in the hallway. He said, "Oh, Mike, I'm so glad to hear that all's well, that you've cleared things up."

I said, "Art, did you know about this?"

"Oh, yes, I've known about it."

I asked, "Did Marshall know about this?" "Oh, yes, he knew about it."

"Why wasn't I ever told anything?"

"Well, Marshall doesn't like to have unpleasant things like that."

So nobody was allowed to mention it. Nobody allowed me to say my own [piece]. They just accepted that I had made a mistake. If it hadn't been for Mack Godley, I would never have been able to get another post or promotion.

I've always admired Marshall Green, all my life, and I've served with him and under him. But I must say, that attitude really sickened me.

Q: Yes... A couple of questions back on this, what was your evaluation of Lon Nol?

RIVES: I thought he was a well-meaning person. I don't think he was terribly intelligent. I think the driving force behind him was Sirik Matak.

Q: ...who was the king's cousin?

RIVES: Yes. And who was a very impressive, intelligent man, I thought. Also, quite nice. Very ambitious. Well, Lon Nol eventually pushed Sirik Matak aside. But I don't think he was all that [capable].

Q: What was your impression of Spiro Agnew, the Vice President, the time when he came?

RIVES: Well, he did what he was suppose to do, that was all I saw. He said the right things. He'd obviously been thoroughly briefed. He was following the instructions of the President and Mr. Kissinger. He followed, obviously, the Secret Service's advice about security. I don't think we had two words alone.

Q: When you came back, first you went into African INR. I take it that was just a parking spot for a while, was it?

RIVES: Yes. Well, I don't know what it would have turned out to be. I was there for about two years. Then Marshall Green called me down and assigned me to Laos/Cambodia Affairs.

Q: You took that over when?

RIVES: Let's see... I came back in '70. It must have been about '72/'73.

Q: And how long were you there?

RIVES: In Cambodian Affairs? Until after the fall... until '75.

Q: When you took over there from '73 to '75, can you talk about how we saw things in Laos and Cambodia?

RIVES: Things were getting pretty desperate in both those countries by then. Charlie Whitehouse was Ambassador in Laos. Coby Swank, at the beginning, was Ambassador in

Phnom Penh. Then he was removed, and Enders became Charge and after that, Gunther Dean became Ambassador. I think the overall attitude was to try to do everything we could to help Cambodia.

For a while, when I first took over as Director, Bill Sullivan was Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of that area. He had a special group, which consisted of military, State people, NSC people, and others. For a while Mark Pratt, who was the Lao desk officer, used to go to these mysterious meetings, which I didn't know anything about. One day I questioned him, and I was told, "It's restricted." Then I went to see Bill Sullivan. I said, "Here, I am Country Director, and I don't know what my staff is doing. I'm not allowed to know. I'd like to have a transfer. I'm not interested..."

So that stopped that. I went to the meetings, where I found out what our policy was, more or less, which was going all out, supporting [Laos and Cambodia]. It was interesting, because I found out how military equipment got there, who did what to whom, you know.

That went on for quite a while, and then towards the end, the bombing got worse and worse. Enders called in more and more B-52s, that kind of thing, which I thought was a mistake. When John Gunther Dean took over, of course, it was very much towards the end, and he came in with several suggestions. Meanwhile, we churned out papers, and a couple of times I prepared papers, hopefully to go to the NSC, and they'd get as far as Phil Habib, who was Deputy, and Phil would call me in and say, "Forget it!" They were papers suggesting various courses of action, like negotiations, things like that, trying to stop the war and everything like that. The NSC policy was to, well, to keep things going.

One incident that occurred during my Washington stint concerned the so-called "Mayaguez incident", when the *SS Mayaguez* was captured by Khmer forces off Cambodia. I was called in the middle of the night, tried to find someone in the Pentagon to see if help could be sent but failed. Upon Secretary Kissinger's learning of the matter, he tried to accuse me of inefficiency, etc., but had to recognize I had done all I could. In any case, the Marines eventually retook the vessel with a loss of life.

As an aside, I might say that famous book, *Sideshow*, by Shawcross, hit the nail right on the head, in the title: Cambodia was a sideshow. Everything that was done there was to help Vietnam. They didn't really care what happened to Cambodia. Anyways, when Dean took over, and it really got bad, he came in with a plan, and he said, "We've got to have peace. We've got to negotiate. We've got to talk to Sihanouk." Which I had recommended a couple of times before, but I'd been told, "It won't go." But this time, since it came from the Ambassador, and things were really getting desperate, he was summoned back to Washington. They had a meeting in the Secretary's office. I was allowed to take notes. I was told that I was to take notes; I was not to speak.

And so I went up there. There were the Secretary and Habib and Dean, and, I guess, Ingersoll, who was Under Secretary at that time, and myself. Mr. Kissinger got up and greeted everybody, shook their hands, except me. He never looked at me. We sat down, and the meeting took place, it was an interesting meeting. The decision was made to try (of course, it was too late by then) to

get hold of Sihanouk and see if he'd talk to us. We then got up and left. Again, the same procedure. Everybody [but me] got a handshake goodbye. Kissinger never looked at me. I was the country director, supposed to be running things, you know... Never spoken to, never allowed to speak. (Of course, I was used to this, because I had been through this with Mr. Kissinger at the UN when he talked to a Chief of State.)

We went on, and, of course, Cambodia fell. John Dean came back in my office -- we'd known each other since Laotian days, old acquaintances, if not friends. He had his suitcase filled this thick with *Eyes Only* cables, which he carried by hand.

Q: Henry Kissinger, by this time, of course, was Secretary of State. In a way, you were sort of persona non grata with the NSC, hence Henry Kissinger.

RIVES: But he treated people like this all the time.

Q: I'm surprised you were kept on, rather than...

RIVES: But I had cleared my name, you see. Dunn had apparently said the right things...

Q: That might have been the Secret Service. But you were advocating negotiations, doing something.

RIVES: He never saw those. I wasn't allowed to submit them.

Q: Was there the general feeling that whatever you did really didn't make any difference?

RIVES: Very little

Q: There just wasn't that much interest.

RIVES: It was just hold the line, I suppose. Do whatever we could...

Q: Were we beginning to get a better feel for what the Khmer Rouge was like?

RIVES: Not until the really end, no. They were doing very well... they turned out to be better fighters than anyone thought they would be. The French had always told me they thought the Cambodians could be the best troops in Indochina, if properly led and trained. Better than the Vietnamese, they felt. But there was no indication there would be that slaughter after the fall of Phnom Penh.

Q: Did we see Sihanouk as being a viable alternative during this period?

RIVES: I don't think so. Well, I think John Gunther Dean thought that he was a good guy to talk to.

Q: But policy-wise, at least, we had written him off?

RIVES: Oh, I think so.

Q: You were mentioning Henry Kissinger at the UN. When was that?

RIVES: It was when Kissinger was Secretary of State. I took him in to see an Indonesian, Suharto perhaps. It was the same procedure. I was instructed to take verbatim notes, but not to speak.

Q: Was this just Kissinger treating underlings this way?

RIVES: Oh, yes.

Q: This wasn't that you were on somebody's list.

RIVES: No.

ANDREW F. ANTIPPAS
Political Officer
Phnom Penh (1970-1972)

Cambodia Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1972-1975)

Andrew F. Antippas was born in Massachusetts in 1931. He received a bachelor's degree from Tufts University and entered the Foreign Service in 1960. His career included positions in Africa, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Korea, Canada, and Washington DC. Mr. Antippas was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 19, 1994.

Q: Today is August 19, 1994. Andy, you came back to the Department, feeling that the end of the world had come. Although this was a matter of great concern to you, things worked out fairly well for you. As you have already said, you were assigned to the Embassy in Phnom Penh in the spring of 1970.

ANTIPPAS: We had already reopened our Embassy in Phnom Penh in the summer of 1969, with Mike Rives as chargé d'affaires, as I said. Mike had served in the Consulate in Hanoi, along with Tom Corcoran, before 1954. He had gone on to serve in Africa at a number of posts. He had been charge at least three times. He was selected to be chargé d'affaires in Phnom Penh because he had no recent Indochina experience. Initially, the Embassy remained small, headed by the charge and with a small staff, including a military attaché, an Administrative Officer and one political/economic officer, two secretaries and a communicator. There were only eight Americans in the Embassy in Phnom Penh in March, 1970, when Sihanouk was overthrown, things began to happen, and world attention began to focus on Cambodia.

I knew that everything was short in Phnom Penh, so when I stopped off in Saigon, I stocked up with a couple of suitcases full of whisky and other "goodies." As I mentioned before, I saw Admiral Zumwalt, who had been nominated to be the new Chief of Naval Operations. I met with Zumwalt on the morning of April 27, 1970, just a few days before we began the Cambodian "incursion" on May 1, 1970. I wondered later on if Zumwalt knew that this incursion was about to begin. Very few people in MACV knew about it in advance. The operation was only set up in the last three or four days of April, 1970. Even Secretary of State Rogers didn't know that we were planning this because on April 25, 1970, about the time I left Washington, he was testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, chaired by Senator William Fulbright, that the United States had no intention of intervening in Cambodia. It made him look kind of silly after we marched in a five days later.

I arrived in Phnom Penh on the afternoon of April 27, 1970. Mike Rives, the chargé d'affaires, set me up in a little flea bag of a hotel in downtown Phnom Penh. We began work to find out what was happening, both politically and in terms of the war.

John Stein, a CIA officer who had previously served in Africa, arrived in Phnom Penh shortly before I did. The White House had insisted on a CIA presence because of the need to know what was going on, despite the opposition of Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield to such an assignment.

It was interesting that Stein's "cover" in the Embassy was to be the Consul. He had never done consular work. Over the months that followed, whenever a visitor's visa or an immigrant visa had to be issued, one of us would have to go down to the consular section to handle it for him. Then he would sign it. Over the months, because I was an "activist" type and was out running around, looking at the war, riding in helicopters, and flying in the Air Attaché's airplane -- he had a C-47 -- most of the journalists covering Cambodia at that time figured that I was the CIA guy, and Stein was the consul. It was sort of fun, and I always told Stein that I should have been put on the payroll, since I was the "target."

Of course, we spent a very hectic summer in 1970. When the U. S. "incursion" of Cambodia took place, we didn't know about it. The "New York Times" correspondent almost "beat" Mike Rives to Lon Nol's residence to inform him that we had just marched into Cambodia. Henry Kamm, the "Times" correspondent had the news almost before Mike Rives did. The incursion created quite a clamor, of course. However, those of us who were there or had any experience with the Cambodian relationship to the war wondered what the big "to do" was all about.

Q: We'd been bombing, we'd been shooting across the border...

ANTIPPAS: As one U. S. 1st Division officer told me in Vietnam in 1968, when talking about the area called the "Fishhook," one of the places where our troops marched in, he called it, "Wall to wall North Vietnamese." There was nothing out there but North Vietnamese. So we wondered what everybody was getting so excited about.

I was surprised at the incursion and, then again, not surprised. If you thought about it -- and this

was the theory on which I based a paper at the National War College -- first, I didn't believe that the White House participated in the overthrow of Sihanouk. I think that it took place in spite of anything that the White House wanted to do. It had always been our perception and policy that we really couldn't influence events like that. To suggest that we were seeking to turn the Cambodian Armed Forces against the Vietnamese communists was ludicrous. It was like throwing the baby out with the bath water. I think that the White House, and particularly the State Department, was as surprised as anyone at the overthrow of Sihanouk. What happened was that things just got out of hand. This is not to say that there were no individuals in Phnom Penh who felt that Sihanouk should go and that if they, in fact, threw him out, the United States would have to go along with it. We would have no choice but to support those who opposed Sihanouk.

One of the things that motivated an awful lot of these same Cambodians was that there would be a return of the American aid program, which many Cambodians remembered from the 1950's. They wanted that aid program to come back because of the corruption and opportunities for making money.

That consideration came into play, and we became captives of that particular scenario, because I think that, if you put yourself in the place of the White House, here we were drawing down our troops in Vietnam at this very time. We could see this. We could observe this phenomenon from Cambodia: the fact that American troops were no longer able to do the kinds of things that they had done the year before. We could see it in the maintenance of the aircraft that came to Phnom Penh -- the helicopters, for example. We flew around Cambodia in MACV helicopters.

I think that the view was -- and the reason why they decided to go along with an incursion into Cambodia -- that they might be able to disrupt North Vietnamese supply lines. I don't think that anybody thought that there was a prayer of really "nailing" North Vietnamese "main force" units, which would have a very positive tactical implication. But if they could upset the North Vietnamese supply system, this would buy some time. Any time that we could buy was to the advantage of the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam. Don't forget. A big concern was to avoid a kind of "Dunkirk". We didn't know what would happen in Indochina, but we didn't want a Dunkirk. We didn't want to have to shoot our way off the beaches, which would really be a terrible situation for any administration.

I think that was the main motivation for the incursion into Cambodia -- and it worked. I think that everybody was surprised. I think that the incursion was a much tougher campaign than people recall. Some people think that it was just a "walk through." In point of fact the North Vietnamese fought very hard, and we took very heavy casualties in Cambodia. Of course, the North Vietnamese took the view, as did the Chinese communists, that we had precipitated the overthrow of Sihanouk, in order to turn the Cambodians against them. They did what they had to do. They turned 180 degrees around in their sanctuaries and started to attack the Cambodian forces.

I think that the only thing left in dispute is how, in the full light of the presence of international journalists, the North Vietnamese could explain the overthrow of Sihanouk by Cambodians, and the subsequent occupation of Phnom Penh by Vietnamese troops. The communists had always denied having sanctuaries in Cambodia. That was a big question in our mind. Of course, what we

did not know and did not learn for almost another year was that there was an "outside" as well as a "home grown" Khmer Rouge movement. There had long been a Khmer communist party. It was really as pitiful in terms of its military capability as the Cambodian Army. Even the Cambodian Army could keep the local Khmer Rouges on the run. But what no one knew was that in 1954 the Viet Minh, when they withdrew from South Vietnam and Cambodia, where there had been some small unit actions before the battle of Dien Bien Phu, took some 5,000 young Cambodians to North Vietnam. They took young Lao with them as well, for training and indoctrination, with a view to sending them back to their home countries to start a revolution at such time as the party decided that was the thing to do.

Over the intervening period, which was something like 16 years [1954-1970], the "home grown" Khmer Rouges had often pleaded with Hanoi to send back these cadres to help reduce the pressure that the Cambodian Army was putting on them. The North Vietnamese had always refused to do that. They had always refused to play that card because Sihanouk was cooperating with them. He was giving them pretty much everything that they needed and wanted. They had border base areas and were able to buy rice and medical supplies. They were getting weapons through Cambodian sources, and, of course, the Cambodians were making an awful lot of money from this trade, as we all knew, including Lon Nol.

We did not know, in fact, that there was a very large number of Cambodian cadres available to start a Cambodian civil war. It was just a question of how the North Vietnamese would explain this.

One of the other things that we did not understand was that by June, 1970, the North Vietnamese had fought their way almost all the way to the Cambodian-Thai border. They occupied the Angkor Wat complex. By June, 1970 they besieged Siem Reap, which is two-thirds of the way, across Cambodia, to Thailand. Very quickly, it became impossible to drive across Cambodia, which we used to be able to do. We used to be able to drive from Saigon to the Thai border in about 24 hours, if you caught all the ferries right across the various rivers. Nobody seemed able to explain what the North Vietnamese were doing, going all of that distance, because by that time the Nixon administration had already announced that the incursion was going to be very limited in duration -- two months -- and that American forces wouldn't go any deeper than 25 kilometers inside Cambodia.

In fact, it became a great game for the journalists to drive, say, 26 kilometers into Cambodia "looking for the Americans" so that they could make a scandal out of their report. There was an interesting kind of byplay once in June, with a number of international journalists, including some Americans, who were cut off by North Vietnamese North of Phnom Penh. They had gone out to watch some operation. You were never safe, even with a Cambodian battalion around you. One of the American journalists came rushing into the Embassy when I happened to be duty officer one afternoon. He said that they needed American helicopter support to bail the journalists out. They were up on Route 6 some place. I carefully explained to him that U. S. forces were precluded from going into Cambodia any deeper than 25 kilometers. However, I said that I would note the interest of the journalists and report this to the Cambodian Ministry of Defense. The Ministry of Defense had the responsibility of protecting these guys.

I reported all of this to Mike Rives and to the Military Attaché, who, of course, referred to all of these guys in very scatological terms, more or less in the sense that "They can go screw themselves." I managed to convince the Colonel that he had better report it to the Defense Ministry in case the journalists were caught and murdered as seemed to happen quite regularly.

It became very evident a year later when we became aware of the existence of all of these North Vietnamese-trained Cambodian cadres that what the North Vietnamese had been doing in going so deep into Cambodia was the classic communist ploy: getting as much of the population as possible with a view to dragooning them into the Khmer Rouge army. That's what they did, in fact. These 5,000 Cambodian cadres came back to Cambodia, created units, and set up training programs. Two years later, by the time of the Easter offensive in South Vietnam in April, 1972, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong main force units which had been fighting the Cambodian Army up to that point withdrew from Cambodia and went to South Vietnam to participate in that offensive. The bodies of Cambodian communist soldiers began to be found on the battlefield instead of Vietnamese. It was very clear that we had been fighting Vietnamese [communists] up to that point. After that, it was Cambodian [communists].

One of the things I did was to debrief two "ralliers," two Khmer Rouge cadres who had come back from North Vietnam, had survived, and had surrendered to the Cambodian authorities. Most of those who did surrender were killed by the Cambodian Army. But these two guys managed to survive. Apparently, they had been picked up by American intelligence, taken to South Vietnam, debriefed, and then sent back and turned over to the Cambodian authorities. The Cambodian authorities decided that they would "exploit" these men and introduce them to the press, as a demonstration of the "perfidy" of the North Vietnamese, that the North had been planning this for many, many years and that it was all part of the "international communist plot."

I persuaded the [Cambodian] military spokesman, who, interestingly enough, was named Lt Col Am Rong. This was always greeted with great hilarity by the press. He was actually a very nice fellow but dumb as a post. He was a decent individual and tried very hard to do his job. We became very friendly.

I asked him if he would let me debrief these ralliers before he released them to the press, because I wanted to get a little "scoop" myself. I was irritated to discover that, in fact, they had been debriefed. These two guys told me that they had been taken to South Vietnam and debriefed by some [American] intelligence agency, given a briefcase, a pair of combat boots, and a little money, and sent back to Cambodia. We in the Embassy in Phnom Penh never saw the report of their debriefing. We were never told what they had found out. So, I thought, "Well, screw these bastards [who had debriefed the two Cambodian Khmer Rouges]. I'm going to talk to them and then report by an LOU [LIMITED OFFICIAL USE -- a low level security level for a document] or an UNCLASSIFIED despatch for widest possible distribution.

I took the interpreter from the Political Section of the Embassy in Phnom Penh and told him, "We're going to talk to these guys." That had been my practice. I found a number of old characters who had been involved in the "Khmer Issarak" [Free Khmer] movement, all of the anti-French types, and anybody we could talk to, and just vacuumed up as much information as I could, still heeding Tom Corcoran's dictum, "Don't send us what's in the newspapers. Tell us

what the hell is happening."

So I debriefed these guys extensively. They were very impressive individuals. I viewed all of this with a great deal of personal alarm. I said to myself, "If they [the Khmer Rouges] have 5,000 guys like this, we are really in trouble. We don't have anybody like these people and we never will. The political process [in the United States] had dictated that there would be no "Secret War" in Cambodia, as there had been in Laos. I think that it had been the intention of the White House [to do the same thing in Cambodia as in Laos]. There would be no opportunity to train a Cambodian military establishment, even in the "half baked" fashion that we had been able to do in South Vietnam over the years. The Cambodian Government would never have any kind of "level playing field" in terms of trying to fight [the Khmer Rouges] themselves. The only kind of people that we were able "to toss into the pot" to even the state of play were the Khmer Krom, the ethnic Cambodians who had worked for the American Special Forces -- the "Mike Force," or "mobile forces," as they were called. The Khmer Krom were very good troops. They were all given the opportunity to be discharged from the Special Forces under Vietnamese [government] control and be transferred directly into the Cambodian Army. Several battalions of them were transferred to the Cambodian Army.

Of course, I knew nothing of this, as I was in Cambodia. We in the Embassy really weren't "in the loop," as it were, because we didn't have the secure ability to talk to the Embassy in Saigon. In fact, Mike Rives was not even able to get time off to go to Saigon for consultations. The amazing part of this whole thing was that here was the American chargé d'affaires in this tiny, beleaguered Embassy [in Phnom Penh], with no real opportunity for consultations with Saigon to find out what the "big game plan" was. All I remember was that one day I came out of my "flea bag" hotel and was standing on the main street in Phnom Penh. I saw a couple of Cambodian soldiers standing there that didn't look anything like any Cambodian soldiers I'd seen before. Their uniforms fit, they didn't have any weapons, they had real combat boots -- not just some kind of sneakers or loafers or something like what Cambodian soldiers usually wore. They looked like soldiers. You could tell just by their bearing.

Then we discovered that, in fact, there were hundreds of these guys encamped in the Olympic Stadium. They'd been brought in from South Vietnam, set up in the Olympic Stadium, and then parceled out to various Cambodian Army units as cadre. So that was our contribution. I found out about this because Lon Nol's younger brother, [Lon Non] had asked to meet with us in the Embassy. So Mike Rives sent Bob Blackburn and me to meet with him. Lon Non came to Blackburn's house and brought two of these Khmer Krom officers with him. The Khmer Krom officers, wearing US Army fatigues without insignias, started telling us what their requirements were. He said that they needed 81 mm [mortar] ammunition, medical supplies, call signs for the Forward Air Controllers, and all that. We had to explain to them, "Fellows, you now belong to the Cambodian Army, and we aren't going to give you anything. You are not going to get any direct support from the United States." Their disappointment was really quite palpable. I think that it came as quite a shock to them that there was not going to be a "Secret War" [in Cambodia] which would be stage-managed by the United States from Saigon.

Two other things happened during the first couple of months that I was in the Embassy in Phnom Penh. On May 4 or 5, 1970, we were informed that another Special Mission aircraft was coming

into Phnom Penh with a brigadier general on board. We were instructed to receive him and take him to visit Lon Nol. We were all wondering who this brigadier general was. Brigadier generals in the Vietnam War were as common as doughnuts. In fact, they went out to get the coffee.

We went out to the airport and met the aircraft. The brigadier general who arrived -- very recently promoted to brigadier general -- was named Alexander Haig. He was accompanied by a young NSC [National Security Council] officer named Winston Lord. I had known Winston Lord from my very early days in the Foreign Service, from which he later resigned. Win Lord, of course, was very well connected with the Republican Party. His mother was Mary Lord, of Lord & Taylor [department store] and a very big, moneyed figure in the Republican Party in the Washington, D. C., area. Win Lord was the "note taker" for Brigadier General Haig. Al Haig was, in fact, the office manager of the NSC staff. This was his first big assignment under Henry Kissinger [then Special Assistant to President Nixon for National Security Affairs]. He was told to "go out and find out what the hell's going on in Cambodia" and give Kissinger an assessment.

This was four days after the Cambodian "incursion" began on May 1, 1970. I don't know what happened. Blackburn and I really weren't privy to what went on. We didn't participate in most of the meetings with Al Haig.

However, my general appreciation of the situation was that Haig did not like Mike Rives. I think the chemistry was bad. Rives has a an effeminate manner, sort of high class English manner. Haig thought he was gay. Mike was all man though. He had fought as a Marine private under Chesty Puller on Guadalcanal in the Second World War. Rives came from money in Newport, Rhode Island where he counted Claiborne Pell as a neighbor. Rives was also a descendent of a signer of the Declaration of Independence. But he wasn't everyone's cup of tea so speak. We became good friends and I worked for him for over four years in Cambodia and the Department.

Rives had not been particularly cooperative with MACV in Saigon. During the first year after the Embassy in Phnom Penh was reopened Rives had complained bitterly, almost constantly, about border incidents. He had said that if MACV wasn't able to control events more effectively, the result would be that the Embassy in Phnom Penh would be kicked out of Cambodia again. This, of course, was viewed with a great deal of anger by the MACV establishment, from Gen. Abrams on down. I had this directly from Admiral Zumwalt. They were wondering whose side this guy [Mike Rives] was on. This is the kind of thing that I tried to communicate to Rives. I told him that he really should be careful, because he was angering the "establishment" in MACV.

Q: By this time you were an old hand in Vietnam and in the area. Can you talk a bit about Rives? Where was he coming from and how did he operate? Was he trying to play the classical diplomat's role, keeping a low profile, and avoiding upsetting anything? Was he saying that diplomatic relations with Cambodia were far more important than any other considerations?

ANTIPPAS: Yes, that was it. His instructions from Marshall Green [then Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs] were that it was important to establish relations and get a dialogue going with the Cambodians. You should understand that Mike Rives did not talk to Sihanouk. He never saw Sihanouk or the Prime Minister of Cambodia. The highest level Cambodian he talked to, during that whole period before the overthrow of Sihanouk, was the Foreign Minister. Those

were his instructions: keep things "low key." There was no Embassy building. He reopened the office in August, 1969, in one of the rooms of the Royal Hotel [in Phnom Penh]. He sort of hung the flag out the window. One week after he arrived and established his presence, Senator Mike Mansfield came and had a meeting with Sihanouk. The State Department was operating from that point of view: we mustn't anger Senator Mansfield and we mustn't anger Senator Fulbright, who was angry enough because he felt that he had been led down the garden path by the State Department in the past. I think that Mike Rives was just doing his job.

Admiral Zumwalt told me that one of the other things that angered the Saigon "establishment" was that, during the coordinating conferences which were held from time to time, when our Ambassadors from Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam would get together to discuss what was going on at the theater level, they were angered by Rives' absence from those meetings. However, as Rives explained it to me, when I discussed it with him, he said, "Hey, I didn't have an airplane. How was I supposed to go? Furthermore," Mike said, "Marshall Green told me to 'stay put' [in Phnom Penh]." Marshall reportedly said, "I don't want any other junior officers to be chargé d'affaires in your absence." Mike continued, "How was I supposed to get down there? It was only an hour's flight to Saigon, but I didn't have an airplane. To get to Saigon, I would have to go to Bangkok and then from Bangkok, fly commercially to Saigon, which would take a whole day. I'd be absent from the office for, maybe, three days, and that was unacceptable to the EA [Bureau of East Asian Affairs] front office. Nobody ever sent a plane for me. Nobody ever thought about sending a plane to pick me up."

Mike Rives was very conscious of [the importance of] not appearing to be manipulated from Saigon. He said that it was very important that it not appear that he was getting his marching orders from Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker or General Abrams [in Saigon]. But this got him into trouble, because he was perceived [as having no interest in the area discussions], plus the "nattering" that he periodically did about incidents along the Vietnam-Cambodia border. This made it appear that he was not a "team player."

However, I think that Mike Rives was very much a "team player." He was trying to pick up as much intelligence as he could, given the fact that he didn't have any CIA presence [in the Embassy in Phnom Penh] to help him, he had one Political Officer, and he had a Military Attaché who was a drunk and apparently wasn't there half of the time. The Embassy in Phnom Penh was really not very well set up. [If he had gone to Saigon for these meetings], he would have gone from this eight-man Embassy which was operating out of the servants' quarters of what was to be the Ambassador's residence in Phnom Penh to this enormous Embassy in Saigon.

Don't forget that after the overthrow of Sihanouk and the U. S. "incursion" into Cambodia took place, the Cooper-Church amendment was passed. This amendment limited the official American presence in Cambodia to 200 people at any given hour of the day. This made it almost impossible to set up a logistics operation whereby you could supply the Cambodians, once we decided that the non-communist Cambodians were going to survive and that we weren't going to be shot out of Cambodia. Suddenly, Cambodia became sort of the living example of the "Nixon Doctrine," which stated that we would help anybody who would help themselves. The Americans weren't going to do the fighting, but we would help others.

The "Nixon Doctrine" was mocked by the liberal press and by those who felt that we were doing the wrong thing in Cambodia. However, the fact of the matter is that the Cambodians did fight. They didn't do it very well, but they did fight. They lasted for a long time, and they distracted the attention of something like four "main force" North Vietnamese/Viet Cong divisions. I used to know the numbers of these divisions: the First and the Seventh North Vietnamese Divisions, the Ninth Viet Cong Division, and something called the "C-2" Division, which was made up of Vietnamese fishermen recruited from around the "great lake" [Tonle Sap in Cambodia]. The Cambodian Army kept these Vietnamese units busy, while, of course, they were being battered the whole time. The Cambodian Army was something of a joke, in terms of being able to fight. I used to say, "I wouldn't go out to look at the war with anything less than a brigade because, given all of the corruption which took place, including the fact that you had all of these 'phantom troops' to pad the payroll, when a brigade went into action, you didn't know if there was a brigade or a battalion. The chances were that you probably didn't have much more than a battalion out there."

To answer your question, I think that Mike Rives did what he was told to do. I believe this was his natural inclination. He never talked much about the propriety of our involvement in the Vietnam War. He was probably against it but he was a good soldier. He did what he was told. After he got into trouble for this, because of what happened, he then got into deeper trouble. This is all very much an object lesson to a younger, observing officer such as myself about how to avoid getting into trouble and how Washington works.

In early August, 1970, Spiro Agnew, the Vice President of the United States, was to make a short visit to Phnom Penh to encourage the Cambodians. It was to be a four-hour visit. He was to fly into the airport. He wasn't even going to drive into town from the airport. They were going to helicopter him in. He was going to have lunch with the acting Chief of State, Mr. Cheng Heng, former President of the National Assembly, and fly out. In fact, I never even saw the Vice President of the United States. I stayed in the Embassy during the visit. The Secret Service was there. There was a lot of concern about his security, because there was fighting right outside of Phnom Penh. I guess that, in the "great scheme of things," it was fairly heroic on the part of Spiro Agnew to fly into a besieged capital like this.

I remember -- you couldn't miss it, as we all occupied the same office space -- that when the chargé d'affaires had an important visitor, Blackburn and I would pick up our files and leave the room and sit outside with the secretaries. Depending on who the visitor was, Mike Rives might, in fact, move out of his chair and sit on an orange crate. He made a big deal out of the fact that he was getting so little support out of the State Department from Bangkok. Mike Rives was a bit of a theatrical character. He was an old Africa hand, used to operating on very slim rations.

I will recount two incidents which kind of give you the atmosphere of what we were up against in dealing with Washington. Vice President Agnew came to town and, of course, the Secret Service did their usual "thing." In the exit interview, after the Secret Service left -- and remember that they'd been in Phnom Penh for two weeks, programming this visit out and working out exactly what was going to happen during this four-hour visit -- we had gotten to know these guys fairly well. I had had some experience with the Secret Service during the 1966 visit by President Johnson to Manila for the seven-nation conference on Vietnam of the troop contributing

countries. I wasn't particularly daunted by these Secret Service guys.

Mike Rives sort of bawled out the Secret Service guys for the "heavy-handed way" in which they had handled the [Agnew] visit. For example, when Agnew "trooped the [Cambodian] honor guard line," off camera the Secret Service was "covering" the honor guard with sub machine guns. Another Secret Service guy, with a drawn Uzi sub machine gun, sat behind the acting [Cambodian] Chief of State at lunch! When they took Vice President Agnew on a tour of the Royal Palace, Sihanouk's palace, and led him into a room that hadn't been scheduled for a visit, the Secret Service got all excited. They unceremoniously pushed Mike Rives out of the way because he was in the line of fire. They literally shoved him out of the way and charged around with drawn sub machine guns.

Mike Rives was very upset about this. He said, "You [Secret Service] guys come to town and leave me with the pieces to pick up. You know, I've got to work with these people." This was the Cambodian honor guard which had received [international] luminaries such as Zhou En-Lai, Tito, Castro, and people like that. They weren't exactly "slouches" in terms of protecting people. Mike said, "Don't you think that I'm interested in the security of the Vice President of the United States?" I'll never forget what the Secret Service guy said. He said, "I don't give a damn. All these guys have got their hands out, anyhow." In effect, he was saying, "Screw you, Mr. Chargé d'Affaires."

We learned subsequently that the Secret Service went back to Washington and told Vice President Agnew, "You know what that guy in Phnom Penh said about your visit? He said, 'Agnew comes to town and leaves me with the pieces to pick up.'" Well, that remark really tore it, as far as Mike Rives was concerned. The State Department was told [by the White House, "Get rid of this guy [Mike Rives]."

So he had all of these strikes against him, despite doing his job. Anyway, it was an object lesson. I learned, "Boy, it doesn't take much to screw up." If you get crossways with these guys, they can cut your throat, and you don't even know it happened. So Mike Rives was given the Distinguished Honor Award of the State Department and was transferred to INR [Bureau of Intelligence Research] to cover African affairs. Marshall Green [Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs] told me, when I went back in June, 1970, to pick up my family that Rives was in trouble and that he [Marshall] had been ordered to "fire him." However, Marshall was trying to avoid doing this.

When Coby Swank was appointed Ambassador to Cambodia, Bill Sullivan [Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs] told me that Coby, who had been Bill Sullivan's DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission] in Laos at the time of the beginning of the "Secret War" in Cambodia in 1964, was his choice to be Ambassador to Cambodia. Despite Coby Swank's being a Soviet specialist and although he had served in China in 1946 as a soldier and later on in Laos with Bill Sullivan, he really had had little Foreign Service Asian experience. However, Coby offered Mike Rives the job of DCM in Phnom Penh, to serve under him. Mike accepted the offer. Mike had had hopes that he would be appointed Ambassador to Cambodia, but at that time that sort of thing almost never happened. Charges d'Affaires were not usually upgraded and appointed Ambassadors. We're doing that more frequently now. It makes a certain amount of sense,

actually, for an officer who is knowledgeable about the country to be appointed Ambassador.

However, Mike's days in Phnom Penh were numbered, because very shortly thereafter Tom Enders was appointed to be the DCM in Phnom Penh. Tom had his own "friends in high places," but Tom was in trouble on his own. He was about to be kicked out of Yugoslavia, because he had had his difficulties with the Ambassador there. Anyway, Tom was "larger than life" when he came out to be DCM. Mike was relieved from duty and moved sideways to INR, to a "nothing" job, because the position was later abolished.

Mike ultimately replaced Tom Corcoran as Laos-Cambodia Country Director, sort of over the objections of the White House. People in the NSC [National Security Council] staff, had also developed a bias against Mike Rives. One such FSO, now a senior ambassador, complained to me at the time of my own assignment as desk officer for Cambodia that the NSC staff really didn't like having Mike Rives appointed as Country Director for Laos-Cambodia. However, the Personnel people concluded, "Well, the hell with you guys. We're going to take care of 'our' guys."

So I think that there was a perception that Mike Rives had been "shafted." You can probably say that Mike hadn't been very "clever" about the way he handled himself. I'll make a kind of philosophic observation. Here we Foreign Service Officers train ourselves on how to observe and analyze what's going on in foreign countries, but we don't do a very good job of analyzing how our own government operates and what it takes to "operate" within our own government. You really have to be smart and clever about this kind of thing.

Taking the kind of "absolute" positions which Mike Rives did was not helpful. Here is another example of what he did to "anger" the "establishment" in Vietnam. Before we had satellite communications between the United States and Vietnam, they had a "tropospheric scatterer" system. What happens is that you "bounce" the sound or radio wave off the tropospheric layer of space downwards. In effect, it's a kind of satellite communications. That's what we were using at that time, in 1970. The Embassy in Saigon very much wanted to establish a "tropospheric scatterer" unit [in Cambodia] for its own communications. Mike Rives was against it. He said, "We should communicate by telegram so that we'll have a paper record of what's going on." He continued, "Too many things get decided over the telephone, and there's no record of the decision." That's a very interesting principle to fight for, but not to fight and die for. This issue was one of those "white birch stakes" which was sharpened and driven into his heart.

Mike Rives was really fighting the system. I think that he also fought the idea of rearming the Cambodians with anything more than AK-47's which we could buy from the Indonesians or whatever we collected on the battlefield in Vietnam.

Q: I remember that the Department really made an effort at the time of the Cambodian "incursion." I was in Saigon. They went around and collected all of the AK-47's they could find.

ANTIPPAS: Hanging up on the wall?

Q: As souvenirs. Actually, I wanted one. It happened that just at that time I was told, "We're

sorry but we're collecting all of them to send up to Cambodia."

ANTIPPAS: That's right. In fact, I think that we bought about 40,000 AK-47's from Indonesia. But that wasn't enough. The big problem in supplying the Cambodians with these weapons was the ammunition supply. We would have had to set up an ammunition factory. It really became simpler to re-equip the Cambodians with M-16's, M-1's, and other American equipment, for which we had an ammunition supply. I remember all of that.

In fact, the guy who was selected to run the "Secret War" in Cambodia, which never really got off the ground because of the Cooper-Church amendment, was a guy named Jonathan ("Fred") Ladd. Fred Ladd was a retired U. S. Army colonel. We became very good friends. I met him in the State Department in Washington in June, 1970, when I went back to collect my family.

When it became clear that we weren't going to be "shot out" of Phnom Penh and that there was a job in the Embassy there for me, Mike Rives said that he wanted me to be assigned to the Embassy as a Political Officer. He said, "Look, you've got two weeks to go back home and bring your family back." I tried to do it and almost succeeded in doing it. I flew home and collected my wife and infant son. She was pleased enough. She didn't want to stay in Washington by herself. Fortunately, we hadn't unpacked most of our effects, so we threw it all back in the lift van and left town.

Q: Did you go through Saigon when you moved to Phnom Penh?

ANTIPPAS: I don't think so. We flew directly to Phnom Penh from Hong Kong if memory serves. We were permitted to have our families in Phnom Penh. [In Washington] Tom Corcoran had introduced me to Fred Ladd. Ladd had commanded the Fifth Special Forces Group in Vietnam, until the time of the "Tet" offensive of 1968. He went back to Washington and retired from the Army after that, in 1969. He went down to Florida to open up a charter fishing business. Fred was very well known in the Army "establishment." His Father had been a regular army Major General and he had attended but was washed out of West Point. He attended OCS in the Second World War. He was very close to senior General officers like Fred Weyand and Creighton Abrams. He was mentioned in David Halberstam's book, "The Best and the Brightest" as one of those people who had spoken up early in our Mission in Saigon, saying that the corruption of the Vietnamese was going to do us in, if we didn't handle things right. Ladd had had a lot of career experience in special operations, running around with the Kurds in Iraq, riding camels, and that sort of stuff. He had also served as military assistant to Secretary of the Army Wilbur Brucker back in the late 1950's.

Interestingly enough, Fred Ladd and Al Haig had been aides de camp to Gen. MacArthur at the time of the Inchon invasion during the Korean War [1950]. Fred was a captain and was senior aide. Al Haig was a first lieutenant and was the junior aide. So Ladd's relationship with Al Haig went way back over twenty years. It was Al Haig who decided that we needed somebody to run a "Secret War" in Cambodia. He felt that Mike Rives, was not the man to do it. Haig persuaded Ladd to come back into the government, in the State Department, as a Foreign Service Reserve [FSR] officer Class Two and to be the Political-Military Counselor in the Embassy in Phnom Penh.

I remember Tom Corcoran's specifying to Mike Rives at that point that Ladd, as an FSR-2, would be the next most senior officer after Rives. However, Ladd was never to be left as Chargé d'Affaires of the Embassy. The State Department was going to remain in control of the Embassy. Well, Fred Ladd really didn't know an awful lot about the Foreign Service. He really wasn't an "empire builder" at all but he was a "results-oriented" kind of guy. He firmly believed that the only way to succeed in a situation like the one we had on our hands in Cambodia was not to repeat what we had done in Vietnam but, in fact, to set up a kind of Special Forces operation to harass the communists on their own turf. He felt that building a large, "main force" operation as we had done in Vietnam, would create enormous problems for ourselves, including corruption, which would be our undoing and which we were very familiar with, based on what had happened in Korea, China, and Greece.

Fred Ladd was a "can-do" kind of man. He knew everyone in authority in Saigon and could "interface" with the Saigon brass very well. He had access to Gen Weyand, who was then Deputy Commander of MACV and became Commander of MACV after Gen Abrams left Saigon to become Chief of Staff of the Army after Westmoreland.

Q: Gen. Weyand was later the Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army.

ANTIPPAS: Yes. Ladd was "well wired" into the system. We in the Embassy in Phnom Penh got as much out of MACV in terms of materiel as anybody could reasonably get. This was at the same time that Admiral John McCain, who was CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific], decided, "By God, Cambodia is going to be under ME." He said, "I am going to run things in Cambodia, not MACV."

So the line of authority went directly to Ladd from CINCPAC. In fact, Admiral McCain came to Cambodia a couple of times while I was there. It was probably a mistake to have CINCPAC running the Cambodian war. The military support aspect, if not the strategic aspect of our whole effort in Cambodia should have been run out of Vietnam. But we had this other layer of CINCPAC running things.

That's where we were in the fall of 1970, when it was decided that Cambodia was going to survive. The Nixon administration was going to draw on all of the military assistance programs, worldwide, to find money to support Cambodia. Over the shrill screams of everybody in the world, like Israel, Greece, and God knows where else we were giving money to. We had to support Cambodia.

In fact, the Deputy Director of P/M [Office of Political- Military Affairs in the State Department] at that time, was Tom Pickering [later Director General of the Foreign Service and Ambassador to the UN and to the Soviet Union]. He was another very bright and upcoming officer who was a classmate of Tom Enders. They had competed ferociously throughout their careers. These two people were just larger than life. They were so smart that they made your teeth hurt! Pickering found the money in the worldwide military assistant program (MAP) to give to Cambodia.

By the fall of 1970 we had a limited operation going on in Cambodia. There was no "Secret

War." We were limited to 200 Americans in country at any given time. We were getting military assistance for the Cambodians, who were getting out and conducting some operations, but they turned out, for the most part, disastrously. In October, 1970, they had the "Chenla" operation, a multi-battalion effort directed up Route 6 to try to open up the road to Kampong Thom and Siem Reap. Of course, the Cambodian Army walked right into a divisional sized North Vietnamese ambush. It reminded me of General Braddock and the French and Indian War [1755]. The Cambodians were really clobbered. They lost 13,000 men. It set the Cambodians back very seriously. They lost a lot of the hard-won ammunition and equipment that we had given them.

The another blow fell in December, 1970, when Viet Cong "sappers" attacked Pochentong Airport in Phnom Penh and blew up every airplane there. They also blew up the ammunition that was being delivered at the airport. The whole thing was such a fiasco that Gen Lon Nol had a stroke because of the stress of that moment.

The Viet Cong probably did us a favor by blowing up all of these old airplanes because Lon Nol had the damndest collection of aircraft that you ever saw. He had MiG-17's, French Fouga-Mystere jets, and a whole collection of "junk," none of which was much good for close air support of the Cambodian Army. Because of the loss of all of this equipment and supplies we started delivering some helicopters, with the cooperation of the Vietnamese. Also, we started giving them some T-28 trainers, which had been turned into excellent close support aircraft. They were very good.

Q: You're saying that Lon Nol got rid of all of these old aircraft.

ANTIPPAS: All of the aircraft that they had been given by the French, Russians and Chinese over the years. In effect, it was a blessing.

Q: Andy, I'd like to go back to an earlier period. You were sent to Phnom Penh on April 27, 1970. You were told to "find out what's really happening." We're talking about a situation where you had to "hit the ground running." You knew about Cambodia, but this was not your "beat." One of the things that I'm trying to do with these oral histories is to pass on information on how to do things like this.

ANTIPPAS: Tradecraft. I think I can tell you. Here's an interesting little anecdote about that. I told you that I had volunteered to go to Vietnam in the first place. I figured that was the only way that I was going to get a political reporting assignment. I was one of those who felt that I had to try this. I didn't really know what the Foreign Service was all about. I'd joined the service before we had the "cone" system. I didn't particularly like the "cone" system. In fact, I was dead set against it.

Q: The "cone" system involved your area of specialization in the service. The "cones" included administrative, political, economic, and consular.

ANTIPPAS: Exactly. I remember that when I was in Kobe, U. Alexis Johnson became Ambassador to Japan. He had been Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and President of AFSA [American Foreign Service Association] at that time. We're talking of 1966. Ambassador

Johnson came down to Kobe for a visit to the Consulate. Another officer named Charley Duffy, an economic officer who later resigned from the Foreign Service, and I spoke to Ambassador Johnson at a reception held for him and Mrs. Johnson. I had known U. Alexis a little, because Steve Johnson, their son, was a class behind me in the Foreign Service. We'd been part of the Washington junior officer crowd. Afterwards, we were in Saigon together. I had known Ambassador Johnson on a personal level. I said to U. Alexis, with Charley Duffey, that we didn't think that it made a lot of sense to have this "cone" system. I hadn't joined the Foreign Service to do just one thing the rest of my career. One of the reasons that I had joined the Foreign Service was to avoid doing just one thing throughout my career.

It was clear to me that I was doing very well as a consular officer. I'd gotten two promotions in succeeding years and I really did like consular work but I wanted to try something else. I felt that if I were put "on a peg," so to speak, I would never get to do anything else. I didn't feel that I would advance to my greatest capacity.

Anyway, I volunteered to go to Vietnam to do political reporting. I had learned a little political reporting in Douala [Cameroon], when I served as acting Principal Officer for four months. I spent a lot of time doing political analysis on the ruling political party in West Cameroon. In my graduate studies, political analysis was my "bag." So I wasn't exactly a neophyte. My biggest problem in political reporting was learning how to do it and learning how to write. Writing was the biggest problem that I had. That's something that you only learn after you get into this business. Being a journalist doesn't exactly prepare you to be a good Political Officer.

I did "hit the ground running" [in Phnom Penh]. One of the things that I was asked to do was to go to the military press briefing every morning and find out what was going on. Of course, all of the journalists were there. Some of them would go out in cars and look at the war, which could be very dangerous and very injurious to your health. In fact, during the first year of the Cambodian War, 17 journalists were killed. They went out to look at the war and never came back -- ambushed by the Viet Cong.

Q: You mean the Khmer Rouges.

ANTIPPAS: No, they were Viet Cong [operating in Cambodia]. There were very few Khmer Rouges at that time. They were really not militarily active. I am persuaded that the people that they ran into were Viet Cong, who weren't about to let Western journalists tell the world that they were captured by Vietnamese on Cambodian soil. The journalists may have been handed over to the Khmer Rouges for captivity or other disposition, but I think that they were captured by the Viet Cong.

I would go down to the briefings and find out what was going on. We would get bits and pieces of reports from all and sundry and would go back and write this up in a daily "sitrep" [situation report]. I started to expand my horizons a little bit. As I said previously, I was the first American diplomat to go to the Cambodian National Assembly since the overthrow of Sihanouk. I introduced myself and met the people there. You may recall that it was the National Assembly which actually overthrew Sihanouk. They're the people who changed the constitution and said, "He's out." They created the Cambodian Republic. The acting President of the National

Assembly was In Tam. He was also Governor of the province of Kampong Cham, Northeast of Phnom Penh, in the rubber plantation country. The province itself is bisected by the Mekong River. East of the Mekong River was very much "Apache country" [communist controlled]. Kampong Cham town, the province town, which is on the West bank of the Mekong River, was the scene of several very heavy battles. This governor, who was a career Ministry of the Interior type, had police experience and training. I came to the conclusion that he was probably the best trained military guy that they had, since he was about the only one putting up an effective fight against the communists. He was actually holding his own.

He would drive down from Kampong Cham to Phnom Penh, down Route 6, every couple of days, to attend to the business of the National Assembly. We became very good friends, dating from those very first days in May, 1970. Of course, I also got to know a lot of other people in the National Assembly. I started to pick up bits and pieces concerning what made Cambodia "tick."

Q: French was the language you used?

ANTIPPAS: French was the language. You didn't need to speak Cambodian [at the time]. That came later. Just like in Saigon. You didn't need to speak Vietnamese for dealing with the Foreign Ministry. So the [Cambodian] National Assembly became my "beat." In that way I got a lot of inside "dope" on what was going on.

In Tam, the President of the National Assembly, became quite a political power. In fact, he ran for the presidency in 1972. It was stolen from him by Lon Nol, and we let Lon Nol get away with it. In Tam really had been "my" candidate to be president. Had he become president, I think that the Cambodians would have put up a much better fight. But it was problematic, and the White House -- and particularly Al Haig -- were very concerned that if we "lost" Lon Nol, the military who were beholden to him might disintegrate. Given what had happened to [President Ngo Dinh] Diem and the dynamic of what had happened [in 1963 and subsequently in South Vietnam], nobody wanted to fool around with the situation in Cambodia. So we let Lon Nol get away with stealing the 1972 election.

At any rate, there were lots of to-ing and fro-ing politically, and In Tam became "my" source. In fact, I even had a big "to do" with the Agency [the CIA] when they tried to recruit In Tam and put him on their payroll. I found out about it when In Tam told me that he'd been visited by an Embassy officer who had offered him medical treatment in Laos and all of that sort of thing. I went storming back to the Embassy to see John Stein, [the CIA Chief of Station and] my colleague at the "flea bag hotel" in April, 1970. I told him, "Look, we don't have to pay a nickel for this guy. He tells me everything we want to know. In fact, if he's put on your payroll, he'll be discredited, in my view. I'm mad as hell that you're trying to take over 'my' contact." John Stein backed off. The guy who had been assigned to recruit In Tam, Tom Ahern, was one of the guys later captured in Iran [when the Embassy in Tehran was taken over in 1979]. He was an Agency guy who spent 444 days as a "guest" of the Ayatollah Khomeini. He had a German wife named Gisella. Our families were great friends. We had been in Saigon at the same time. Our wives were friends in Bangkok, where they were "safe-havened."

Tom was just doing his job. I said, "Look, this is 'my' contact. I developed him, and he's going to

be 'mine' as long as I'm around [Phnom Penh]."

[During my time in Phnom Penh] a daughter of Sihanouk was still there -- I think her name was Bopha Devi. She was a classical Khmer Ballet dancer. She was arrested by the new Cambodian Government and put on trial. We in the Embassy decided that convicting her would not be useful. It would make Sihanouk look like a hero in various quarters if his daughter was "railroaded" into jail. I used to attend her trial, just to demonstrate that the American Embassy was very interested in this matter.

Q: This is how one influences a situation, in a way...

ANTIPPAS: Exactly. I didn't say, "Look, damn it, let her go," but I made it very clear that we were concerned about what was going on. The Cambodian authorities got the message very clearly.

You may remember that in 1969 an American merchant ship, the "Columbia Eagle," which was carrying munitions...

Q: Yes, Heavens, I remember that.

ANTIPPAS: The "Columbia Eagle." We had a program in Phnom Penh in 1970 called, "Take a mutineer to lunch." Two mutineers had taken over the ship and were imprudent enough to do this about the time when Sihanouk was overthrown. They took the ship into Sihanoukville and found that they had taken it into the wrong country. [The Cambodian authorities] put these guys into a Navy jail on the Mekong River. The Cambodian authorities were really kind of fed up with these guys by May, 1970. They didn't want them. They used to take them out to lunch from time to time and during one outing one of them escaped. They never saw him again. We figured that the Khmer Rouges caught him and killed him. The other guy was mentally unbalanced. I can't remember his name exactly. Perhaps it was Glatkowski. I've got it in my files somewhere. He may still be in custody. A U. S. court had asked for his arrest. U. S. Marshals were flown into Phnom Penh to pick him up.

During the time this was being set up, Blackburn and I "entertained" this guy to make sure that he didn't get lost. We had this program, "Take a mutineer to lunch." We used to feed him. We took him out to the airport to deliver him to the Marshals. They never got off the airplane. I suppose that there was some legal consideration in that, that they were still on American territory, in a sense. We bundled this clown on the aircraft, and he was taken back to the U.S. You were probably involved in that.

Q: When the ship was hijacked, I think that it was carrying napalm...

ANTIPPAS: And "iron" bombs.

Q: It was on its way to Thailand. I remember that everybody was chasing around. I think that was the only time I ever met Admiral Zumwalt in Cambodia. He was working up a scheme to get this ship. Then, when the ship was picked up, just after the Cambodian "incursion" in May, 1970,

one of my U. S. Coast Guard officers -- because I had a Coast Guard detachment attached to the Consulate -- came in and said, "The South Vietnamese Navy people say that they know where these guys are. Do you want them 'taken care of'?" I said, "Good God, no." That's what they were talking about -- killing them. I guess that he felt that I could just wave my hand and say, "Do what's necessary..."

ANTIPPAS: And have them "terminated with extreme prejudice."

Q: *Yeah, I was mad as hell about it. I said, "Tell the South Vietnamese Navy, 'No, no, no.' Stay out of this affair." Just to finish this story off and to satisfy my own curiosity, what were they trying to do?*

ANTIPPAS: I think that it was basically an "anti-war statement." They were just a couple of kooks. One of them, I swear, was mentally unbalanced. They were a couple of disreputable characters. They weren't old guys and really weren't very smart. How they got away with it -- I don't remember the details.

Q: *What happened to the ship?*

ANTIPPAS: The ship was released very quickly. The Cambodian authorities just took these two guys into custody. The ship and the rest of the crew were released. I never met them. Of course, I didn't get down to Sihanoukville to see the ship when it was there. It was gone by the time I got to Cambodia at the end of April, 1970. These two guys were still in jail. I had had some experience with people captured in Cambodia when I was in Vietnam. We had two instances that I dealt with, when I was the "border incident" guy.

One case involved a U. S. Army LCI [Landing Craft, Infantry] which went up the Bassac River en route to Can Tho [South Vietnam] or some place like that. It was traveling inside the IV Corps area with a crew of 21 on board. They had a few cases of beer. I guess they all got "bombed out of their minds" somewhat and sailed right up the Bassac River and into Cambodia. They were seized by a Cambodian gunboat. I remember that General Abrams [then commander of MACV] was mad as hell that this had happened. I used to get this information from Army lieutenants who handled Cambodian affairs. They used to sit "behind the screen" [against which slides were projected] at MACV briefings. So they heard everything and they would pass it on to me. It was just as if I had attended the MACV staff meeting.

They told me that the Rear Admiral who was Commander of Naval Forces Vietnam -- probably Zumwalt's predecessor, because this was about 1968 -- said, "Well, it wasn't one of my ships. This was an Army LCI." General Abrams erupted and said, "No, God damn it, it was one of mine. How the hell did this happen?" It had a forklift on it to handle crates, POL [Petroleum and Other Lubricants], and stuff like that.

Sihanouk kept the crew of the LCI for a fairly long time before he finally released them. He arranged to have them treated quite well. Now and then they would be taken to "floating brothels" for feminine companionship and they would be taken to lunch. Sihanouk arranged to have a white, tropical suit made for each one of them. When they were repatriated, they came off

the plane wearing these white suits! The U. S. military [in Saigon] didn't know what to make of this.

The other case was a little more serious. We had these reconnaissance aircraft -- [De Haviland] Beaver's [Canadian made]. You remember them -- high wing monoplanes. They were loaded with SIGINT [Signals Intercept] equipment. They used to fly up and down the Cambodian-Vietnamese border, listening to enemy tactical communications. On this occasion a Beaver, flying along the Western border of Tay Ninh Province, adjoining Cambodia, was shot down and crashed about one kilometer inside Cambodia. I remember how excited everybody got because it was loaded with all of this equipment. [MACV] called in an air strike on it and blew the plane up. The pilot and crew were captured by the Cambodians. Fortunately for the aircrew, the Cambodians beat the Viet Cong to the scene. They took them to Phnom Penh. I don't think that anybody really realized what these guys were or that they were quite important from the technical point of view. They could have ended up in the Soviet Union, for all of that. We finally managed to get them back.

That was part of my job [in Saigon], keeping in contact with the Australian Embassy [during the time when the U. S. Embassy in Phnom Penh was closed, and Australia was the "protecting power."], the Canadian Delegation to the ICC [International Control Commission] and all of that.

Q: Getting back to your service as a Political Officer at the Embassy in Phnom Penh, could you talk a little more about the international press there, which was all over the place.

ANTIPPAS: Of course, Cambodia was "the" story at the time. During the fall of 1970 the reporters were distracted by the civil war in Pakistan, which led to the establishment of Bangladesh. But for three or four months Cambodia was "the" story. Everybody was waiting to see the Vietnamese communists march into Phnom Penh. It all quieted down after we ended the Cambodian "incursion" and President Nixon was seen to have kept his word that this was an "incursion" and not an "invasion."

The international press were a mixed bag of people. I had a pretty good relationship with a number of them whom I had known in Saigon where I had occasion to brief them. One such was Francois Sully who wrote for UPI and was killed in a helicopter crash in 1971 with Vietnamese General Do Cao Tri, the III Corps commander. He was a pretty good journalist and had been a very good contact of mine in Saigon. He understood the war and what it was all about, so we had a good relationship. There were others. The New York Times reporter, Henry Kamm had a political ax to grind, as did the AP [Associated Press] representative. A lot of the contact between the Embassy and the international press was "confrontational" in tone. It was our side versus their side. These guys were out to embarrass the Nixon administration, and they certainly embarrassed the Cambodians, who weren't doing all of that well in the field. For example, there were the atrocities that took place -- on "our" side. One of the habits that the Cambodian Government people had, when they killed a Vietnamese, was to cut out his liver and eat it -- raw -- to ensure that the dead man never went to Vietnamese heaven, or whatever. [They believed that] his soul would wander eternally. Or they would decapitate bodies of prisoners, and people would walk around with these heads. That became a big controversy. Of course, it is embarrassing when your "clients" act like headhunters. Then there was the "child soldier" issue.

The press would become aware of the fact that there were 13-year-old Cambodian Government soldiers, carrying AK-47 rifles. This was a big thing.

Q: *I remember seeing pictures of that.*

ANTIPPAS: Anything that was embarrassing to the Cambodians, of course, was an embarrassment to us. It's funny how "what goes around, comes around." You remember Moose and Lowenstein?

Q: *Yes.*

ANTIPPAS: Jim Lowenstein and Dick Moose, both former Foreign Service Officers who resigned from the Foreign Service and went to work for Senator Fulbright as investigators. This was when the staffs of Congressional Committees began to be expanded. Moose, of course, was from Arkansas. Lowenstein was probably from New York. Moose and I had never served together, but we had both been in Cameroon [at one time or another]. I think he served with Walt Cutler, when they were very young officers and we had just opened up the Embassy in Cameroon.

When Moose and Lowenstein came to Phnom Penh, they were out looking for all of the "dirt" -- whatever they could find to feed to Senator Fulbright to "flay" the Nixon administration with, such as the treatment of refugees or the failure to take care of refugees. The fact that we were doing very little for the Cambodian refugees was an embarrassment. In 1972 I had to testify before Senator Edward Kennedy's Refugee Subcommittee on our treatment of refugees in Cambodia.

Of course, Moose and Lowenstein weren't particularly welcome in the Embassy at any time. They knew it and figured that they were "going to get the ball in play anyway," so they spent most of their time in Phnom Penh talking to the press. They'd get all of the "dirt" from the press and then would go back to Washington and feed this into the system. Then Senator Fulbright could take the administration to task.

It was ironic that one thing that some of the journalists would do on Saturday evenings was to have "couscous" [North African barbecue] parties. The trouble was that the "couscous" was laced with "hemp" [marijuana], and they'd all get a "buzz" on -- they'd all go ga-ga. Moose and Lowenstein didn't know this the first time they were invited. The press had a great time feeding them with this marijuana "couscous" and got them "bombed out of their minds." This was reported. I remember how frantic both of them were to send a cable to the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to explain what had happened. [Laughter] We all got a big laugh out of that.

In fact, a free-lance AP photographer and the AP reporter pulled the same thing on my wife Judy and me. We were invited to the AP guy's house. Judy was pregnant with our second child at that point. There was a young woman from the Singapore Embassy and the two journalists, who were feeling no pain. They were drinking, and I think that they were smoking something. We just said, "Look, we don't do that. Don't feed us anything." We thought that we knew our hosts well

enough so that they would respect our concerns. By the time dinner was served, we were very hungry. We had something like minestrone soup, and I ate everything. But the "spinach" turned out to be marijuana. I got "bombed out of my mind." The young woman from the Singapore Embassy was much worse affected. She became hysterical and very frightened. The two journalists who gave the party were having a hell of a time. They were laughing their heads off. Judy and I drove the Singapore woman home. Then we decided to go back to the party. The effects hadn't hit us yet, for some reason or other, the way they had hit the young woman from the Singapore Embassy. We thought that she was nuts, or something. It seemed like a nice party, and we liked these two guys. It was a mistake to go back to the house, because it didn't take very long before the effects of the marijuana hit us. It's a wonder that we got home in one piece. I was mad as hell that they would do this to us.

Q: *Of course.*

ANTIPPAS: It was very common. The Cambodians used marijuana on a recreational basis. They would collapse in the afternoon in their hammocks and smoke a "joint." They felt that this was no problem.

Q: *What was your impression -- or the Embassy's impression -- of Lon Nol and his coterie?*

ANTIPPAS: I think that those of us who had to deal with the problem of Vietnam had contempt for him. Maybe "contempt" is too harsh a word. I think that we really understood his limitations. He really was a limited individual. He wasn't all of that smart. He was clever, to a certain extent. He was experienced. He had basically been a policeman during most of his career. He had worked for the French and had been "around the track" a number of times -- Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and all of that. And now he had himself proclaimed "President of the Republic of Cambodia."

However, his heart attack in late 1970 really limited him. We flew him to Hawaii for treatment. We thought that this would allow us to arrange for a real change of government and get a stronger hand to run the Cambodian military. It was quite clear that it was all going to be "downhill" if we didn't get the Cambodian military under control. However, in April, 1971, he came back to Cambodia. The heart attack had crippled him, but he was still functioning, to some extent. Of course, the Cambodian military wanted him back, because they had their "feeding frenzy" in the U. S. aid program.

His younger brother, Lon Non, became a real "shit disturber." That's the only term I can think of to describe this guy. I am convinced that he was the guy who started the trouble in March, 1970 in Phnom Penh -- the anti-Vietnamese demonstrations which got out of hand. They resulted in the sacking of the PRG [Provisional Revolutionary Government -- the Viet Cong] and the North Vietnamese Embassies. This created the situation in which the communists withdrew diplomatically and set off the attack on the Cambodians. In other words, he altered the status quo in Cambodia to bring the Americans in. He and his little coterie succeeded in doing that.

The group around him included some Cham's. These were Muslims from northeastern Cambodia. He controlled the 15th Infantry Brigade, the largest unit in the Cambodian Army. It

was not supported under MAP [U. S. Military Assistance Program]. We would not support it militarily because he would not observe the requirements that we levied on him, in terms of operations, strength, unit size, accountability, and all of that. Since he was "the first one at the trough," he had this enormous brigade which did very little fighting and which was very obviously created to be the Palace Guard. We felt that this guy was a real problem. He had been the "point man" in spoiling In Tam's run for the presidency in 1972.

This was very clear. I used to make a point of going to In Tam's house very openly to see him, because I knew that Lon Non's guys were watching. I wanted them to understand that the U. S. Embassy was very much interested in In Tam. He was, in effect, under the Embassy's protection. I even brought my son with me on these visits. In Tam kept a monkey up a tree. My son liked to go and play with the monkey.

In late 1972 or early 1973, after I had become Cambodia desk officer in Washington, we started getting CIA reports that Lon Non was talking about staging a coup d'etat against his brother and taking control of the Cambodian Government. I remember writing a memorandum to Bill Sullivan [then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs], through Mike Rives, who was the Country Director for Laos and Cambodia. I analyzed the situation and concluded that Lon Non was fully capable of making a coup attempt. From what I knew about him, he was going to present us with a "fait accompli," as he did in 1970, and we would be "stuck" with him. He would become "our bastard." I didn't think that he was smart enough to be "our bastard." It was bad enough to have the onus for starting something like that, but he really wasn't smart enough to pull it off. I recommended that we "get rid of him." I recommended that we tell Marshal Lon Nol -- he had not only made himself President but also Marshal of the Cambodian Army -- that his brother had "to go." Obviously, we were not in the business of assassinating people any more, but somebody had to find a way to get rid of certain difficult people, somehow.

Interestingly enough, Marshall Green [Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs] approved the memorandum I wrote on the status of Lon Non. I saw the copy he had signed. It was decided that someone would go to Phnom Penh to tell Lon Nol this. Bill Sullivan decided that Al Haig was to be the messenger. Al Haig had just left the White House and the NSC. He had just received his fourth star [had become a four-star general] and was then Vice Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army. Haig didn't particularly want to go, but he was Lon Nol's "buddy," so Bill Sullivan said, "You've got to go and do this, because you have enough prestige so that Marshal Lon Nol will accept this." Haig was President Nixon's friend, and all of that.

There was then the question of who from the State Department was to go to Cambodia with Al Haig on this mission. The first choice was Walt Cutler, who was then Bill Sullivan's Special Assistant. I think that Roger Kirk had gone on to be Ambassador to Somalia or some such place. However, Walt was getting a divorce from his wife. He felt that he had traveled enough with Bill Sullivan -- to Paris and so forth. He said, "No, I don't think that I want to go. Antipapas wrote the damned memorandum. Let him go." I was not Al Haig's first choice. He didn't remember me from meeting him in Phnom Penh in early May, 1970 or subsequently in Phnom Penh again in 1972. When we took Haig out to the airport at the end of this May, 1970 visit. I told him as I had Admiral Zumwalt, "I don't know whether we're going to be shot out of Phnom Penh, but do you have any jobs on the NSC staff?" He said, "Well, we have a really small staff. but if you don't

have anything in hand when you come home, come and see me." The point of this was that at this stage of my life I was keeping my options open.

By this time it was late March or early April, 1973. Fred Ladd had left Phnom Penh and was working in P/M [Political-Military Affairs], but with a special responsibility to keep the Secretary of State informed about what was going on in Cambodia. This was before Henry Kissinger "pushed" William Rogers out of the position of Secretary of State and assumed that position himself. This was at the height of the "secret bombing" of Cambodia -- or "not so secret bombing" of Cambodia. The debate in Congress on the War Powers Act was just building up. Fred Ladd's job was to go over to the Pentagon and find out "who was bombing who" and come back and report to Secretary of State Rogers.

At that point we were being cut off from circulation of what they used to call, "The Yellow Peril." This was a book with yellow covers published daily which reported all of the bombing strikes which took place in Vietnam and elsewhere. Because the White House was so paranoid about "leaks". The State Department was cut off from distribution of "The Yellow Peril." Even the Secretary of State didn't know whom we were bombing at this point. Ladd used to go over to the Pentagon and find out what was going on. He and I had retained a friendly relationship.

At the same time I had thrown this other issue into the pot, that we had to get rid of Lon Nol's little brother. Ladd persuaded General Haig to take me along on this trip to Phnom Penh. However, Haig did not accept me because I was the most knowledgeable on Cambodia, because I wrote the memorandum, or anything like that. The way that Ladd persuaded him was to say, "You know, Antippas fought in the Korean War" and that I had received a direct commission. It was on those grounds that Haig accepted me.

I spoke to Haig a little bit during that trip because we went to Bangkok, Nakhon Phnom, Vientiane, Laos, Phnom Penh, and Saigon. There was an effort to camouflage the real purpose of the trip, which was to get rid of Lon Non. During the trip I told Haig, "We desperately need a competent Cambodian Ambassador to the United States to help us talk to Congress. The guy that's there now is an old, French-trained diplomat, whose basic function is to sit there and look ambassadorial. Meanwhile, we're getting our brains beaten in. I've got just the candidate to be Cambodian Ambassador. His name is Um Sim". Um Sim had been Director, then Minister of Posts and Telegraph. He was a Fulbright Scholar. He went to the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale, IL in the 50's. He was one of the people I met in Phnom Penh early on and was a good friend of mine. I told Haig, "He's articulate, he understands what the problem is, and he could help us make our case in Washington, which is something that we desperately need."

While in Phnom Penh, Haig persuaded Lon Nol not only to get rid of Lon Non but also to appoint Um Sim Cambodian Ambassador to the United States. When we were on the way back to Washington on the Special Mission aircraft, Haig came back to where I was sitting and said, "Well, I got your guy for you." This was great. I spent the next two years collaborating directly with Um Sim in working the Hill on the AID program and fighting the battle of who was to represent Cambodia in the UN -- the Phnom Penh government, Sihanouk, or someone else.

Q: I'd like to go back to the time you were in Cambodia from 1970 to 1972.

ANTIPPAS: May, 1970, to February, 1972.

Q: *Was Mike Rives the Chargé d'Affaires during the whole time you were there?*

ANTIPPAS: No. Mike Rives was Charge from August, 1969, until Coby Swank arrived in August, 1970. He served as DCM until November, 1970. Tom Enders came in to replace him, and Rives went back to the Department.

Q: *How did Coby Swank deal with matters in Cambodia?*

ANTIPPAS: Swank, of course, is an enormously decent guy. He is a very nice guy -- a man whom I have liked and admired from the time of my first assignment in the State Department in 1961, when he was Secretary of State Dean Rusk's senior staff assistant. Here was a guy at the apex of power in the State Department who took time to be very decent. Of course, I'd watched his career since then. He'd been DCM in Laos and later in the Soviet Union.

He was obviously in line to go on to very great things, as he was a Russian specialist. However, I think that he was not the guy for Cambodia, particularly to try to control the U.S. and Cambodian military apparatus. He took great pride in the fact that he didn't have much military background, apart from having been a private first class in the Quartermaster Corps, in Special Services in China, or something like that. He had never fired a shot in anger. He took great pride in that.

Well, we were dealing with an unusual military apparatus in Cambodia. In such circumstances we needed a guy like Fred Ladd to deal with the Cambodian military, and we certainly needed someone who had the confidence of a guy like Fred Ladd. Tom Enders also had no military background, but he has a very strong personality. He had his marching orders from somebody, presumably Henry Kissinger who had been his professor at Harvard. Tom knew what he was about and was very clear in his own mind. There was no question of who was in charge when Tom Enders was around.

This is not to say that Coby Swank wasn't in charge, but I think that he really didn't quite understand the "game," as it was played in Cambodia. Of course, he had had no direct experience in Vietnam, so he didn't understand how that whole mechanism worked. Only those of us who had dealt with it understood the "mind set" of the people we were in contact with.

I think that the biggest mistake we made [in Vietnam and Cambodia] is that we tolerated the corruption and let the people we supported get away with it. This lost us a lot of support from Congress and from the public more generally. Secondly, there was the unlimited bombing of Cambodia. Of course, the Embassy was found out to be heavily involved in the targeting. In fact, Moose and Lowenstein found out that Tom Enders was heavily involved in the whole system. These two guys found out from journalists with little FM radios bought in Hong Kong which could pick up the communications with the FACs [Forward Air Controllers] from the airport control towers. It was an "open secret" that the U. S. Embassy was running the bombing campaign. That really didn't "play" very well in Congress or elsewhere.

Now, I would say -- and this is what I said in my paper at the National War College -- that we, the Cambodian Army, obviously needed bombing support. Since the Cambodian Army didn't have much artillery, they needed the Air Force equivalent of flying artillery. But what the U. S. Air Force was doing in Cambodia was just horrendous. It was engaging in "carpet bombing." I remember that when I accompanied Al Haig to Southeast Asia in the first week of April, 1973, we visited Seventh Air Force headquarters in Thailand. We were standing in the Officers' Club having a drink. By this time I was physically exhausted. Lt. Gen John Vogt, commanding the Seventh Air Force told Haig, as we stood there, "We have reconfigured the B-52-D's. We can carry more 'iron bombs.'

At that time CINCPAC [Commander in Chief, Pacific] Admiral Noel had come out against the "carpet bombing" of Cambodia. I remember General Vogt telling Haig, "Don't let them turn us off. We have to continue to hit them [the communists] hard." I have to imagine that Haig, being basically a "political" general, went back and told the White House that we should not fail to continue the bombing. I think that the political overhead in any White House has to be careful not to appear to refuse the military their requests, especially if the venture might end disastrously.

I was in Phnom Penh during that trip and spent three days talking to people in the Embassy, including the Air Attaché, who said, "These guys [the air crews] drop sensors. If anything moves out there at night, they put in an "Arc Light" [carpet bombing] strike. So the Cambodian Army is afraid to move at night. If a herd of cattle moves out there, first thing you know, they're obliterated."

Q: *"Arc Light" was the code name for B-52 "carpet bombing" strikes.*

ANTIPPAS: Exactly. This campaign became terribly counterproductive, and now and then we made serious "mistakes". The B-52's at various times blew up an airfield, a hospital, and the ferry crossing [of the Mekong River] at Nhiek Luong.

Q: *This is Tape 4, Side A, of an interview with Andrew F. Antippas.*

ANTIPPAS: Anyway, I imagine that Al Haig went back and told the White House and pretty well told the Washington "establishment" that we cannot stop the bombing of Cambodia. If we lost the war, the same military guys calling for these extreme measures were going to say, "The President of the United States did not do everything at his disposal to win the war."

I think that the "carpet bombing" was a terrible mistake. I watched us lose our Congressional support for this enormous amount of bombing that was going on and the killing that was taking place. Sydney Schanberg won a Pulitzer prize for his reporting on the bombing of Cambodia. He was one of those who delighted in reporting on all of the missteps that we were making. Yet we had plenty of tactical aircraft, like the F-111's, that could have been used as flying artillery and air support.

Q: *There is a problem that goes on [when you use air power]. All you have to do is to think back to Wurzburg and Dresden and World War II. When the generals have these weapons --*

particularly the Air Force -- they don't see what happens. They get too concerned about the tonnage of bombs they can drop. They don't really think about what is happening on the ground.

ANTIPPAS: It's a very mechanical thing.

Q: There is a view that "more is better," and all of that. It often doesn't work that way and can be counterproductive. There are two more things that I would like to talk about during the time that you were in Cambodia. First, you mentioned something about a Foreign Service inspection while you were there.

ANTIPPAS: We had an abbreviated Foreign Service inspection in late 1970. It really wasn't one of the usual inspections. The inspectors happened to be in the area and were asked to visit Phnom Penh, more generally to help to "sort out" the Embassy. Obviously, we desperately needed help, because we had such a limited staff. Suddenly, the Embassy was expanded from eight to 200 Americans, organized very much "on the hoof" [in an unplanned way]. So the inspectors came in to see what they could do to provide us with some guidance on how to put everything together.

I remember that one Inspector was Allen Morland, who, you will recall, was head of the Visa Office. I think that he finished up his career as Consul General in Toronto. He was a senior inspector on this team. I took him aside and talked to him about my concern about my own future. I said, "Look, this is what happened to me in Vietnam, where I was 'low-ranked.' I wasn't sure whether I was going to be "shot out of the saddle" [selected out]. I said that I didn't know why this had happened, but I was really concerned about my future. I said that here I was in Phnom Penh, helping to fight the good fight in Cambodia. Anyway, he took note of some of this, went back to Washington, and reported it. He was very positive. I think he helped. This is one of the things that really struck me about those inspectors, as had struck me when Randolph Kidder came with the inspectors to Cameroon in 1964. Their attitude was to help people to fix things, instead of functioning as they do now. I found their attitude an ideal use of the inspection function.

Q: The other point concerned your time in Cambodia. You have been talking about how inept the Cambodian Army was. Here you had a very proficient and very professional North Vietnamese Army. Why didn't they just take over the country? When you left Cambodia, what did you think about the future prospects at that time? Could you address both of these points?

ANTIPPAS: I think that we all wondered about that. When you think about it, the Cambodian Army only controlled most of the population centers, most of the provincial capitals. They controlled very little of the countryside. The North Vietnamese pretty much had the run of things. In retrospect, I think that the North Vietnamese could have "cleaned their clock" [i. e., wiped out the Cambodian Army] at any time. I think that they could have taken over the country as early as May, 1970, had it not been for the U. S. "incursion" into Cambodia. I think that they saw their basic role as keeping the Cambodians tied up in knots while they trained the Khmer Rouges to take over. They basically sought to keep the Americans and South Vietnamese occupied and spread out. They knew that the Americans were withdrawing. If they didn't know that from battlefield activity, they certainly knew what was going on at the Paris peace talks. So I think that the Vietnamese didn't overthrow the Cambodian Government, not because they

couldn't, but because they decided not to do that. It's as simple as that. There's no other explanation why this rag-tag outfit that the Cambodian Government had become was not wiped out very quickly.

I certainly expected that to happen during the first month I was there [April-May, 1970].

What did I think was going to eventually happen in Cambodia? I was very pessimistic about what was going to happen when I left Cambodia [in 1972]. I was terribly impressed by these two Khmer Rouge cadres whom I debriefed in detail. Even allowing for exaggeration, the fact that the communists had large numbers of these people available to them to set up whatever they were going to set up, while they watched our own presence diminish day by day in Vietnam made it very evident to me that the Vietnam War was not going to be decided in Cambodia. Obviously, Cambodia was part of the problem, but we weren't going to be able to solve the problem in Cambodia. I felt that we really weren't helping ourselves on the political level by letting Lon Nol do everything that he wanted to do -- by allowing the corruption to take place, which simply was sapping the will of the Cambodian people. Obviously, the Cambodian people wanted to fight. No Cambodian that I knew wanted to be communized.

Q: No Cambodian or Vietnamese.

ANTIPPAS: Or the Vietnamese. For their part, the Cambodians despised the Vietnamese of whatever political persuasion. They just wanted to be left alone. Cambodia was a very viable little country which could function very well on its own. There was no population pressure and no starvation. It was very attractive in its own sense. I really had a tremendous sense of foreboding and of doom.

I might note some of my interests in Cambodia. Early during my tour in Cambodia I traveled up in the northern part of the country, around Kampong Thom, Siem Reap, and Kampong Cham, which are North, Northeast, and Northwest [of Phnom Penh]. This area became my "beat." I used to go up there by helicopter and talk with provincial governors and take a look around and see what was going on. I did this regularly enough that I did some reporting on these trips.

I could appreciate what was happening. I became very familiar with the region. We noted that after the Khmer Rouge took over, after I left Phnom Penh but while I was on the Cambodian desk in the Department, the people in the Political Section in Phnom Penh were my friends. One guy, David Carpenter, had been in the Political-Military Section in Vietnam and then Cambodia when we were there. Bill Harben was the Political Section chief and was a "great old pro" in the Foreign Service. We were all on the same wave length. We were privately corresponding with each other all the time. I knew a lot that was going on which wasn't coming in through the official cables. They were simply writing me letters, telling me what was going on and sending me lots of information.

Early in 1973 Khmer Rouge "main force" units started to concentrate around Phnom Penh, encircling the capital. A lot of heavy fighting was going on outside of Phnom Penh. Many of the provincial capitals were left unguarded by the Khmer Rouge "main force" units. In Kampong Thom, which is half way from Phnom Penh to Siem Reap, the town was surrounded. You could

shoot across the perimeter -- that's how small it was.

Then, when he discovered that there were no Khmer Rouge "main force" units around some of the provincial capitals, the Governor of Kampong Thom went out and contacted a lot of the villages in the area. When the people realized that there were no Khmer Rouges to inhibit them, they all headed into Kampong Thom itself. David Carpenter sent photographs taken from helicopters of masses of people streaming into the government controlled towns. The Cambodians knew that there was nobody to protect them. Not only were Cambodian Army forces unable to feed them but they were unable to protect them. But, when they could get away from their villages, the people did so. That was a major indication to us that the Cambodian people didn't like what was happening to them.

The second thing was that I got to know the senior monk of the major Buddhist order in Cambodia, the "Mohanikay" order. The senior monk became one of my contacts, and I used to visit him just to talk to him, just to be able to report on what he was thinking. He came from the town of Oudong, which is 35 miles Northwest of Phnom Penh. It had been the capital of Cambodia between the time of Angkor Wat and the advent of the French protectorate in 1850 in Phnom Penh. It was just a little town of a few thousand people, but it was basically known for several special pagodas there. It had a giant Buddha -- the only Buddha that faces North, instead of East. It faced North more as a gesture to China than anything else.

Anyway, the senior monk came from that town and therefore was interesting. Well, the Khmer Rouges took that town in the spring of 1974. I still have a picture taken from an SR-71, a very high altitude reconnaissance aircraft that overflew Cambodia. Every household in the town was burning. I guess that it was taken on infrared film. Of course, the people of the town had run into the forest. It's one of the few towns that the Cambodian Army took back. Basically, they took it back because it was so important from a religious point of view. They found a thousand skeletons in the wreckage of the town, which was a very clear indication to us that it was Khmer Rouges that took the town -- not Vietnamese communists. The Vietnamese didn't do that. They didn't kill lots of people. There were other instances, but those are two that I recall vividly about what was going to happen to Cambodia if the Khmer Rouges won.

So when I left Cambodia, I was very depressed. We didn't have the same kind of people fighting for us that the other side had fighting for them. I knew in 1973 that the bombing would have to stop, and we were going to lose what little support we could give them. And that was our own fault. I never felt that we were going to win the war in Cambodia. If we were going to win it at all, it would have to be that we settled something in Vietnam, and part of the payoff would be that we would do something for Cambodia -- set up some kind of coalition government there. But in that way we might avoid the bloodbath which we all thought was going to take place.

Q: So we'll pick up the next time you're available when you went back to the Cambodian desk. We've already talked about your trip with Alexander Haig to get rid of Lon Non. We'll talk about the desk and how it operated.

Q: Okay, today is September 1, 1994. Andy, we left things when you were returning to the Cambodian desk in the State Department. When did you serve there?

ANTIPPAS: From July, 1972 to April, 1975 -- almost three years.

Q: So you had the full experience, then.

ANTIPPAS: The whole nine yards, as they say. I was able to be the person who was "in on the takeoff and in on the crash" -- for the whole Cambodian adventure. It didn't begin in 1968 but in 1970.

Q: When you say the "Cambodian desk," what was it?

ANTIPPAS: The whole Indochina apparatus in the State Department has gone through a variety of permutations over the years. During the buildup for the war years in Vietnam, there was a separate "desk" for Vietnam, called "The Vietnam Working Group," as you might recall. Laos and Cambodia were shunted off to a separate office, run by a Country Director, with desk officers under him. In the case of Laos there was only one desk officer during the almost three years I was there. For Cambodia there were two desk officers: one who followed political affairs, myself, and one who followed economic affairs, including the aid program and all of that. There was plenty of work to do in both areas. Mike Rives was appointed Country Director, replacing Tom Corcoran.

Of course, as I described previously, I had worked with Mike, starting in 1969 when he reopened the Embassy in Phnom Penh. In 1970 I went to Phnom Penh on a TDY [temporary duty] basis to help him when he was Chargé d'Affaires there. The other officer in Phnom Penh with me was Bob Blackburn. He had had no political experience but was a very competent officer. He was a quick study and understood how things worked. The "chemistry" in the relationship between Mike Rives and Al Haig didn't work. I've already mentioned Mike's problems with the Secret Service during Vice President Spiro Agnew's visit to Phnom Penh. Not many people can survive the kind of "slicing job" to which Rives was subjected.

Rives was ultimately appointed Country Director for Laos and Cambodia. I believe that the Personnel guy who arranged this assignment for Mike Rives was Tom Recknagel. Tom is an old friend of mine from way back, from the earliest days of my career. We had studied French in an early morning class at the FSI. Then he was my boss in the Embassy in Saigon, where he was chief of the Political Section, 1967-68]. I was told that, in spite of the objections that the NSC [National Security Council] staff raised against Mike's being assigned as Country Director for Laos and Cambodia, the Department's Personnel section decided that it wasn't going to be dictated to by people outside the building. By that time Mike had also been promoted to FSO-1.

1972 was a critical year on the Cambodian desk in Washington. My work on the desk was largely staying informed, writing memos and staying in touch with the Embassy in Phnom Penh. The two major events in 1972, were the "Watergate Affair" which occurred during the election campaign, though its ramifications dominated events in Washington in 1973 and 1974. The other major event in Cambodia was the impact of the Easter offensive in Vietnam. At this time the

Vietnamese communist troops were pulled out of Cambodia and sent into combat in Vietnam. The Khmer Rouges took over the conduct of the war in Cambodia.

Q: The Easter offensive of 1972. For the record, who was conducting the offensive?

ANTIPPAS: This was the Vietnamese communist "main force" attack on South Vietnam. Eventually, it was turned back mainly through the use of American air power and Saigon Government troops. Many of the U. S. forces had already left South Vietnam by this time. It was the major push by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in 1972. The main effect on the Cambodians is that they really got a "bloody nose." As the Vietnamese communists pulled out of Cambodia, they just "walloped" the Cambodian Army. After that we began to find Cambodian communist bodies on the battlefield, instead of Vietnamese communists. It became apparent by that time, even to the most casual observer, that the Khmer Rouges had been committed to combat in Cambodia. There was a "brand new war," in effect, in Cambodia.

Those people who say that the "secret bombing" of 1969-1970 precipitated the Khmer Rouge struggle against the Cambodian government are simply mistaken. We were fighting Vietnamese communist forces until 1972.

The second thing that took place on the political level in Cambodia, which I, of course, monitored very closely, was the Cambodian Presidential Elections. The Cambodian government had declared the establishment of a Republic in October, 1970. Sihanouk, of course, had been effectively removed from power. There was an acting Chief of State. The government drafted a new constitution, and Lon Nol decided to run for the presidency, even though he was, in effect, crippled by the stroke that he had suffered in December, 1970.

We had hoped against hope that Lon Nol would drop out of the government and would be replaced by a more reform minded group in the spring of 1971. That didn't happen, basically because of the "machinations" of Lon Non [Lon Nol's younger brother]. Lon Nol ran for president in the spring or summer of 1972 -- I don't remember exactly when it was. The main candidate against Lon Nol was my old friend, In Tam, who had been Vice President of the National Assembly and Governor of Kampong Cham Province. In my view he was probably the most competent guy in the country. However, the Nixon administration wasn't about to do anything to interfere in what they saw as the "people's choice." This was a big mistake, in that it meant that we would never really get a handle on military corruption. As a consequence, as we saw over the next several years, Cambodian corruption was enough to "turn off" any support for Cambodia that we had in the U. S., even though the Cambodians were doing the fighting. They had mixed results, obviously, as they weren't doing all of that well. But they were fighting. I don't think that anybody could disagree with that. There is no question about the fact that, when Cambodian refugees would come out of these areas [of combat] when they could, the people were "voting with their feet." There was absolutely no question of this. Nobody wanted to live under communist control. The Cambodians were fighting, and all they wanted from us was our material support.

I think we were unable to continue that material support because of the scandals that went on. If you change the place names and the names of the people, it could have been the situation in

nationalist China before the communist takeover. It was the same kind of thing. There were military units with "phantom" payrolls. They'd send a brigade out on an operation, but, in fact, it was only a battalion. If you were sensible, you never went out with the Cambodian Army on anything much less than a multi-brigade operation, to make sure that there were enough people to protect you. The Cambodian Army would sell POL [petroleum and other lubricants] and ammunition to the communists -- anything was fair game to them.

Q: How did it look when you were on the Cambodian desk in Washington? Were you getting reports that business was pretty much as usual in Cambodia?

ANTIPPAS: Yes. By that time the Nixon administration and the American Embassy were becoming increasingly unwilling to communicate any "bad news." They were really afflicted with "clientitis." I was getting letters from my friends in the Political Section in Phnom Penh which contrasted with the official cables being sent to the Department, as I mentioned before.

Q: What kind of letters were these?

ANTIPPAS: My friends in the Embassy would write letters to me and tell me their views on what was happening. When people would come back to Washington on leave, they would come in and visit and tell me. So I think that I had a pretty good insight into what was happening, over and above the official telegrams from the Embassy.

Q: For the historian, what happens to those "private" letters?

ANTIPPAS: They were written to me, personally, so they are probably squirreled away in my own files.

Q: The normal source of information for historians is the flow of telegrams.

ANTIPPAS: And the telegrams go all over the government.

Q: And then you have, particularly in controversial places, a certain number of letters from officers who want to keep the desk informed. So there's a different type of reporting which will...

ANTIPPAS: Will never show up...

Q: On the historical radar.

ANTIPPAS: One of my responsibilities was to make sure that I didn't expose these guys who wrote to me. They were getting into enough trouble as it was, "bucking the system" inside the Embassy. The "system" involved Ambassador Coby Swank being told what to do by the [U. S.] military. I think I've mentioned this before. Coby probably wasn't the right choice to be the Ambassador there. He was a decent individual and as competent an officer as there is. We really needed a person as strong minded as Tom Enders, except that Tom Enders was going to do what Henry Kissinger wanted, because he had been one of Kissinger's students [at Harvard] and had his own agenda as well. It was very clear that the Nixon administration really didn't want to

"rock the boat."

Q: *Well, you'd be sitting in meetings in the Department and people would be talking about where Cambodia was going. By that time a significant number of people in the Foreign Service -- certainly in the Department of State -- had served at one time or another in one of the three Indochina countries. You weren't talking to a bunch of "starry-eyed" people.*

ANTIPPAS: No, no.

Q: *Well, what was their attitude?*

ANTIPPAS: Actually, it was very negative. I worked under several Assistant Secretaries of State. Marshall Green went off to be Ambassador to Australia after that. He was replaced by G. McMurtrie Godley, who had been in the Congo and then in Laos during the "secret war." He was a wonderful guy. I had known him slightly in Africa. I was in the Central African Republic when he was in the [former Belgian] Congo, during the crisis over the seizure of some of our people in Stanleyville. I had visited him in Vientiane in 1969, when we were in Saigon. He became Assistant Secretary.

Then he was replaced by Phil Habib in 1974. Phil, of course, as I think I mentioned before when I described how the Political Section in Saigon operated, was one of those people who liked controversy and liked to be challenged. He liked to challenge his officers and was really quite a breath of fresh air in the system. As I look back on it now, I really felt quite intimidated by the negativism of almost all of the country desk officers in the Bureau of East Asian Affairs. At our staff meetings we would have a roomful of country desk officers...

Q: *When you say "negative," what do you mean?*

ANTIPPAS: Well, they were almost all against our policy in Indochina. They wanted to "cut our losses" and get the hell out of Indochina. That was basically it. They were dealing with their "clients" [in East Asia] and they could see the impact that our Indochina policy was having on our policies toward those [other] countries, everywhere from Australia to Japan. This really came across very clearly. Should I then get up and make a speech to my colleagues about how we should help "our little brown brothers" in Cambodia? I would be laughed out of the room. Everyone knew where I stood, anyhow.

The biggest chore that I had in 1973-1975 was the credentials fight for Lon Nol's government at the UN. This involved our effort to save the seat of the Khmer Republic from the challenge of Sihanouk and his communist associates in the so-called "GRUNK" [Gouvernement Royal Unifie Khmer], the Royal Unified Khmer Government. The political arm of this government was called the "FUNK" [Front Unifie Khmer], the Khmer United Front. So it [Sihanouk's faction] was sometimes referred to as the "GRUNK/FUNK." They were our opponents. My job for several years was to beat the drum and make sure that every one of our Embassies abroad went to their host government foreign ministries and urged them to vote for "our side." This didn't make me very popular in the Department of State at all. Not only was I not popular in the Bureau of East Asian Affairs but in the whole building. I would go around and beat the drum all over the

building -- "roller skating" up and down the corridors and visiting every desk. I was "thrown out" of the best desks in the Department.

Q: Let's go back to these meetings with Habib and the desk officers. The other people were "negative" as all get out. How did you feel about it? You had a "client." This was your job.

ANTIPPAS: I had a very personal feeling about it. I knew these Cambodians.

Q: What was your personal feeling?

ANTIPPAS: My personal feeling was a certain loyalty to the Cambodians. I knew them, "warts and all," because I had followed this problem from the vantage point of Vietnam in the late 1960's. A number of our so-called "allies" in Cambodia had been, in effect, on the communist payroll before the Cambodian Army overthrew Sihanouk. However, as I saw it, the point was that the Cambodian people didn't want to be communists. They were fighting. They didn't ask for direct American combat assistance. You could argue that the very fact that we had a policy which got us involved in Vietnam dragged the Cambodians into the struggle as well. So I felt that we had a certain responsibility for what was going on there. Obviously, you couldn't carry that too far. In the first instance it was very much in our interest to keep them fighting as long as possible, because that helped us in the negotiating stance [on Vietnam in Paris]. Secondly, it helped us to get our troops out of Vietnam.

To me that was the critical consideration. I'll never forget the fact that the last American killed in Vietnam, an American Army colonel, was hit by a rocket fired from Cambodia by the Vietnamese, during the Easter offensive of 1972. He was the last actual combat casualty.

I knew some of these Cambodians and I played a certain role in getting some of them to work for us. In 1974, I think, I played a key role in convincing the then [Cambodian] Foreign Minister to take the job of Prime Minister. I wrote the paper that was used by Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Rush in his meeting with this individual, asking him to take on the job. He was a good man, very active, very intelligent. In fact, he was killed by the Khmer Rouges at the very end because he did not manage to escape from Phnom Penh.

I remember meeting him at the Diplomatic entrance of the Department in Washington. He had been in New York and came down from the UN. It may have been March, 1974, or about that time -- I would have to look up my notes to see. He came down to Washington for a meeting with Deputy Secretary Rush. I had written the briefing memorandum for the Deputy Secretary, giving him the arguments why this guy should take the position of Prime Minister. The Minister was well regarded by the Embassy in Phnom Penh. He had served as Minister of Information as well as Ambassador to the Asian Development Bank in Manila. He knew I had supported his appointment as Prime Minister. He said, "I'll take the job of Prime Minister if you will stay on the desk and protect our interests." He knew very well how Um Sim and I had operated and the role I had played in getting Um Sim appointed. I told him that I would stay the extra year. My initial assignment on the desk had been for two years. In point of fact, in personal terms, I probably should have moved on at that time, instead of being there for the "crash" [of our Cambodian policy].

I knew these people personally and felt a certain responsibility toward them and knew -- better than most people -- the actual conditions on the ground.

Q: What was the general feeling, say, within the "Indochina complex" in Washington about Cambodia?

ANTIPPAS: For many in the liberal camp "Cambodia was a dirty word. It was felt in many quarters that it was, to use William Shawcross's terms, "a sideshow". That was a very apt name for it. Nobody really knew that much about it. I think that most people saw Cambodia as one of those things to be used. It was the sort of thing that you had to do to try to protect our flanks in Vietnam. If we could get a decent, negotiated settlement in Vietnam, maybe that would be all right for the Cambodians as well. I don't think that anybody really lost much sleep about Cambodia in the Washington community, quite frankly. Generally, they didn't think that the Cambodians were very great fighters and that we were using up a lot of our credibility by supporting them. Cambodia was a pretty poor "client" to be representing.

I may have told you that when Secretary of State Rogers left the Department in 1973, to be replaced by Henry Kissinger, the custom was to allocate a time when anyone who wanted to see him could do so, shake his hand, and say goodbye. Practically the whole building walked up and shook his hand. As I passed through, since I had briefed him a couple of times, he did sort of recognized my face. I introduced myself and said, "Sir, I'm the first mate on the 'Titanic.'" He laughed at that. He knew exactly what I was talking about. That's kind of the way I felt. We were really on a collision course, and our policy probably wasn't going to be successful.

But I felt so proud of the Cambodians. They were so central to our policy. The whole debate over the War Powers Act turned on the unauthorized bombing of Cambodia in 1972-1973. This debate was going on about the time I made that trip with Al Haig. I'll never forget the feeling that we all had in the Summer of 1973 when U. S. Air Force participation in Cambodia was "turned off." They made the last strafing runs across the skies of Cambodia. We all held our breath and felt that our "clients" were going to go down the drain, because now they had no protection. A major offensive took place in the provincial capital of Kampong Cham, on the Mekong River. There was one hell of a fight up there. Amazingly enough, the Cambodians stood their ground and beat off the Vietnamese offensive. The Khmer Rouges were in contact with the Cambodian Army, but Kampong Cham was so close to the Vietnamese controlled, rubber plantation "sanctuaries" that the Vietnamese communists were very much involved in that fight. But the Cambodians survived. I was surprised but so proud of them. I used to say to people, "How can we abandon these people when they're fighting like hell?"

I became too emotionally involved. I still am, to this day. I still feel very "uptight" about it, when I think about it.

Q: How did we view Sihanouk? At the time you were on the Cambodian desk, Sihanouk was out of power. He was wandering around the world and was in Beijing quite a bit.

ANTIPPAS: And in Pyongyang.

Q: *Were you following what he did?*

ANTIPPAS: Yes. Of course, he became the "hand maiden" of the Khmer Rouges.

Q: *At that time?*

ANTIPPAS: Oh, yes, very much so. He made a very well publicized trip to the "liberated zone" [i. e., Khmer Rouge controlled zone] of Cambodia.

Q: *Wearing one of those little scarves [which the Khmer Rouges wear]?*

ANTIPPAS: Exactly, and with several of the former "three ghosts." There was a great debate about three of the former Khmer Rouge leaders during the 1960's. These were not the people who had gone to North Vietnam in 1954, but local Khmer Rouge leaders: Khieu Samphan, Hu Yun, Hu Nim The only survivor was Khieu Samphan who is the putative head of the Khmer Rouges, who is still alive. I obtained a copy of Doctoral thesis from the University of Paris which was critical of French colonial policy and became the theoretical basis of the Khmer Rouges policy of returning Cambodian society to the earth or the "year zero".

Anyway, there was a great debate about whether the three ghosts had been eliminated by Sihanouk in the mid 1960's. What happened was that they simply went into the bush and disappeared. They resurfaced after 1970. But there were many of us who didn't believe that they were alive and that these were impostors who were created simply to develop popular support. They had been popular in the National Assembly. They were National Assembly members -- communist and Marxist members of the National Assembly who had really been pains in the neck to Sihanouk and Lon Nol in that time period.

It turned out that they, in fact, were alive. I spent a lot of time in Cambodia going around and asking people, "Do you recognize this picture?" We would get these pictures from communist sources. We would also tape their radio broadcasts that the FBIS [Foreign Broadcast Information Service] would pick up. I would go around asking people who had known them and ask them, "Are these the voices of these same people?" I even remember asking, "Do you recognize the shape of this guy's ears?" It was kind of detective work. Anyway, it turned out that they were real.

As I said before, Sihanouk made a very well publicized trip with them in the 1973-1974 time frame. It was clear that he was so angry at those people such as Lon Nol who had betrayed him and thrown him out of office that he was determined to bring them down, whatever the cost. He no doubt felt that he would be able to control events after that. I am not sure if that, in fact, is accurate. I think that he was as much a prisoner of the communists as anybody was. In fact, the communists killed off a number of members of his family when they took power. We know that now. Sihanouk was basically held under what amounted to "house arrest" for several years by the Khmer Rouges after they took power. But there's no question that Sihanouk was very valuable to FUNK and GRUNK and to the communist cause generally. I used to say that he was worth four communist divisions to them because he played their game. People in the Non-Aligned

Movement thought that he was a great hero and couldn't be wrong.

But your question was, "What did we think?" I know what I thought and I know what many people in the State Department thought. I'm not sure what the Nixon administration thought -- how the NSC viewed him...

Q: Were any efforts made to contact him?

ANTIPPAS: I suspect that there were, but I don't think that he was his own master. Any efforts that we made to talk to the Khmer Rouges were just ignored. They just "would not play ball."

Q: Let's talk about the Khmer Rouges during the time that you were on the Cambodian desk. You were on the desk when the Vietnamese pulled out of Cambodia to "do their own thing" in Vietnam.

ANTIPPAS: Right.

Q: What was the feeling at that time about the Khmer Rouges?

ANTIPPAS: Well, I think there was surprise in the intelligence community at the fact that they were able to field a major force. I don't think that anybody had really appreciated the fact that the Vietnamese had these Cambodian cadres in North Vietnam during all of those years -- 15 years or whatever it was. Then the Vietnamese sent them back to Cambodia and corralled themselves a peasant army. Obviously, these troops were "dragooned" or conscripted into the Khmer Rouge army. They gave a fairly good account of themselves, from the very beginning, except in the face of our air power.

I told you of the sinking feeling that I had after I interviewed several of those Khmer Rouge "returnees." They were middle level cadres. I was shocked to find out the quality of the training which they had received. I said to myself, "We're really in trouble, because we don't have anything like that and we won't get them under the combat situation we were in."

The only thing that we had anywhere near that was the "Mike Force" people, the Khmer Krom from South Vietnam. They were basically Cambodians, but they were from South Vietnam, so their attitude was slightly different. Of course, the casualties which they incurred were very heavy during the first couple of years. Khmer Rouge casualties were also very heavy. I am sure that the great majority of the 5,000 cadres who returned to Cambodia from North Vietnam were killed off.

Q: When the Khmer Rouges did march into Phnom Penh, I heard stories about how young they were.

ANTIPPAS: Oh, yes. We saw many pictures of those troops. They were young people. Their commanders were well trained and were definitely in charge. There is no question about it. They very definitely had their agenda.

Q: *Were you picking up stories or reports about how the Khmer Rouges were acting?*

ANTIPPAS: Oh, yes.

Q: *In the villages...*

ANTIPPAS: And in the "liberated zones."

Q: *We're talking about the time up to the fall of Phnom Penh.*

ANTIPPAS: Yes, we're talking about 1973-1974. On a number of occasions the Khmer Rouges would take forces away from areas that they had captured. They massed their forces for an offensive against Phnom Penh, for example. There were several offensives against Phnom Penh which were beaten back. To do that, they would take troops away from certain areas. When these troops would get down below a certain level, the local people would "take off" and would go to a provincial capital still held by the "friendlies," even though the "friendlies" couldn't protect them. It was very clear how those people felt, in the stories they were telling about what was happening out there.

I think that we had a very clear view, long before the fall of Cambodia, of what was going to happen, in general. However, I don't think that anybody predicted the ferocity [which they displayed]. You knew that Cambodian Army officers would suffer, maybe the bureaucrats, and maybe the teachers. Perhaps they would all get "zinged," because that's what the communists do. However, the Khmer Rouges took it out on anybody who could read. They killed anybody that wore eyeglasses. People like these were taken out and killed, because anybody that could read was obviously a "threat" to them.

Q: *Were you getting this from the Khmer Rouge propaganda? When you look at this situation, the Khmer Rouges were the most vicious and, you might say, ideologically as far to the "Left" as you would want. None of the other communist troops did this -- the Vietnamese...*

ANTIPPAS: I think that the North Koreans did a little of this.

Q: *A little of this, but not really to this extent. Yet you think of the Cambodians as being a relatively relaxed people.*

ANTIPPAS: Absolutely. We were shocked.

Q: *Looking at this, at the time or afterwards, did you have any feeling about why?*

ANTIPPAS: I think that we kind of "kidded" ourselves into thinking that these were very nice little brown people who were very "laid back," as you pointed out. In fact, the Cambodians had a reputation of being very tough people. They were used by the French as police in Indochina. The French Empire, the French colonial administration, used Vietnamese as bureaucrats in all three states of Indochina [Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia]. They used Cambodians as the police, because the Cambodians did what they were told and they were "tough."

I had this theory that I used to put forward of the three "races" -- the Lao, the Vietnamese, and the Cambodians. The Cambodians were the best fed of the three. Their diet was the best. They ate more meat than any of the others, since they belonged to a cattle-owning society. They had a lot of cattle. Not that this made them necessarily bloodthirsty, but I think that there is some relationship between people who slaughter cattle and who can be "tough." In fact, the means of execution used by the Khmer Rouges resembled how you slaughter cattle -- "pole-axing," cutting throats, and things like that. So I had this theory that the Cambodians weren't as "blasé" as we used to think and their pre war tourist based propaganda had us believe. In fact, they had a very "tough" background. Cambodian troops had fought in World War I in the French Army and gave a fairly good accounting of themselves. This is not well known, but they did. They did what they were told, they were well disciplined when they were trained, and they had this dietary preference.

One of the things that really upset me in 1979, when I was put on a task force for famine relief in Cambodia, was to think that there could be any famine in a place like Cambodia, given its well known attributes in terms of fish, rice, and cattle. You really have to work hard to starve a country like Cambodia -- the size of Indiana or Missouri. It's not that big a country. The fact that people were starving to death meant that, obviously, somebody was working hard to achieve that.

Q: How about Pol Pot? Did we have any feel about him? Was he just a name?

ANTIPPAS: I forget what his real name is. He was a student in Paris. One of my jobs was to try and keep track of all of these people and learn about them. One of the things I accomplished was that I was one of the first people to get a copy of the doctoral thesis of one of these three "ghosts," the man who is now the key Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan. He was one of a number of Cambodians who went to Paris in the 1940's and 1950's and became communists. The fact is that the French Left probably created more home grown communists in their former colonial areas than any place else. We have a lot of data on the names of Cambodian students in France who became communists or were coopted by the French Left. Pol Pot was one of these students. I'm told that he was an electronics student, who failed his technical studies. He returned to Cambodia an embittered man. Having been coopted by the communists, he went to work for the local resistance to the French colonial system.

Not everyone admired Sihanouk as an administrator. Sihanouk really acted like royalty. People tell stories about Sihanouk the first time he came to the United States, which I think was in 1959, under the Eisenhower administration. He landed on the West Coast. He was received there by the Under Secretary of State. Christian Herter was the Secretary of State at the time. I forgot who the Under Secretary was it may have been Douglas Dillon. I remember reading a report of this first meeting with Sihanouk and how absolutely amazed this Under Secretary was at the way Sihanouk's entourage treated him. No one in his entourage would walk up to him. They would literally "crawl" up to him, on all fours, not daring even to look at him. It was kind of the way Japanese Emperor Hirohito was treated before World War II. People were not even allowed to look at him. Sihanouk had been king for 30 years when he was thrown out. He'd been around a

long time. You kind of get used to it. When you become king at the age of 17, you learn a certain way of behaving. So I think that the Cambodian communists really didn't like him because he treated them as royalty did in the middle ages. They had their axes to grind, too. They viewed him as a hand maiden of the French and the colonial powers. Of course, the communists wanted to change all that.

Q: How did the whole thing "play out?" Can you talk about the "end game," from your perspective?

ANTIPPAS: Well, the major problem was continuing the supply of rice and ammunition to the Cambodians. We had "saved" the seat of the Cambodian Government at the UN, so they still had some political power. Our aid program had been cut back dramatically. Those people in Congress who were against the whole effort in Vietnam and Cambodia took steps to cut off even the small amount of military assistance that we were giving them. Toward the end [in 1975] supplies had to be flown in, because the Mekong River was no longer safe for navigation. Most of the heavy stuff had been brought up the Mekong River from Vietnam, but the supply line was interdicted in a number of places.

I think that in the late winter of 1974 or early spring of 1975, the Vietnamese or the Cambodians figured that aid was going to be cut off. I recall that Ambassador John Gunther Dean testified before Congress after the end in Cambodia -- and I accompanied him up to the Hill to talk to the East Asian subcommittee chaired then by Congressman Lee Hamilton. Hamilton asked Dean if he thought Congress was at fault for the loss of Cambodia. Dean was very cagey and dodged that bullet but answered by saying that, "Nobody fights to the last cartridge."

I think that the Cambodians just gave up hope.

I can't speak directly to Vietnam, since I wasn't really dealing with the issue. In Cambodia the "siege areas" tightened. The Khmer Rouges were closing in on several provincial capitals, which the "friendlies" still held. I think that when they got the message that there would be no more assistance and we started pulling our advisers and observers out of local areas, the Cambodians understood that they were being left on their own.

During the third week of April when the Embassy in Phnom Penh was actually evacuated, we thought that we might have to shoot our way out. I say, "We." Actually, I was observing all of this from the vantage point of Washington. The feeling was that the Cambodian Government forces might, in fact, impede the evacuation of the Embassy. There was some apprehension about what would happen. However, the Cambodians were almost lackadaisical about it. Our people just left. In fact, the Cambodian military guarded the Embassy building until the very end -- not allowing anybody in. The interesting phenomenon was in the days between our pullout and the Khmer Rouge takeover, almost the whole cabinet had refused evacuation, I was told there was a euphoria among cabinet members in that they felt that finally they were their own masters. All those leaders who remained behind were executed immediately. Sisowath Sirik Matak, the former Deputy Prime Minister, who refused evacuation and expressed his contempt for America's abandonment in a letter to John Gunther Dean, was hauled out of his refuge at the French Embassy in a garbage truck and killed. Lon Non, who had returned to Cambodia in spite

of my efforts to keep him here went out to meet and negotiate with the incoming Khmer Rouges and he was immediately shot by firing squad on the banks of the Mekong River. My friend In Tam was in the Western Provinces and he made it to the Thai border with his whole family in a hail of gunfire. The Thai put him under house arrest and I was unable to see him when I visited Thailand as part of the Refugee Task Force in the Summer of 1975.

Q: Before we get to that point, when did John Gunther Dean go out to Cambodia as Ambassador?

ANTIPPAS: He went out in 1974.

Q: How was he viewed?

ANTIPPAS: He was tough. He was viewed as a very hard liner. He made very strong pitches for assistance and continued support for Cambodia. He was very angry, for example, when I "let" Lon Non leave the U. S. to go back to Cambodia. John was a very strong figure in Phnom Penh. But the Ford Administration literally had no cards to play with. Congress had turned off the water. There was a lot of bitterness about that.

Q: Were you dealing with Congress at all at this time?

ANTIPPAS: Oh, yes. Not directly, of course, since we weren't supposed to be "lobbying." However, we obviously had contact with a variety of people in various Congressional committees. I had a lot of direct contact with Dick Moose and Jim Lowenstein and later Chuck Meissner, who were "investigators" [for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee]. So there was a dialogue of sorts. However, it was very clear that there were elements in Congress that wanted to stop the war, pure and simple. They were tired of having people "kill each other with American weapons." This was kind of a favorite quote at the time. They worked continuously to stop the assistance [to Cambodia and Vietnam]. This was what happened. It happened for Vietnam and it happened for Cambodia. Nothing that anybody could say about the explicit and implicit commitments of the United States for the previous 20 years, would change their view.

Q: What about your colleagues within the Department. What was their reaction toward the end in Indochina? Did they pretty well see the end in sight?

ANTIPPAS: Everybody pretty well saw the handwriting on the wall. The attitude of most of my colleagues -- the desk officers for the various countries in the Bureau of East Asian Affairs, including even those who had served in Vietnam -- was "a pox on all of their houses. Let's just get out of there and end it." The raiding of what little money was available for military assistance to Indochina, where it was obviously going to waste, didn't make any friends for us on other desks in the Department. So there was a lot of bitterness about that. I can sympathize with how those people felt at the time. It was very much of a "down" feeling for anyone working on Indochina at that time. Everyone was pretty depressed.

Q: Were you involved in the decision to pull the Embassy out [of Phnom Penh]?

ANTIPPAS: I observed it. I actually had left the Cambodian desk by the time all of that was playing out. I think that I left the desk around April 1, 1975, and went over to the Bureau of Consular Affairs to be the Administrator's special assistant.

I was only in Consular Affairs for a couple of weeks when the Bureau of East Asian Affairs created the Refugee Task Force. I was actually working on this task force at night when the evacuation of the Embassy took place. After the evacuation took place, the inter-departmental task force was established. It was obviously more than the Bureau of East Asian Affairs could handle. When the evacuation of the Embassy was going on, I was monitoring events up in the Operations Center in the Department. They were telling people that they had to limit the baggage they could take out of Saigon. I remember the Executive Director of the Bureau saying, "Don't let anybody take out any of those bloody ceramic elephants." Most people left everything behind and just took out a suitcase. Not even pets were allowed to be taken out.

During the day I'd be working in the Bureau of Consular Affairs. I remember that Admiral Zumwalt called me one day. I don't know if he was still Chief of Naval Operations or had just retired. He called me to say -- this was before we actually closed down the Embassy in Saigon -- that he very much wanted to bring the former Vietnamese Chief of Naval Operations, with whom he had worked, out of Vietnam. We were still issuing visas to Vietnamese at the time. So on Zumwalt's behalf I called the guy who had your job as Consul General in Saigon -- I can't remember his name.

Q: I forget, too. The Consul General in Saigon.

ANTIPPAS: He subsequently served in Haiti. He had a heart attack, I think, as a consequence. I remember calling this poor guy in the middle of the night, getting him out of bed, and asking him to take care of Zumwalt's "buddy." I guess we did take care of him in terms of issuing him a visa but I think he too decided to remain behind to care for his Father.

It all went down the drain very quickly, I thought. The Consular Section in Saigon stopped issuing visas -- stopped letting people into the compound. The end came fast in Vietnam.

Q: Would you care to talk about the refugee situation?

ANTIPPAS: Sure. I was one of the original recruits [on the task force].

Q: You left the Cambodian Desk in April [1975] and went to Consular Affairs.

ANTIPPAS: Tom Recknagel [former chief of the Political Section in Saigon and then in Personnel in the Department] recruited me for the job as Special Assistant to the Administrator of Security and Consular Affairs. He was the Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator and about to retire himself. No sooner did I start this job when I was immediately drafted into the East Asia Bureau task force which was set up. I was allowed to work at night so that I could continue to work during the day [in Consular Affairs]. Basically, that task force dealt with the evacuation of both Phnom Penh, Saigon, and other places in Vietnam. After April 25, [1975], when Saigon was evacuated, it was decided that we needed to broaden the scope of our efforts because we would

have to deal with all of these refugees who were coming out of Indochina. Ambassador Dean Brown, former Under Secretary of State for Management, who was then the Director of the Middle East Institute, was selected to be in charge of the task force. He pulled together a bunch of people -- most of the old Indochina hands, including a number of the people who came out of the Consulates and the Embassy in Saigon. I don't think that anybody from the Embassy in Phnom Penh went to work on the task force. A number of these guys who were evacuated were brought back and were either working in the task force in Washington or were sent out to field operations, where we set up reception centers for the refugees, like Guam, Camp Pendleton, Fort Chaffee, Indiantown Gap and places like that. It was a big operation to try to pull this together and decide what the policy would be.

We had representation from the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service]. The Deputy Commissioner of INS was a member of the task force. The Commissioner of INS was a member but, for operational work, we had his deputy and an assistant commissioner.

After some time the task force was reorganized, and I was put in charge of a unit which dealt with the Vietnamese that didn't make it to U. S. territory or to U. S. bases, such as the Philippines or American ships or Guam. They escaped to Malaysia, Thailand, and other locations. So I headed up a unit of several officers and a secretary that worked with INS in particular to figure out how we were going to get these people into the U. S. and what criteria we would use to select them. Everybody that made it to U.S. territory, in fact, we took, including a number of "Third Country Nationals" who decided that they weren't going back to the Philippines or Korea. They decided that they were refugees, too, and were going to the United States. They refused to be repatriated to their home countries. I think that we actually took some of these guys, because we couldn't forcibly repatriate them. I never understood that. I really never understood how a Korean "Third Country National," who had been working in Vietnam, made it to Guam and was permitted to go to the United States as a refugee.

Q: I guess it was just too complicated [to send him back to his own country].

ANTIPPAS: It was kind of interesting. I made a trip out to Southeast Asia to see some of these locations with an Assistant Commissioner of the INS and one of the senior deputies in the task force. His name escapes me now. He finished up his career as an Ambassador to Haiti, as a matter of fact. He was an old Indochina hand. He had run the computer program for...

Q: Was this McManaway?

ANTIPPAS: Yes. Clay McManaway, this Assistant Commissioner of the INS, and I. We went to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to talk to the local governments, our Embassies and to get a handle on how many people had made it their shores. That is, the original "wave" of boat people not the subsequent ones after 1977. We got to Kuala Lumpur just after the Japanese "Red Army" terror squad captured one of our consular officers in the Embassy. The consular officer, Bob Stebbins, later became my deputy in Seoul, in fact -- an old friend of mine. He had been a courier when I was in Africa. He had the dubious distinction of having the "Red Army Faction" take him as a hostage.

We didn't go to Indonesia. We were trying to find out how big the problem was and what would be the criteria that we would use to decide which of these people we were going to take.

I worked on this task force for about six months. The Administrator of Consular Affairs in the Department began to squawk about where his special assistant was. So I managed to get away from the task force.

Q: Just a question or so on the criteria you used on the task force. Was the idea to pare the numbers down -- to get as many of these people into the U. S. as you possibly could?

ANTIPPAS: The fundamental criterion was that if they could make any linkage at all with the United States, we would take them. If they had relatives in the U. S. or had worked for the Americans in some fashion, we would take them. Of course, the numbers of refugees were not that large at that time. I think that in the first few months after the evacuation [of the Embassy in Saigon] total Vietnamese refugees in particular -- Cambodians didn't take to boats in any numbers -- were only about 12,000 to 13,000. The numbers were really fairly small.

Q: The big problem came later.

ANTIPPAS: Subsequently. After I got to Thailand, the "boat people" started coming out in numbers reminiscent of what's happening in Cuba today. We were trying to handle the refugees in a workmanlike fashion.

Let me say a couple of things about working fairly closely with the Commissioner of the INS. At that time the Commissioner was General Leonard Cushman, the former Commandant of the Marine Corps. He turned out to be a very charming individual and all that. I would go over to his office from time to time to negotiate the acceptance of certain individuals that we wanted to take from these offshore camps [in Southeast Asia]. I would go over to his office and would put these names up to him. He would veto them or accept them, as the case happened to be. He used to say that he was the guy who "taught Antippas how to say No." We had an interesting time. During the first days after the evacuation of our people from Saigon, I accompanied General Chapman to a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee chaired by Senator McClellan of Arkansas. I remember McClellan telling us to order all American ships in the Philippine Straits to clear out because they were like a "neon sign saying welcome". McClellan said he feared a flood of refugees. He was right. The Senator subsequently was further annoyed when we opened one of the reception centers for the refugees at Fort Chaffee. Anyhow, it was quite an interesting learning experience, working directly with General Cushman and his Deputy Commissioner.

At the time my personal feeling was that we "owed" something to an awful lot of people [in the Indochina countries], but I really couldn't agree that we should take everybody. I continued to feel that way all during the entire exercise. Simply deciding to take everybody that wanted to come out [of the Indochina countries] just didn't make sense from the American interest point of view. It certainly did not pay off any debts we owed people because of the fact that we'd been there.

I think that mine was a minority view at the time, because I was one of the few consular officers

actually involved in the task force most of the time. To most of the old Indochina hands who were running the task force, the idea was, "Let them all in." They had a kind of personal commitment about that. We'll talk more about that when we discuss my time in Thailand.

EMORY C. SWANK
Ambassador
Cambodia (1970-1973)

Ambassador Emory C. Swank was born in 1922 in Maryland. He entered the Foreign Service in 1946. His career included positions in China, Indonesia, the Soviet Union, and Romania, and an ambassadorship to Cambodia. He was interviewed by Henry Precht in 1988.

Q: We come now to your service as Ambassador to Cambodia, September 1970 to September 1973. Please begin your reflections.

SWANK: I'll furnish a few comments on the origin of the appointment, Henry. I was named Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs in May 1969. I had an excellent boss in Assistant Secretary Martin Hillenbrand, and my responsibility was to oversee Soviet and Eastern European relations. This position, short of an assignment as Ambassador to Moscow, is probably the job most sought after by Soviet specialists. In April 1970 I decided to visit my constituency and made a trip to Belgrade, Zagreb, Warsaw, Poznan, Krakow, Sofia, and Budapest. It was in Budapest, in the office of Ambassador Alfred Puhán, that I read the text carried in the USIA wireless bulletin of President Nixon's speech of April 30, 1970, announcing that U.S. and South Vietnamese forces had entered Cambodia. Having served in Laos, I had more than a routine interest in this development. The President, I have always believed, misjudged in giving this decision the momentous quality it acquired through this nationwide address on television. It was a reasonably straightforward, if unexpected, military action against enemy sanctuaries. His speech was defensive and somewhat emotional. Shortly thereafter I returned to Washington unsuspecting of what lay ahead.

Deputy Assistant Secretary positions are often regarded as stepping stones to Ambassadorships. I had worked closely in recent months with Joseph Sisco, Assistant Secretary for Near East and South Asian Affairs, who was spearheading Secretary William Rogers' efforts to induce the Soviet Union to play a constructive role in Arab-Israeli affairs. One day Joe asked me to consider whether he might nominate me for the Embassy in Jordan. After reflecting a day or so, I declined the nomination, explaining that I was unfamiliar with and had rather hazy notions about the area and believed there were better qualified candidates. (Dean Brown subsequently served as Ambassador to Jordan.)

In late May, a few weeks later, I received a telephone call from Bill [William H.] Sullivan, a good friend who was Deputy for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Bill informed me that my name had been submitted to the White House as State's leading nominee for the reestablished position of Ambassador in Phnom Penh. I remember telling Bill at the outset of this conversation that

Phnom Penh did not need an Ambassador but a worker of miracles. My misgivings stemmed not only from a suspicion of the sorts of difficulties that might lie ahead in Phnom Penh but also from my ambivalence about the U.S. role in Indochina. The issue has troubled me for some time, beginning in 1963-64 at the National War College where my class had been unable to reach a consensus on whether Indochina was a "vital" U.S. interest. This ambivalence had grown in Laos, where I served as DCM from 1964 to 1967. The government we were supporting in Vientiane with economic aid and covert military support against the North Vietnamese and their Lao allies was barely surviving. I feared we were in a "no-win" situation in Laos. The best we could hope for was that our friends would hold on pending some overall settlement with North Vietnam. It was because of this ambivalence that I had sought a second tour in Moscow.

But other considerations tended to override these misgivings. How many opportunities to become an Ambassador can a career officer reject? Unlike the Near East, I could not claim ignorance of Southeast Asia. Also, Cambodia's situation challenged me -- career officers are not likely to decline assignments because of their intrinsic difficulties. Finally, as a practical matter, did I have any option? My name had already been submitted to the White House. The die was cast.

An interview at the White House was necessary. The President felt no need to be a major player in the screening process, and so I met with Henry Kissinger, Director of the National Security Council. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, prepped me for the meeting. "Be confident and dynamic," he advised. "Give him the impression you can handle the situation." The meeting with Dr. Kissinger was unremarkable and not very probing and lasted possibly fifteen or twenty minutes. We talked about Cambodia and Vietnam and East-West tensions. I guess I displayed sufficient assurance and knowledge to pass muster: my appointment was announced on July 14, 1970.

Even before the announcement, my briefings got under way. Cambodia was a controversial issue -- a circumstance that affected not only my tour in Phnom Penh but my briefings for it. State had argued against the invasion of Cambodia. The White House never forgot this apostasy. To further complicate matters, relations between Secretary Rogers and Dr. Kissinger were not only cool but almost nonexistent. As a consequence, the White House, distrusting not only Rogers but also State's Asian Bureau, headed by Assistant Secretary Marshall Green, took Cambodia under its protective wing. My most important briefings were with Thomas Pickering, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political and Military Affairs in State, and with the Pentagon and CIA. Significant communications concerning Cambodia were in a special channel classified NODIS KHMER (no distribution Khmer). Many of these dealt with arms deliveries being made to General (later Marshal) Lon Nol in response to his April appeal for military aid against encroaching Vietnamese forces. So sensitive had the White House become about leaks that few in State had access to this information. As a matter of fact, policy towards Cambodia was already being made and was henceforth to be made essentially by the White House. Kissinger's Deputy in the National Security Council, Colonel (later General) Alexander Haig, had made his first trip to Phnom Penh in May 1970. I never saw a written report of his meeting with Lon Nol, but as a result of it military supplies had begun to move from storehouses of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) to Phnom Penh.

Q: May I interpose a question? What was the position of our Embassy in Phnom Penh on arms deliveries and other support?

SWANK: Lloyd (Mike) Rives was Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., at the time of Haig's visit and of a later visit by Vice President Agnew. Rives was dubious, I believe, about Lon Nol's credibility as a leader, but he was excluded from Haig's meeting with Lon Nol -- the meeting that activated a policy of military support for Phnom Penh that was to continue until its fall in April 1975.

Q: Were there American troops fighting in Cambodia?

SWANK: Ground forces were withdrawn in June 1970. Bombers and fighter and reconnaissance aircraft flew missions in Cambodia until August 1973.

White House differences with State over Cambodia were paralleled by differences with Congress. On August 11, 1970, along with several other Ambassadorial nominees, I appeared before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The confirmation hearing was conducted by Chairman J. William Fulbright. Given his record of dissent on Vietnam, he was relatively mild in his questioning. He asked me if the U.S. Government were contemplating a treaty of alliance with Lon Nol. I replied that we had not undertaken any formal commitments to Cambodia.

The overriding authority on Cambodian affairs was neither Agnew, Kissinger, nor Haig, but Richard Nixon. My meeting with the President -- my only meeting with him while I was Ambassador -- took place at the Western White House in San Clemente on September 4, 1970. Dean Brown, off to Jordan, flew with me to Los Angeles and we motored together in a rental car to San Clemente. The meeting lasted a full hour and was largely a monologue by the President. He spoke cogently and in detail, without notes, about the opportunities the recent political change in Cambodia offered us and stressed Cambodia's importance in buying time for "Vietnamization." Kissinger, who was present, said little. Secretary Rogers, although present in San Clemente, had not been invited. The President discussed the prospects for economic and military aid and stressed his determination to do all he could to support Lon Nol. He was insistent -- the matter came up twice -- that Mike Rives be replaced as DCM (the President did not so inform me but the Vice President had strongly recommended this action). At the end of the meeting, the President, Dr. Kissinger and I walked out to the garden overlooking the ocean and had numerous photographs taken as we gazed west across the Pacific.

In his memoirs, Nixon wrote about his special preoccupation with Cambodia and his decision to invade. He was apprehensive that the North Vietnamese would topple Lon Nol and turn all of Cambodia into a sanctuary. It was therefore essential to bring Lon Nol into the war on our side. This decision has remained controversial, but after reviewing the materials that bore on it during my briefings, I concurred in it. If our overarching strategy was Vietnamization of the war so that U.S. forces could be withdrawn, the invasion could promote that strategy. Also, the Cambodians in Phnom Penh, for their own reasons, were eager to add their weight to the forces opposing North Vietnam. What no one could foresee then was the phenomenal growth of the Cambodian insurgents into a disciplined, motivated force with Sihanouk as its figurehead. No one foresaw that Cambodia was going down a path to debilitating, destructive civil war.

Q: Was there an active Khmer Rouge rebellion under way at that time?

SWANK: In this early phase the insurgents could not have numbered more than 5,000 men. The rebellion had existed for about ten years without much success and was periodically engaged in skirmishes with Sihanouk's troops, under the command of Lon Nol. In 1970 the insurgency posed no immediate threat. All of us, including Lon Nol, perceived the real enemy to be the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong.

I arrived in Phnom Penh on September 12, 1970, via Hawaii and Saigon. In Honolulu Admiral John F. McCain, Commander in Chief Pacific (CINCPAC), briefed me on the military situation. In Saigon I met briefly with Ambassador Bunker and General Abrams. Both men were helpful and promised their support, but their attention was heavily focused on the main theater of operations -- South Vietnam.

In Phnom Penh I was warmly greeted by Mike Rives and his staff. The Embassy already numbered about 50, and a new chancery was ready for occupancy. The city still had an aura of tranquility and charm that contrasted with the bustle and squalor of Saigon. I have preserved an article by Peter Jay, Washington Post correspondent, written on October 9, 1970, the date of the official proclamation of the Khmer Republic.

There is an aura of genuine friendliness, bravery, and good cheer. There is a notable sense of aroused nationhood and a new republicanism.

In my first interview with the press on September 22, I told James Foster, a Scripps Howard writer, that I was impressed by the patriotism of the Cambodians. I set for him the parameters of our involvement in Cambodia, as I understood them:

This is a Cambodian affair. We are simply helping the Cambodians defend themselves. Since we're furnishing military assistance, there need to be experts to manage it. But I think President Nixon has made it clear there will be no U.S. ground forces or military advisors.

I faced immediate challenges -- military, economic, and political.

Let me begin with the military. The question was this: What should be the size and location of the logistics team delivering military supplies and equipment to Cambodia? Arrangements up to that time had been informal with MACV sending supplies to the Politico-Military Section of the Embassy. This unit was headed by Jonathan (Fred) Ladd, a retired Army colonel and friend and appointee of Al Haig. Ladd's title was Political-Military Counselor. It was obvious that these informal arrangements would not be adequate for long since our military assistance would be rapidly increasing. (It grew from \$8.9 million in FY 1970 to \$185 million in FY 1971, \$200 million in FY 1972 and \$225 million in FY 1973.) A more orderly channel of supply under military direction was required. Fred Ladd had misgivings about the military bureaucracy taking over and the diminution of his authority and support role. But it seemed to me a necessary and reasonable step to take. Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and I agreed in January 1971 to establish a Military Equipment Delivery Team (MEDT) modeled on an organization the U.S. had devised some years before to deliver military aid to Burma. The initial complement of MEDT was 113 men, 23 of them resident in Phnom Penh, the remainder in

Saigon. Later, additional personnel were brought to Phnom Penh, but the grand total of personnel at the Embassy, civilian and military from all agencies, never exceeded 200. The officer heading MEDT as based in Phnom Penh. The first incumbent was Brigadier General Theodore Mataxis, the second Brigadier General John Cleland.

The staffing dilemma we faced was of Washington's making. Congress was intent that the U.S. not convert Cambodia into a Vietnam and placed unprecedented restrictions on the executive branch to enforce this policy. Its vehicle was the "Supplemental Foreign Aid Authorization Act of December 1970," on which we depended for funding for Cambodia programs. The Act provided that no funds were to be used to introduce ground combat troops into Cambodia or to provide U.S. advisors to Cambodian military forces in Cambodia. Nor should the provision of military aid be construed as a U.S. commitment to Cambodia for its defense. Subsequent legislation went so far as to limit to 200 the total of all U.S. personnel based in Cambodia.

I concluded that we had to observe these restrictions scrupulously to assure a continuing flow of appropriations. But their impact was never far from my mind. Addressing an MEDT conference in May 1971, I noted the modesty of our efforts in Cambodia as compared to Vietnam and the dilemma we faced of making the military aid program effective without advisors. Nonetheless, we were providing critical assistance to people who wished to defend themselves against aggression. We had limited influence over the course of events, I noted, but were the source of their supply of arms and thus a vital part of their effort.

These restrictions on our input into the war, together with weaknesses of the Khmer government and armed forces that soon became apparent, made it clear to me that as in Laos we were engaged in a "holding action." When I arrived in 1970 the North Vietnamese and the insurgents already controlled about half the land area of Cambodia, although most of the people were still under friendly rule. At another MEDT conference held in Bangkok in May 1972 -- twenty months after my arrival -- I pointed out that we could be proud of what we had accomplished with the limited means at hand. The Khmer Republic had survived. The enemy had been denied use of the port of Kompong Som (Sihanoukville). More importantly, the Cambodian armed forces were deflecting between 10,000 and 15,000 Vietnamese troops from operations in South Vietnam, thus buying time for Vietnamization." Yet it was evident to all of us at the conference that the Cambodian armed forces could not reestablish their authority over enemy-held areas and would do well to hold on to the provincial centers they then controlled. Although President Nixon as late as November 16, 1971, had called Cambodia "the Nixon Doctrine in its purest form," Cambodia was in fact a "no-win" situation.

I want to make a few comments about our economic support to the Republic. A group of U.S. experts had arrived in July 1970 to discuss the country's economic requirements. These received further study in November 1970 during a visit by Roderic O'Connor, Assistant Director, AID. We produced a program of assistance that would provide essential imports for the economy and monetary stability. (Developmental assistance, what little could be used by a country at war, would be provided by the United Nations Development Program.) The first delivery of aid, symbolized at a welcoming ceremony by a sack of wheat flour, occurred on June 21, 1971. By mid-1972 assistance valued at \$40 million had been delivered and \$90 million was under procurement. An Exchange Stabilization Fund, modeled on that in Laos, was also in operation,

with Japan, Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, and the U.S. as contributors. The economic assistance program was effective and served the purposes for which it had been established. It was also well administered by Miles Wedeman, Economic Counselor.

Q: Did you take the President's counsel and replace your DCM?

SWANK: I saw no alternative, given the strong personal directive from the President and my need to retain his confidence. Mike's career was probably damaged by this episode, but I am glad to say he continued to serve in responsible posts for a number of years.

We now come to the political challenges of Phnom Penh, the most daunting of which was Lon Nol. He had been Prince Norodom Sihanouk's Minister of Defense and had personally led some campaigns against the insurgents over the years. Yet, along with Sihanouk and other top officials, he had been paid off by the Chinese for allowing war material for the North Vietnamese to be clandestinely unloaded at the port of Sihanoukville and transported to the Cambodian sanctuaries.

Q: Was Washington aware of that payoff?

SWANK: I think CIA obtained documentary proof of these shipments after I had arrived in Phnom Penh and certainly after the White House had committed itself to Lon Nol.

Lon Nol had been a ringleader, along with Sirik Matak, a princely rival of Sihanouk, of the bloodless coup which deposed Sihanouk in March 1970. There has been speculation about U.S. involvement in this coup. I am quite convinced there was no U.S. involvement. Top officials in the White House, State, and CIA were equally astounded by it.

Q: What were the reasons for the coup? Was it simply a grab for power?

SWANK: Yes, but in response to growing popular dissatisfaction with the encroachments and assertiveness of North Vietnam. Sihanouk was aware of his precarious situation and was on a trip to Paris, Moscow, and Peking to solicit protection from the Vietnamese.

Once committed to support of Lon Nol, Washington regularly sent "stroking" missions to reassure him of it. There were repeated visits by Haig, a second visit by Agnew, a visit by Treasury Secretary John Connally, visits by Admirals Moorer and McCain, a visit by Henry Kissinger, and a visit by Under Secretary of State John Irwin and Assistant Secretary Marshall Green. The President was in regular correspondence with Lon Nol through Embassy channels, sending him messages of encouragement and occasional policy suggestions.

I suppose I should record my impressions of Lon Nol. He had good qualities. He was a genuine nationalist and patriot and his anticommunism was deeply felt. He was generous and loyal to friends. He had boundless -- almost child-like -- confidence in the U.S. and in President Nixon. He was a shrewd manipulator of men, controlling his army officers through a network of appointments, friendships, and patronage. Yet he also had qualities that made him difficult to work with and an indifferent leader of his country. I found him divorced from reality a good deal

of the time and had problems getting him to focus concretely on mutual problems. He was a devout Buddhist, perhaps even a mystic, but was also hostage to astrologers and all sorts of superstitions. He was overtrusting of his family, giving far too much authority to his half-brother, Lon Nol, who had no significant official position. He had delusions of grandeur and faulty military judgment. In December 1971, against the advice of some of his counselors, he launched a military campaign (Chen La II) to reopen communications with a northern provincial center, Kompong Thom. His troops got there but were then cut off by the enemy from resupply, panicked, and incurred disastrous losses in men and equipment.

But perhaps Lon Nol's major weakness was his failure to provide leadership. He could not articulate objectives -- did he even see them clearly? -- or motivate his people. He isolated himself from the public and distrusted his peers, seeing in them potential rivals. To aggravate the problem, his health failed. He was incapacitated by a stroke in February 1971 and relinquished power for six months, spending part of that time at U.S. hospitals in Hawaii. When he returned, he seemed less in touch with reality than before. He launched Chen La II, autocratically reasserted his authority (losing the friendship of Sirik Matak in the process), and seemed unable to work harmoniously with Cheng Heng, the nominal chief of state, or In Tam, a parliamentarian with considerable popular support.

By December 1971 we at the mission had arrived at a bleak assessment of the regime, and I sent a highly classified message to Washington incorporating our misgivings. The report was filched by a Navy yeoman in White House communications and was leaked by him to columnist Jack Anderson, who made it the subject of his syndicated column. My deputy, Tom [Thomas O.] Enders, alerted me by phone at a hotel in Pattaya, Thailand, where my wife and I were taking a brief vacation. I pondered with mounting chagrin the impact the leak could have on my relations with Lon Nol. On my return I sent him a personal note, written in longhand in French, attributing the Anderson column to political maneuverings against President Nixon. Fortunately, the episode did not seem to reduce his confidence in me -- I have never known whether his staff translated the column for him. Ambassador to Chile Nathaniel Davis suffered from a similar leak to Jack Anderson about the same time, the particulars of which he recounts in his book The Last Two Years of Salvador Allende. Assured privacy of communications is of course vital to diplomacy.

Q: You mentioned that Lon Nol had received payments for allowing shipments to go to the Vietnamese. Would you consider him a corrupt individual?

SWANK: He tolerated much corruption in his government and in the armed forces. But corruption is endemic in Cambodia, in Southeast Asia, and in many parts of the world. Loyalty to the extended family takes precedence over other values, and providing for its welfare ranks above honesty.

As the months went by, we privately discussed at the Embassy whether a more effective leader than Lon Nol could be identified. The political vacuum that had existed in South Vietnam following the coup against Ngo Dinh Diem gave us pause. There was also the difficult question of who was qualified to succeed Lon Nol. Few Cambodians had ever had a chance to display leadership under Sihanouk, who had brooked no competitors. Strong personalities ended up in exile or in the insurgency. The Cambodian elite were also prone to factionalism and petty

grievances. The country was in desperate straits, but no one seemed to comprehend the overriding importance of national survival. Who could replace Lon Nol in the armed forces? They might well disintegrate under a civilian alternative to Lon Nol. And so we never recommended that Lon Nol be replaced, and I am confident the issue was never remotely considered in the White House, however disillusioned they became with his performance. Lon Nol left for Hawaii on April 1, 1975, only weeks before the final collapse, and he later moved to California where he died at age 72 from heart disease in November 1985.

Q: In considering whether it might have served our interests to replace Lon Nol, did you ever consider whether we could accomplish it?

SWANK: We never got that far in our speculations.

I should make some remarks about Phnom Penh in wartime. The serenity of the early days soon vanished as rocket attacks on the city, indiscriminately launched against civilian as well as military targets, and harassment of the Embassy increased. Phnom Penh grew from 500,000 to over a million. Its facilities were overwhelmed by refugees from the countryside, and it took on the urban sprawl, litter, and confusion of Saigon.

Harassment of the Embassy began shortly after I arrived. A bomb exploded in the uncompleted wing of the new chancery at 7 a.m. on December 1, 1970. The timing of the explosion was odd -- at that hour the adjoining wing was unoccupied except for a guard, who was unhurt. But the message got through: We had enemies in Phnom Penh. The enemy's first rocket attack on the city was spectacular, destroying on January 23, 1971, almost all of the T-28 fighter aircraft we had supplied the fledgling Khmer air force. Then in April and June bombs were tossed at MEDT vehicles, the occupants escaping injury. An attempt to assassinate me occurred on September 7, 1971. It failed because the charge of plastique hidden away in a bike pushed into the path of my limousine was improperly wired.

Q: Was the perpetrator ever identified?

SWANK: No. But while he failed in his mission, he achieved nationwide publicity in the U.S. for the notion that we were not welcome in Cambodia -- the attempt was front-paged in most newspapers. That same month a more serious incident occurred. Two U.S. mission staff members were killed and ten Americans and two Cambodians wounded by grenades hurled by terrorists at softball players using a vacant lot near the residence. This was a shock to us all, and we accelerated efforts to take precautions. Yet a year later Tom Enders, his chauffeur, and his bodyguard (Tom was Chargé d'Affaires, I being absent in Washington), despite these precautions, were subjected to a bomb attack on the way to the chancery. The specially armored limousine in which they were riding was no longer usable itself but saved their lives. A Khmer motorcycle escort was killed.

As the war progressed and highways were interdicted, Phnom Penh became an island reached only by air or by river convoys moving upstream from Saigon with supplies of rice, other essentials, and military equipment. I spent frequent lunch hours on our terrace roof looking down the Mekong for these convoys. They were the city's and our lifeline. Phnom Penh ultimately fell

to the insurgents because they acquired a capability to mine the river in the spring of 1975.

Q: Did the enemy control all the countryside around Phnom Penh?

SWANK: Only toward the very end. I cannot speak, by the way, for mission morale at that time, but in my years it was high in spite of dangers and hardships. Shared difficulties seem to reinforce loyalties.

Q: Were dependents at the post at this time?

SWANK: Most dependents were evacuated in the spring of 1973, some returning to the States, others staying in Bangkok and returning in periods when the threat temporarily lessened.

I come now to the stage of my tour of duty I call "Peace in Vietnam - War in Cambodia."

Q: Before moving to that, Coby, did you take special measures to keep morale up? Was morale a major preoccupation?

SWANK: It was not a major preoccupation. We all worked hard and then had social activities in the evening up to the hour of curfew. There was entertaining by diplomats, the still large community of foreign residents, and Cambodian officials, who were friendly and hospitable.

The Vietnam peace treaty signed in Paris in January 1973 between the U.S. and North Vietnam did not commit either side to actions to establish peace in Cambodia. Le Duc Tho, chief negotiator for Vietnam, had resisted Dr. Kissinger's efforts to include Cambodia in the treaty, claiming Hanoi could not speak for the Cambodian insurgents. We were skeptical about that assertion. In retrospect, it appears to have been an accurate statement. Nonetheless, I saw a glimmer of hope. We persuaded Lon Nol to declare a unilateral cease-fire on January 27, 1973. He insisted on addressing the appeal for compliance to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong, although we knew from special communications intelligence that the insurgents had then become the principal enemy. But it was at least an overture for peace. Simultaneously with Lon Nol's declaration, General John Vogt, Commanding Officer of the U.S. Seventh Air Force based in Thailand as the "United States Support Activities Group" (USSAG), stood down all tactical air and B-52 operations.

The response of the insurgents was to launch a major offensive against Lon Nol's forces. Takeo, a southern provincial capital, was seriously threatened. And so on February 8, 1973, Lon Nol and USSAG resumed military operations. Some years later a document came to light confirming that the insurgents were bent on total victory and feared the collapse of their revolution had they accepted a cease-fire (Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, p. 348).

USSAG operations continued until August 1973 when halted by Congressional fiat. They have been the subject of controversy, generated in particular by the William Shawcross book Sideshow, subtitled Kissinger, Nixon, and the Destruction of Cambodia (1979). The Embassy's role in these operations, essentially that of liaison between USSAG and Lon Nol's General Staff, is described in detail in a memorandum which Tom Enders and I jointly filed with the

Department of State's Historian in 1979. (Tom Enders served as DCM from January 1971 until my departure and as Chargé d'Affaires from September 1973 until April 1974, when John Gunther Dean, the last U.S. Ambassador to the Khmer Republic, arrived in Phnom Penh.) The document we filed with the historian is also included as an appendix in Years of Upheaval.

I concurred in the resumption of the bombing. We judged it essential to the survival of Lon Nol's armed forces and to the success of negotiations that might be under way between Washington and Hanoi, or Washington and Peking, to terminate the war in Cambodia.

This might be as good a time as any to comment on those negotiations and on Prince Sihanouk.

None of us at the mission was privy to Kissinger's secret discussions looking toward a settlement and later described in Years of Upheaval. Kissinger correctly states that at the last meeting I was to have with him as Ambassador, in Bangkok on February 8, 1973, I stressed Lon Nol's objections to dealing with Sihanouk, then in Peking (p. 16). Distrust of Sihanouk was still widespread in Phnom Penh in 1973. He had forfeited good will by aligning himself unconditionally in 1970 with the insurgents and the Vietnamese, his former enemies. No Phnom Penh politician could have stomached his return to power in 1973 in a role of national reconciliation. My remarks to Kissinger did not come from any personal animus against Sihanouk -- I had never met him -- but from my reading of politics in Phnom Penh. In retrospect, neither we at the Embassy nor Lon Nol and his peers comprehended the degree to which Sihanouk had become a figurehead in the insurgent power structure. This lack of comprehension was not surprising since Sihanouk was to make a highly publicized visit to the so-called "liberated areas" of Cambodia in March 1973, the month following my meeting with Kissinger. Two years later, after the insurgents took power in April 1975, Sihanouk's fall from grace had become fully apparent. He returned to Phnom Penh only to find himself a prisoner in his own capital -- powerless, isolated, and unheeded. Several of his children lost their lives in the carnage Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot launched against his people. It is because of this subsequent suffering of Sihanouk at the hands of the Khmer Rouge that he has regained some measure of respect from his noncommunist countrymen and a sufficiently neutral posture to permit him to be seen, in 1988, as a possible figure of national reconciliation.

Q: *So you never met Sihanouk.*

SWANK: Yet I feel I know him quite well, having heard so many stories about him in Phnom Penh and having read his numerous interviews and books and seen his films.

My concluding months in Phnom Penh -- March to September 1973 -- were full of professional and personal frustrations.

Let me begin with the professional concerns. As the weeks passed with no sign of progress towards a negotiated settlement and no advance of Lon Nol's military fortunes, we could point to only one accomplishment: the survival of the capital from convoy to convoy. It is true that we managed to induce Lon Nol to accept, in the interest of political unity, Sirik Matak, Cheng Heng, and In Tam in a High Political Council which he chaired. But as early as June it had become clear the Council remained largely on paper and that In Tam, who had been named Prime

Minister in May, would not be able to function effectively. Factionalism remained too strong. I pinned a hope or two on Kissinger's meeting with Le Duc Tho in Paris in mid-May 1973. But a private message to me from Kissinger in June indicated no progress had been made on Cambodia. We then persuaded Lon Nol to take another initiative for a cease-fire, but this July 6 declaration elicited no response from the insurgents. Meanwhile, refugees were streaming into Phnom Penh from the provinces. We reviewed our evacuation plans in April, based on helicopter rescue of U.S. personnel and friendly Cambodians and diplomats to safe-havens outside the country. The actual evacuation two years later closely followed these concepts.

In April I also decided to evacuate wives and children. My wife Meg was among them. The letters from me she preserved convey something of the anxieties we were experiencing.

June 29, 1973. I hope I can look back at this post at some future point without bitterness. But the past two years have been the most trying I can recall -- an accumulation of frustrations and failures. . . . Fortunately, there is harmony, by and large, within the mission that contrasts with the intractable divisions which mar the fading Khmer Republic.

July 6, 1973. If only by some miracle these people could sense their danger as much as we do. Simple, cheerful, uncomprehending, they are not equipped to summon the resolution and discipline they need.

July 25, 1973. I have sent a notice to non-official Americans recommending they leave. I am reminded so often of those last grim days in China in 1949. Lon Nol has no Taiwan. We gave the High Political Council a pep-talk yesterday and a program for survival if they can and will follow it. It is pretty much up to the Khmer now. I think the outcome is unpredictable, ranging from early evacuation to muddling along for months.

The sense of imminent danger in the last entry was due to the termination of U.S. air support scheduled for August. There was a widespread impression in the U.S. that the bombing was excessive and provided no long-term solution to the problems of the Khmer Republic. To us in Phnom Penh, it was insurance for survival.

My personal frustrations were also mounting. Earlier in the spring I took advantage of a visit by Bill Hall, Director General of the Foreign Service, to ask whether I could be replaced as Chief of Mission during 1973. I noted I would complete three years in Phnom Penh in September and told him a new Ambassador might bring more vigor and conviction to the job than I could now muster. There was a further consideration I did not share with Bill Hall. Friends privy to Washington currents told me Kissinger was unhappy with me -- too "low profile." Years later, in 1986, I came across a quotation in Barry Rubin's book Secrets of State attributed to Brent Scowcroft, an aide to Kissinger on the National Security Council staff in 1973, that substantiated this:

We felt Swank's attitudes were not healthy. He was pessimistic and therefore a bad influence on the government. He had a negative attitude towards what we were doing -- didn't put his heart into it.

Early in August 1973 I left Phnom Penh for a week for the relative tranquility of Burma, visiting Ed Martin (the American Ambassador) in Rangoon and making a trip up country to the temple ruins of Pagan and the city of Mandalay. One evening at Pagan, alone in my hotel room overlooking the Irrawaddy River, I decided to write Dr. Kissinger a confidential letter that I later dispatched from Bangkok by classified pouch. The salient paragraphs were these:

Your criticism hurts because I have given a great deal in time and energy to realize the mission the President and you gave me at San Clemente in September 1970. Your minimum objective, as I understood it, was to preserve a friendly regime in Phnom Penh pending the success of the program of Vietnamization in South Vietnam and the negotiated end of the war we hoped would follow. Against considerable odds, some of them unforeseeable, including the invalidism of Lon Nol and the general ineffectualness of the Khmer military and political leaders after a period of initial elan, this minimum objective was in fact realized and contributed to the disengagement of U.S. forces from Vietnam. It was admittedly an uphill battle all along the way, at best a holding action which at the time many predicted would fail in six months. Yet we held the line through the 1973 [U.S.] elections and the January settlement. . . .

Our task would have been easier, as you know, without the restrictions on staff and prohibition on military advisors, both legislated by Congress. Indeed, the lack of combat advisors with Khmer battalions has probably proved to be our severest handicap. But within those restrictions, we have for the last two years been operating at full strength seven days a week -- a maximum effort which belies the description "low profile."

Naturally no one is fully satisfied with his effort. In retrospect, I think I placed too much confidence in the early enthusiasm of the Khmer for the war as well as their capability to wage it with a minimum of outside support. Only in time did I learn . . . that the competence of the Khmer in these things is modest. . . . Only after time did we perceive that our own supporting effort, basically modest in input and conception, would be just barely adequate to our purpose. A modest input, it should be recalled, did not prove adequate for Vietnamization in Vietnam. And so I am not apologetic about what we have accomplished with the means at hand. . . .

I would of course have preferred to discuss this issue with you personally and directly since it is not one easily addressed in a letter. Although I have had numerous useful meetings with Al Haig, I have met with the President only once, and with you only twice since San Clemente, both times in haste on your way to Peking. I doubtless would have benefitted from more frequent and direct counsel from you since most Presidential emissaries who came to Phnom Penh were inevitably confidence-building missions for Lon Nol, focusing on the crisis of the moment. None gave me a hint of serious unhappiness with the mission's or my effort, and all seemed to accept we were doing our best in a fragile and intractable situation.

I was encouraged to receive rather quickly from Kissinger his reply through private channels.

From: Henry A. Kissinger. Eyes Only for Ambassador Swank.

I am replying to your letter of August 8 by this means in order not to have to wait

for a pouch to convey my response.

It is certainly true that I feel our policy of "low profile" in Cambodia was wrong. It is equally true, however, that I was in a better position to have that policy changed than you.

It is clearly unjust to charge the executors of a policy with the consequences of that policy. I made that point very strongly at the time the Foreign Relations Committee failed to confirm Mac Godley. It most certainly is equally applicable in this case.

I want you to know that I have great respect for your professionalism and your dedication. The country owes you a great debt for your tireless efforts in a most difficult post at a most difficult time. The toughest days are now upon you but I know that you will "hang in there" and give it everything you have -- as you have never failed to do. You have the very best wishes of all of us. Warm regards.

I have quoted these letters in detail because neither, to my knowledge, has previously been published.

I was heartened not only by this letter but also by State's recognition of my service in Cambodia in granting me a Superior Honor Award. Also, I received an extravagantly phrased letter from President Nixon, with his signature, dated August 28, 1973, which spoke of my "great dedication and purpose" and of the Phnom Penh assignment as having added "new luster to an already distinguished career."

Yet in subsequent years (1973-75) friends in State acquainted with the personnel process, including Deputy Director of Personnel Hugh Appling, told me that although my name was frequently submitted for top level assignments, the prospect of my receiving one seemed negligible. I chose retirement in 1975, at age 53. I left with a feeling of depression I overcame only over a period of time as I immersed myself in the challenges and rewards of a second career.

Q: You mention having had two meetings with Kissinger after San Clemente. How did you find him on those occasions? Friendly? Well informed?

SWANK: The meetings were hasty -- he was obviously under great pressure and preoccupied with other problems. His tone was sometimes peremptory. Perhaps he did not have as accurate a picture as he might of our situation in Phnom Penh and perhaps I failed to convey this reality to him in our meetings. However, one would have expected Haig to brief him.

Q: What were your impressions of Haig?

SWANK: He was friendly, open, and talkative. I had numerous private talks with him, to and from the airport and official calls, in my office and at home. He projected an agreeable, relaxed personality quite different from that he later projected as Secretary of State.

Q: Did he fully understand the difficulties you faced?

SWANK: I don't know. He should have, since his trips were frequent and his contacts numerous.

Q: What about the Department of State?

SWANK: Our reporting was candid and realistic. State officials knew, I believe, what we were up against. But the White House formulated policy on Cambodia.

Q: What would Kissinger have had you do differently?

SWANK: I never knew precisely, and his message to me did not clarify that important point. Maybe he didn't like my style. But I have always suspected my reporting irritated him. It was increasingly reflecting my conviction we were facing a "no-win" situation, possibly even a losing one.

My sense of discouragement as I left Phnom Penh on September 5, 1973, was profound. I had met infrequently with the press for the past 18 months but had a farewell session with journalists on September 4. I told them I saw no prospect for a negotiated settlement or an end to the fighting. Thinking principally of the U.S., whose forces had by then disengaged, I said that the war seemed to have less and less meaning. What I failed to articulate was that for Cambodians the war had changed its meaning -- it was a bitter civil war. Did Lon Nol, Sirik Matak, or their associates comprehend this changed character of the war? Or did they continue to blame North Vietnam for their misfortunes? Sirik Matak and others who remained in Phnom Penh in 1975 must have thought some compromise with the insurgents was possible. They lost their lives as a consequence.

Before my departure, Lon Nol received me at Chamcar Mon palace to award me the Order of the Grand Cross Sahametrei (Friendship). It was the saddest encounter of my life. I had developed affection and respect for this genuine if flawed patriot, but I could not bring myself to tell him honestly that I was convinced the Republic was doomed. Diplomacy, personal courtesy, and concern for U.S. interests kept me silent. Besides, what would honesty have accomplished?

Since 1973 Cambodia has known continuing tragedy: war, revolution, genocide, foreign invasion, perplexing and unending factionalism.

But Willie [William] Shawcross is wrong and simplistic to assign blame for the tragedy up to 1975 to Nixon and Kissinger as he does in Sideshow. Shawcross interviewed me for 8 or 10 hours at my home in Cocoa Beach in 1976, and he later sent me for comment an early draft of "Cambodia: The Blame," an article published in the Sunday Times Weekly Review on December 12, 1976, which advanced the thesis more fully developed in Sideshow. In my reply I noted that Nixon and Kissinger bore indeed some responsibility for the widened war in Cambodia but that responsibility for the tragedy that ensued was rather widely spread. The North Vietnamese aggression against South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia was a root cause of the tragedy. The unwillingness of the Cambodian insurgents to negotiate a settlement was another. And our own

Cambodian friends were not blameless. They were naive about their prospects in Cambodia, unrealistic in their assessments, and provided weak leadership. But Shawcross, although a talented and personable journalist, was carried away in his own emotional tide of sympathy for Cambodia and antipathy for U.S. policies.

There are probably many lessons to be learned from the Cambodian experience as far as U.S. policy makers are concerned: match resources to policies, or else change the policies; undertake military operations of any duration only when there is a broad national consensus favoring them; avoid interventions in third-world situations unless the objective is precise and appears feasible. We ventured into many unknowns in Cambodia.

Q: When we look back at our experience in Southeast Asia, my immediate impression is that we vastly overstated our interest in that region. What an expenditure of men and materiel we made and how little it all seems to count now! Do you share that judgment?

SWANK: Yes. There is a pervasive "Can Do" philosophy among Americans. It was that philosophy operating among policy makers in a series of decisions over a number of years that deepened our involvement in Vietnam -- so-called "incrementalism."

Q: Was it ever possible during that period to say to President Nixon or Dr. Kissinger -- Whoa! Aren't we overreaching ourselves? Or weren't they receptive?

SWANK: Alternative courses of action had to be examined much earlier -- in the Kennedy years.

Q: How closely did you work with Embassy Saigon and the various military headquarters?

SWANK: Very closely. Saigon was the logistics base for our Cambodian programs. We also worked together to ease tensions between the South Vietnamese and Lon Nol forces. Coordinated operations of the two armies were eventually feasible.

Q: It must have been difficult for you, given the variety of tasks the mission was performing, to keep your finger on operations. How did you manage that?

SWANK: On my arrival I established a Coordinating Committee comprising the principal officers of the Embassy -- a streamlined Country Team. Ten or twelve of us met at 8 a.m. each morning except Sunday to review the intelligence picture and discuss courses of action. The meetings generally lasted an hour and were indispensable.

Q: Coby, your last assignment was as Political Advisor to the Commander in Chief Atlantic (CINCLANT), who is also the Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SACLANT), from October 1973 to December 1975. Do you wish to comment on that assignment?

SWANK: I came to refer to it, Henry, as a "decompression chamber." The Norfolk assignment offered limited operational challenges but enabled me to learn a great deal about the U.S. defense posture and to become acquainted with Iceland, Portugal, and the Caribbean countries. I worked for two excellent commanders in chief -- Admiral Ralph Cousins, a low-key, reflective naval

aviator, and his successor, Admiral Isaac (Ike) Kidd, a dynamic, extroverted surface commander. Both were exceptional men of broad experience and keen intellect, and I was highly impressed with most of the other naval officers I met. They were a dedicated professional elite.

I have a couple of observations about NATO deriving from my experience in the SACLANT headquarters and some six visits to Brussels for Defense Minister and Foreign Minister meetings. The first is that military planners seem doomed to fight the last war. SACLANT spent considerable time discussing and debating the resupply of Europe in event of hostilities with the Soviet bloc. Because of the new Soviet "blue-water" Navy and its expanded submarine fleets, the U.S.S.R. can probably successfully interdict allied surface shipping. At the end of six weeks' fighting, NATO forces would have used up stockpiles, and resupply by airlift would prove inadequate. But is a war in Europe going to last more than six weeks? Many doubt it. I believe SACLANT planners could have spent their time more profitably on other problems. The second observation is about NATO itself. It is quite an institution. Not only is it the most durable and central alliance in which we participate, but also the degree of cooperation at the civilian and military levels is remarkable. It is a fully credible alliance and has helped keep the peace in Europe.

During my assignment to Norfolk I was invited to spend a week in the spring of 1975 as a diplomat in residence at Franklin and Marshall College, my alma mater, and to deliver an address on U.S. foreign policy during the last quarter of the century. I took as my theme the transition of the U.S. from post-war dominance to uneasy preeminence in the world -- a thesis that has received much attention in 1988 with the publication of several scholarly books on U.S. decline. I cited Soviet attainment of strategic parity with the U.S., the emergence of new centers of power in addition to the super-powers (European Community, Japan, China, India), and our diminished political authority, reflected in disillusionment with U.S. leadership as a result of the Vietnam and Watergate experiences and the loss of U.S. authority in such bodies as the United Nations. I foresaw that the process of adjustment to our changed status would prove difficult and complex for "Can Do" Americans since it would require much greater collaboration with Europe and Japan in economic and military affairs than we had been accustomed to, efforts to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and produce a more survivable and less terrifying balance of power, and development of a bipartisan consensus at home on what our overseas commitments should be. My experience in Cambodia, which fell to the insurgents the very week of this address, probably caused me to emphasize the injury and policy paralysis associated with executive-legislative confrontation. "No parliamentary democracy," I said, "has generated controversy over foreign policy issues of the intensity and frequency our presidential system has experienced." In the years since 1975 it is evident that we have succeeded, slowly and painfully at times, in shaping policies that give more weight to Europe and Japan and -- very recently -- that hold some promise of a lasting diminution in East-West tensions. But a consensus on foreign policy has eluded us. The fault may lie in our constitutional system, which we will probably not be prepared to change.

Q: My questions may seem irrelevant after that strong statement. Your career, Coby, seems to parallel the "rise and fall" of the Foreign Service as competing government agencies have chipped away at State's dominance of foreign policy. Do you have any comments on this?

SWANK: The fate of the Foreign Service is closely dependent on that of the Secretary of State. A strong Secretary who is trusted by the President can muster the enormous body of talent that resides in State and utilize the Foreign Service in grand causes.

Q: What about our foreign affairs management as compared to other countries?

SWANK: That is a large question. Power in foreign relations is much more diffused here than elsewhere. We are the only nation that has so many different players in foreign affairs that we have to organize them abroad in so-called Country Teams. The competition for the President's ear is fierce. I am proud of our Foreign Service, although like many of my peers I am ambivalent about some of the changes of recent years such as affirmative action. Terrorism is also reducing the interaction with other societies so important to the Foreign Service as a profession. The enhanced assignment of political appointees to top positions is a dangerous trend. For all these reasons, I am not as enthusiastic about the Foreign Service as a career now as I was when I entered it.

Q: Would you like to comment further about the impact of Congress on foreign relations?

SWANK: Congressional oversight is always troubling to members of the executive branch. I suppose that for a considerable part of my career I was anti-Congress. But the Constitution is reasonably clear on the point that neither the executive nor the Congress can prevail in foreign policy, and as a result of Vietnam, Watergate, and Irangate I am no longer persuaded that the executive should have a free hand. Abuse of power, especially in the White House, has been flagrant. So we are doomed to checks and balances and considerable inefficiency in foreign relations.

Q: What about the quality of American journalism abroad? How well are Americans being informed by the media?

SWANK: There's great variation in talent. Journalists whom I knew in Moscow were superb reporters, and some have produced excellent books on Soviet society. Reporting from Laos and particularly Cambodia was uneven and inevitably reflected the strong bias against the war which many journalists developed. There was little attempt at nuance, and they tended to view anyone in federal employ as hostile.

Q: This concludes the oral history, Coby. Many thanks for your participation.

FRANCIS J. TATU
Cambodia Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1971-1972)

Francis J. Tatu was born in New York in 1929. He served in the US Navy from 1946-1952. Afterwards, he received his bachelor's degree from University of California in 1955. His career includes positions in Hong Kong, Laos, Taiwan,

Philippines, Thailand, Washington D.C., Nepal, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Australia. Mr. Tatu was interviewed by Susan Klingaman in October 2000.

TATU: Basically I was concerned about the Cambodians, and that was one of my prime functions actually, that I was the “Cambodian watcher.” There was nobody else watching, so in a way it was my own show. I had wonderful assets because we had an FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service) station in Bangkok. When the FBIS guys picked up broadcasts from Cambodia that were pertinent, they would call me immediately and I would have information sooner than the people who were stationed in Phnom Penh. Now, the Australians in Phnom Penh were taking care of our interests, with a formal “interests section.” I was taking care of their interests informally in Bangkok of the guys who were there. Were on a more formal basis, but all of this helped me in my Cambodian hat.

Q: Do you want to give me an example?

TATU: There was an Army group pulling a barge up the Mekong. You know, some of these details I’ve forgotten: what they had on the barge, why they had the barge, and all that. They were captured by the Cambodians. They took a wrong turn in the river or something, and the Cambodians incarcerated them. When the U.S. media got hold of this, it immediately became they were pulling a barge full of beer. I don’t think they were hauling beer. They were there, in a makeshift prison about three months, and the Australians were taking care of them to be sure they weren’t badly treated. So when Cambodian National Day came, the prince, Sihanouk, deigned that the boys should be entertained for National Day. They were all taken out and fitted for new white suits. In those days white linen suits were formal attire in Southeast Asia.

Q: The tropical attire.

TATU: And they were taken around to these various celebrations, and then they were taken to the leading restaurant in town. Everybody cleared out; it was their restaurant.

Q: Quite a story.

TATU: They were not the only group. There were others that came through also.

Q: So you were the Cambodian watcher?

TATU: I got a piece of paper from then assistant secretary Marshall Green that says I was probably the preeminent American authority on Cambodia, that no other American knew as much about Cambodia, which really, really did me great good for promotion purposes.

Q: Because those on the promotion panel probably had never heard of Cambodia.

TATU: I won’t wax sullen about this.

Q: But it must have been really interesting.

TATU: It was fascinating. People would come and see me from all sorts of places with Cambodian information and stories.

Q: After Embassy Bangkok where did you go?

TATU: Then to the Department as Cambodian desk officer. I had been 16 years abroad without a Departmental assignment. This was right at the height of our involvement in Cambodia, and suddenly - Cambodia was relatively unknown - everybody was expert.

Q: Everybody was expert?

TATU: Everybody you met in the hall. There was this guy in AID who used to have a big plaque on his desk that said, "Officer in Charge Cambodia." When I would come around to see him, he would take this sign down before I got there. I would leave and he'd put it back up. Cambodia had a lot of sex appeal at that time. I've got two great stories out of Cambodia. I've got to get in the Cambodia mode here to be accurate. At any rate, you remember that at one point General Lon Nol had taken over, in early 1970. He'd staged a coup and overthrown Prince Sihanouk, who happened to be out of the country. Then we had prevailed upon Lon Nol to institute some democratic processes in the country. So he went through an election, and an Overseas Chinese named Cheng Heng, who was elected as president. So he'd gone along with this gag.

Then Lon Nol decided that this was too awkward, he was going to overthrow Cheng Heng, he was going to stage a coup. I began getting a urgent messages from our Phnom Penh embassy. Nobody at the Department was paying a lot of attention because they were all preoccupied with President Nixon's "secret" visit to China.

Q: To Cambodia?

TATU: No, China. So I got a "FLASH" cable which reported, "Personnel carriers are in the streets. Lon Nol is about to do it, to overthrow Cheng Heng." So at that time we had real typewriters, you know, in the Department, There were no secretaries around, so I went in first to my boss, who was then Tommy Corcoran and showed him the cable. Tommy handed it right it back to me and said, "It's your country. Take care of things." I sat down at a typewriter and wrote, "You should seek out Lon Nol and you should inform him" - this is almost verbatim - "that, to the extent that we do not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, you should be very much aware that whatever support Cambodia enjoys in the Congress of the United States would seriously be eroded if you were to undertake this measure." So I come around to Tommy, and he says, "Okay. Take care of it."

I had his signature, It was February 14, 1972 - President Nixon and the whole party were on their way to Beijing, and in charge in the Bureau was Bill Sullivan. It just happened I ran out in the hall and there's Bill coming down the hall, fast, and he says, "What have you got there? Brief me." He was going up to see the Acting Secretary, who was a political person named Oscar Meyer. So Bill looks at the cable and he says, "Okay, let's go," and he goes in to the Secretary's office and comes out in about two minutes and he's got the Acting Secretary signed off, I ran it

to the code room. I'll bet that was the fastest that a cable ever got responded to by the Department of State, but it was, of course, sent without the legions of clearances such messages usually require.

Q: I would imagine so.

TATU: So the whole presidential party were on their way to China. Who's in charge? Al Haig was in charge. My counterpart over there, at NSC, was John Negroponte.

Later in the day I'm walking by Bill Sullivan's office and he's obviously in an argument on the phone shouting, and it was Al Haig. Haig was really ticked off that we had sent the cable without clearing through him. I told Bill Sullivan, "I've been in touch with Negroponte, and right along he's been in accord with our position. And here, we had to move fast, as Phnom Penh said 'the personnel carriers are in the streets.'" Well, no matter. General Haig called the Presidential party, who were then overnighing in Hawaii, and he got the authority of the President to rescind our instruction. But in the meantime our ambassador at Phnom Penh, Embry Swank, had already carried out his instructions and the coup was put down. The next day after the dust had settled a bit, I called Negroponte and asked, "What's the problem? You and I were in complete accord. I didn't clear with you because I knew you would agree that we had to get that cable out of here as rapidly as possible. He said, "Well, the whole thing was Al, he thought he was in charge acting president, and he was just put down that you didn't clear with him." "You mean this whole thing was based on vanity and ego?" He said, "Well, I don't like to put it that way, but yes."

Q: He felt he had been bypassed.

TATU: He had been bypassed. So that was one thing.

Q: I think we need to clarify this was when you accompanied General Haig, at that time the head of the NSC, on a trip to Cambodia.

TATU: Well, to Vietnam and Cambodia. We traveled, incidentally, on a presidential plane, a VC-110, which is the only way to travel. The other thing that happened was we spent a few days in Saigon and I went around to see my Cambodian contacts while the other guys of the small group were all circulating for their own interests and purposes. As we were returning to Washington, Haig, for the first time really took notice of me, because he knew I was with State, called me over to talk about Cambodia. He heard my entire brief about Cambodia, and he said, "One thing I want to ask of you, when we get back, don't mention to anybody in the Bureau that we are going to invade Laos." Dead silence. "I didn't know that, General." He just assumed that like the other guys I was in the picture that I knew. So when I got back - now, this is to my detriment; we got back on a Friday, and I thought it over and I thought I'd better keep my mouth shut because at that time I didn't know Marshall Green well enough to feel that I could trust him to protect the source. So when I saw him on Monday, he gave me hell why I didn't have the trip report all written up over the weekend. I said, "I knew you were playing golf." But I never gave that away.

Q: Oh, well, it's one of those things. What do you do? What was your impression of Haig?

TATU: He's a very commanding individual. He's a very good-looking man. I decided the theory is correct that good-looking guys get promoted fast in the military, because they make good posters and good photo ops and all. You've never seen a general who was not good looking - think about it. Legions of women swooned over Air Force general Leroy Manor, as an example.

Q: That's an interesting point. But he did have highly responsible jobs.

TATU: Oh, yes, absolutely. He is a very vital guy, a true hard-charger. Actually, despite everything, I liked him.

Q: Smart man. So you were Cambodia desk officer for a couple of years.

TATU: It was a terribly exacting job. I was putting in about 70 hours a week no exaggeration, and it was terrible. I loved the job, I loved the substance of it, but I just couldn't quite grapple with the physical requirement. And there's very little respect for the time or requirements of the lowly desk officer. The Ops Center would call in the middle of the night for example. They got a classified cable from Phnom Penh, and they can't read it to you because of the classification. So you have to get up, drive all the way from Virginia to the Department, to learn that rockets had been fired on the Pochentong airport. And so what? I mean, nothing to be done about it that couldn't wait till dawn.

Q: Were you it? You were the Cambodia desk? You were the only one?

TATU: Yes, that's right. I suppose of course the other agencies had people in similar capacities, and I used to have a lot of trouble with the Pentagon. They have very little idea of what we do. I recall once I was preparing for a visit by the acting Cambodian prime minister Sirik Matak. Now you can imagine what that entailed, on top of my usual 70 hours. And I got a call from a lady at Commerce who I had never met. She asked, very sweetly, and condescendingly, as though she was giving me a great secret, "Did you know the Cambodian prime minister is coming here?"

Q: What office were you in?

TATU: EA Bureau; we were "Directorate for Cambodia, Laos and Thailand," although it kept changing around. That's why I hesitated. We had BLT at one time: Burma, Laos and Thailand, not to be confused with bacon, lettuce, and tomato.

Q: So the office was in the Asian Bureau, but it sounds like you must have had pretty good direct entree to the top if you were the only person on Cambodia who really knew anything about it.

TATU: Well, sometimes I was and sometimes I wasn't. I'd have to brief these interlopers and then sit back as they took the credit. But that's the way of bureaucracies, and you've just got to live with it.

I'll tell you an interesting thing that happened in the Cambodian situation, although this is out of chronological order. Having occurred in 1979. I had gone up to New York as the IO

representative for the UN General Assembly. You know, when they have the General Assembly, each bureau has a representative go up. I had in the meantime been transferred from EA to IO (another story). So I was up there in New York, and in the meantime Prince Sihanouk was on his way, supposedly as a representation of the Khmer Rouge for the General Assembly (he soon “defected,” however. This could be a very long story.)

Q: Go ahead.

TATU: No, it’s too long. But I walked in to our mission one fine morning - that also was a great job in terms of access - and the Chinese ambassador, who later became the foreign minister, was coming over to see me with his gang, some undisclosed subject. We had an ambassador named Dick Petrie, who was our professional FSO, and then the lead ambassador (we always had five at the UN) was Andrew Young. Anyway, I get a call to come up to the ambassador’s and I said, “The Chinese ambassador’s on his way.” They said, “No matter. Come on up here.”

Petrie and another ambassador, Don McHenry, awaited me. Petrie said, “Listen, we’re going to tell you something that if you tell anybody we mentioned this to you, we’ll say you’re lying.” How about that? It’s an old State Department shibboleth, I’d heard it many times.” Okay, what’s the big lie?”

They said, “We want you to go over and see Prince Sihanouk. He’s at the Lenox Hill Hospital (this was not public, I had not been aware). And we want you to tell him...” I said, “Wait a minute. Why me?” “Because we don’t want it to be anybody else.” “Okay.” “You tell him that he is not a prisoner there. We have Secret Service guards all around him to protect him. He can do anything he wants to do, go anywhere he wants to go. He can communicate with anybody he wants to. Just assure him of all that, and then we’ll do anything he wants to do for his comfort, We are not going to release any press on this or disclose to any one, other than in our own ranks, on a ‘need to know’ basis that he is there.”

So I go charging out of the building, I didn’t even take my overcoat, and it was in the middle of winter. I was so worked up about this. I had been dealing with Cambodia for years, and I had never, met the principal actor. As I’m going out, sure enough, here comes the Chinese delegation. “Where are you going?” “I’ve got to go Lenox Hill.” (I mistakenly said, blurted out, more like it) “Oh, you’re going to see Sihanouk.” Here it was supposed to be so bloody secret, and they knew about it. They said, “Tell him our best regards.” So as I was checking into the hospital they wanted to know, “What is his (Sihanouk’s) health plan?” I said, “He doesn’t have a health plan.” They said, “Everybody’s got a health plan.” I said, “Well, this one doesn’t. Somehow I talked my way through that.” I get up on his floor and the Secret Service had taken over most of the floor. They hadn’t been advised I was coming they didn’t want to let me in. My State Department pass was like a Mickey Mouse card to them. But I got by them somehow and I walked into his room, and there’s the Prince, barefoot and in pajamas; our first meeting. He greeted me, “Excellence.” I said, “*Ce n’est pas necessaire pour moi.*” (it is not necessary for me) Monique, principal his wife, was standing by, and she indicated through eye contact that she was getting the picture. So I gave them all this the messages I had been instructed to convey, and he said, “Fine, okay, Fidel.” He had come around to a good mood, and he just decided, he explained, to call me “Fidel,” for “faithful,” which he did whenever I saw him thereafter, even

years after.

When I returned shortly thereafter, the Chinese had already visited him. The Secret Service were comfortable with me now and they said, "Look, the Chinese were here, and they told him they would take care of him, and they said if he needed any funds, any help or anything at all to call this number," and they give me the number. So I tucked it away. "Any amount of money." So finally, after about 10 days in New York I returned to the department after a very interesting stay. When I got off at National airport, there was a message for me to report to the Department immediately.

I proceeded to the office of IO (International Organizations) DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary of State) Jerry Hellman, as instructed, having rehearsed in my head all of the substantive exchanges I had at the UN. The only question put to me was "Who is going to pay Sihanouk's hospital bill?" Subsequently there were meetings on this question involving many people whose salaries for the time wasted would have paid the \$20,000 hospital bill many times over (Sihanouk had committed himself to the hospital for "fatigue," and stayed about 10 days) These were not interesting meetings. During one such meeting I noted a scrap of paper in my shirt pocket, the ink blurred because it had recently been laundered. It was like a bombshell when I introduced the phone number of the Chinese ambassador with the dictum that "any amount" would be taken care of.

Q: The Deputy Assistant Secretary's office. Send the bill to the Chinese.

TATU: "Do you think they'll pay it." "I'm sure they'll pay it. I know they will pay it." Well, so then, of course, we had to have meeting after meeting after meeting to decide what we were going to do with this bill, how we were going to handle it. Were we really going to let the Chinese to pay it? We eventually ended up paying it 21,000. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance had called on Sihanouk, and he told him, conversationally "you are our guest." So that took care of the question.

Q: Oh, I'm sure. So how long was Sihanouk there?

TATU: As I remember, it was only a matter of about 10 days.

Q: Well, that's interesting, another notable figure that you were contact man for. Now, Cambodia, we're talking what, between '70 and '72 you were doing all this?

TATU: Yes, Well, that last sequence is in 1979, I got out of chron in my enthusiasm. '70 to '73. I was doing it out of Bangkok, but when I was doing it in the Department. I was in EA, on the Desk. But then in the late '70s I was in IO, looking at all Asia, including, of course, Cambodia.

Q: Let's see. You have down here 1970 you were Cambodian desk officer in the Department.

TATU: Oh, that's right, you're right.

Q: Now, this was when we bombed Cambodia, right?

TATU: Yes, that was one of the functions I had when I went over to Vietnam on TDY, to determine the extent of the bombing, because the military was covering up, even to us.

Q: We bombed Cambodia in 1970, I think.

TATU: Yes, we bombed them for a long time, before 1970 and after. Our military thought that "COSVIN" spells out "Central Office South Vietnam," or the main command for the Communist Vietnamese was on the border with Cambodia. It is ironic that after I left the Service, and the war was concluded, I visited the area where COSVIN was supposed to have been, crawled down in a tunnel, and came to a large room underground, that our guide said was COSVIN.

Q: So you went to Vietnam to get a better reading?

TATU: Yes, on the border, and I remember one memorable experience (we're talking about 1972 here). I had a colonel on each side of me poking reach the ribs saying, "No, we didn't have any planes in the air that day" when in fact they did. They had a regular routine of bombing the border, justified for the most part, I may add.

Q: During this time a couple of people mentioned to me - and actually I was in the Department during that period - this was the time when there was a number of officers, Foreign Service Officers, who wrote a protest letter to the Secretary? There was a big to-do about Foreign Service Officers dissenting - I don't know if that's the right word since they had not been directly involved in the decision making - disagreeing with the bombing of Cambodia.

TATU: Well, they were disagreeing with all aspects of our presence in Vietnam, and Laos and Cambodia, the whole thing.

Q: Did you get involved or brought into that at all?

TATU: I didn't. Now that you mention it, it's curious that I, and my colleagues ion the Vietnam and Laos desks did not get involved.

Q: It was something that was going on. The Secretary of State was...?

TATU: I think it was Edmund Muskie.

Q: It was Rogers, yes. But there was quite a flurry over that.

TATU: I think it was like 140 FSOs.

Q: I don't know, but it was, I think, basically the first time - well, of course, with China and Japan in - but I mean the first time there was really an official, overt, publicized protest by Foreign Service Officers about a policy. But that didn't affect you?

TATU: No. I remember the demonstration in front of the Department, looking out the window.

Q: I remember that.

TATU: Occupied the same area in the Department.

Q: In the Asia Bureau.

TATU: Anyway, I was going to say it was so exacting, that job, that one fine day Personnel called me up. You get the impression that Personnel is not in coordination with anybody. They said, "How would you like to go to Nepal?" I said, "I don't know where it is, but I'll take it..."

Q: Anything to get out.

TATU: "...to get out of here." As I say, despite my commitment to the country and the whole cause, I was just wearing thin, and it happened that a logical replacement was there on home leave from Phnom Penh. I was that type of "street" FSO who preferred to be abroad, mixing with the people rather than in Washington buried under paper and mixing with bureaucrats.

Q: For Cambodia desk.

TATU: Andy Antippas, he was always very unhappy with me because he wanted to go back to Phnom Penh, because they were getting - what do we call it? not danger pay...

Q: Hardship.

TATU: It was beyond hardship.

Q: Oh, well, maybe it was something like 'danger pay.'

TATU: Yes, something like that.

Q: But instead he got to replace you on the Cambodia desk. But just before we go on to the next, you were saying it was a 70-hour work week or so. What all were you doing?

TATU: Well, whatever you do: it's always hard to define. Earlier you had questioned that I was just one person on the Desk. So consider that I was doing also the work of the two other guys who should have been there.

Q: Liaison with the Cambodian embassy?

TATU: Oh, boy, I should say, because none of them at their embassy had any real experience, from the ambassador, down to the press attaché, and the consular officer. They all looked to me for guidance. And I didn't mind it. I recall a very poignant moment. During the period when Cambodia had suspended relations with us, their embassy, on 16th Street in the District had simply been locked up. One day, after there had been publicity about the restoration of relations, the keys, plainly labeled, turned up in my in box with no indication as to where they had come

from. I called their press attaché and we drove down there and opened it up. Her wanted me to be the first to open the door and go in. It was quite a mess, but what a moment.

In 1972 we had what amounted to a state visit by Sirik Matak, the acting prime minister came here... I like this little anecdote. My basic library is downstairs, but there is a book on Cambodia which has as its frontispiece a photograph of Richard Nixon watching the Royal Ballet in Phnom Penh, at which time he was Vice President. I provided that photograph for the guy who wrote the book, *A Decent Interval*. The way I got it was actually from another academic, Roger Smith. I had it displayed in my office in Bangkok when I was doing Cambodian affairs there, and everybody who came in who knew anything about Cambodia I would ask to help me identify the people. There were almost 100 people in the photograph. So gradually I was getting to recognize them all, and my boss thought this was very silly stuff, a waste of time. I call this abstract research.

But, by God, when Sirik Matak was coming, I had the picture enlarged and a clear plastic overlay made with the names of the various people. I also got from the archives a copy of the reporting on the Nixon visit to Cambodia, in 1953. Sirik Matak went in to see Nixon and no one else was present except for the interpreters. One of them, whom I had prepped earlier, told me that the photograph was on Nixon's desk and the president began pointing out various prominent people (Having obviously studied the overlay.) Sirik Matak was very moved, he said, "You Americans are so sentimental," and Nixon said, "Yes, I remember this trip so very well, it was you who came to welcome me at Siam Reap."

Q: That must have made a good impression.

TATU: "Tears *flooded* his eyes," said the interpreter.

Q: And little did they know that you had planted...

TATU: A million smiles. I think when I write my autobiography I'll title it *Spear Carrier to History*.

Q: That sounds like a great title.

TATU: Well, you know, very often nobody even reads colleagues memoirs. That's the problem.

Q: One never knows.

TATU: Well, I can't think of any.

ROBERT DON LEVINE
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Phnom Penh (1971-1972)

Robert Don Levine was born in Germany of American parents in 1924. He joined USIS in 1955, serving in Switzerland, France, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Washington, DC. Mr. Levine was interviewed in 1988 by Pat Nieburg.

LEVINE: I subsequently also spent a tour of duty in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. So I was in the same area. And the Vietnamese experience first of all probably had something to do with my being sent to Cambodia, the fact that I dealt with that part of the world, both in Saigon and in Washington. And also the fact that I spoke French. Because French was still used a lot in Phnom Penh.

Q: Well Robert, let me just ask one more question. And that deals with Cambodia. Were you there during the Khmer Rouge takeover of Cambodia?

LEVINE: No, I left in 19 -- let's see. We got there in '71 and we left in '72. I was there just about a year actually because they had -- families were there. Nevertheless, there were a number of incidents, a few Americans killed, not military, you know. There was one incident shortly after I got there playing softball a Khmer Rouge, I guess he was a Khmer Rouge, threw a grenade there and killed several Americans and several Cambodians who were watching a sandlot softball game. What was your question again? I got off.

Q: Were you there during the Khmer Rouge?

LEVINE: Oh, yeah. I wasn't there during the takeover. Because I left in '72. And I think -- or what I started to say was that they finally ordered civilian dependents, minor dependents, to leave, children to leave. And my wife, I had two children then one, was just born and one was just about two. She could have gone to Bangkok. And I said this wasn't part of the deal when I came here. And so I left. And they said, okay, just get a replacement. And we got a replacement. But the final days of Cambodia didn't happen until sometime in '75 after the last days in Saigon.

MILES WEDEMAN
Economic Counselor
Phnom Penh (1971-1973)

Miles Wedeman was born in Maryland in 1923. He received a BA from Swarthmore College in 1943 and his LLB from Harvard in 1949. He also served as a lieutenant overseas from 1943-1946. After joining USAID in 1962, he did development work in Nigeria, Liberia and Uganda. He was also assigned to Korea, Cambodia, and Syria. Mr. Wedeman was interviewed in 1995 by John Kean.

WEDEMAN: Phnom Penh, in Cambodia. The country at that time was known as the Khmer Republic. My assignment there was from early 1971 until late summer 1973.

Q: So you got there before the bombing?

WEDEMAN: After the bombing of eastern Cambodia, yes, in 1970. Sihanouk had been overthrown in March of 1970. Even before he was overthrown, the U.S. had resumed diplomatic relations with Cambodia. The U.S. had a chargé d'affaires in Phnom Penh beginning sometime in 1969. When things heated up after the change of government in March 1970, an Ambassador was appointed and he arrived in early 1971 (Emory Coblentz "Coby" Swank). Our assistance program started in February 1971.

Q: And you were there in what capacity?

WEDEMAN: My title was Economic Counselor, a State designation. I did not have an AID title. It was not a separate AID Mission. We were the Economic Section of the Embassy. I don't know how frank you want to be, but I did not have an AID title because I could not get political clearance from the White House. Beginning in 1969 this became a problem for a number of AID people. If you were not true blue Republican, or more particularly if you were a Democrat, you were not going to get a job at the top. So it was decided in my case I would carry a State title, not an AID title. You had friends around who would help you in this regard. So I was an Economic Counselor, but it was the same thing as an AID Director, except I had, as I said, a State title. The AID office was not the AID Mission but the Economic Section of the Embassy.

Q: But it carried out all the functions of an AID Mission?

WEDEMAN: Yes, exactly the same thing, although when I arrived there was one slight difference. The same situation existed in Korea, as a matter of fact -- one person was already in the Economic Section, not an AID person, who was a CIA representative. In Phnom Penh, I made sure after a very short period that the CIA person was moved elsewhere. I think it does not help to carry out an aid program when it is known that someone from CIA is listed as being on your staff.

Q: And what were the particular problems and issues that you were addressing at that point?

WEDEMAN: The problems were enormous: Cambodia was in the midst of a civil plus international war, which had started immediately after the overthrow of Sihanouk in 1970. The basic question had nothing to do with development, but rather how could Cambodia survive economically in the face of ballooning expenditures for military purposes and the cutting off of foreign exchange earnings.

The principal sources of foreign exchange had dried up. Before 1970 Cambodia exported a very poor grade of rice - "brizures," i.e., broken rice - to a market developed for the Cambodians by the French - Senegal. Almost immediately after hostilities broke out in the summer of 1970, the transport route from the rice export growing area of the country, Battambang, the westernmost province of the country, to the port of Kompong Som (before 1970 "Sihanoukville") on the Gulf of Thailand was not secure. Furthermore, for whatever the reason, the rice could not be moved through Thailand. Battambang's rice did help, though, to feed Phnom Penh until the land route was definitively cut in the summer of 1973.

Before the war in Vietnam intensified in the mid-1960s, Cambodia was a producer of crude rubber which was exported through Sihanoukville. However by 1969-1970 the rubber growing areas were either under the control of the North Vietnamese or were the scene of fighting. Except for a brief period in 1972 - 1973 the movement of rubber for export stopped.

There was concern as well that not only did funds have to be provided to keep the economy going, in terms of imported requirements, but also to maintain the economy on an even keel to avoid inflation, if that was possible. The whole purpose of the AID program for at least a year and a half was economic stabilization. The AID money initially went entirely into a commodity import program. Later on, AID funds were used for refugees as well. That's what it was, pure and simple, a commodity import program.

Q: So this was a dramatic change from your Africa experience, and from your Korea experience.

WEDEMAN: Yes, but for some reason, it didn't seem all that different because being in Korea, I began to move in an atmosphere where there were more politico-military matters which you were aware of, and even if you didn't participate directly in them, you were aware of them, and knew that AID was part of the mosaic of the American presence. In Cambodia, it was more apparent, even though there were no American military forces other than a MAAG Group. So to that extent, it was quite a difference. I had not been in a war situation since the second World War. This was real war. It was dangerous. There was a war going on and you knew it all the time. And it was a war that was not being won by our side.

Not long after I arrived in Cambodia, it was quite obvious the war was going to be lost. There was no way the Cambodian Army was ever going to be able to win it. Slow, downhill, all the time. Now the Ambassador bore the major brunt of this problem. Very, very difficult for him. And he was not, how would I put it, he was not part of the team that ran the American effort in Vietnam, the country right next door. Ambassador Swank was a member of a group that wanted to preserve Cambodia by means of diplomacy and aid in a different way, and without an overwhelming American military and civilian presence. After a while, Congress imposed restrictions on the number of official Americans that could be in the country on any one day.

Marshall Green, then the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, was the organizer of the American effort in Cambodia and its guiding light. He was not a "hawk." I think he was very apprehensive about our involvement in Cambodia and wanted the American intervention carried out in a way that would result in the least damage to ourselves and the Cambodians. However, as the Cambodian military position weakened and the Government of South Vietnam lost ground, the hawks became more and more influential. I said then and later that as Cambodia and South Vietnam went under, all but the super hawks in the American government had fled. The doves had long since been banished from the scene.

Q: And to what degree was the war in Cambodia a direct reflection of the war in Vietnam, as opposed to being a Cambodian civil strife?

WEDEMAN: It was both. The civil war, in a sense that it had started long before. Parts of the country had been restless in the 1960s, even in the 1950s. Beginning in about 1965, 1966,

Sihanouk was having more and more difficulty with the opposition. The more militant opposition eventually became known as the Khmer Rouge, the Cambodian communist party. After Sihanouk was overthrown in 1970, a new government came in largely composed of his alienated relatives and anti-Vietnamese personalities. The Khmer Rouge then became the heart of the domestic struggle against the Phnom Penh government supported by the United States. The Khmer Rouge was not the tool or close to the North Vietnamese, but they were actively supported and supplied by them, and maybe to some extent by the Chinese. Cambodia had been terribly important as a conduit for the movement of supplies from Sihanoukville, built by its namesake on the Gulf of Thailand, to the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces operating in Vietnam and in eastern Cambodia, the period of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. I won't say a deal had been struck, but Sihanouk had consented to this arrangement, even though I think he didn't like it. Many people felt that by 1970 he didn't really know what to do, that he could see the country slowly falling under North Vietnamese and Viet Cong influence. At the same time relations with the South Vietnamese were pretty bad. Thus it was both a civil war and an international war. If, let's say, the government in Saigon had been successful, then the government in Phnom Penh, which in effect was our government, would have survived. I think there's no doubt about that. Once you realized that the war was not going to be won in Vietnam, you knew it was extremely doubtful that the government of Phnom Penh could make it.

Q: I would like to return to a point that you were making earlier about the Ambassador's views; his view of policy and relationships with what was going on in Vietnam, and wondered if you might elaborate on that a little further?

WEDEMAN: I wanted the opportunity to speak about it because I didn't cover at all the question of the staffing of the Embassy and later the Economic Counselor's office in the Embassy in Phnom Penh, because it was guided by a particular principle. The Embassy reopened in 1969. This was when Sihanouk was still in power. The course of affairs changed drastically in 1970 when he was overthrown. I might say, not overthrown by popular revolution, but by a result of a struggle within the ruling groups in Cambodia, including some of his influential but alienated relatives. Coby Swank was appointed to be the new Ambassador to the Khmer Republic, as it was known. This was the first diplomatic representation at that level since 1966, when diplomatic relations had been broken off.

I won't call it a governing principle, but certainly the hope was to staff the Embassy and the AID program in terms of leadership, with people who had had no exposure to Vietnam. In the case of the East Asia Bureau at State, the bureau was interested in having people whose views had not been influenced by experience in Vietnam. Coby Swank had been the DCM in Moscow; previously he had been a special or executive assistant to George Ball when Ball was Deputy Secretary of State. Coby was a Soviet expert, a Sovietologist, in the words of the trade. He had had no experience with what had been French Indochina. His first diplomatic post during his foreign service career (he was a career officer) had been in China, his second in Indonesia. He had also served in Romania. In any event, he came to Phnom Penh in late 1970 or early 1971, I don't have the exact date, as our Ambassador. He arrived after the United States became heavily involved in Cambodia—we have discussed the incursion of American troops into eastern Cambodia in the late spring of 1970. These troops were withdrawn partly because of domestic political pressures in the United States.

Q: That incursion was largely to interdict the movement of supplies.

WEDEMAN: I guess so. It 's hard to say. It was certainly to try to prop up the new government which came to power after the overthrow of Sihanouk. The incursion was not successful and the American troops were withdrawn. From that point on you knew the Khmer Republic was going to lead a very uncertain existence.

Q: So this incursion was an attempt in some fashion to bolster the new government of Cambodia; not so much to do with the trend of the war in Vietnam.

WEDEMAN: Both. Perhaps nobody realized what a weak weed we were leaning on in Cambodia. When the war spread more openly and widely in Cambodia, the situation became even more difficult for the United States. To get back to the staffing question: Ambassador Swank did not represent any views with respect to Southeast Asia in terms of background. I was appointed Economic Counselor of the Embassy. I certainly did not have any experience with Southeast Asia. The State Department wanted things run so it would have a team in Phnom Penh not influenced by experience with Vietnam.

The State Department wished to have a fresh view with respect to Cambodia. The people in State responsible for Cambodia were not great enthusiasts for the war in Vietnam. I would not describe them as doves necessarily, but they were not hawks, to use popular terms of the day

I arrived in Phnom Penh in February of 1971 to direct the AID program officially characterized as "economic supporting assistance," or whatever the term was at the time for aid serving a political/military purpose. It consisted of one program, if you can call it that, which was commodity imports. General commodity imports. The goal was economic stabilization of the Khmer Republic. The country was in a difficult economic situation in that it did not have a strong economy to begin with. The years of war had not been helpful to Cambodia, and as a result of the bringing of Cambodia into the war as a whole, it lost its ability to export. As I mentioned earlier Cambodia had two significant exports. The first was a low grade of rice, "brizures," i.e., broken rice, all of which was exported from Cambodia to Senegal. Why Senegal? This was a market which the French had arranged for low-grade Cambodian rice. Second, there were rubber plantations north and east of Phnom Penh, between the Mekong River and the border. They had been fairly profitable before the war. But the plantations were in an area in which the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong had based many troops. There was some fighting in that general zone as well, so that rubber production virtually came to an end for quite a while. There was a slight revival when I was there, but it really didn't amount to much.

Under these poor conditions the purpose of the American AID program was to try to assist in the economic stabilization in Cambodia. Another player in this effort was the International Monetary Fund. The United States persuaded the IMF to appoint a resident representative in Phnom Penh to try to oversee or influence the fiscal management of the government. At that point it was very rare for the IMF to do such a thing. It appointed a man from Iceland, interestingly enough, who was in Cambodia for the entire time I was there. And we worked very closely with him in supporting his efforts to get fiscal management improved. I say improved, because the

government was virtually starting from zero. It was a daunting task to get fiscal management improved and to make some sort of sense in trying to keep the economy manageable. This meant pushing to reduce the rate of inflation, which, even during the time I was there, was not uncomfortably high. Also to improve tax collection. This did not happen. As I mentioned earlier the AID program consisted entirely until sometime in 1972 of a commodity import program.

For at least a year there was one big oddity about that program. In the East Asia Bureau of AID in Washington the Assistant Administrator, Rod O'Connor, became convinced that it would be undesirable to allow a normal import mechanism to operate in Cambodia. He felt that relying on normal commercial channels would be an invitation to fraud and corruption. Therefore, a decision was made to have the General Services Administration buy everything that was to be financed under the commodities import program. To put it mildly, this was difficult, and it was a mistake. It proved to be, as many had predicted, awkward and unworkable.

Q: *USGSA?*

WEDEMAN: USGSA. GSA had no experience in buying commodities to be imported and consumed in a foreign country. GSA wanted to purchase everything by competitive bid. On the other hand, the Cambodians had a habit of importing many products by brand name, not too surprising a commercial practice. For example, the most popular American brand toothpaste in Cambodia was Ipana. Well known in the United States before the war, it was no longer produced in the United States. Keep in mind that everything that was financed for that program had to be produced in the United States. This was a Buy American program. When we looked at the list of what the Cambodians wanted to buy, naturally there was Ipana toothpaste. GSA basically didn't know what to do. Even so GSA wanted to put toothpaste out for bids. This made no sense in terms of how business operated in Cambodia. You didn't even know to whom these shipments would be consigned.

The situation was complicated by a very odd Cambodian import-export regime, if you can call it that, in operation before 1970. Sihanouk was very suspicious of the merchant community in Phnom Penh, which was largely expatriate or overseas Chinese. He didn't want them to control imports, nor did he want them to determine what the balance of trade would be. So before the beginning of the calendar year, the national bank and perhaps other agencies of the government in Phnom Penh would draw up an estimate as to what they thought Cambodia's foreign exchange earnings would be for the coming year. Another agency of the Cambodian government, SONEXIM, would look at that calculation, and would prepare a list of what the country wanted to buy using that foreign exchange calculation. The one who finally approved that list, item by item, was Sihanouk himself. Everything was imported for the account of SONEXIM. One of the thoughts behind using GSA was that SONEXIM as the sole importer could deal with a single American exporter, namely GSA. In reality, the import regime in Phnom Penh did not operate this way. The buying was actually done by the private importers in Phnom Penh.

This Cambodian import/export regime had begun to atrophy once Sihanouk departed. One of the things his opposition disliked was the clumsy way he attempted to run the economy. To make a long story short, having GSA operate as a procurement agent for the Cambodian program simply didn't work. But it took a long time to get that decision undone in Washington.

Q: The whole first year essentially you were there?

WEDEMAN: The first year I was there. It was finally undone. I came back to Washington in December of 1971 to try to get this arrangement stopped. The consequence had been almost nothing had been imported into Cambodia under the program. Even then it was several months before the new, more normal commodity import regime could be brought into being. That time was lost.

Q: That was a shift to commercial channels?

WEDEMAN: It went through commercial channels. I should mention that the war in Cambodia was very unpopular in the United States. There had been student riots, student closings of universities in June of 1970. This was at the time of the American incursion into Cambodia. Congress took a great deal of detailed interest in whatever went on in Cambodia, including the import program, and we had one or more visits from the staff of the Government Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee that dealt with foreign aid, to look over in detail what we were doing.

For example, the staff of this subcommittee got the idea that we were importing bidets into Cambodia and some others were starting to make a certain amount of political hay out of this. You may or not remember that several years before, in the case of the Dominican Republic, when the United States had intervened, the Mission Director spent a lot of his time warding off charges that AID had spent money on champagne glasses, which was not true. In the case of Cambodia, it wasn't true either in the case of the bidets. As I testified later before that subcommittee, we did not finance pink bidets, blue bidets, flowered bidets, or what have you. But this is emblematic of the kinds of problems you had to deal with. That same subcommittee later produced a report later on the execution of the commodity import program, and I was called to testify on that. The subcommittee had a long list of items we had bought. When you went down the list, you found something labeled as "hose," h-o-s-e. I was asked by Senator Inouye, "How can you defend the purchase of women's hose?" I said, "We never financed the purchase of women's hose. It would be absolutely out of the question." "Well," he said, "that's on the list." And I looked at the list and said, "What we financed were h-o-e-s, garden hoes, and that particular procurement was monitored very, carefully."

This was the hostile atmosphere in which we operated. There was opposition to almost anything we were doing in Cambodia. I can remember later on, the Ambassador and I participated in a ceremony to mark the beginning of a refugee program in Cambodia. This was televised and rebroadcast in the United States, and it showed the Ambassador drinking a glass of champagne, a traditional custom in the country for such occasions. Immediately, criticism arose about the U.S. living, in effect, "high on the hog" in Cambodia, and "there's the Ambassador - what's he doing? He's drinking champagne." You had this kind of situation all the time.

Another problem, although not of that character, was the fact that even a commodity import program as AID would ordinarily conceive it, was probably not well adapted for Cambodia. I recommended more than once that it would be far better simply to give the government a cash

grant and monitor what they were doing with money, with the help, or with the active participation of the IMF. I said this would be a far better way to help Cambodia than to have a staff in place in Phnom Penh trying to carry out a commodity import program ill adapted to the circumstances in the country. What I was told was, "Oh, no, that is politically unacceptable." I found it interesting that by the late 1970s, this was a not unknown device as a means for providing assistance to countries in which the U.S. had a very strong political interest. That was done by cash grant. If the cash grant had been used in Cambodia, we wouldn't have needed an Economic Counselor, and would not have had to go through the awkwardness of administering an ill fitting commodity import program. Considering the fact that before the war, before 1970, Cambodia imported almost nothing from the United States, this was not too surprising. Cambodia was in the French sphere of economic influence, and commercially Cambodia looked to France and other parts of the world, but not to the United States.

Q: So, in the execution of this in this peculiar fashion, what kind of staff did you have to try to monitor and implement this?

WEDEMAN: We had a comptroller, Don Sohlin, whom we recruited from the Mission in Bangkok. A large amount of accounting had to be done on the commodity import program. He was a very experienced man and I had known him before. We had a commodity specialist and a procurement specialist. These three were the ones who ran the program. Later we got into refugee assistance, but that was something else again. It was a staff that was entirely concerned with the management of the commodity import program, centered on a comptroller, a commodity specialist, and a procurement specialist, all of whom had had experience with commodity import programs. It was a very small staff, about eight altogether.

Q: When you finally broke out of the GSA procurement mode, you got into what was supposed to be essentially commercial procurement, but you still had difficulties because there were too many people looking over your shoulder.

WEDEMAN: People were looking over our shoulder, particularly on the Hill. But the root problem was "tied" procurement; tied, that is, to procurement in the United States. Thus, inevitably there were going to be all kinds of problems. The Cambodian merchants had little or no experience in buying in the United States. A cash grant could have been tailored to performance by the Cambodian government in fiscal policy, and in general economic policy. Cambodia had almost no economists. It had very few skilled people. The person with whom I dealt for about a year and a half, who was in charge of economic planning, was the first Cambodian who had ever been trained as an engineer, with a "license," the French equivalent of a bachelor degree. And that occurred only in the late 1960s. A number of people in the country had been participants in the AID training program in the 1950s and early 1960s. Whether economists had been trained under this program I do not know. An economist (not American trained) did head the national bank. He was competent, but the bank didn't have a "working" staff. A not unknown Cambodian habit was non-attendance in government offices. I remember going to the national bank on almost any day of the week, and room after room, empty tables, desks, chairs, with nobody there. One employee was almost always present, an expatriate Finn married to a Cambodian, who dealt with the whole range of issues of economic stabilization. She

was the only one and almost frantic to get out of Cambodia (she later joined the World Bank). There was nobody else.

The level of technical expertise was about the same as I had observed earlier in Africa. There was very little difference. Why the French had approached Cambodia in that way, I don't know. In staffing the colonial administration, they had relied heavily on Vietnamese. The colonial administration in Phnom Penh under the protectorate had been largely Vietnamese. In 1970 the population of Phnom Penh was one-third Vietnamese, one-third Chinese, one-third Cambodian. It was not at heart a Cambodian city.

Q: So, in terms of relationships between Cambodia and Vietnam, this sort of secondary colonialization by Vietnamese of Cambodia had something to do with the strained relations?

WEDEMAN: The strained relations between the Khmer, as they usually called themselves, and the Vietnamese, go back hundreds of years. It's not anything new. It's been there a long time. If you go back to the years, 800-1200, the Khmer empire was the largest political unit in what later became known as Indochina. It gradually weakened for a variety of reasons. You had the Thais on one side, and the Vietnamese on the east, who were gradually moving south, from the area of Hanoi down to what became known as Cochin China, the extreme southern portion of modern Vietnam. The Vietnamese had ousted the Khmer from Cochin China, including what became Saigon, by the end of the 18th century.

Nevertheless, a substantial Khmer population remained in this region. They were called the Khmer Krom, i.e., the South Khmer. One day when I was going from Phnom Penh to Saigon on business and I mentioned this to the fellow who was in charge of economic planning. And he said, "Saigon is ours; it isn't theirs; it belongs to us." He was right in a sense. The Khmer had been in control of the area of modern Saigon until pushed out by the Vietnamese by 1800. In 1970 two million Khmer Krom lived in the southern "bulge" of Vietnam. They had provided troops to the Diem government in Saigon. When the war expanded into Cambodia, and the United States became more directly involved, the Khmer Krom wanted a "piece of the action" in Cambodia.

Their leader had been the first prime minister of Cambodia in 1945, when the Japanese left. He was pushed aside by Sihanouk, who had earlier been crowned king. After 1970 the South Khmer really wanted to run Cambodia if they could, and were always demanding a larger share of political power in Phnom Penh. While they were Khmer, the rest of the Khmer in Cambodia tended to look at them as more Vietnamese than Cambodian. The Khmer rather feared the Vietnamese, north or south, although they did draw a distinct line between the northerners and the southerners. They very often would refer to the northerners as "Les Dents Noirs," or the "Black Teeth," because apparently Vietnamese in the north would often lacquer their teeth black, hence, "Les Dents Noirs." The Cambodians thought the North Vietnamese were worse than the South Vietnamese. They didn't like the South Vietnamese either, and yet the United States was somewhat insistent that they cooperate with South Vietnam. One of the weaknesses in Sihanouk's position as the years went on was the fact that he was cooperating with the Vietnamese, in that case the Northerners, and that was no way to endear himself to the Khmer. Relations between South Vietnam and Cambodia were never good. Vietnam had an Ambassador

resident in Phnom Penh who was a target of at least one bomb attack. I called Indochina the Balkans of Southeast Asia. The Khmer or the Khmer-Mon as they are sometimes referred to, the Thais, the Laos and the Vietnamese for thousands of years have been jostling with each other for control, never with any clear winners, and the only clear losers being the Khmer.

Q: So if you then look at the second year, was there any improvement in the effectiveness of the commodity import program as an instrument to improving the economy?

WEDEMAN: I think it began to work better. The major difficulty was that the military situation was deteriorating. In reality it started going downhill after the incursion came to an end in the summer of 1970. Later that year Lon Nol became the leading figure in the government. He had been minister of defense under Sihanouk, and had profited enormously from a trucking concession, or something like that, that moved supplies from Sihanoukville, later Kompong Som, on the Gulf of Thailand, to the North Vietnamese troops which were along the North Vietnamese border. He became the dominant figure, certainly by the end of the year. He then had a serious stroke, which left him, I won't say incapacitated, but certainly his physical condition was much weakened, and his mental capacities were as well. He considered himself an authentic general, he ran the war, and he wasn't very good at it. In March of 1971, the government conducted a major offensive against the Khmer Rouge in North Central Cambodia. It was a total failure. I think everybody knew even then, that things were just going to get worse, and that, absent some sort of miracle, sooner or later the government in Phnom Penh would fall.

So you had in the background a military situation that was always deteriorating in one way or another. The central government over time controlled less and less territory. By the time I left in August 1973 it controlled Phnom Penh; the Mekong River from Phnom Penh to the Vietnamese border; the area that ran from Phnom Penh southeast to Vietnam; most, but not all of the provinces lying between the capital and Kompong Som; and the extreme western portion of Cambodia. And it controlled a number of towns. But otherwise, the Khmer Rouge was in control or free to roam. In some ways, I kept wondering if this was really different from what had been true under Sihanouk, because even then the writ of the central government didn't run to the remote villages of the country. With this unraveling military situation, you also had a deteriorating political situation. You had more and more restlessness with the government. You were always aware of one group or another that wanted to replace Lon Nol. At least one armed attempt was made to overthrow him, which didn't succeed. He remained in Phnom Penh until the very end in 1975 when he was evacuated by American forces. Thus, even though the commodity import program might have been working better in late 1972 or at the beginning of 1973, the political and military situations were becoming more perilous. Ominously, as a consequence of the unsettled conditions and warfare in the rest of Cambodia, we were getting more and more refugees in Phnom Penh.

Q: And, I presume, in the broad sense, this was also complicated by the impending greater certainty of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam?

WEDEMAN: Yes, although it's very curious in a way. I think I mentioned that we had a small U.S. military assistance group in Phnom Penh, whose chief was a general who had served in Vietnam. He brought with him officers who had been in Vietnam - always referring to "our war,"

meaning the American war. It was a war to be won. I think even when the situation began to change drastically in South Vietnam looking toward the end of the American military presence, they still believed there was still a chance that Cambodia could survive and that it wouldn't go under in the way that you knew sooner or later Vietnam was going to go under. Although everybody lived with the fiction that things were going to stabilize in South Vietnam; that we were going to bring the South Vietnamese forces, ARVN, as they were known, up to snuff; and we would continue to aid them economically and they would be able to survive. I won't go into the situation in Vietnam, but it didn't happen. I think many knew that once the American troops were withdrawn, there was no possible way that South Vietnam could survive.

Q: So as you look back on that Cambodian experience, would you regard it as one of the toughest nuts you ever had to deal with?

WEDEMAN: It certainly was tough. There were no solutions, which was the problem. The Ambassador, whom I came to know very well, said, "Every day is a little worse than the day before." He was talking about the total situation, political, economic, social, so on and so forth. After March of 1971 when a major Cambodian offensive failed, it was downhill. There would be occasional successes by the Cambodian Army, but not much.

The United States continued to bomb in Cambodia, and that was stopped by Congress. Congress also decreed the maximum number of official Americans who could be in the country on any one day. The first thing the Ambassador did every morning was to look at the staffing pattern and number of official visitors present in the country. If the total was over the permitted number, the excess visitors had to leave by the end of the day. I remember I had had to tell a couple of people, "You've got to go." They were AID people who were from an AID regional mission in Bangkok. They were very interested in Cambodia, and had been so for a number of years. They wanted to come over to be helpful. And I had to tell them, "You've got to leave today." And their reaction was "Well, we'll speak to the Ambassador about that." I said, "You can speak to the Ambassador, but there's nothing he can do because every day he has to account for all Americans who are here, and he has to make sure that the ceiling imposed by Congress is not exceeded." They left.

Q: So, one in, one out.

WEDEMAN: That's right. Gradually, Congress imposed its will on bombing. I can well recall the last day of the bombing. At that point, the Cambodian situation was particularly bad. I made a courtesy call on Lon Nol that day, just before my final departure. U.S. aircraft were bombing a town about 10 miles to the south. The windows in Lon Nol's office rattled as the bombs dropped on that town and our conversation would be interrupted every few minutes. Other mistakes were made such as bombing a town down the river, Neak Long, crowded with civilians. Many casualties resulted. The U.S. got a black eye out of it. The war in Cambodia was probably even more unpopular in the United States than the war in Vietnam, if that's possible.

Q: Tell me a bit about your personal existence in that awkward environment.

WEDEMAN: I hate to tell you but living was very comfortable. Phnom Penh was a very pleasant city. I lived in a house and the Khmer were a very nice people. You faced several problems, one being the endless security problem. There had been one attack on the Ambassador's life sometime in May of 1971; later there was an attack on the DCM.

My car was armored. Now, what was armor? It consisted of vinyl that was woven into a kind of coat of mail, sandwiched between the steel panel of the car and the inner shell. It was installed in all four doors. Clear acrylic shields were fitted just behind all four side windows, the windshield and the rear window. A dark curtain ran around the back window and would come forward so nobody could see who was in the car. Personally, I don't believe AID was intended as a target for terrorist attacks. The political side of the Embassy was, of course, meaning the Ambassador and the DCM. Even so, the country was not safe. Phnom Penh was not safe, because there were infiltrators from the "other side" as it was referred to.

I can remember one incident very, very vividly. After I had been there several months, my wife and my three sons came to Phnom Penh. Before this they had been in what was known as "safe haven" in Bangkok. Every Sunday afternoon the boys went to a local soccer field to watch the Marine Guard and Embassy civilians play baseball. The game always started at 2:00 p.m.. The Sunday I am describing was my youngest son's birthday. In the morning we went out and swam in the Ambassador's pool. The pool was not at his residence and was some distance away. We came home back for lunch and had a birthday party for him, his next older brother (his oldest brother had gone off to school in northern India) and two friends. After this I said, "Now what would you like to do?" And my son said, "We think we'll go back to the pool." I said, "You don't want to go back to the pool, you were there this morning. Why don't you go to the ball game?" "We don't want to go to the ball game." So they went back to the pool.

If they had been at the ball game, they would have sat at home plate as they always did. They would have been killed. That afternoon, there were a couple of guys from other side on bicycles with sacks of plastique, a malleable explosive. They threw the sacks from their bicycles into that ball park. The plastique exploded right at home plate. I think eight people were killed.

The end of that afternoon for me was spent helping to ship the body bags back to Saigon. The boys missed the ball game. It was sheer accident that they did. That kind of threat was always present.

As time went on, you had another kind of threat which turned on how close the Khmer Rouge and the North Vietnamese could come to Phnom Penh. If they were not too distant you'd get rocket attacks on the city. My children thought it was exciting. I said, "There's nothing exciting about it." Everybody in the Embassy had a safe place in your house you would go in the event of rocket attacks.

I remember another incident of infiltration, which was more than just shooting rockets at the city. My wife and children were in Phnom Penh. It was another Sunday afternoon, and we decided to take a ride outside the city. Not easy to do since if you went beyond 20 kilometers from the city you could run into some chancy situations. So we drove north from Phnom Penh along the river, presumably a safe area, and saw some interesting Buddhist temples. I believe it was Buddha's

birthday. Long, brightly colored streamers fluttered from the temples. We came back after a very pleasant afternoon.

That night, the Khmer Rouge attacked that area and also blew up what was known as the Japanese Bridge. This was the only bridge crossing the Mekong in Phnom Penh and had been built with Japanese aid money before 1970. To blow it up, they had to come right into the city. In this same attack, the invaders also destroyed the country's major oil depot. Although they were driven back this attack sharply increased the sense of insecurity and the knowledge that something like it could happen again.

Another time, the Khmer Rouge came very close to Phnom Penh. They were on the other side of the river. Yet the reaction of the Khmer to it was startling. Down on the river bank was a broad esplanade, on which were people just sitting during the afternoon and watching the fighting literally going on on the opposite bank of the Mekong. A little fellow was going around with his cart selling colored ices, and that sort of thing. That was probably the closest the Khmer Rouge got to Phnom Penh while I was there. I left in the summer of 1973.

There was always that element of danger. I must say, I'd been in dangerous situations in World War II, and I had the same reaction in Cambodia I did in the Philippines, which was the longer I was there the less safe I felt.

Availability of food was no problem. The river was still open, and they were still importing Evian water from France. Nothing had changed in this regard. Excellent restaurants continued to operate. The main hotel in the city, the "Le Royal," which later became the "Le Phnom" -- where I lived for about three months in, I don't know how many different rooms -- had a first class French restaurant. That sort of thing continued for as long as I was in Phnom Penh. As the security situation worsened and attacks increased you would see outside the restaurants patronized by foreigners wire mesh grids over the entrances. This arrangement was designed to deflect grenades or what have you thrown at the restaurants.

The security situation was getting worse and worse in the city and in the countryside still controlled by the Lon Nol government. I can recall not long before I left the country watching from the Embassy the Cambodian army staging what was called a victory parade after a semi-victory it had won down the river somewhere. Looking at that army I thought the end was in sight. Some soldiers were children of about 10 to 12 years of age and the entire procession included their families who traditionally traveled with the army. They were all threadbare - men, women, and children. Even though the Cambodian army had been armed by the United States to some extent, it still was not well equipped. I thought, "If that's the victorious Cambodian army, it's not going to be terribly long before the whole thing comes to an end." Which, of course, it did.

On another occasion, I went with the Ambassador to Kompong Som, just to spend the day. A hotel there had been built by Sihanouk, including a movie theater. Monseigneur, as he was sometimes referred to in order to recognize his royal pedigree, fancied himself a movie producer and director, and built a movie theater at the hotel to show his productions. Phnom Penh had a similar theater to cater to his whim.

While at Kompong Som we were invited by our military to watch an exercise in the training of Cambodian recruits at a new camp outside the town. There we stood at the top of a rise, on which had been erected two or three wooden towers looking something like forest ranger towers in the U. S. About two or three hundred feet, maybe more, sloping gradually down from the top of this rise, had been cleared. A forest lay beyond the slope. On the slope were laid rows of barbed wire, maybe three feet above the ground. Machine guns with fixed trajectories were mounted in the towers, restricting fire to no lower than two feet or so above the top of the rows of barbed wire. An exercise was underway. Recruits under constant machine gun fire crawled on their bellies under that barbed wire from the woods at the foot of the rise to the top of the hill. Naturally many of them were absolutely paralyzed with fear. I hardly blamed them. When the remainder who were not scared to death scrambled to the top, the senior Cambodian officer asked the Ambassador to review them. He did so. It was a real shock. Most of the soldiers, I would say, were boys 12, 13, 14 years of age, perhaps even younger. They were just children. You wonder why children. This was not an unknown phenomenon in that part of the world. They were the sons of career soldiers in the Cambodian army. The fathers simply took the pay of the children. No one else would join the army in his right mind. We saw a few older "recruits" but they appeared to be in less than top notch physical shape. They could have been forced physically to join the army.

Once again, you were looking at a situation which told you in glaring terms there was never going to be any success for the regime in Phnom Penh. It was doomed to failure and collapse.

Q: So would you say that this was the least developmentally oriented duty you ever had in AID?

WEDEMAN: Yes. It had nothing to do with development - it had everything to do with the political survival of the Lon Nol government! Cambodia was in such chaos that it was simply a matter of trying to hold on in the hope that something would turn up. It didn't.

Q: In the extreme.

WEDEMAN: And that was it. Toward the end, as I said, we were beginning to get refugees, and started programs to help them. Occasionally we would get messages from the Mission in Saigon, wanting to send technicians to look at the possibility of increasing rice production. They did send up two agriculturalists. They went out to Battambang province, came back and made recommendations. I asked them when we could we see any results in terms of higher rice production. Their response was there wouldn't be anything for at least two years; it had to be a long-range effort. I said, "But this country doesn't know whether there's even going to be a tomorrow. Anything that's to be done in Cambodia to improve or increase rice production has to be something that you can start now and get results within six to nine months." Sound as the recommendations might have been they simply didn't address the crisis Cambodia was in.

The whole exercise had nothing to do with development. Cambodia was not a country that had been active in development even before the war. This was to some extent a place of milk and honey. It didn't take a lot of effort to get by. You could raise almost anything in Cambodia with ease. For example, conditions were particularly well suited for aquiculture. I won't say it

flourished, but did very well under wartime circumstances. But there wasn't a great deal of energy behind it.

I wouldn't generally be optimistic about development in Cambodia, but I have another view-not every society wants to develop, or necessarily is going to develop, and I think this is one that is not.

Q: I think that perhaps you have more specific things you feel need to be touched on and maybe one of them might be this refugee issue. Refugee in this context, I presume, means internal refugees.

WEDEMAN: Yes, they were all Khmer. They were coming into Phnom Penh from the countryside. The Khmer Rouge was very brutal. Not much was known about what they were doing in the areas they controlled, but some information indicated that when they came into a village they would immediately kill the Buddhist priests. Reportedly they would often kill people indiscriminately. People were frightened to death of them. I don't know whether intentionally or not, but driving the refugees toward Phnom Penh simply increased the burdens of a government that could hardly cope in the first place. In the end I guess there may have been 500,000 to one million refugees in Phnom Penh.

Our refugee program was carried out by two American religious organizations, Catholic Relief Services, which had experience with this sort of problem, and World Vision, if you know World Vision. The two of them ran the program, which I thought went pretty well. We provided the funds for them. I did not get the impression there was any amount of proselytizing that went on. Cambodia is a Buddhist country. I don't think I ever met anybody who wasn't a Buddhist.

World Vision was efficiently organized and had good ideas, particularly in regard to housing. Catholic Relief Services somewhat less so. One interesting thing about Catholic Relief Services was the man who ran it in New York. He was a real marketer and promoter. He came out to visit, and I told him I thought World Vision was doing a good job, perhaps better than CRS. He said, "I'm not worried about that kind of competition." To dramatize CRS' interest he had Mother Teresa make a one-day tour of Phnom Penh.

Buddhism was divided into two groups. They were not theologically divided like Catholics and Protestants nor did they apparently compete for souls. Each had a chief bonze (priest). They were fairly well informed of what was going on in the world and had read in a Bangkok newspaper that the senior bonze in Bangkok had been invited to Rome to call on the Pope. They felt put out that they had not been invited. The Resident Representative of the Asia Society in Bangkok, who was both an American and a Buddhist, was asked by the Cambodian bonzes to come to Phnom Penh to discuss the papal slight. They desperately wanted to be invited to Rome because they said, "We're more important than the Thais are." They weren't invited and so had to endure being considered inferior to their counterpart in Bangkok.

My overall conclusion is that Cambodia was a mistake and a terrible tragedy. We never should have been involved.

Q: But involvement in Cambodia was essentially a by-product of being involved in Vietnam?

WEDEMAN: Yes.

Q: And so the issue was joined in Vietnam, and what happened in Cambodia was an inevitable result, is that right?

WEDEMAN: I think the result in Cambodia was inevitable; but American intervention in Cambodia was not. I think if the U.S. had been more sophisticated, it would not have intervened in Cambodia. It would have left Cambodia alone. The leadership of the State Department did not like Sihanouk, and . . .

Q: Thought of him as a neutralist?

WEDEMAN: He was a neutralist, no doubt about that. But I think there was also a certain amount of personal animus between the man who was running policy, Kissinger, and Sihanouk. The Cambodians who wanted to overthrow Sihanouk probably should have been told by the United States, "You do this at your peril; there's nothing we can do to assist you." I don't know what would have happened at that juncture, but his fall from power was not a foregone conclusion.

Q: These people wanted to overthrow Sihanouk, other than the Khmer Rouge . . .

WEDEMAN: He was overthrown by members of the ruling group in Phnom Penh. They were literally frightened to death of him. But I think either we could have arranged for Sihanouk to remain in power, or at least to have said to the people who wanted to overthrow him, "We will not intervene. If you do this, you do it at your own peril."

Q: And yet Cambodia was under Sihanouk, and maybe subsequently to some extent playing ball with the North Vietnamese?

WEDEMAN: Yes.

Q: And wasn't that what drew the U.S. into the intervention?

WEDEMAN: You can deal with countries you don't like. Sihanouk was caught in many ways. I don't think he liked the North Vietnamese any better than he liked anybody else. But Cambodia was weak compared to North Vietnam. They didn't have the military power to deal with the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese had occupied a good deal of eastern Cambodia in the late 1960s, and he was fearful of losing control of the country. There had been also internal political developments unfavorable to him. He finally got around to having a fair election to the local parliament in 1966 and he didn't do too well. What later became the Khmer Rouge showed electoral strength. Sihanouk's reaction was to lock up the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, who were later released. Even so, his internal political situation was not strong, but I think he didn't know what to do about it.

To some extent he had cut off his line of retreat with the west. The U.S. and Sihanouk hadn't gotten along for years. By the early 1960s the French, traditional and cultural friends of Sihanouk, were not going to intervene in the region again. Absent support from the U.S. and/or the French, no great power was going to help him. He was on fairly good terms with the Soviets and had gone there in 1970 to get some support from them. It was while leaving Moscow that Sihanouk was told of his overthrow in Phnom Penh. They never lifted a finger for him. Perhaps they were the ones who found a place for him to live in Pyongyang in North Korea. So he was caught. I'm not saying the U.S. had to intervene or should have. This is my view of Vietnam as well. That was avoidable. It was my greening. Do you know that phrase?

Q: *Any other thoughts on Cambodia?*

WEDEMAN: No, it was an experience never to be forgotten.

Q: *And hopefully never to be repeated.*

WEDEMAN: Never to be repeated, but I don't have that much confidence.

Q: *The time in Cambodia came to an end, and you moved onto what next?*

WILLIAM N. HARBEN
Political Officer
Phnom Penh (1971-1973)

William N. Harben was born in New York in 1922. He entered the Foreign Service in 1950. His career included positions in Germany, Indonesia, Rwanda, Mexico, the Soviet Union, Cambodia, Austria, and Washington, DC. This is an excerpt from an unpublished memoir.

HARBEN: I was transferred to Vietnam just as President Nixon announced the beginning of the withdrawal of U.S. forces. I suggested that it made little sense to put me in a pipeline when I was not going to come out at the other end and they changed my destination to Cambodia as chief of the two-man Political Section (excluding myself). Because the capital, Phnom Penh, was besieged by the Communist Khmer Rouge and several Americans had been killed, I was to go alone. I packed "Mad Dog" Bolin's 9-mm automatic and started for Hawaii, where I was to receive a military briefing, which I found puzzling. The Khmer (Cambodian) Army comprised about 80,000 men, the enemy half that. The lieutenant colonel spoke of a crisis due to the imminent departure of Australian mechanics who serviced the army's trucks. I asked why that was a problem, since from one front to the other was only forty miles. Robert E. Lee had led 80,000 Confederates 200 miles to Gettysburg without a single truck. The colonel replied that the U.S. Army had abolished its mule corps in 1921 and "we wouldn't know how to help them with horses." I began to see that the U.S. Army was wrapped in a straitjacket of high technology. In Washington, just before leaving, I had had lunch with a General Mataxis, just arrived from Phnom Penh, where he had been head of the Military Equipment Delivery Team. Several others

went along. The general was saying that he thought he might obtain the lumber for the non-com training school in the Philippines. I asked, "What does the enemy use for non-com training schools?" No answer.

When I pointed out to the briefer in Hawaii that the figure for enemy casualties he had given me was less than the number of men reaching military age in North Vietnam and therefore we were losing, he admitted "certain negative demographic factors." English really is two languages - Anglo-Saxon and Greco-Latin. One can always conceal embarrassing facts from the untutored masses by using the latter without being accused of suppressing information. Military matters were not in my area of responsibility, however. When I arrived in the beautiful, pagoda-studded capital of Cambodia on the banks of the great Mekong, I set about perusing the files.

The first thing I noticed was a U.S. newspaper article by one Dennis Cameron, described to me as a locally stationed journalist who was addicted to marijuana, claiming that a wizard monk named Mam Pram Moni was Marshal Lon Nol's principal adviser - conjuring hexes against the Khmer Rouge, developing magical cotton T-shirts which would deflect enemy bullets, etc. "Has anybody checked this out?" I asked. No one had. (My predecessor had been an administrative officer.) If the country and the direction of the war were being run on the basis of magical incantations, Washington ought to know about it, I thought. Taking with me a Khmer-speaking subordinate, Donald Jameson, I went to the pagoda cited in the article as the wizard's residence. We approached a group of monks and asked for him.

"Oh, he's not here any more. He lives at the palace of Chamcar Mon, where he advises the Marshal," translated Jameson.

My heart sank. "All right, let's look into the bullet-proof shirts." I had heard that one was on display in the Buddhist Museum. We went there and the woman curator showed us a shirt covered with curious designs and inscriptions. I photographed it as Jameson held it up.

Even before I could ask, the curator said, "A man from the palace came. He wants to mass-produce this shirt for the army. I told him it wasn't made to ward off bullets, but arrows, and anyway, it is the prayers recited by the bonze who paints the shirt which make it effective."

In the succeeding weeks I had gathered much evidence of Lon Nol's superstition. It was clear, to me at least, that the reason that a large part of the Khmer Army was besieging the ancient temple of Angkor Wat was the Marshal's belief that the possession of this abode of the Khmer soul by the enemy prevented victory. An avenue to the palace which had been built for the deposed Prince Sihanouk was torn up in the belief that it exercised a magical influence favoring the return of Sihanouk, who was siding with the enemy.

Remembering how well received my long airgram on Indonesian mysticism had been, I compiled many accounts of Marshal Lon Nol's superstition, almost from published Cambodian sources and recent books. I entitled it "The Anthropological Lon Nol." The ambassador, already made nervous by the leaks of his secret telegrams to Washington columnists and intimations by the administration that "negative reports" would be unwelcome, was aghast. He watered it down considerably and edited it to put the Marshal in a more favorable light and finally let it proceed.

The White House was displeased, and during a subsequent visit of Gen Haig an NSC functionary, Negroponte (according to a witness informant) drew the ambassador aside and said they did not want any more reports like that.

The embassy was, in effect, muzzled, which led to tragicomical consequences. The following I heard from colleagues: In the Pentagon they had devised a way of monitoring the progress of the war in Vietnam by computer. The number of skirmishes, the numbers of arms captured, enemy defectors or prisoners etc. were fed into the computer by province or district and the trend analyzed. It was decided to do the same in Cambodia, with the data furnished by the Political-Military Section. The work was complicated by the fact that the Marshal was selling governorships of provinces - since indirectly the Americans were paying their salaries, and having run out of provinces began dividing existing provinces in two, creating terrible confusion for the computer. The intimidated embassy had not reported that most of the provinces were partly or wholly occupied by the enemy and that the "governors" lived in besieged Phnom Penh. To unravel the confusion Washington proposed to send a team to sort things out "on the spot," whereupon the embassy had to warn that "security conditions" impeded free circulation (to say the least). Actually one risked a bullet in the head if one drove more than 20 kilometers in any direction, although convoys did go regularly north and west with only occasional ambushes.

Shortly after my arrival I was Chargé d'Affaires a.i. for a few days. I had an experience which convinced me that unless something like a revolution occurred on the government side, the country was doomed. I wrote Desk Officer Frank Tatu as follows:

"Dear Frank:

It is another lonely, idle Sunday afternoon, and since I believe that a bit of detail not directly relevant to our work may be more useful than "pertinent" information in conveying the atmosphere of this place, I have decided to spend it in describing the "Bal des Cineastes" in war-torn, beleaguered Phnom Penh, where the Marshal recently enjoined his people to dig trenches in preparation for the imminent enemy onslaught. The Bal des Cineastes was a benefit performance for war cripples, sponsored, I gather, by Long Boret's Ministry of Information.

I hate balls of any sort and had planned to stay away, but, as I was sitting in Enders' office as acting Deputy Chief of Mission, his secretary said that an American businessman who knew Enders was on the line. By "knew" I mean he had spoken to him a few times. The businessman, whom I shall call Schlechter, invited me to attend the affair as his guest. I hedged, pleading a busy schedule and said I would call him back when things looked clearer. I went down to see Wedeman and asked him who Schlechter was. He replied that he was a Miami promoter out of Saigon who was head of, or public relations man for a Cambodian-American company called Ratanakar, which had some connection with Colonel Prince Norodom Chantarangsey, Wedeman thought. I told Schlechter that I would be glad to attend.

When he showed up at the office I thought he was very unprepossessing. He came to bring me the tickets, which he took from an attaché case in which lay a roll of \$100 bills bound with a rubber band, which aroused my suspicions. My suspicions deepened to paranoia when he assured me that a "hostess" would be provided. I told him firmly that a hostess would not be necessary,

but he mumbled something about having to "fill up the table" for the benefit of two Khmer generals, Pak Saman and one other.

When I arrived at 5:00 p.m. at the Palais du Gouvernement, hundreds were already seated around tables placed in the grassy area lying between the two colonnaded, open porticoes which extend, thirty feet high, from the north side of the Palais.

Schlechter was sitting with his obsequious Khmer assistant at a table next to that of Long Boret, who was there with his youngest wife (according to someone nearby of whom I enquired) and several other Khmers. I had chosen "tenue de ville", following the invitation's alternative of that or "tenue de soiree", but Schlechter was in his Miami promoter's garb -- loud tie, flecked shirt with dangling stalagmite collar points, and a brownish-gray suit with wide zigzag lapels. His heavy-lidded, deadfish-blue eyes nervously swept the crowd as he greeted me. His thinning hair was plastered in rattails across his bald spot.

"The generals will be here in a minute," he said, and snapped an order to his assistant, a thin, unctuously servile fellow in a tight Edwardian suit, who bounded like an ape to get chairs and drinks. He also turned up a while later with my unsolicited "hostess", who, I was relieved to see, was quietly dressed and worked respectably in a travel agency. Very beautiful, but heavily painted girls glided about in Louis XIV coiffures and expensive silk and satin gowns, sparkling with gems and gaudy Hong Kong watch-bracelets. Some moved in twittering pairs; others hung on the arms of cinematic fops or Cambodian colonels and Ministers curiously austere in Chase National Bank executive suits.

Schlechter's generals were nowhere to be found, however. I, realizing that he needed me to impress them with his Embassy connections, enjoyed his fury. "What the hell happened to them?" he snapped at his lackey, whose capacities did not extend beyond drinks and girls.

"Perhaps they are out on patrol, Mr. Schlechter", I suggested. He threw me a baffled look, as though he did not know how to take that. Finally Colonel Tim Phan appeared -- a youngish fellow with an Angkorian face and a Jayavarman smile of opulent satisfaction below smoked glasses, which always inspire me with as much trust as rolls of \$100 bills. He said he was general manager of Ratanakar, of which Chantarangsey was president. Chantarangsey, he said, had established Ratanakar for the good of the people, for whom he had spent all of his own personal fortune (earned while directing one section of Sihanouk's gambling casino). Even his villa was now up for sale.

As daylight faded, I saw the silhouettes of infantrymen carrying American rifles clambering along the tops of the colonnades to take up positions to protect from the enemy the glittering company below, and I wondered what they thought of the fops around me with their flared trousers and coattails, 20-carat topaz cufflinks, violet ruffled throat pieces and lacquered curls -- all denizens of the still swollen Phnom Penh film community founded by the Prince and in which Schlechter confided that his firm had bought an interest.

Jazz bands in colored regalia filled the stage and began to rend the night air with hideous nightclub music. A European master of ceremonies with a strong Belgian accent announced a

parade of film beauties. A side door opened and these vedettes, each with a gigolo-type on her arm, minced suggestively across the stage one by one, the spangles and bangles on their swaying derrieres and quivering bosoms flashing under the glare of the stage lights. Their gowns, of gold and silver lame, satin, and silk, must have cost a couple of hundred dollars apiece.

Soon a handsome film idol was declaiming something patriotic into the microphone. The girl at my side murmured ecstatically in her little-girl French, "Oh, that is (inaudible). He was captured by the Viet Cong near Kompong Speu. Isn't he handsome!"

"Captured?" I asked. "How did that happen?"

"He was at the front photographing a battle," she replied.

"Did he escape?" I asked.

"Oh, no! He just told them he wasn't a real soldier and they let him go," she explained.

"Hurrah for the Khmer Republic!" shouted the war hero..."

I carried "Mad Dog" Bolin's 9 mm automatic under the seat. In the event that any Khmer Rouge soldiers blocked the road and tried to flag me down, I planned to abandon the car, dive into the bushes and make them keep their distance with a few shots from the 13-shot magazine.

My own section's reports continued to be censored, which weighed heavily on my conscience. If we had been instructed in writing to conceal the deterioration of the situation we might have felt that we had done our job as well as the limitations of government allowed us, but that was not the case. Furthermore the reports of our embassy in Laos, of which we received some copies, were very frank, particularly in regard to corruption, which we were required to gloss over.

Lives were at stake. When the enemy overran certain villages, or military camps, containing women and children, all those found therein were massacred. If the enemy were to overrun Phnom Penh a bloodbath would result. But even I did not suspect the dimensions of the mass murders which later took place. The embassy regarded most journalists as hostile, which was natural, since the truth was unrelievedly unfavorable and very easy to discover. The embassy would not even report Khmer newspaper articles. Unable to report directly and finding it very dangerous to talk to the many journalists steered to me, I refrained from saying anything myself, but recommended that they visit certain people from whom I believed they could get the truth without involving me.

On one occasion I thought a breakthrough was possible. The Marshal issued a presidential decree ordering the arrest of anyone seen buying rabbits in the market. These were enemy agents, said the decree, and would tie timed explosives on the backs of the little beasts, which would hop into the army's entrenchments and blow them up! Since it had been broadcast on the state radio I knew that it would be circulated all over Washington by the FBIS in unclassified form. To make sure, however, I drafted a SECRET cable reporting the text. My superiors refused to send it. This led to a confirmation of the bureaucratic lesson I had learned in Moscow: the officer who reports

an event which could be used to back criticism of a presidential policy will be suspected of political partisanship. If he even brings such reports to the attention of his superiors he runs an unacceptable risk.

And so it was that an emergency high-level mission from Washington was sent to Phnom Penh after a day of spectacular disasters which could not be concealed by any censorship. By then it was too late. One member of the team was a young fellow on the National Security Council who covered Cambodia.

"Why is the situation so much worse than we thought it was?" he asked me at lunch in my villa.

I told him that the ambassador had been discouraged from reporting the truth, "but anyway, there was enough material in the public print for any sensible person back there to realize that this place is going down the tube with its present leadership - like the rabbit bomb decree."

"The what?" He had never heard of it. Apparently no one in Washington had dared send the item upstairs. The government had concealed the truth from no one but itself.

The evil of political censorship which afflicts the Foreign Service derives, in my opinion, from defects in the U.S. Constitution, which, as George Kennan has observed, was not written for the conduct of foreign affairs by a great power. Election and reelection is the focus of the political system. 1972 was a presidential election year, and nothing should be reported or done which would detract from the votes for the incumbent president - and all foreign service officers serve "at the pleasure of the president." Until the armed forces and the foreign service are responsible only to some non-elective council with life tenure, like the Supreme Court, Foreign Service reporting on subjects of internal U.S. political importance are worse than worthless. In the case of Cambodia the result was that a million men, women, and children were shot, bludgeoned, and bayoneted to death, and some slowly put to death by means so horrible that I will not describe them - but none were U.S. voters.

The day of disasters was March 21, 1972, the anniversary of the overthrow of Sihanouk. Brig. Gen. Lon Non, the Marshal's younger brother, had shamelessly rigged the presidential election. My report detailing the methods was not permitted to be sent as an airgram, but rather on blank sheets of paper, in one copy only, to the desk. On March 21 a pilot lover of the Princess Bopha Devi, daughter of Sihanouk, stole an air force plane and dropped a bomb on the palace of Chamcar Mon, residence of Marshal Lon Nol, killing about 60 guards - the bomb hit their barracks - and flew away to join the Khmer Rouge. Just before this event agents of Lon Non threw grenades into a crowd of demonstrating teachers. Splinters hit the Volkswagen of the Khmer political section employee whom I sent to cover the event. The following day Lon Non, fuming over a "royalist plot", arrested every prince in Phnom Penh, including Sisowath Sirik Matak, the darling of the Pentagon, which was always dazzled by his elegant French and exquisite manners.

Also arrested was old Prince Monireth, who had served in the French Army in the First World War. He had a reproduction of a trench with barbed wire in the cellar with dummy French infantrymen in moth-eaten uniforms leaning on the parapet, rifles at the ready (according to the

description of the Comte de Saint-Simon, the French military attaché). During parties Monireth would excuse himself for a moment to go down and have a drink with his comrades.

The embassy seemed paralyzed. No instructions having been issued, I drove to Prince Monireth's shabby mansion, now guarded by some of Lon Nol's soldiers. There was nothing I could do, of course, but I knew that if I shouldered my way through the guard saying "American Embassy, get out of my way!" it would get back to Lon Nol, who might thereby sense American displeasure. Having done so I commiserated with Princess Monireth and a couple of frightened women relatives and assured them that the Prince would soon be released. He was.

Lon Nol was a loose cannon, devoted to protecting his paralyzed brother, but actually all but sinking the ship as he crashed about. He also seemed to aspire to the presidency as his brother's successor, since Lon Nol had had a stroke and might at any moment die or be coaxed into retirement by the Americans. Likely competitors for the job, like Sirik Matak, seemed to be his special targets. The powerless prime minister, Son Ngoc Thanh, was another. One day someone in ambush pulled the lanyard of a claymore mine as Son Ngoc Thanh's car drove by, but pulled too late, and the charge of shrapnel pocked the wall beyond.

At some point even Lon Nol began to read the handwriting on the wall illegible to Washington, and began to prepare to ingratiate himself with the victorious Khmer Rouge. The ambassador having gone on leave, the DCM, Thomas Enders, was being picked up in the ambassador's armored limousine to be taken to the embassy. I thought a grenade had been thrown into my garden and ran out with my pistol, but realized that the explosion must have been more distant. I passed the scene on the way to the embassy. The ambassador's partly burnt vehicle stood in the middle of the avenue. A blackened peasant with a completely calm expression on his face lay on the asphalt, still on his bicycle, killed instantly by the concussion. The bodies of some Khmer MP outriders lay on the other side of the car. The explosive charge had been on the sidewalk and had been detonated by a string leading part way down a side street. The armor had saved Enders, but the motor had caught fire. He had proceeded to the embassy in a jeep, where he presided over the staff meeting with admirable calm.

It was clear to me that both the attempt on Son Ngoc Thanh and Tom Enders were the work of Lon Nol. If they had been the work of the enemy, both would have been killed. The enemy's sappers were quite competent, and had expertly blown the Friendship Bridge over the Mekong and had used frogmen or mines to sink several small freighters in the river. Any ordinary military rifle bullet of .30 caliber would have penetrated the armor if striking at a right angle.

A rumor circulated about a possible assassination attempt against the Marshal. I halfheartedly checked it with one of his ministers, who laughed and said, "The enemy would burn alive anybody who touched a hair of the Marshal's head. He's the greatest asset they have. Any of the servants in the palace would kill him for 2000 riels (about \$8.70 U.S.). You can wander in there and run into him sunning himself in the garden. The guards won't stop you."

I dropped this bit of news in the staff meeting and met with icy stares. The fact was that both we and the enemy were protecting Marshal Lon Nol, and one of us was wrong. On the radio Sihanouk even described Lon Nol as the best asset of the FUNK, the exile government which

fronted for the Khmer Rouge.

At one point the ambassador asked my section and the Military Attaché's office to prepare a report on the political attitudes of the Khmer Army. We had not gone very far when we discovered that a military coup d'etat against the Marshal was being planned. The ambassador was shocked. General Cleland, head of the military equipment delivery team (MEDTC) promptly threatened the Khmer generals that the United States might terminate all aid if the Marshal were overthrown. It is hard to tell at what point the doom of the Cambodian people was sealed. It might have been on this occasion. Or it might have been the failure of the attempt of In Tam, the incorruptible opposition leader, to lure away a part of the enemy's strength - the so-called "Khmer Rumdoh" - local peasant militia. In Tam and some others, notably Madame Nou Neau, a mystic who commanded the Khmer equivalent of the Women's Army Corps, were in contact with Khmer Rumdoh. In Tam reported to me that he would be able to bring over to the government side thousands of Khmer Rumdoh on several conditions: 1) their leaders wanted the same pay and rank as officers in the Khmer Army, and 2) they wanted to be left in control of the areas in which they lived. In effect he proposed to buy them off. I asked where he would get the money to pay so many men. Following is his reply, as verbatim as I can recall it:

"Monsieur Harben, your own government admits that Lon Nol's officers are stealing the wages of sixty thousand non-existent soldiers in their ranks. With that much money I would buy off the whole enemy army." In short he expected the U.S. to crack down on Khmer Army corruption and use the money for this "rallying" effort.

Of course, with that many Lon Non-hating former enemy troops in the Khmer Army Lon Nol's position would be even more insecure and he knew it. He ordered that In Tam's rallying scheme be placed under the command of his brother, the infamous Lon Non. The embassy reported this affair as an item in the weekly report, made no comment and took no action. At a staff meeting the only reaction I can recall was an exclamation of Gen. Cleland, "Negotiate, hell!" - apparently under the impression that some sort of political compromise with the whole enemy regime was contemplated.

The bottom line was that a U.S.-supported army of 80,000 men (officially 140,000) equipped with tanks, artillery and the support of modern aircraft - later even B-52's - was being beaten by an army of 40-50,000 with none of these advantages.

The corruption, about which the embassy seemed so complacent, particularly affected the army. Colonels would submit to the War Ministry a roster of, let us say, 500 men and would receive payment for wages and family allowances for that number. They would then deliberately keep their force at, say, 300, and pocket the difference, with which they would build fine villas with imitation Angkorian bas-reliefs, some of which they would then rent TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY!

A member of the opposition came to me one day with a man from Kompong Chhnang, a town to the north, who related how the colonel in charge of that town was selling Khmer Army gasoline to the enemy. On a map he described the exact routes by which the gasoline was shipped. Some was floated downstream to the enemy. Since this was military, and not political, I could only

report it at the staff meeting, with little hope that anything would be done. The general had previously demanded that all copies of my internal memoranda to the ambassador concerning cases of similar military corruption which had come to the attention of my staff be burned. When I asked the ambassador to confirm this, he replied that henceforth I was to limit such reports to him and the general. The corruption of this particular colonel later came to the attention of a more patriotic Khmer officer, who removed him from command. What struck me through all this was the mildness of the punishment for such transgressions, if they were punished at all. In most armies in time of war they would have been shot. But probably not in the U.S. Army. We seem to have become so tolerant that we were no longer capable of inspiring in our client allies the iron discipline needed for their survival.

As a desperate measure to turn the tide we threw in B-52's. Each carried 30 tons of bombs which would kill every living thing on the surface of the earth within a "box" one by three kilometers - a typical American response to compensate for the weakness of discipline on the ground.

Immediately the hostile U.S. press, some of the representatives of which frankly supported the enemy, began to write of enormous casualties among the innocent peasantry. Undoubtedly there were some, although we were very careful to try to avoid them. In my office one day I idly cut a small square of paper to the scale of one by three kilometers by the map on the wall and found that I could not orient it anywhere on the territory of Central Cambodia without covering a named populated point. Since our Air Attaché and the Political/Military Section were claiming that there were no civilian casualties at all I thought that any journalist who made the same comparison could ridicule our claims. I so informed the Political/Military Section in a memorandum. My demonstration was not entirely accurate, since many villages had been depopulated and their inhabitants had fled to Phnom Penh, but it was quite clear that we were killing some civilians, as we of course did in France in the Second World War.

One day a university professor came to see me and told me that two or three hundred peasants from a village called Saang had walked into a B-52 "box" when they went into the woods for the funeral cremation of a revered bonze. All were killed. Although the whole capital would shake from the seismic waves caused by these attacks I had no way of knowing where last night's attack occurred. But when I mentioned the name Saang at the staff meeting I saw from the expression on Tom Enders' face that the report was true. At that moment I did not envy him his heavy responsibility as a member, or, I believe, chairman, of the committee which selected the targets, the existence of which I had heard from others. Not long afterward the B-52's, which dropped their bombs by triangulating on two or three radio beacons, were guilty of a pilot error. One of the beacons was located at a Khmer Army base on the Mekong south of Phnom Penh. Instead of aiming at the intersection of the beacons they dropped their bombs on the base, killing about 100 Khmer soldiers and their families. Much later I read that the beacon had previously been located on the embassy itself. Were it not for that decision to move it the entire embassy AND Chamcar Mon Palace itself would have been destroyed and all of us - ambassador, DCM, the general, and myself, annihilated.

I had never paid much attention to the Cooper-Church amendment, which prohibited United States forces (or diplomats) in Cambodia from taking any direct part in the military operations. (The bombers came from bases in Thailand.) I was only dimly aware of its provisions, since

politics was my bailiwick. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee sent two investigators, former FSO's Moose and Lowenstein, to S.E. Asia to report on various matters, including adherence to the amendment. The embassy reacted with great alarm. The DCM circulated a memo telling the staff to list all classified documents shown to this pair. This sounded like an indirect way of discouraging us from showing certain documents which might be of use to them. Since my files were now cleared of material on military corruption I saw no reason to comply. Tom Enders also drew up a schedule of briefings, dinners, interviews, and cocktails which would keep the visitors tied up during their visit and told me to meet them at the airport and give it to them. When I handed it to Lowenstein he glanced at it, tore it up and said, "Tell Tom I'll see him in a couple of days - after I've poked around a bit."

During their poking around they dropped in on a woman journalist, Sylvana Foa and asked her if she had any evidence that the embassy was involved in military operations. "Certainly!" she replied, "You can hear the embassy directing bombing strikes on the radio." She turned on a small VHF receiver and they heard themselves. Later I was told that this was well known and had been reported by journalists, but that editing by newspapers in the U.S. had stricken it out for lack of space and because interest was focused on Vietnam. I myself had known nothing of this activity until the scandal broke. Lowenstein demanded to visit every room in the embassy. His demand was refused. He cabled the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which ordered the embassy to show him everything. The practice was stopped.

La Comtesse de Plaud

The British widow of a French officer, this harridan was a fine example of the mischief which can be wrought by dilettante amateur practitioners of foreign relations. Desirous of penetrating behind the curtain into the realm of the wizards who cast hexes for Lon Nol, I consulted a member of a friendly embassy who had been in Phnom Penh some years. He suggested that I contact Madame Nou Neau, reputedly the most beautiful woman in Cambodia, who was commandant of the Khmer Women's Army Corps. She was most concerned with supernatural matters. On one occasion my informant and his wife had been strolling at the foot of the sacred Wat Phnom, in the heart of Phnom Penh, and heard strange music coming from the summit. He climbed the Wat and found a dozen or so ancient crones dancing in an enclosure, brandishing scimitars. Leading this ballet was Madame Nou Neau. Bonzes stood to one side, muttering disapproval. To get to Nou Neau I must first contact the Comtesse de Plaud, he said. He gave me her address - in a decaying apartment house on the Mekong.

She greeted me and the conversation proceeded satisfactorily. I invited her to dinner and asked her to convey an invitation to Nou Neau. On the appointed evening they arrived, Nou Neau accompanied by her handsome young "garde de corps," whose duties, I believe, quite literally corresponded to his title. She was, indeed, breathtaking. Raising her hand I said, in French, "It is true, Madame, what I have heard. You are the most beautiful woman in Cambodia!"

I was startled by her reply, delivered in a tone of weary resignation, "Oui. Tout le monde veut coucher avec moi: Je ne sais pas quoi faire!" [Yes, Everybody wants to sleep with me. I don't know what to do!]

"Do you realize, M. Harben, that Madame Nou Neau is the reincarnation of a famous queen of Angkor?" said the Comtesse de Plaud during dinner.

"No. Is this true, Madame?" I asked, turning to Nou Neau.

"So the phantoms say," she replied diffidently.

The dinner did not result in any introduction to the phantoms or their intermediaries, but it did result in having the Comtesse in my hair for some time.

Shortly afterwards I heard a knock at my bedroom door while I was shaving. Thinking it was my cook I opened it, clad only in my sagging pyjama bottoms. It was the Comtesse. "Come quickly! I want to take you to a very important man who has been talking to Khieu Samphan!" [an enemy leader who we thought was dead].

She took me to the Tuol Kork quarter, where she introduced me to a mild little man, Dr. Moch Lean, who said Khieu was alive and that he had talked to him near Kompong Speu a couple of weeks earlier. He had been his family physician, he said. His story sounded plausible, but exasperatingly vague on points which would have clinched its veracity. I warned him to reveal it to no one and to stay away from the Americans, since Lon Non would probably murder him if he found out.

A few days later he walked right through the front door of the embassy to request compensation for his orchard near Kompong Speu which had been destroyed by U.S. aircraft. This contact led nowhere, but La Plaud's fertile imagination soon conjured up another scheme. She came to me claiming that she knew of an island in the Mekong near Kratie where the Khmer Rouge were holding captured American journalists. About 20 were missing and all were presumed dead. She asked me to procure a disguise from the CIA to enable her to pass through enemy territory to the island and get a message from the captives. The idea of a 70-year old white woman who spoke no Khmer sneaking through the jungle was so ludicrous that I decided she was suffering from senile dementia.

Not long after this another political crisis erupted, and the Khmer prime minister, Hang Thun Hak, invited the top echelon of the embassy to a dinner behind closed doors with him and the cabinet for a frank and confidential discussion. At the head of the table, eyeing me triumphantly, was la Comtesse de Plaud!

"What is that woman doing here?" I asked Um Sim, the Foreign Minister. "I thought this was to be confidential."

"Well, she's the personal representative of Dr. Kissinger, isn't she?" he replied in surprise.

"She's the personal representative of nobody!" I fumed.

For years after my retirement, even as late as April 1993, I received transatlantic telephone calls from her in Oxford, where she had gone to live with her son after the collapse, trying to enlist me

in mad schemes of her own devising. I finally said I could not discuss anything with her because the Russians tapped the telephone lines!

As my own desperation rose, I came increasingly in conflict with the complacency of my superiors. Perhaps complacency was too strong a word. Paralysis of the imagination in totally unfamiliar circumstances for which there was no guide in the rules with which we were bound. The Marshal could not be removed by a coup, lest some officer's trigger finger slipped and the Republican administration be accused of complicity in an election year, as was the Democratic administration in the murder of Diem in Vietnam, fresh in memory. More American military power was blocked by the Cooper-Church amendment and the rising outcry over our bombing of the countryside. In addition there was the ambassador's reluctance to interfere in the internal affairs of the country, which took the form even of refusing to express a preference on a list of prospective appointments when the Khmer Government asked that he express a preference.

I thought there was a way out. I had read that the cabinet of the Portuguese dictator Salazar, like Lon Nol felled by a stroke, regularly met at his bedside to report that his decrees had been faithfully carried out when in fact they were ruling the country as they saw fit. Since Lon Nol's ministers, almost without exception, would have welcomed such an arrangement, why not try it? I wrote it up in a memorandum, but the ambassador replied that he thought I was joking. Lon Nol slyly acted in any case to defuse such plots against his authority by expressing his intention to go to Hawaii for treatment "soon." He repeatedly delayed his departure as the situation worsened. Once I orally suggested that we simply send a squad of marines to the palace and bundle him into an Air Force plane and take him away by force. This at least would preclude assassination by any Cambodians.

All solutions blocked, gloom deepened. It was then decided to pressure him into agreeing to the formation of a "Supreme Council" consisting of Prince Sisowath Sirik Matak, opposition leader In Tam and two other respected politicians. In Tam was reluctant, since he was expected to consult with the Prince, and the last time he visited the Prince he was left waiting in an anteroom for an hour and departed without seeing him. (I had heard from an irreproachable source that the Prince was often unavailable at such times since he was accustomed to enjoy intimacies with young women, from whom it was difficult for him to drag himself away).

On the telephone In Tam demurred at a meeting, on the grounds that it would be too "delicate."

"Are we to tell the United States Senate that this republic is dying of 'delicatesse?'" I said. There was a silence, and then he said, "All right, I will go."

Even then I regretted what I was doing, since collaboration by the popular In Tam with the now hated Marshal would surely diminish his popularity - and we would need a popular replacement for the Marshal if and when he left. And, true to form, Lon Nol immediately began to ignore the advice and decisions of the Supreme Council, often, according to In Tam, by simply saying "this matter is classified."

At the time of the arrest of the princess after the aerial bombing of the palace I urged In Tam, who had the title of Prime Minister, simply to go to the houses of those arrested and order the

guards to disperse. He objected that if he did, he himself might be arrested. I replied, "Politically that would be the best thing that could happen to you. You would be a hero overnight." The crisis slowly was dispelled, however, and In Tam lost his opportunity. He and I both knew now that the country was doomed. He bought a small farm close to the Thai border from which he was able easily to flee to safety when the end came, while the foolish Matak was instantly executed when the Khmer Rouge captured Phnom Penh. He had been offered a place on the new ambassador's departing helicopter, but in a final display of nobility refused and remained to face certain death after writing a bitter note to the ambassador the text of which was censored by the Washington Post, whose partisan editors probably felt that its eloquence might inspire last minute support for American intervention.

Khmer government troops fought bravely -- particularly the Khmer Krom, the Khmer minority in South Vietnam, who came to Cambodia to defend their fatherland. The fact that they were beaten by an army half the size of the government army and possessing none of the aircraft and heavy weapons of the latter is proof enough that the rot was at the top, and it was this thin slice of Khmer society which was most susceptible to American influence. Yet we stood by in silence when Lon Nol rigged the election and offered no denial when he warned that the US would withdraw if he lost. We said nothing when Lon Nol scuttled in Tam's rallying program, and, through General Cleland, threatened the withdrawal of aid if the army staged a coup to overthrow the corrupt and incompetent dictator. Most of this reluctance was attributable to the fear of the White House that any abrupt changes might provide grist for opposition propaganda in the election year of 1972. Our constitution precludes efficient management of proxy conflicts that last more than a few months.

JOHN A BUSHNELL
Program Analysis, National Security Council
Washington, DC (1971-1974)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997

Q: Another question. Do you have any special knowledge as to why Tom Enders was chosen to go to Phnom Penh [Cambodia] as Chargé d'Affaires?

BUSHNELL: Yes. I hadn't known Tom Enders well, but I certainly knew of him. Strangely, this appointment came about because he took a job which Tony Solomon wanted me to take in 1965.

Q: What was that job?

BUSHNELL: Deputy Assistant Secretary for Monetary Affairs in the Bureau of Economic Affairs [EB]. Solomon wanted me to come back to Washington as an Office Director to handle monetary affairs. At first Tony wanted me to be a DAS, but I was still an FSO-5, even an office director position was a double or triple stretch. I didn't want to go back to Washington at the time. I also thought his proposal of an arrangement as de facto Deputy Assistant Secretary would not work out well. He appointed Tom Enders, who was then an FSO-4, to that position. After a couple of years Enders moved up to be the Deputy Assistant Secretary. I first heard of Tom Enders when I came back to Washington and called on Tony Solomon. I saw Tom Enders a couple of times. Later Tom Enders went to Yugoslavia as DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission]. I'm kind of fuzzy on the details of Tom's assignment there, but he had a falling out with Ambassador Kenneth Keating, with whom he disagreed strongly on some issue. He was moved out of that job as DCM.

Tom Enders was in limbo for a time. We had just moved into a program of bombing and other actions to cut off supplies going through Cambodia from North Vietnam to South Vietnam to make it more feasible for the South Vietnamese to get their act together. Thus Cambodia was very important for Kissinger and the NSC. I forget why but we did not have an ambassador in Cambodia. The State Department sent over, in the normal way, the names of some candidates. Somebody indicated that these candidates were totally unsatisfactory. Kissinger wanted somebody who was a take charge sort of person who would get things done in a difficult situation. I was asked if State had any such people. It occurred to me that Tom Enders had just those qualifications. I suggested his name, and the next thing I knew, he was in Phnom Penh as Chargé. I did not even see him before he left, but I did visit him in Phnom Penh at least once.

Q: So that's how Henry Kissinger got acquainted with Enders. He later brought Enders in as Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs when Kissinger became Secretary of State.

BUSHNELL: Yes. By that time Enders' tour in Cambodia was over. Before Enders was given that assignment to Cambodia, I don't think Henry Kissinger knew him.

Q: Enders' assignment to Phnom Penh was quite controversial. It raised hackles on the Hill [i.e., in Congress]. Do you know anything about that?

BUSHNELL: I know the whole question of Cambodian policy, in terms of how we would proceed and what we were doing there, was contentious. Those of us who worked in the Nixon administration saw that what we were doing was to facilitate our getting out of South Vietnam faster by trying to build a buffer zone in Cambodia. We thought this would give the South Vietnamese a better opportunity to develop their own defenses and, in particular, to bring an end to our troops' involvement in the war. Other people saw our Cambodian policy as involving an expansion of the war. One could look at the situation from either point of view. Our objective was mainly bombing the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia, which the Viet Cong were using as a main supply route to their cadre in central and southern Vietnam. I'm not sure how it developed, but Tom Enders was given a major role in targeting the bombing. The issue was to get the proper balance between what we wanted to do and to work with the Cambodians in such a way as to

avoid antagonizing the government in Phnom Penh. This was the balance we were trying to achieve.

I only visited Phnom Penh three times. At least once Tom Enders was there. In many ways Phnom Penh was an extreme of the South Vietnam situation. The Cambodian Government was hardly a government and hardly even controlled its territory; its military was not an effective force.

Q: The Cambodian Government really consisted of one man, Prince Sihanouk.

BUSHNELL: There wasn't any real consensus on how to proceed. Cambodia was such a primitive society it was very difficult to implement any program. The Cambodians wanted us to help them form a military that could do something. In this case the concern of the military about the ability of the Cambodian Army actually to use equipment given it was certainly well-founded.

Q: Didn't you have something to do with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations] when you were on the NSC staff?

BUSHNELL: Yes. Over the years there have been many attempts by the State Department and OMB [Office of Management and Budget] to control the tendency of many, if not virtually all, Government agencies to assign people overseas and to follow, at least to some extent, a little bit of their own foreign policy. There was an order issued by President Nixon that any additional overseas positions would require approval by the President and the NSC. I inherited the job of handling the implementation of that order in the NSC. Any request to station additional staff overseas had to go through the State Department and to have comments by the relevant Ambassador. State then forwarded the matter to the NSC with the backup information on why the agency wanted the staffing, the views of the Ambassador, and State views. Generally, this was not a contentious area.. During my tour these requests in total did not involve any considerable increase in the assignment of federal government employees overseas. My general approach, if a strong case was made to increase the assignment of staff in country A, would be to ask, for example, if the agency concerned could not reduce the staff assigned to country B. Quite often the agency would agree to reduce staff assigned elsewhere, and we wouldn't have to go any further into the matter.

The most contentious problem was with the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigations], which wanted to assign Legal Attachés in an additional six or eight countries. During World War II the FBI had assigned Legal Attachés to many countries, and Legal Attachés continue to be assigned to these countries. These assignments required staff personnel in addition to the Legal Attachés themselves. The total number of persons involved was not large, but this proposal would be a big expansion in the Legal Attaché service around the world. The State Department was strongly opposed in principle to the increase in the number of people assigned to Legal Attaché offices. Most of the places where the FBI wanted to increase its staff were in Eastern Europe. The CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] was opposed to this increase for the most part, except in one country. This meant that virtually all interested Government agencies, with the exception of the FBI itself, were opposed to this staff increase. I drafted a National Security Decision

Memorandum which noted that most agencies were opposed to this staff increase. I set out two options, either to reject any of the staff increases or to approve only one increase.

In due course this memorandum went forward to President Nixon. There was never a formal NSC meeting on this proposed expansion of Legal Attachés. Much to my surprise, a couple of weeks later the memorandum came back from the President with another option box added to it, which had been checked and duly signed. This added option approved everything proposed by the FBI. I assumed FBI had gotten to him and had twisted his arm to get approval for this expansion. It was only years later when oval office tapes were released that I learned J. Edgar Hoover had in effect blackmailed the President on this minor issue.

Q: Did you know anything at all about a proposal for the FBI to put wiretaps on the telephones of Morton Halperin and a few other people?

BUSHNELL: I did not deal with the FBI myself. I dealt with overseas staffing through the State Department. In fact, I don't think I ever dealt with anybody in the FBI, although I was cross examined by several men I did not know, as were most officers at the NSC, concerning leaks.

Q: In 1973 you were transferred to the economic side at the NSC. What led to that?

BUSHNELL: There were two things involved. One was that, partially at my suggestion, Chuck Cooper, who had been Minister for Economic Affairs in Saigon and with whom I had worked closely on economic matters, was brought back to the NSC by Kissinger to be the Deputy Assistant National Security Adviser for Economic Affairs. Chuck wanted me to work with him. It was clear Chuck Cooper had come back to the NSC in part to handle the economic part of the Southeast Asia function, which had been under the Office of Program Analysis. Program Analysis was not particularly interested in Vietnam once our troops were out. Many of the other things I had been doing, such as intelligence and military planning, were slowing down. The province analysis work was over. Thus I didn't have nearly as much to do. I already had a new assignment. But in the spring of 1973 Chuck asked me to extend at the NSC and work for him. I agreed to do so provided State fully supported it. At this point I had worked for the NSC for over two years. I was due for another assignment. Early in 1973 I was assigned to the National War College. This assignment was to begin in August of 1973. I was delighted to attend the National War College.

I said I would be glad to work with Chuck or go to the War College, whatever State wanted me to do. Another negotiation went on, so to speak, between the NSC and the State Department. I didn't know the details. Someone from State's Office of Personnel asked me which assignment I really wanted. I said I would be quite happy to remain at the NSC, but assignment to the National War College was interesting and I would like to do that then or later. The personnel officer in the State Department said: "You know, you can always go to the National War College next year." I was told State agreed to extend me at the NSC for another year, and I went to work for Chuck.

Ann was surprised to receive a phone call early one morning in August, 1973, soon after I left the house. The man said: "Where is Mr. Bushnell. This is at the National War College, and he is supposed to be here." Apparently, no one had told them that I wasn't coming to the National War

College. Ann gave them my phone at work and called me, so I was prepared to explain to the National War College what had happened, adding the comment that I hoped to be there the next year.

PAUL F. GARDNER
Political Officer
Phnom Penh (1972-1974)

Ambassador Paul F. Gardner was born in Texas in 1930. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Madagascar, Laos, Indonesia, Cambodia, and Turkey, and an ambassadorship to New Guinea. Ambassador Gardner was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: From Indonesia you got yourself very much involved in the Indochina thing, from 1972-74. You went to Phnom Penh.

GARDNER: Yes. This was just as we intervened in Cambodia by supporting the Lon Nol revolt against Sihanouk. There were a number of us in the Department then, especially among the younger people, who disagreed with this step by the Kissinger/Nixon White House. They felt we should not have taken this road in Cambodia. I was among this group.

Q: The initial one where we charged into Cambodia was in 1970 wasn't it?

GARDNER: Yes.

Q: I was in Saigon at the time.

GARDNER: There was a group of us younger people in the East Asian Bureau who opposed this. We even held a meeting to put the views forward, that it was wrong to have such a military role in Cambodia. Happily, we didn't get much press publicity.

Q: There was a group of young officers who made the press and Nixon was after their necks.

GARDNER: The group that I met with based their stance on moral grounds. I didn't feel that was the proper grounds because it was hard to determine morality in what was happening in Vietnam. Certainly the morality wasn't on the Communist side. I personally felt that the grounds should be that it doesn't serve our interests or the Cambodians interest because we would in fact be substituting our self for Cambodia initiative.

This was the feeling I had and it was based on the Indonesian experience. Indonesia had handled things by itself and done so much better. The hardest thing for Americans to do is not to get in and fix things. We are very activist inclined. When something is going your way, just let it be, especially in an alien culture in which your hand shows so much. But Americans find that very difficult to do because we are can-do people. I disagreed with the policy in Cambodia and felt

that we should not have gone in. My personal feeling, one I maintained throughout, was that Cambodia was used to relying on other powers to shield them. They were used to being a protectorate. They had always been in a sense a protectorate and relied on a great power, be it France, China or another country. I didn't feel that the United States made a very good protecting power, particularly in Southeast Asia. The French didn't do too well either, except they were there for quite a long time.

We had meetings and said things orally, but none of the people that I was involved with in the East Asian Bureau got hurt. We were such a young group that I don't think we really mattered. We let our views be known, but they didn't go very far. We were very junior in rank.

Q: I think the real thing that disturbed Nixon, personally, was the fact that there were other groups that went public during the time.

GARDNER: I disagreed with those who eventually got in control of the meeting and based the opposition on moral grounds. I don't think any of them got into trouble. Certainly it got out, that we didn't approve of it, and the White House was angry, but I can't think of any individual career that suffered.

Q: All I recall, and this is vague, is that Nixon called Rogers and said, "Do something" and Rogers put on a stall in order to protect those opposing the position.

GARDNER: We were protected by both Green and Rogers, I think, to a large degree. I just have a feeling that Green may have agreed with us, although I don't know, I never asked him. He was closer to the power center and he didn't get along with Kissinger, and I think Indochina was one of the reasons. I don't know the details of that. I do know there was an estrangement between the East Asian Bureau and the NSC at that time over Cambodia. So I felt, it was really quite something for them to decide to send me to Cambodia in charge of political/military affairs. I had the responsibility and actually a role in the military intervention that I had disagreed with to begin with. So this called for discipline because you were implementing a policy you don't agree with but it was our job to do so. I tried to do my best to implement it.

Q: You went there in 1972-74.

GARDNER: Yes. I went to the War College first for a year and then went out to Cambodia.

Q: What was the situation in Cambodia when you went out there in 1972?

GARDNER: It was bad. I guess we were hopeful at that time. The entire time I was there the only areas held by non-Communist forces were larger towns and they were under periodic attack. Phnom Penh had some of its worst attacks before I got there, but there were several after I got there as well. Rocket attacks, principally, with one attack by sappers that actually controlled the central part of the city one night. They captured some armored vehicles in the stadium and actually took them over and controlled the central part of the city during the night. We learned this through our radio system and consequently stayed home until they were wiped out. But otherwise, we had periodic rocket attacks which caused some casualties. I think it was more or

less going along this line before I got there and when I got there things really didn't change very much.

We had our moments of optimism, but basically, especially with people like me, I guess it was a basic pessimism I felt. I felt, and I wrote, that the military ...and I dealt with them quite a bit and I respected many members among the Cambodian military...but I felt that they felt that we would do the job for them. Some of them were aggressive, some were brave generals, but on the whole I felt that they wanted us to take care of it as a protectorate.

They tended to fuss among themselves quite a bit, a tremendous bit, in fact, which was very disheartening. I mean, I can recall one dinner that I sat with several generals. One of the generals and the head of the navy ...this was when things were looking pretty bad and they felt it was time to get rid of Lon Nol. I thought, "My God, you have the enemy all around you here and here are these two people who had drunk too much [they had a tendency to drink too much cognac] who are talking about a coup and trying to get the Americans to give them a go ahead against Lon Nol while the enemy completely surrounded the capital city."

Of course we rejected this out of hand. They felt that they could make a better defense without Lon Nol, but that didn't make sense because I couldn't see really that they had any different strategy to do the job better. None of us could. But what was very disheartening was to find them concentrating on the wrong thing -- how to handle their own future within the army and the regime as a whole, instead of getting control over the countryside. It was very disillusioning.

I wrote an airgram on the military which I think displeased a great number of people, but which our military attaché agreed with entirely. Certainly my boss didn't agree with it at the time. Tom Enders, whom I respect tremendously. A fabulous person with a fabulous mind. But I think he was really put off with an airgram in which I more or less said that our ally was not all that dependable. He was serving as Chargé at that time with Kissinger and I think perhaps he thought it looked a little bit defeatist. But at the same time I tried my best to see that they weren't defeated.

Primarily the programs I concentrated on were some counterinsurgency programs which I found gave disappointing results; some civil action gave slightly better results; and then I was saddled with helping them to install a draft, because they really didn't have obligatory military service even though the country was about to fall.

Again the draft was to a large degree designed by us and in order to see that they were doing things we asked to have periodic trips to the training grounds where they had these drafted youngsters. I felt it was essential. I had a very bad opinion of the other side. I was not as surprised as some by what occurred afterwards with the Khmer Rouge. So I felt they really had to be able to protect their lives. But the fact is that they really didn't want to do it. None of the people wanted to be drafted. None of them wanted to fight. None of the generals wanted to make them do it. This was sort of a permissive society to some degree and yet you felt that you had to get a draft program going. So it was quite dismaying visiting all these training camps and seeing how they were coming along and finding things were not all that good with these groups.

Although they were carrying out the thing, because we insisted on it and their money and everything else came from us, I think they continued to rely on the B-52 strikes which occasionally hit some military targets. The B-52s blew up the ammunition dump of the Vietnamese with a loud bang at one time down south. But they also, I am afraid, killed a great number of civilians. Some on our own side. One of my grimmest tasks was to go down to a town on the Mekong River which was under friendly control and which had taken a rack of friendly B-52 bombs and see the disaster caused by the bombing. In this case they bombed territory which the Cambodian government held and there were many, many civilian casualties.

Q: Wasn't this depicted in the movie, "The Killing Fields?"

GARDNER: I haven't seen that. I think many of us who served in Cambodia shy away from such movies. We have some very strong feeling about what we saw there. We lost most of our friends, who were killed afterwards. I had a mental block afterwards. I couldn't remember things about Cambodia afterwards. I wasn't there when the country fell, but it was well along the way. It fell about eight months after I left. But it was a very, very disappointing period. Virtually everybody you knew was later killed. Many were people who you respected tremendously, perhaps not as generals and military people, but as people.

But I think we made a mistake then. I thought it when I was there and I think it now. We tried our best to buck them up and to give them the wherewithal to fight, but I think we were too big of a protective power. We were so powerful, we had so much money, that they really basically thought that we would handle things. And we didn't and couldn't handle things without their help.

Q: What sort of reports were you getting about the Khmer Rouge?

GARDNER: Well, they were killing people. They would take over a city, like they took over Kompong Cham, for a couple of days, knowing they would not be able to hold it. And they killed virtually everyone with any sort of education. I mean just massacred everyone. The place was recovered so we saw what they were doing. It wasn't just reports. We saw in this case.

Q: Did you get any feel as to what was motivating this as opposed to what one gathers from what you are saying and from other accounts that these were basically a rather peaceful, passive people and why was there this virulent strain as bad as anywhere in the world?

GARDNER: Yes, it is hard to understand the Khmer Rouge. I think all of us had a difficult time. We tried what we could to find out something about them. The ones that we really had some information about because they had studied in France, weren't really Son Sen and Pol Pot, they were Khieu Samphan and some of the others. Looking at their biographies you wouldn't think that they were all that bad, although they were obviously very ardent Marxist and strong revolutionaries. But I don't think they were the ones who were controlling the policy. The ones who were controlling the policy we didn't know much about. To this day we don't know very much about Pol Pot or Son Sen and some of those people who are really controlling the troops and what they were doing.

It is a difficult thing to fathom, except you do realize that, although what we call the Hinduized culture puts a peaceful veneer on things and represses anger, sometimes underneath you have some raging going on and it breaks out in riots like in Indonesia. It broke out in Thailand in much the same way from time to time. When violence does occur it can be very, very brutal. Perhaps this is in part because hostility is repressed in most day-to-day reactions and confrontation is avoided. But when it breaks out, it breaks out big. This does not really explain the Khmer Rouge, however. Perhaps Pol Pot's craving for power and his personal cruelty which accounts for much of the Khmer Rouge's activities.

Q: What was the status of the Embassy? Emory Swank was the Ambassador at that time and Tom Enders was Deputy Chief of Mission. How did they operate in this type of situation?

GARDNER: Well, they were two very different personalities. Both I respect highly. But both had a different approach. Tom was an activist and Coby was not. I think Coby really felt there should have been a negotiated peace there. Tom was really enmeshed in our military role there and particularly in our air support, which got him into a bit of trouble when they discovered that many of the air operations we were planning in the Embassy. When parts of Washington discovered it...some Congressional staffers, etc....Tom was really conducting that to some degree. He wasn't a general or anything like that. I am not trying to say that he took a military role, but he had overall management of a program to give the Cambodians air support. Some of the concepts, I think, came from him...what our role should be there.

Coby was aware of it, of course, but he took a more hands off attitude towards it. He left and Tom became Chargé d'Affaires. I think Kissinger felt that Tom was more aggressive. I am not saying one was right and one was wrong. Frankly, in a sense, our government was wrong. Us being there was wrong. A negotiated settlement would have been a disaster because the Khmer Rouge would not have settled for anything less...the negotiations would not have succeeded in my view.

The military one seemed to be out the window as well. You couldn't really say that the military situation was completely out of the window because the real key to it was Vietnam. The Khmer Rouge did very little on their own. The sappers I talked about who took over the center of Phnom Penh were all Vietnamese. Behind all the Khmer Rouge regiments were Vietnamese artillery regiments and Vietnamese backup. This was a very difficult group to defeat because the Vietnamese were there. So really in a sense Cambodia's fate was sealed by Vietnam's fate. Had we not cut off our role in Vietnam, had Congress not cut off our role in South Vietnam, we might have been able to build up the South Vietnamese to a point where they would have held the Viet Cong at bay. In that case our role could have been successful in Cambodia simply because the Vietnamese were such an important element in the Khmer Rouge offensive when we were there. I think the Khmer Rouge could have easily beaten the Cambodian troops, but perhaps not with the B-52 and air support that we were giving them from Thailand. And perhaps not with the equipment that we were giving them.

So you could say that there could have been a possible victory there. There is no way of disproving it now. So in a sense neither Coby nor Tom were wrong. A negotiated peace might even have been possible if we had helped out in South Vietnam. Or a military victory would

have been possible. But in the actual circumstance, I think we were just in a position where there was no win. Whoever was there, whatever policy he had, it wasn't going to work in Cambodia.

Q: How about the CIA? Did you find that this was a post that the CIA was in a way running things?

GARDNER: No, I don't think they were running things. at all. No one else runs things when Tom Enders is in charge. He runs his own show. But they had a very big role because they were the only representatives in the provinces. They were supporting the Cambodian military in the provinces. So there were a great number of them. They were very much in an operational role, much as they were in Vietnam. But policy was really Kissinger and Nixon because this was a White House run policy. It was run through the JCS and CIA, but it was really White House policy as far as I could see. I think we all followed it. Some more wholeheartedly than others. I think we all tried to do our best to see that that particular policy worked. But some were obviously much more activist than Coby Swank.

I wasn't determining policy which I disagreed with years before. I was trying to implement it as best we could because I don't think we had any other choice at that point. We had engaged these people and they were going to die one way or another if we didn't try to help them and get them to help themselves. I did as much as I could to see that the draft was a success. That is about all you can say.

Q: Once you are engaged, you are engaged.

GARDNER: I sat in on every meeting with the headquarters group. We had almost daily meetings with the top generals...briefings, etc. They were all in French. I sat in on those with our military people there. We had a brigadier general as our principal representative. The U.S. military group was small because the number of people we could have there was set by Congress. That was a handicap.

Q: When did you leave in 1974?

GARDNER: I think it was in June. I guess it fell the next April.

Q: Something like that, yes. April, 1975.

GARDNER: Then it was ten months later.

Q: Not very optimistic when you left, then.

GARDNER: I still had some hope when I left. You had to keep hope or else you really became depressed...I mean, having seen what the Khmer Rouge was capable of at Kompong Cham. All the reports from the people of how the Khmer Rouge killed and how many were killed...they killed virtually anyone who had an elementary education. Whole schools were wiped out. Anyone with any type of education, whatsoever, they killed. We were aware of this, that they were brutal. You would be in the depths of depression if you felt there wasn't some hope. Once it fell, of course, you were in depression as well over what would occur afterwards.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
Political Officer
Phnom Penh (1972-1975)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

CARNEY: The teachers were quite a good crew. One of them is a friend to this day. We were all at dinner at a mutual friend's house just 3 weeks ago. Kem Sos... Madeleine Ehrman was the linguist. It quickly became the sort of Gestapo interrogation style of language learning. I was the only student. I have a high aptitude and used it to try to push the learning of the language. An interesting language: Words are essentially one syllable unless they're borrowed from Pali and Sanskrit. No tones. But the alphabet – and thank God it has one – is based on a 4th century Indian script, so it's affectionately known as “worm tracks.” The number of vowels and diphthongs are many more than exist in English, which causes a certain complication to us English speakers when we try to pronounce it correctly. But there were no surprises in the language. Once you get the alphabet down, the grammar is very straightforward and it's a question of building vocabulary. FSI hadn't yet learned that you've got to get students capable of reading or they're never going to build vocabulary, but that ultimately came.

The culture... There were no Cambodian restaurants and very few Cambodians in the U.S. in those days: Refugees from the Sihanouk period were people like my teachers for the most part. Very little was published on Cambodia in English at that time. I got a few books in French. A political memoir came out: Jean Claude Pomonti's *Courtesans aux Partisans*. But I don't think I got that until I got to Cambodia. Lots of gushy stuff existed from the Kennedy period, even from the '50s from the Eisenhower-Nixon period. I think Vice President Nixon visited Cambodia in the Eisenhower era. But nothing really gave me any clue as to what Cambodia was beyond the fact that Cambodians built Angkor Wat, which is to this day one of the wonders of the world, the largest single religious structure on the planet.

Q: Were you able to visit or did they make arrangements to talk to some of our people who were coming out of there on leave or something like that?

CARNEY: The problem was that we had broken relations with Cambodia in about 1964. The Aussies ensured our interests. There were no resident official Americans until about 1969 or '70 even. So there wasn't anybody. Frank Tatu was the desk officer. Frank was a wonderful, very particular Foreign Service officer, clearly has his own drummer and his own fife. He had gotten so interested in Cambodia he had actually done a “Chronology of Developments Affecting

Cambodia” on the country dating back to the Funan period in the 3rd or 4th century AD. I eventually updated it, since I thought it was so worthwhile, when I finished my tour there.

Q: You were there from '72 to when?

CARNEY: To the day a battalion landing team of the U.S. Marines from the USS Okinawa removed the Embassy staff April 12, 1975.

Q: When you arrived there, you were really the new boy on the block. I think the view of somebody who has just arrived is different than somebody who's an old hand and comes back. What was your observation when you got there?

CARNEY: I got there late April 1972, which is the beginning of the rainy season. It's the same monsoon that India has. I was to replace Don Jameson. Don stayed, which was good because that meant there were two language officers in the political section. The embassy was very complicated in its structure. There was a huge military equipment delivery team (MEDT) with a brigadier general in charge, the late John R.D. Cleland, who had his own particular view of the way things should be run. Emory Coblentz Swank was the ambassador, who left in '72.

I got to town and my quarters were not ready. I was going to a house that Elena Adesso, the Ambassador's secretary, had had. (If Elena's around, her service is so rich that she would be extremely valuable for this program.) But the house wasn't quite ready, so I was put in the hotel that had been known as the Royale. The times were somewhat eviler, and it was now known as the Phnom, after the nearby small hillock after which the capital is named, because we had a republic instead of a monarchy. But it was the massive walls, that yellow color of colonial French official structures that had persisted into the independent Kingdom of Cambodia: Ceiling fans, air conditioners that sometimes worked. I went up there.

Either the first or the second night, I had met a journalist from the *Domneung Peel Prik*, which means "Morning's News." It's a little more impressive in Khmer than the translation. I'm sure I could give you a more elegant translation. It was the late Ly Eng, who was at that time having an affair with one of the foreign correspondents there, whose name I won't mention. No need for posterity. We had talked a little bit. His English was better than my Khmer, so we basically spoke in English. (I would often feign to speak no French to ensure the conversation proceeded in Khmer.) I went up to bed the second night. It could even have been the third night. But having been in Saigon before, and knowing that Phnom Penh was subject to being rocketed, I also knew enough to keep an outfit at the side of the bed so that I could immediately get into it in case I had to go downstairs and take shelter from rocket fire. Sure enough, 122 millimeter rockets began coming in. I rolled out of bed, dressed in my black knit outfit and dark trousers, slipped a handgun into my belt under my outfit, and went downstairs.

Equally surely enough, Ly Eng was there and he said, "I've heard that there have been some people killed near the railway station which is quite close to the hotel. Let's go see what's going on." He and I went out. I think we were in a car rather than on his motor scooter, but I don't remember. Sure enough, this little kid had been chopped up by a chunk of casing from this 122mm rocket, and was dead with his mother disconsolate. Ly Eng asked some questions, a

working journalist. Then we heard a lot of automatic weapons fire from further south towards the suburb of Takhmau, and we drove down there to see what was going on. We were stopped at a checkpoint. There was a Cambodian general officer. I was able to follow part of the discussion in Khmer. I had gotten a 2+ rating in speaking when I finished the language course. But I had enough to be able to follow part of the discussion. (Even with a 3 or often a 3+, it's very hard to follow a discussion in which everybody is jumping in and ideas are half expressed and seized on. You need basically a 4 or even a 4+ in any language to do that.) But I got enough to know that there was a serious firefight going on further south and it would be dangerous to go further. We did not. We went back.

Of course, I was introduced to the country team the next morning and reported all of this to the astonishment and horror of Swank and the late Tom Enders, then DCM, but not to my boss, William Harben. But one didn't do that. You weren't supposed to put yourself at risk, which struck me as a very bizarre way to do foreign affairs reporting in a war. You have to get out, meet people, and be out of the embassy as much as you possibly could. That started the tour in Phnom Penh.

Q: Why don't we describe the embassy? The ambassador was Coby Swank. How did he operate? What was your impression of him?

CARNEY: He was extremely personable and engaging but he was the ambassador. There was a huge distance between a second secretary, an FSO-6, and basically I didn't see much of the ambassador or of the DCM for that matter ... except I can remember one particular time... Cambodian internal politics was a matter of despair for Washington. Basically, we were regularly ordered not to report on aspects of Cambodian internal politics because it made life too difficult for people running the policy in Washington. It was an early reinforcement of my lesson from Vietnam not to let Washington tell the embassy what it could and couldn't report. The corruption of the Foreign Service reporting process was well accelerated in Cambodia. This was the case and Tom Enders lent himself to that.

I was the duty officer one night and in those days the duty officers slept overnight in the chancery. The newspapers come out at night to be read in the morning, the Cambodian press. I was reading a couple of the Cambodian papers. This was 6 weeks or so after the presidential election which was structured. "Free and fair" would be unlikely words to put to it. Lon Nol was of course elected president. He and one of the 3 or 4 people who had made the coup with him... This was Sisowath Sirik Matak, from one of the minor branches of the Cambodian royal family. Monarchs in Cambodia have alternated from the 1840s or '50s from the Norodom branch of the family, of which the present king, Sihanouk, is a member, to the Sisowath branch of the family. Sirik Matak never had a chance to be king, but he was in the Sisowath branch. The French had bypassed his uncle in 1941 because his uncle was a graduate of the French military academy and far less tractable. The French decided to their cost that 19 year old Norodom Sihanouk was infinitely more tractable, so Sihanouk became king in 1941 at age 19.

But Sirik Matak was so annoyed at the result of the way the presidential election was run and counted that he announced that he had "withdrawn confidence" in the government of Lon Nol. I looked at that and said, "That can't be right." I got my dictionaries out. A Cambodian-speaking

Soviet diplomat, Igor Kossikoff by name, and I had come to know each other, which was extraordinary in those days. He actually gave me a copy of the 1933 French-Cambodian dictionary, 2 volumes. I was looking words up. I had to be absolutely sure I had it right. That's a pretty significant development: One of the people who had engineered the overthrow of Sihanouk withdrew confidence in the ongoing government of the country!

So I wrote it up and then I typed a cable. Even in those days I had figured out that you could not be at the mercy of secretaries and communicators. I had already learned in Lesotho how to run an HW28, which was then the one time tape code machine of State Department small embassy choice, and I knew how to do the green telegram forms and typed the cable up. It was on the political counselor's desk in the morning. I had gone home to have breakfast and shave and shower and what have you. I got back to the office and went up to the DCM's office – he had it by then, Bill Harben having signed off on it – and he said, “Is your translation correct? Did he really say this?” I said, “Here's the paper and the translation is correct.” He just shook his head. It wasn't in that context but a later, similar one that Tom Enders said, “What a bunch of losers.” Of course, they did lose.

Q: Tom Enders was the DCM. He was a major figure. How was he both as an intellect and a powerful personality? How did you find him at that time?

CARNEY: The intellect was real. Definitely smart and always looking at an issue to see whether it was real and what could be done about it if it wasn't going in a direction that would serve U.S. interests. What he didn't have was the sense of when things were going so badly that we had to try to get Washington to focus and change policy. It was always trying to do something, rather than to recognize and to make the judgment that things weren't possible and we had to do something else. That is a weakness of our service. If you only spend 2 or 3 years in a place, you can always think that you can hold it together until you leave.

Q: I think you're pointing to a real problem. Tom Enders, this was his only excursion into Asia. He later was in charge of Latin American policy.

Did you feel there was a division between the ambassador wanting not to over report on the complications of the situation which would imply the weakness of the Cambodian government which we were supporting and Tom Enders and the political section that said, “This is important stuff?”

CARNEY: Far from it. Enders was, if anything, even more willing to accept strictures on reporting.

Q: Were you and Don Jameson chafing at the bit wanting to get things out?

CARNEY: It was the political counselor, Bill Harben, who was chafing. This was before the dissent channel was established and there just didn't seem to be any way to deal with this problem at least at my level of seniority.

Q: Often there is a way. Some places nobody ever goes to, but I imagine that Cambodia was

pretty much on the circuit of people coming out to Vietnam to see what the hell was going on.

CARNEY: You know, it really wasn't. We had at various times Vice President Agnew, Governor Connelly, and only one CODEL with Bella Abzug on it.

Q: She was such a...

CARNEY: Elemental force?

Q: Elemental force with her polka dot hat and all. But also she was easy to dismiss, wasn't she?

CARNEY: I think that's basically it.

Q: She was opposed to the war.

CARNEY: Opposed to the policy.

Q: So whatever came out of there wouldn't be considered a considered report.

CARNEY: Yes, but ultimately all of that added up to an end to funding in the effort in Cambodia, which caused us to evacuate and the Khmer Rouge to take over.

Q: Was there any visit by the Senate team of Lowenstein and Moose?

CARNEY: I don't remember one when I was there. But just before I got there... It might have been Moose and the late Chuck Meissner who visited when I was there. But there was a Lowenstein and Moose visit before I got there where the journalists had them out to a restaurant called the Tavern just opposite the post office, very close to the Mekong river and fed them that wonderful Cambodian delicacy known as "somlaa kancha," which is marijuana chicken soup. It immobilized them for 24 hours.

Q: Marijuana is mixed in with it?

CARNEY: It's cooked with marijuana leaves.

Q: Were you getting desk officers, others, coming?

CARNEY: I don't recall a large number. Of course there weren't very many visitors because there was a "head space" problem. There was a decree, I think from the Congress, that there be no more than 200 official Americans in Cambodia at any given time. So whenever we had anybody come in, people would have to go out. It got complicated.

Q: The Embassy used a commuter plane, didn't it?

It would come in in the morning with military on board to take care of supply matters or something.

CARNEY: We had all of that. And then it would leave.

Q: What was our relation from your perspective to the Lon Nol government when you arrived?

CARNEY: Basically the leadership of the mission was always over giving advice and suggestions on how to do things. The military mission was trying to upgrade the capacity and to prevent the Force Armée Nationale Khmère [FANK] from embarking on adventures that cost it dear when it tried to use its enthusiasm to kick the Vietnamese out of the country, lacking the command and control and tactical skills or even basic training to be able to do so. They just simply got waxed in Operations Chen La I and Chen La II.

In the meantime, behind the Vietnamese shield, the Khmer Rouge were building up their capability. By '73, the insurgent effort was very heavily, if not entirely, Khmer Rouge against the government.

Q: Were the politics centered on personal wrangling? Was it a sense of nationality?

CARNEY: It was personal wrangling in Phnom Penh, who was up and who was down, who could pay the cost of an air conditioner to get an audience with Lon Nol's wife, for example, and what would happen if you did get such an audience? Could you get a job? How much would you have to pay if you became governor of such and such a province? That sort of thing.

Corruption was a major issue. A number of us more junior people decided that one of the areas that we had to focus on, an area totally unacceptable, was what we called the "traffic in jeeps," U.S. provided M151, A1, and A2 U.S. military jeeps that became civilian registered and were driving all about Phnom Penh with people's wives, mistresses, and children. We actually did a list... People started taking license numbers down. There were 4 or 5 of us who did this, including one or two of the military attaches. We did an airgram with all the jeeps we could find civilian listings were matched against the registration numbers at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and the source of origin insofar as we could determine it from the engine number. This outraged the MEDTC chief, the late General Cleland, whose classic comment that will live forever was, "GAO can make a case against us on this." (end of tape)

Q: You were mentioning that General Cleland had his own particular view. What was that?

CARNEY: That was, "I've got my marching orders. I'm going to effect them. I'm going to build these people up to defend themselves and go for it."

Q: Were you seeing that these efforts were getting diverted?

CARNEY: Of course. As in almost any organization, there were plenty of people who do not have, or do not see, a vested personal interest in making something happen that can't, and can judge things rather more dispassionately and accurately. Some of his staff were that way.

Q: But the program went on?

CARNEY: Of course.

Q: You had served in Vietnam and now you were in Cambodia. Did you feel that the political wrangling and the corruption were worse or equal to what you had seen in Vietnam?

CARNEY: I didn't make any comparisons. It didn't seem to serve anything. What was clear was, one effect of the corruption was that it was so widespread and so well known that it was sapping popular confidence in the Lon Nol government and in popular will to resist, all the more so because Sihanouk for all of his faults had been accepted as monarch and more to the point, Sihanouk had by May of '70, two months after the coup, become the leading figure in the resistance. The Khmer Rouge used him as their drawing card.

Q: Wasn't he in Beijing?

CARNEY: Yes. He had been on a trip abroad to Moscow and on the way back the coup took place. He landed in Beijing and stayed there.

Q: Was the thrust of our embassy at the top that we were going to make this government work and let's try to make it sound good?

CARNEY: Absolutely.

Q: Did we have anything like looking in the provinces?

CARNEY: Ultimately, the CIA put some people upcountry but that didn't happen until '74 and they did not speak Cambodian.

Q: The CIA had been the precipitating cause of Sihanouk throwing us out, hadn't it?

CARNEY: I'm not sure. There had been a number of problems when operations were uncovered in earlier years, the name Victor Matsui is in the press in the 50s or 60s. Our support for Diem in Vietnam was a proximate cause, as I recall.

Q: Who else was in the embassy, some of the reporting officers?

CARNEY: Some? Don Jameson – Peter Collins replaced him. On the economic side, that section was joint with AID, so it was a different approach to reporting. Bruno Kosheleff was there in that section. Also there was an economist who was looking at larger aspects, Phil Berlin. I can't remember whether he was macro or micro. There were a couple of assistant military attachés who were pretty good: Allen Armstrong was one of them; Mark Berent was the assistant air attaché. Then the station was relatively small. It had 2 good reporting officers on the clandestine services side. One clandestine services officer was very smart, but simply couldn't recruit agents, which must make you wonder why you're in the CIA.

Q: What about USIA? Were we doing much there?

CARNEY: It was inadequately covered. None of the journalists held any candle, much less any respect, for U.S. policy or what the embassy had to say about events.

Q: Was the press relatively free?

CARNEY: The Cambodian press was rambunctious and relatively free, very scatological and earthy in its metaphor and editorial cartoons.

Q: When you arrived, how was the military system of the Khmer Rouge judged?

CARNEY: For a long time, far past the reality, the Khmer Rouge were regarded as the mere auxiliary of the Vietnamese forces. My view of it was signally limited because I did not have an SI [signals intelligence] clearance. I was never shown that material. That suddenly became clear to me one day when Tom Enders came down and said, "The prime minister has given me this. It looks kind of interesting. See what you can do and maybe report on it." I took a look at it - this was in '73. It was two long interviews by the Cambodian services of individuals who had been teachers and who had gone to the Khmer Rouge after the coup late in 1970, if not in '71, and had subsequently rallied to the government. Basically, these documents had who the Khmer Rouge were: The Communist Party of Kampuchea. It had individuals who were in it, their names - these were people who had disappeared from Phnom Penh into the bush - their revolutionary names or aliases.

I translated it. Fortunately, the interviews were in French so I could easily translate it. Translating Khmer at that point would have been damn near impossible for me. I sent it around for clearance. I did it as an airgram. It should have been a telegram. The NSA representative to the embassy came down and said, "You've got to get this out right now." I couldn't figure it out. Finally it dawned on me: the intercepts, all the radio stuff, had the revolutionary names of these people rather than their real names and this made the connection between a revolutionary name and an individual. A very significant intelligence coup. So, we got that out. One of those people subsequently published a book which came out in late '74 called "Sranaoh Proloeing Khmer," which I translated as "Regrets for the Khmer Soul" and others have translated "Regrets of a Khmer Soul." I suspect the latter is a better translation. He, by the way, survived the Khmer rouge, wound up working for the CIA on the Thai-Cambodian border in 1979 or 80, and is now here in the U.S.

Q: Amazing. Were we getting reports that the Khmer Rouge was really something different?

CARNEY: We were getting reports because my predecessor, Andy Antippas, was hearing reports that in 1954 after the Geneva Accords, a number of the Cambodian revolutionaries, who were not given any status as a result of the Accords - Sihanouk wouldn't have it - those people boarded Polish ships and went to North Vietnam. There were a few thousand of them. Those people began reinfiltrating after the coup. By '72 or so, some of them were being executed or they would disappear. Clearly the indigenous Cambodian communist movement decided that these were the thin edge of a pro-Vietnamese wedge and were purging them. That ultimately led, after the Khmer Rouge victory, in about 1976, to the establishment of the torture/execution

center at the Toul Sleng High School through which roughly 18,000 cadre were interrogated, tortured, and executed in the Khmer Rouge period.

Q: Was there anything in the Khmer character that would lend it to this type of thing? Or was this sort of an import of French intellectuals, nonsense carried to the nth degree?

CARNEY: The Cambodian communist movement has basically 3 strains. One of them is Vietnamese. Essentially it was the Vietnamese who brought communism to Cambodia. The second strain comes from a group of younger Cambodians who went off to France to study in the late '40s. The late Pol Pot himself - his real name is Saloth Sar – got a scholarship and went off to study radio electronics. He was even in Yugoslavia building agricultural projects at one point and doing Socialist International duties. The third strain is completely indigenous. The deputy secretary of the communist party of Kampuchea's standing committee, is Nuon Chea, although did get some education outside of Cambodia, in Bangkok at one of the universities there – it might have been Thammasat University. So you had those 3 strains in the party.

Marxism must have seemed attractive if you were not a royalist. Then the idea of Leninism, that there would be a party with a leading role in the revolution, was even more attractive because it meant they were the leading role, were in charge. And so the Cambodian communist party was definitely Marxist-Leninist. You have to throw Lenin in there because that's how you do your leadership.

To answer your question specifically, there is no more or less in the Cambodian character that lends itself to that kind of nonsense than there is in anybody else's character, including our own.

Q: The ruthlessness with which this was carried out – you might say the extreme logic – just seems to be excessive.

CARNEY: It's, in fact, no different than Stalin or Mao or Idi Amin or Hitler. It was less systematic. There is a book in the process of being done now by an American academic whom I first met when he was just becoming a graduate student – he was in Cambodia – Stephen Heder. Steve stayed with us the first 3 or 4 months of this year (2003) while he had a fellowship at the Holocaust Museum. His studies are pretty convincing in showing that, however bad the Khmer Rouge were, they were nowhere near as systematic as the Nazis, that defining an out group initially caused a lot of slaughter, and a lot of it was revenge for roles taken during the civil war, but you just didn't have that machine that the Nazis built. Maybe it was because the Nazis had to operate on a larger scale. Cambodia never had more than 8 million people or so.

Q: And it didn't have the infrastructure.

CARNEY: Right.

Q: Were you seeing a growing sense of foreboding, people looking over their shoulder or seeing this thing as being inevitable?

CARNEY: No, there was growing apathy. My own view was mistaken. It was that the Khmer

Rouge are going to win. There is certainly no stomach in America for continuing to pour money into Cambodia, much less Vietnam. Yes, there are going to be executions. Unless they get out, we're talking a few thousand people who will be chopped. And then Cambodia will more or less be Cambodian. Certainly it will be on the left side. But I never envisaged the scale of what the Khmer Rouge did, beginning with the evacuation of the cities.

Q: One of the mistakes that we made in evaluating Vietnam was that we saw somehow the Chinese and the Vietnamese being together like lips and teeth.

CARNEY: Utter nonsense. The Vietnamese had a much greater role in creating and sustaining the Khmer Rouge than was initially... Initially they were believed to be totally in control. That was not the case. But the role was infinitely greater - Steve Header's book is going to document that - for an infinitely longer time than anyone can imagine. For example, I had incredible difficulty when I was at Cornell after leaving Cambodia - I had a State Dept.-funded academic year - and I did a monograph, a Data Paper in the series of the Southeast Asia program, "Communist Party Power in Kampuchea." It included an introduction to the party and what we knew about it and the translations of some documents, part of Ith Sarin, and "A Short Guide to Party Statutes," that was a captured document I managed to find, and a number of issues of the Cambodian youth publication "Revolutionary Young Men and Women." I had an incredibly difficult time translating it. I had Kem Sos help me and he couldn't make head or tail of it, largely it was because the terms were taken from Vietnamese. The intellectual capital of communism came through the Vietnamese. It just didn't make any sense in Cambodian.

Q: I spent 5 years in Yugoslavia and an awful lot of stuff that came out of that part of the communist world didn't really make sense. I mean, a lot of jargon.

CARNEY: Exactly. But they had used it by the time you got there, and it was in currency. This was all stuff that never existed in the language before. My Khmer at that time was maybe 3+/3+, 3+/4. I thought it was me until I got hold of Sos and then a separate translator. They couldn't make head or tail out of it either.

Q: Was there the feeling that the Cambodians would essentially reject the Vietnamese?

CARNEY: There was no doubt.

Q: But was there a feeling that the Vietnamese... You had a lot of North Vietnamese troops in Cambodia, didn't you?

CARNEY: No, there were relatively fewer Vietnamese troops in Cambodia at that point. There might have been in the highlands on the southern edge of the trail, but not as far across as they had been during the Sihanouk period, nor when they were destroying elements of Lon Nol's forces.

Q: Was there a general feeling that if they succeeded in overthrowing the South Vietnamese government that they would hack out quite a bit of Cambodia?

CARNEY: The longstanding Vietnamese desire dating back certainly to the 19th century was to make Cambodia and Laos fiefdoms. Indeed, the Vietnamese tried to do that in the mid-early 19th century, including insisting that Cambodian royalty wear Vietnamese court dress and dress their hair Vietnamese style. If you look at the position of Cambodia, the essential geopolitical reality was that Cambodia was a football between Vietnam and Thailand. The Thais ultimately ended Vietnam's dominant position in Cambodia in the 19th century. Then the Cambodians fled to the French for protection in 1863 with King Norodom.

The Vietnamese in the modern political era, the 20th century, decided they wanted to create an Indochinese federation of communist states. That was the goal they had in creating and supporting the Cambodian communist party in 1950 or '51. The strategic belief was that if the Vietnamese got control of Laos and Cambodia, Thailand would be threatened because there is a major invasion route between Cambodia and Thailand at the town of Aranyaprathet, which is a geographical area that is flat and is ideal cavalry country. Historically, the Cambodians invaded through that Watana Gap when they gained suzerainty over what is now modern Thailand. It's perfect tank country in the modern period. The Vietnamese are known to enjoy tank warfare. So, for larger strategic reasons, blunting those Vietnamese objectives was in U.S. interests.

Q: Were the French playing any role while you were there?

CARNEY: The French indeed had an embassy, but they were not particularly active, certainly not in support of Lon Nol. Their embassy ultimately was the refuge for what was in the international community after the Khmer Rouge came into the city on April 15.

Q: I'm always interested in capturing the impression of the officers at your rank going out and doing the reporting, learning the language and all, the foot soldier in our diplomacy. What was your impression and that of your colleagues of Lon Nol and his government?

CARNEY: It was clearly not going anywhere. Incompetent. Corrupt. Lon Nol himself was a Cambodian mystic of very little popularity, and less leadership. Clearly it couldn't come out right. It was so obvious that I came to be puzzled as to what Washington could be thinking about the U.S. role in Cambodia, however much the Cambodians merited being free of Sihanouk and of the Vietnamese.

Q: What was the residue of feeling about Sihanouk within the embassy? They hadn't been there during his time.

CARNEY: There wasn't any question that Sihanouk's dead hand on Cambodian politics had led to the then current impasse. He would buy people off or have them exiled or even killed so that he could stay in charge.

Q: So there was no feeling that he was a white knight or anything like that?

CARNEY: The feeling, which Swank's ultimate successor, John Gunther Dean, came to was that Sihanouk was an element of the solution. As flawed as he was, he was the only possible way the U.S. could get out and try to ensure that there was a brake on a communist victory.

Q: You were there when John Gunther Dean came in?

CARNEY: Yes.

Q: I've had some interviews with him when he comes in from Paris. Was there a difference?

CARNEY: Complete and total difference in the way he did things. He was interested in learning as much as he could about all the disparate elements of Cambodian society. I put him together with youth and student leaders and with some monks at one point basically to help give him as broad a view of Cambodian society as he could possibly get.

Q: What was the result of this?

CARNEY: I think it helped him form his view of the need to move quickly towards some kind of negotiated solution, a controlled solution, as he has publicly put it.

Q: What was happening? Did you feel the play was mainly in Washington?

CARNEY: Yes, no question.

Q: The play was both in Washington and Vietnam centered?

CARNEY: Yes. In fact, I have a good friend who is an English journalist, William Shawcross, who visited me at Cornell in that period after the war, and we discussed that very issue and decided the word "sideshow" was adequate to describe the view of Cambodia.

Q: What book did he write?

CARNEY: "Sideshow: Nixon-Kissinger and the Destruction of Cambodia."

Q: In a way, were we that much of a player in Cambodia? From what you're saying, you have an incompetent government and a military that was also incompetent.

CARNEY: Let me add here this isn't to say there weren't some good soldiers who were good; some leaders paying their troops, doing the job, and seriously fighting. There were plenty of those. But on the whole the national leadership and the military leadership were both corrupt and incompetent. It is the usual contradiction, to borrow the Marxist word, of the situation.

Q: What could we have done about it anyway? In some ways I often feel that we absorb all the sins of whatever happens on ourselves. If the South Vietnamese couldn't make it and the Cambodians couldn't make it, it's our fault. How do you feel about that?

CARNEY: I don't think it's as stark as that. The elements that are there include our unwillingness to analyze those situations before we jump in with both feet. That is certainly the case in the Cambodian situation. But we were surprised by it. Sihanouk was doing what we

wanted and he was giving us the information on where the Vietnamese were. We were hitting them. Then he'd shout and scream in the press. But we were getting what we wanted out of it. We were surprised when the coup took place, there isn't any doubt about that. I've always believed that that was an action by Lon Nol and his people that had nothing to do with the U.S. We might have known about it at certain levels that there was something coming but-

Q: We weren't even in the country in those days.

CARNEY: Well, we were close enough to people doing the coup. We likely had a heads up at the intermediate level.

Then the first thing we did was transfer some weapons to Lon Nol's coup government from captured stocks in Vietnam. Then Sihanouk went on the air and basically called for the Cambodian equivalent of a jihad against Lon Nol and his people with Chinese and Vietnamese support. The Soviets had an embassy in Phnom Penh, but they were basically encouraging the Khmer Rouge, too. It unraveled. Kissinger has an interesting comment. He said, "Sometimes you just have to pick the least bad option as you see it at the time." I think that's where you're going. There is a whole lot of truth to it. At no point did we ever step back and look at Cambodia and weigh it and say, "This situation would be better resolved if we went to the Chinese and Sihanouk and the Vietnamese and said, 'How can we best restore peace in Cambodia?'" It was never an option.

Q: I'm trying to capture your observation at the time. Was there any way to extract Cambodia from what was happening in Vietnam?

CARNEY: I didn't see it.

Q: I found it very difficult. If nothing else, it was a supply channel. You couldn't take them out and put a cordon sanitaire around Cambodia.

CARNEY: All the more so because Sihanouk, in fact, had effectively ended that supply role.

Q: The Chinese probably didn't have any representation there, or did they?

CARNEY: I think the Chinese embassy had been closed. The Soviets were there.

Q: How did the thing unravel? What was happening to you? Talk about the ambassador.

CARNEY: It unraveled because the Khmer Rouge gained in size and strength and competency. They began seizing government artillery units and pieces and began shelling Phnom Penh with artillery as well as rockets. A 107 millimeter rocket has a 5-7 kilometer range, which is pretty close. Your 105 millimeter artillery piece has got an 11 mile...

Q: There was that period when supplies were coming up the Mekong.

CARNEY: And they closed that off in early 1975. And then we tried an airlift, 700 tons a day by

air in those days with the cargo craft we had. It cost too much.

Q: When did you see the end?

CARNEY: When we ended the aerial bombing of Indochina in 1973.

Q: It was the B52s that were...

CARNEY: They could do quite a number on a 1 by 3 kilometer stretch of territory. No stone would be on top of another there as a result of such an attack.

Q: That was in '73 that we ended that?

CARNEY: Right. August sticks in my mind.

Q: Were you packing up the silver?

CARNEY: Let's say I moved some of my effects out in early '75. My ex-wife and daughter - I got married in Cambodia – stayed until early '75.

Q: Where did you meet your wife?

CARNEY: A cocktail party in Phnom Penh. She's Cambodian.

Q: What's her background?

CARNEY: Teacher. Her father had been a district chief, which was an appointed position from the central government rather than elected. Her late brother had been extremely active and close to Lon Nol's brother, Lon Non, and the 2 of them were working with the CIA early on.

Q: You were married in Phnom Penh?

CARNEY: Exactly. In '73.

Q: As a political officer, I can't think of a better source of getting a feeling about... What were you getting from your wife? Was she getting more and more nervous?

CARNEY: No, she wasn't. She was part of the Cambodian elite that was glad Sihanouk was gone, didn't have any respect for Lon Nol, much closer to Sihanouk's cousin, Sisowath Sirik Matak and that royalist side, although she was also close to some of the military wives. I never really got serious political views from her on where the country ought to go and what the prospects were.

Q: Particularly when shells came in...

CARNEY: '75, that last 4 months... It was New Year's Eve of '75 that the Khmer Rouge began

a major set of attacks around Phnom Penh city. Then every week was further downhill, including closing the Mekong and what have you.

Q: What was the embassy doing at this point?

CARNEY: Dean was trying to get Kissinger to start talks with no success. I'm sure he's gone into that in some detail. I was talking to my contacts, including senior Buddhist monks. It just was clear that there wasn't any way out.

Q: With these aircraft coming in with supplies, were we trying to get people out?

CARNEY: Not until March. We drew the embassy American staff down the end of March and then we started moving Cambodians out that were associated with us.

Q: How about your wife and child?

CARNEY: They had gone earlier. I sent them off in February.

Q: Was there a time when you saw that this was going to be it?

CARNEY: It would have been sometime around February or March of '75. I was supposed to be shipped out with the rest of the non-essential staff. I went to the DCM, Bob Keely, or maybe the political counselor, Ray Perkins, and I said, "Look, it doesn't make any sense not to have a Cambodian speaker here. It would be a good idea if I stayed." He said, "So you want to stay?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Let me talk to the ambassador." So I stayed.

Q: Was it an embassy that was... One thinks of what happened in Saigon with our ambassador there who was living in a wonderland almost and was not making the proper preparations.

CARNEY: Not the case in Cambodia. Keely had to go out because he had a bleeding ulcer but he came back. He and Dean were looking at making sure that the people who should get out with us, that everything was properly destroyed. In fact, I can remember the day we choppered out, April 12. The political counselor and I drove to the prime minister's house and there was a cabinet meeting in session. Long Boret was prime minister. He had already been called because we were offering places for all the Cambodian cabinet and their families. Nope. Only one went with us: the minister of youth and sports and his wife and one or 2 kids.

Q: They thought they could make a deal?

CARNEY: To this day, I'm not sure I know what they thought. They had their own plans ready. They had helicopters positioned in the Olympic stadium to fly to Thailand if they couldn't make a deal. In fact, they used them except Boret didn't make the helicopters and was executed.

Q: Were horror stories coming in about the Khmer Rouge?

CARNEY: Ken Quinn did a wonderful airgram from Vietnam in '73 about what Khmer Rouge

rule was like when they began taking over parts of the countryside in southeastern Cambodia near the border. It was prophetic, but at the same time when you read that and when you heard the horror stories you could argue that these were the exigencies to which the movement was forced due to B52 targeting, due to the difficulties of mobilizing the countryside to fight Phnom Penh, which is the way I looked at it. In fact, it prefigured what they were going to do when they were in charge. They basically decided to empty Phnom Penh because they didn't want any networks left in place or any focal points for civil disturbance.

Q: Were units of the Lon Nol government army going over to the Khmer Rouge?

CARNEY: No.

Q: What was happening the last day or 2? What did you do?

CARNEY: I think I had some people over the night before, let some of my in-laws know... I told them to come and pick whatever they wanted up from the house, the storeroom, which they did the next day. I had some journalists over. We finished the champagne. I think I dropped by and gave some money to the usual people, the tennis trainers at the Cercle Sportif, without... Well, everybody knew we were going. It was very much an open secret by then.

Q: What about your wife's family?

CARNEY: Some of them decided to go. None of them asked me for space on the U.S. airlift, interestingly enough. Like so many Cambodians, they figured that they were small enough fish that they would survive.

Q: And then what happened?

CARNEY: They didn't. Well, her father didn't, nor did her mother. All of her sisters and brothers but one wound up on the Thai-Cambodian border, where I found them in '79 and took them to the refugee camp inside Thailand that the UN was running. Many of them are here. Others are in Canada.

Q: You went off in a helicopter. How did that work?

CARNEY: Marines came in from the USS Okinawa, a battalion landing team, to secure the airfield, which was a field not too far from the embassy near some civil servant housing. When we finished off the last destruction - everybody had at most a file drawer with a couple inches - we got all of our telephone locator pads, remembered to throw those away, too, and they were burned, took the flag down, tried to get the shield down but couldn't do it, it was too firmly in, so we left the shield. Dean got the flag. I did some pictures eventually printed with the story in the Department of State *Newsletter* about a month or 2 later, including one of Dean with the flag. We piled into vehicles and drove up to the field and boarded the CH53s and went off to the Okinawa, which then steamed for Thailand. We got off at Utapao the next morning.

Q: Then what did you do?

CARNEY: I stayed in Bangkok for a couple of months processing Cambodians out of the consular section. It was wild and wooly.

Q: While you were there, was this when the reports came in about what the Khmer Rouge...

CARNEY: Not yet, although just before I left Thailand to go off to Cornell for my academic year, a refugee, Sin Mao, appeared at the consulate. I was brought in... He had been in the United States, and had gone back to try to get his family out, which he did. They walked out. I sat down with him and said, "Okay, what happened?" He gave me chapter and verse. I did a cable on it which included the evacuation of Phnom Penh, the fact that there were checkpoints at least on the route he took-

Q: You were talking to this Cambodian who said the Khmer Rouge had ordered the complete evacuation of Phnom Penh.

CARNEY: What they had said was that "You can go back to your native village." So, if you were an ethnic Cambodian, you almost surely had at least your grandparents from a particular native village. This particular refugee figured it out, and he said that his particular native village was in the far northwest of the country near the Thai border. He was moved out of town north across the Mekong in the direction of Kompong Cham. It was there at a ferry point that the Khmer Rouge gave little half sheets of paper that had mimeographed fill-in-the-blank portions on it. In the upper left hand corner was a rather interesting logo. In Cambodian, it read something that roughly translates, "Exodus Reception Committee." You filled out what your name was, who was with you, and where you were going. That was your pass to get to the villages. That was Khmer Rouge policy to take the new people from the cities and to deposit them in the village and to build or forge them into a modern Cambodian communist man or woman. Well, this fellow was aware that it was at that point that former military were separated out and he assumed executed. He carried on and heard several other stories of these executions and got out. That was the first solid report on what was happening with the people after the Khmer Rouge victory. It was several months later when you began to get more refugees coming to Thailand talking about all the horrors that we now know.

Q: When you got to Thailand, what was our policy towards Cambodian refugees?

CARNEY: It was in flux. It was basically... We weren't quite sure what to do, so we put them all in a camp. You heard about former employees, people who were coming over, government officials who made it out in their helicopter lift, people who came in by boat from the seacoast of Cambodia, and then people started making their way across the border. Then you had the refugee lift with the initial wave and then we began – and I was out of it at that point, out of direct contact with it – then we established our refugee policies, who was a refugee and who wasn't and that sort of thing.

Q: You left Cambodia when?

CARNEY: April 12th with the evacuation of the embassy.

Q: When did we leave Saigon?

CARNEY: April 30th.

Q: So it was all one in the same.

CARNEY: It was all of a piece.

Q: So were the Cambodians moved into the Saigon evacuation?

CARNEY: No, it was separate and stayed separate. I think Cambodians were ultimately moved from Utapao to Guam.

MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ
Political Advisor to Commander in Chief
Pacific Command (1973-1974)

Ambassador Abramowitz was born in New Jersey and educated at Stanford and Harvard Universities He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 after service in the US Army. A specialist in East Asian and Political/Military Affairs, the Ambassador held a number of senior positions in the Department of State and Department of Defense. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research and as US Ambassador to Thailand (1978-1981) and Turkey (1989-1991). He also served in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vienna. Ambassador Abramowitz was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2007.

Q: Did you, while working for Richardson, encounter the issue of assigning military officers to civilian positions, as seems to be the modus operandi of the Bush II administration?

ABRAMOWITZ: I personally did not encounter much interest in assigning uniformed personnel, either on active duty or retired, to normally civilian jobs. This was true even in the intelligence responsibilities of DoD. We had at the time an assistant secretary for intelligence who was always a civilian. The use of retired military officers in what had been civilian positions started, I believe, mostly with the Reagan administration. Of course, over a period of time, new jobs were added to the Pentagon roster which were often filled by active duty or retired military officers. For example, while I was in the Pentagon, we had no undersecretary for policy or other jobs above the assistant secretary level in OSD. Those jobs were created in the Reagan administration.

As I said before, Richardson was a very fine man who reached out to people, sought their input and was obviously and sincerely interested in them. He generated a collegiate atmosphere. His brief stewardship was a healthy one for both the civilian and military staffs of the Pentagon. I thought that perhaps he went “overboard” in trying to reach to certain senior military officers; I

didn't think a few of them deserved his attention. But he tended to like everybody or at least treated all well. I attended Richardson's staff meetings and found him always attentive and deeply engaged with the military leaders. He tried hard to make the military feel part of the "team." These meetings, which I think took place twice a week included the service secretaries, the Joint Chiefs and other senior leaders of DoD. The participants in DoD, by and large, were quite forthcoming and provided information and insights freely and without reservations. Perhaps that is the result of the different nature of many of the issues that faced the Pentagon and State. DoD had major issues dealing with weapon systems, troop deployments, etc. – issues which were far more precise than the policy dilemmas often facing State. I found in general, the SecDef's staff meetings were more productive than SecState's ones.

By sheer accident the Political Advisor to the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Command (POLAD-CINCPAC) job came open. There were a number of candidates, but the job seemed attractive that I used whatever influence I could muster, such as with SecDef to get the job. I had the necessary interview with Admiral Gayler and he subsequently offered me the job, which was a State Department billet. It was a very desirable assignment at that point with lots of senior FSO's vying for it. It was until then always filled by an FSO-1 – the highest level in grade levels existing at the time. I was only an FSO-3 but got the job.

It was, I felt, an important job because CINCPAC was deeply involved in the tensions on the Korean peninsula, and in numerous other Far East issues, less so in Vietnam. In the early 1970's CINCPAC was an important player in the policy process – much more than I believe is today. When he traveled to foreign countries, he could see any foreign official he wanted. He was a major official representing the U.S. That is less true today. The 1970's were the "hay-days" for CINCPAC. That is of course one reason the POLAD job was so attractive.

In any case, that POLAD job was the best I could find in State or DoD for which I could be a candidate. I am sure I antagonized some more senior FSO's who looked on me as a junior intruder. I think that Schlesinger put in a good word for me with Admiral Gayler and eventually I was appointed as POLAD-CINCPAC with State bowing to Gayler's wishes. Fortunately, all worked out well. I liked working for Gayler and he relied on me to a great extent. I was useful to him because by this time, I had worked up a large network of contacts in the Pentagon. I knew all the civilian and military movers and shakers. Since CINCPAC effectiveness depended to a considerable extent on his ability to get the DoD bureaucracy to support him and to take appropriate actions to promote his programs and activities, I was of real assistance. I was also a good intelligence agent. All that is not normally a POLAD's job, but I was picked for the job in part because of my Pentagon connections. Gayler would send me back to Washington at times to try to resolve a problem that had arisen between the Pentagon and CINCPAC. These issues usually related to our relations with Korea or Japan.

In the CINCPAC's pecking order, the POLAD was the third ranking officer – even though I was much more junior than the grade of the job. That also gave me considerable access. The standard role of a POLAD is to provide the CINC advice and recommendations concerning the political aspects of the command's undertakings. That included host country problems for our military of the impact of U.S. forces on specific Far East countries, both those which hosted U.S. military elements and those who watched U.S. activities in the Pacific area, those in effect and those

which were just being planned. As POLAD, I went with the CINC on all his visits to other countries, which often elicited my suggestions on the problems that would arise during these trips and how to handle them. I was also the liaison to the Department of State, which had real interest in the admiral's activities. I also did a lot of liaison work for the admiral, particularly with the OSD (office of the secretary of defense).

There might have been some who resented my relationships with OSD, but they pretty much kept their resentment to themselves. I had established something of a reputation and people knew that I had many good contacts who would be helpful to me and my boss. I had access to almost all of the Pentagon's leadership. Gayler understood that and used me it. I also had good access in State, although not with William Rogers, then the secretary – whom I didn't particularly want to see anyway and vice-versa. My access in State was good enough to get done what needed to be accomplished.

My POLAD staff consisted of a deputy (an FSO) and two secretaries. I had as much access to the Admiral as anyone on the CINC staff. He really used me as a sounding board, tossing out ideas and getting my reactions. That relationship acquainted me with issues that went far beyond the POLAD's charter. This was also the first time I got to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.

The Cambodian situation was deteriorating rapidly. We worked hard on the issue of keeping the Mekong River open for our traffic. I did not contribute much except to comment on political aspects, if any, of any military operation, but I did learn a lot about such efforts. Gayler had some, not great influence, on the conduct of the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. He was the titular head of our armed forces in the Far East. He was probably more influential on Cambodia than he was on Vietnam; on Vietnam issues, General Abrams called the shots.

In Cambodia, CINCPAC did have a particular mission toward the end of the war to keep the Mekong River open for supplying Phnom Penh. The country was going downhill in a hurry – economically and politically. In December, 1974 it was deeply depressing watching the chief of the Cambodian Navy – with his ten or twelve small boats – trying to keep the Mekong open. He told us he would never leave his country under any circumstance. He and others were sure that the U.S. would come to their rescue. It never happened. Cambodia soon fell to the Khmer Rouge. He was hanged, I am told, the day after the city was captured.

In the early 1970s we knew very little about the Khmer Rouge. Our intelligence was lousy. I had access to most if not all of the intelligence available to the CINC. There may well have been some military intelligence that was given to Gayler privately, but I tried to do my best to see all that State had. CIA was not as major a player in Cambodia, but the station chief in Hawaii was helpful in getting some information. We didn't know for sure if there was a man by the name of Pol Pot; if he did exist, use other names? The whole Cambodian scene was confusing. By the time I arrived as POLAD the situation in Cambodia was clearly going downhill.

I was most interested in embassy NO-DIS traffic; usually the most important for policy purposes and very helpful to the CINC's planning operation. I think that most NO-DIS messages had CINCPAC/POLAD on distribution; on occasions, a message would not make any sense because

it referred to a previous one which we might not have received. I would then get on the phone to find the message that we had not received.

I think I spent six months of the year I was there traveling with the admiral. I had the opportunity to meet all the “movers and shakers” in much of East Asia. These contacts stood me in good stead for almost twenty years. Even after leaving my POLAD job, I could see most of them. The fact that there were so many doors open to me became quite important in my next job as Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asia in DoD-ISA. Those relationships built up were invaluable. The only one still active is Lee Kuan Yew and I have not seen him since 1997.

Q: What conclusions did you reach about military-to-military relationships?

ABRAMOWITZ: I don't think I would generalize. But this was a military dominated period. The relationships varied from situation to situation. In some countries, that relationship was particularly important and usually close because the indigenous military were in control of the country – e.g., Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan. In those cases, every effort was made to maintain their strong support; we worked hard to gain their confidence and to show our support for their concerns. In those cases, the military-to-military relations were very close, perhaps too close. But we were at war and we had important programs and projects in most of those countries. Whether our support benefited the host country is another issue. We were not unmindful of the possible negative effect that our programs might have on political development of the host country, but our main task was our national military objectives. By and large, as a general observation, I think the military-to-military relationships were probably better than the diplomatic relationships as long as we maintained our commitments to the foreign country, which in all cases consisted in great part of delivery of military hardware. We were important both because we could deliver these goods and because we were a barrier against Chinese and Russian efforts in the region. We were obviously not on the same political philosophy wavelength with the military leadership in many countries; it was a “marriage of convenience” based on our mutual interest in maintaining the independence of these countries and in preventing Soviet and Chinese encroachment.

Relationships were more difficult with the civilian leadership in these countries because they were politicians and the U.S. was not always publicly liked. They had to please multiple audiences and deal with numerous projects not liked by the civilian community. In such countries our presence was often a more difficult problem militarily. Fortunately, the Japanese government, for example, always seemed to find some solution to meet its domestic political requirements and our military operational needs. This is just one example of an issue which, although stemming from a stated military requirement, moved to the political arena.

In the period we are discussing, and in light of the leadership in most of South-East Asia, our military were often more important than our civilian representation. There was a professional kinship among military irrespective of national uniform. Secondly, our military had much-sought-after hardware to give or sell to the foreign military. Thirdly, and quite importantly, there was probably a greater degree of candor and openness among the military, even if in different uniforms. For these reasons CINCPAC was an important part of American foreign policy in the region.

I summarized my experiences in the Far East through my POLAD assignment in the paper I delivered at Harvard in 2006, I said: “In the fifties and sixties our alliances were in place and the biggest focus for me was America’s role as nation builder to use a contemporary term: to establish states that could be self-sustaining, contribute to their own defense, and resist communism. Included were Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma, and the states of Indochina. In Taiwan and a little in Korea I was most involved in the heavy aid emphasis; building physical infrastructure, providing commodity imports to offset large domestic expenditures, vast military assistance programs, encouragement of the private sector, and more effective public administration. AID (then ICA) counted for something and the U.S. year after year, put impressive amounts of money and capable people to the task of helping build those states. Unlike today we had in most countries few internal security worries, and while the foreign publics were envious of our power and wealth, they were grateful for our presence and for the military protection. Our efforts benefited enormously from having superb economic officials in most countries I worked on, often American PhDs in most of the arena, and their cultures honored hard work.

“We danced with dictators – from Marshall Sarit in Thailand to Pak Chung Hee in South Korea. Our demarches were quiet and democracy promotion was a more peripheral consideration – certainly not preached with today’s emphasis. As the U.S. moved toward military involvement in Vietnam, we increasingly emphasized political stability and each country’s support for the war. For example, we wanted sizeable South Korean forces for Vietnam, and this consideration dominated our attitude toward military control of the South. While governments were not always stable – indeed incessant military coups occurred in Thailand, continuing when I was ambassador in 1980 and even to my surprise till today – the systems, except for Indochina, changed little, and officialdom was permeated with a strong anti-communism animus, which added determination to their efforts. Finally corruption permeated almost all of these countries, but it did not prevent rapid development so often asserted for today’s less developed countries. One last politically incorrect, perhaps erroneous reflection: today Taiwan and South Korea are vibrant democracies, causing American governments no little pain, but I doubt that these countries would have prospered so quickly under democratic governments. Chiang Ching-kuo and Pak rank high in the pantheon of economic developers.”

Before closing this chapter of my career, I should elaborate on an incident I previously mentioned but have never forgotten. I had accompanied Admiral Gayler in the late autumn of 1974 to Cambodia – my first visit. He wanted to find ways to keep the Mekong River open; and supplies reaching Phnom Penh. We spent three days in Cambodia. The issue was essentially a military one, but I went along. I accompanied Gayler when he met with the chief of the Cambodian navy, Admiral Vong Sarendy. After lunch, he and I walked along the river and got into a discussion on the future of Cambodia. He said that there would be more warfare, that his country was in mortal danger, but even if his country fell he was prepared to die in its defense. He believed his life depended on preventing the Khmer Rouge from taking Phnom Penh. It was the kind of conversation that grabs one’s attention and arouses much anguish. I expected that we would eventually stop our support of Cambodia; I didn’t say so, but I was hearing at least one voice who we might well abandon and I never forgot that conversation. He was hanged immediately after the Khmer Rouge took over.

Q: Did you have some reservation about us withdrawing from South East Asia?

ABRAMOWITZ: Sure, but I knew it was over. We were facing a situation which was bound to end in many tragedies. Our withdrawal could not have a happy ending. The American people were withdrawing their support of our policy; Vietnam was collapsing; Cambodia was a true mess. I became involved in South East Asia when our position there was badly deteriorating. I watched both from CINCPAC and my subsequent assignment in DoD the end of a decade of war for the U.S. The question that was always posed for me was whether the deterioration could be somehow arrested. Ultimately, we ran out of political options. That became depressingly clear to me when I accompanied Deputy Secretary Bill Clements to Saigon in December, 1974. At that time, he assured President Thieu that we were prepared to provide all the funds and tools he needed to keep his country's independence. It wasn't that easy and Clements knew it. I could understand why the deputy secretary took that line; he could not tell him the truth. At this time, I am not sure the consensus of the U.S. staff working in and on Vietnam was that the war was lost; I thought so in December, but I may well have been a minority at that time. Secretary Schlesinger, by the end of 1974, was deeply concerned that the war was being lost, but I am not sure he had yet reached my conclusion. Clements was probably more positive. In any case, the deputy secretary could not deliver such bad news. The government could have fallen even quicker. We talked briefly about it after his meeting with Thieu. He was not about to further undermine the morale of the Vietnam government

JAMES B. ENGLE
Chargé d'Affaires
Phnom Penh (1974-1975)

Ambassador James B. Engle was born in Montana in 1919. He entered the Foreign Service in 1941. His career included positions in Italy, Ghana, Nicaragua, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Washington, DC, and an ambassadorship to Benin. Ambassador Engle was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

Q: After the Nha Trang experience, what happened to you?

ENGLE: I was recalled. I got a message from Ambassador Whitehouse, who was number two in Saigon at that time. He said, "I've just received a message here from the Department saying that Ambassador Swank in Cambodia, at Phnom Penh, and DCM Thomas Enders are both leaving. They want to know if you would be willing to proceed to Phnom Penh immediately and take over from both of them. We would merely have a chargé d'affaires." The background for that is that Nixon had just been defeated on the Cooper-Church Amendment, which was on Cambodia, and he was in the middle of Watergate, in a lot of trouble, he did not want to have another debate on Cambodia in the Senate, and so we were going to go with a chargé d'affaires.

I had to give an immediate response. I said, "Respond saying that I accept." They asked how long it would take me to extract myself. I said it would take me 24 hours in order to make my

proper goodbyes to the Vietnamese authorities, and then I could go. Charlie said, "Wait 'til I get a response to your response."

The next day a message came in, telling me to proceed to Washington immediately. So I turned over to Dick Teare, who was a Class IV officer, who had been working with me and was one of these TDY FSOs, turned over to him two months. I didn't think I would be coming back or I would come back two months later.

I got to Washington, and when I got there, it was intimated that really what they had in mind was for me to be the next ambassador to Cambodia. The President did not want a debate on Cambodia in the Senate, but he would send my name to the Senate as soon as he felt strong enough to take on the Senate on that issue.

So I accepted under these terms and went. But they waited a long time on this, and the hitch-up was really in Kissinger's office. I didn't know Kissinger, though I'd done a lot of work for him indirectly when I was on the working group. They didn't clear it. Finally, it got cleared somehow. Apparently, the whole overall plan wasn't cleared with them anyhow about my getting the embassy, and I went out in July, just fooling around in Washington for a couple of months.

I went back out, stopping in Nha Trang for a week to wind up and turn over to Dick Teare while they got another consul general. Then I went directly from there to Phnom Penh. I moved straight into the residence of Ambassador Swank and lived in his residence, which, of course, signaled to everybody that I was going to take over from him. That's the way it was. I understudied him for about a month before he was to leave.

In the meantime, Tom Enders was in Washington and got there about two weeks after I got back. Nothing was said to me, but there just didn't seem to be any specific arrangement for him to leave, and it was very unclear to me and to others as to what would happen. Then suddenly, two days before Swank was to leave, came out the announcement that Kissinger had been made Secretary of State. I figured right then and there that this whole arrangement wasn't going to work out. (Laughs) And I was right. But not a word was said to me, ever, from then on by the Department. Not one word. I stayed there. Tom Enders remained, who was my junior, remained as chargé d'affaires for several months because Kissinger wanted him there. He was a very good man and I liked him, but not one word was ever said to me. I ended up by being DCM to the previous DCM, after all these promises. Well, I wouldn't say "promises," but this was hinted very strongly. Nobody wanted to make a definite commitment. Bill Porter, the Under Secretary of State, confirmed all this to me when I got back on visitation a few months later.

So I moved in as DCM to the previous DCM. This actually worked out well, because Tom is a brilliant fellow and he'd been there three years already. The Khmer liked him. He was a great authority, spoke French well, much better than I did, and he knew Lon Nol well. But there was just nothing definite on my status or his future or anything like that.

It turned out that we complemented each other very much, because I had a lot of field experience with the military and, in effect, had military command in Vietnam, and was involved in a lot of military operations. I took over the relationships with all the province chiefs outside of Phnom

Penh, and they were almost all colonels or generals in the Khmer Army. I overflowed enemy lines all the time to visit them, in B(inaudible) and all the other places as part of my job. We worked very effectively together. Tom, who eventually took great pity on the way I'd been treated, he knew what it all was, I think in the beginning, he thought that since I was senior to him and these arrangements had been made with him, he should be worried about me, that I'd be working against him. But I didn't do that at all. It worked out very well.

Tom eventually jumped in and, I think, persuaded maybe Kissinger or the White House to do something about me, not just leave me like that. Eventually, something was done.

Early in December, it was announced that Tom Enders would be the new Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. Tom called me in right away and said, "Jim, you should go back on visitation at once. When you get back here, then I can leave and you can take over."

So I went back at once to Washington, and I went in to see Bill Porter. Bill Porter and Marshall Green had disappeared; they'd gone on to new assignments. I went in to see Bill Porter, the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and he said, "Jim, just be patient. You're still the candidate." (Laughs) I really didn't think so. I really didn't think that Bill's influence on this thing would be decisive. He is very friendly. He said, "Just go back on out." But still, Tom wasn't called to go back; he was named Assistant Secretary, but it took him four months to leave. But that was all right. We were working together, things were going well.

Finally, he left. In February it was announced that John Dean, who had been DCM in Laos, would be the new ambassador. That meant that I'd be DCM. [telephone interruption]

Q: How did you leave Cambodia?

ENGLE: I was chargé d'affaires, believe it or not, for only two days before John Dean got there. I was his understudy for six weeks. Then one Sunday morning, we were in the office early, both of us, and he handed me a telegram that said, "Your agrément as ambassador to Dahomey has been accepted by that government." I didn't even know. They didn't ask me whether I wanted it or not.

Q: The time you were in Cambodia, what was the situation there?

ENGLE: The situation was that we had not had a very aggressive role in the conduct of that war up to that time, though we provided massive assistance to them. We were more disinterested in what they were doing among themselves, and our help, when they came around for it, maybe wasn't too effective. The enemy, the Khmer Rouge, gained everywhere.

During the period I was there, we were much more vigorous and much more directly interested, I would say, and the line was held in a lot of places and the enemy turned back. Things were beginning to look better. There were reforms; we managed to persuade them to have conscription. They had no conscription! Which provided them a good deal of manpower for their divisions. We gave them an enormous amount of technical assistance in agriculture; we managed a convoy system up the Mekong so that the rice we were giving them under the aid program and

also weapons, could be brought safely into the country through Vietnam, up the Mekong, and in cooperation with the FANK we got artillery.

Q: *What is FANK?*

ENGLE: It's the Force Army Nationale Khmer, something like that. It was the equivalent of the Army. Patrols went along the river to protect the riverbank as far as they could. Artillery fans were moved to help out, so that a convoy which also had some Khmer naval patrol vessels with us, could fight its way up, if necessary, to Phnom Penh, unload the supplies, and come back down. This was done very effectively. We didn't lose a single boat the whole time I was there, after we set this thing up.

Q: *So the situation was fairly stable? There was a military challenge.*

ENGLE: A major military challenge.

Q: *But the national forces of Cambodia were at least meeting the Khmer Rouge on equal ground at this point?*

ENGLE: They were fighting very well. They fought a lot better than the Army fought. They were more motivated. Sometimes in a battle, a large percentage of the forces on both sides would be killed, and if the friendlies were losing the battle, they would kill themselves and their families right on the spot.

ROBERT V. KEELEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Phnom Penh (1974-1975)

Ambassador Robert V. Keeley was born in Lebanon of American parents in 1929. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956. His career included positions in Jordan, Mali, Uganda, Cambodia, and ambassadorships to Greece, Mauritius, and Zimbabwe. Ambassador Keeley was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 1991.

Q: *Then what happened to you in the Summer of 1974?*

KEELEY: I was rescued from that dismal Ethiopian situation by an old friend, John Gunther Dean. He had just been appointed as our Ambassador to Cambodia, after a tour as Chargé in Laos. With Dean's help the Laotians had just concluded a tripartite peace arrangement and therefore Dean was chosen as Ambassador to Cambodia with instructions to try to arrange a similar peace settlement in Phnom Penh. We called it "a controlled solution," meaning some arrangement to stop the fighting. We weren't very clear on what such an arrangement might look like, but its goal had to be peace for Cambodia without one side or the other being the complete victor. Dean asked me to join him as his Deputy Chief of Mission.

It was not a good time for me to leave because I had contracted malaria in March, which was not diagnosed because my doctor had never seen a case of malaria. I didn't believe it could be malaria because at least three or four months had passed since I had been in East Africa. I thought that that was just too long a gestation period. But it turned out that I had contracted malaria while in East Africa. It was my fault because I had stopped taking the quinine too soon; I should have taken it for a long time after my return. I was not accustomed to being concerned about malaria; Uganda didn't have it because it was too high; same with Kenya. We had been quite lax about taking our prophylactics. But on the coasts -- Mombasa or Somalia -- malaria is much more prevalent and that is where I got it, while visiting those other posts.

Because it had not been diagnosed, I finally ended up in the hospital. Fortunately, one day my wife and I heard through the hospital's public address paging system the name of a doctor who had worked in Uganda on an NIH-funded cancer research project. I had known him in Kampala because he had asked my advice on whether he as a Jew was safe in Uganda in light of Amin's anti-Israeli diatribes. I suggested that he leave Uganda -- the sooner, the better. We asked the nurse in the Washington hospital to see whether she could contact him because I wanted to see him. When he came by, he immediately diagnosed my case as malaria. He took my hand and put it on my spleen, which was obviously swollen and proof of my illness. I asked him to tell his findings to my doctor, who had been unable to find the cause of my terrible fevers. He recognized my symptoms immediately as classic malaria. He said that in Uganda, he would have treated me first for malaria; if that didn't work, then he would have looked for other possibilities.

When Dean asked me to join him, I told him that I knew nothing about Southeast Asia. He said that he didn't care; he had served twice in Vietnam (once with CORDS), once in Laos, and he knew Cambodia; he had been at the Paris Vietnam peace talks; he knew the area thoroughly. He told me that he had a specific mission -- trying to work out a peace arrangement -- which would take all of his time. He needed someone to run the Embassy and he thought that I could handle that well. The fact that I spoke French was also helpful.

I was not enthusiastic. In addition to my physical condition, it meant separation from my family. My wife was not happy about the assignment. She had already been evacuated from Jordan, twice from Uganda. Our children had had their education interrupted several times -- my daughter attended eleven schools in her first twelve years of schooling, my son went to fourteen by the end of his high school education. My family would have had either to stay in the United States or live in Bangkok. The latter was not a very good solution.

But I didn't see how I could tell Dean that I wouldn't go without sounding cowardly or uncooperative. I suppose I was somewhat motivated by my unhappiness with the Ethiopian problem and our inability to deal with it. Another assignment was a kind of solution, like Cavafy's famous poem, "Waiting for the Barbarians." By going into the fire, at least you escaped the frying pan. Going to Cambodia was a sort of solution. Furthermore, I wasn't certain I would ever get to Cambodia. The war was progressing very badly and there was a chance that the war might have been over before I ever got there. Of course, the war did not end. I told Dean to talk to my wife; he told me that that was my job, not his.

He did rule right then and there that officers' wives could come to Phnom Penh if they were

willing to work. We had some "tandem couples" even then who were already in Cambodia with both husbands and wives working. He enlarged the scope of the rules to include non-employed spouses whom he would permit to come to the post under two conditions: a) that they do some useful work -- e.g., with refugees, with orphans, with feeding programs, with some kind of relief program, all of which were desperately needed because Phnom Penh, with a normal population of maybe a million, now also held two million refugees, was teeming with people in misery whom we were keeping alive with donations of rice. In addition there were lots of wounded -- war victims. The work requirement was a wise decision on Dean's part because the extra help was needed and also to keep the spouses occupied -- the worst thing you can have in a situation like Cambodia is to have unemployed people hanging around with lots of time on their hands with nothing to do except complain. And b) that when the Ambassador gave an evacuation order, the spouses would get on a plane that afternoon and leave for Bangkok -- no arguments, no ifs, ands or buts.

On the basis of those two conditions, seven or eight wives did join their husbands in Cambodia: Mrs. Dean (Martine), my wife, the major general's wife (he was the head of the Military Equipment Delivery Team and our senior military officer), the AID Director's wife -- Martha Olmsted -- and a few others. In general, it was the senior officers' wives who came, partly because no school age children could come, so that only childless couples or people with grown children or who had made other arrangements for their children were eligible. We did not leave our kids in Bangkok because the schools there left something to be desired and furthermore, they had a major drug problem already then. My daughter was in college by this time and my son stayed in the U.S. to finish his high school education at a boarding school. In light of these arrangements, I agreed to go to Cambodia.

Dean left for Phnom Penh in March; I reached there in the middle of June. I stayed ten months. When I arrived in Cambodia, the war was going badly. The government only controlled the Phnom Penh enclave and a few other enclaves, less than a dozen. The country to whose government we were accredited literally consisted of only pockets in a countryside most of which was either under enemy control or uncontrolled. All of these pockets had to be supplied by air -- mostly old, decrepit planes, some of them by helicopters. Some were supplied by air drops. The American bombing had stopped in the previous August by Congressional directive. The prediction then had been that the Lon Nol government would collapse or that the war would be lost if the bombing ceased. That turned out not to be correct. The Embassy was prepared to close in the Fall of 1973, but events did not take as dramatic a turn for the worse as had been anticipated.

One of the important influences in the Cambodian war was the seasons: dry or wet. One season was advantageous for the government's side, the other for the opposition. The principal problem, as seen through my non-military eyes, was essentially that of supply. It was very difficult to get supplies into the country; it could be done by air, but that was extremely expensive. You could barge the supplies up the Mekong from Saigon, but that river was lined with opposition forces that shelled the barges.

We felt that we were very much an appendage of the Vietnam war. The Mekong barges were something to behold. They rode very low in the water, they were covered with wire netting to

protect them from rockets and grenades which might explode on the edges rather than amidships. People were dying daily on these barge convoys. It was a terrible mess, but it was the only means of transportation for heavy equipment. We needed lots of war materiel -- ammunition, weapons, rice to feed the population, petroleum to run the machines -- war machines as well as factory equipment for the few plants still in operation, such as electric plants.

Our Embassy was completely under siege. We had heavy screens built over the chancery buildings so that rockets aimed at us would explode on the screens and away from the roofs and walls of the buildings. The city was rocketed throughout the period we were there. As the rockets came closer and closer from the other side of the river, I checked out our house, which we had inherited from Tom Enders, who had been my DCM predecessor. It was a lovely villa in downtown Phnom Penh. It had been beautifully and tastefully though expensively furnished and decorated by his wife. We hardly ever were able to use it for representational purposes; we did not entertain much there. I figured that by moving the bedroom one room away from the river side of the house it would be lots safer because the trajectory of the rockets would probably cause them to only hit a glancing blow to the roof and they might even go over the house entirely rather than go through the pointed roof into our bedroom. The idea was to put one additional wall between the river and our bedroom. The Khmer Rouge were rocketing the city from the far side of the river. Those were the kinds of security precautions one had to take in Phnom Penh in 1974.

I traveled in an armored car, followed by a jeep manned by four or five heavily armed Cambodian soldiers. Sometimes I had a motorcycle in front. The Ambassador had the same protection, although he usually had two outriders. Tom Enders, who was actually the Charge' from September 1973 to March 1974, had had a close brush with death. A pedicab, filled with explosives, was parked at a wall that he passed every day on his way to and from work. One day, as his car drove by, the pedicab was detonated by someone on the other side of the wall. It killed a couple of the motorcycle guards, heavily damaged Tom's car. Enders was barely able to crawl out because of the damage to his car; fortunately he was not injured and was able to walk the rest of the way to the Embassy, where he proceeded to chair his regular staff meeting. Those were the conditions we lived under.

We varied our routes. There were four or five different ways for us to get to the Embassy. I always thought this was a joke because you were bound to follow one of those routes and if they were plotting to get you, they would be patient enough just to wait on one of these routes until you did use it. It was a wonderful system that our security people designed, but it is utterly useless in my opinion. I had the same problem later in Athens; there security was also at a heightened state because our Defense Attaché was killed by a terrorist bomb. He was blamed because he had not varied his routes from his home to the chancery. The Department convened an investigative commission after that incident -- a new approach to dealing with terrorism. I told them that the varying of routes was a very good practice because it increases the terrorists' difficulties in planning their plot, but it was not an answer to the security problem, because to defeat our stratagem they only had to be patient and wait us out. Eventually, every employee had to come down one street or another so that it was just a matter of them waiting until we did.

In general, we did nothing in Phnom Penh except work. We worked seven days each week. We

didn't have "office hours;" we rose in the morning, ate breakfast and went to work. We might return for lunch, we might take a nap (throughout my life, since I was a small child, I have taken naps after lunch; it had become part of my health regimen), go back to work, worked usually late into the night. Sometimes we ate dinner with each other; very rarely did we go out because it was very dangerous to be out in the streets both due to terrorism and the indiscriminate rocket attacks. Dinner would be eaten late and then we would go to bed. The next day was the same routine. Days, weeks and months went by without variation. There was no difference between a weekend and a weekday.

The living conditions were as severe as they could possibly be. The workload was very heavy. We were after all running a war, mostly in terms of supplies. We had some military attachés who were forbidden to act as "advisors" but who inevitably at least became consultants on occasion simply because they worked with various Cambodian military units; they attached themselves to these units and were in the normal course of events asked for advice. They were not supposed to be advisors but they just became involved as part of their "regular" approved duties. If a Cambodian officer asked for an opinion, could the American refuse to give it? Was that "advice" under the existing regulations? That was a controversial issue because the press used to suggest that we pretended not to be giving "advice." We obviously were giving all kinds of advice. We were not directing combat; we were essentially working at headquarters trying to bring into Cambodia all the materiel needed to keep the government alive -- POL, ammunition, and rice.

The Embassy reported on events. We were dealing with the government. John Dean was working full blast for the whole time we were there trying to work out the "controlled solution." It is something that he and I should write up some day; I have tried to talk him into doing it, but so far unsuccessfully. One day, he may decide that he is ready to do so. At the moment, he is back in Cambodia working for UNESCO, working there from time to time trying to help those people. It may be that the events of 1974-75 are still too close for him, but he would have a very interesting story to tell. Our efforts were ultimately a failure, as everyone knows. Some of the real story about Cambodia can be found in William Shawcross' book Sideshow, which discusses the real problem from our point of view. Cambodia was treated as a side issue to the main story of Vietnam.

No one would address Cambodia as a *sui generis* problem which merited its own analysis and which had its own dimensions that could have been dealt with on their own. It was, until the very last day, seen as an appendage of Vietnam. For example, our final evacuation was delayed for a week because Congress was about to vote on a Vietnam aid package -- a large one -- which would have enabled us to continue that war. President Ford and Kissinger believed -- correctly in my mind, but very much to our detriment in Cambodia -- that if we had evacuated Phnom Penh at that point, Congress would have refused to vote further assistance to the Vietnam war effort. It would have used the excuse that the Cambodian evacuation was proof that the war in Southeast Asia was over and that no further support was warranted. So we were held in Phnom Penh, in a very dangerous situation, for an extra week just in order not to influence adversely a Congressional vote on aid to Vietnam. That is just one bit of evidence of how Cambodia was seen in Washington, just as an aspect of the Vietnam war. In the end Vietnam collapsed so soon - - a couple of weeks after Cambodia fell -- that the timing of our evacuation and the Congressional vote were both totally irrelevant.

Q: Did we have sufficient interests in Cambodia per se to treat it as a separate issue?

KEELEY: It was not a question of seeing it as a separate issue; it was a matter of dealing with it differently, in our opinion, and being handled on its own terms. That is, it should not have been viewed as something that is a bother because it affects Vietnam. There were different forces fighting in Cambodia than there were in Vietnam. There were indigenous forces in Cambodia on both sides; there were no Vietnamese involved at the time. The opposing sides had different interests from the Vietnamese and the war itself had a different history. In fact, there should never have been a war in Cambodia. It was the Vietnamese war that washed over into Cambodia, but we had something to do with that. We should have done everything in our power to avoid this "spill-over" effect.

In order to do that, we would have had, from the beginning, to respect Cambodian neutrality, which is what Prince Sihanouk had done throughout his career to the best of his ability until he was overthrown in 1970. Perhaps war became inevitable after that, and maybe it was so important to deal with sanctuaries and the Ho Chi Minh Trail and all of that, that we were forced to enter Cambodia. We really brought the war to Cambodia. The overthrow of Sihanouk, which voided his policy of neutrality, also contributed to the war coming to Cambodia. Nevertheless, the Cambodian conflict had its own dimensions and it was not correct to assume that it could not have been settled unless the Vietnam problem had been resolved. The two wars could have been addressed separately, but that was never done. Laos was separated from other issues in Southeast Asia; the results were not any better from our point of view, and viewing Cambodia separately from Vietnam might not have improved the outcome there either, but it might have reduced the bloodshed.

I was responsible for the management of our Embassy. Congress had limited the size of the total staff -- we were entirely integrated as an Embassy. The Military Equipment Delivery Team was part of the Embassy; they were housed together with the rest of the Embassy; they attended all our staff meetings. The Congress limited us to 200 people in an effort to limit our involvement in the Cambodian war. Congress was anxious to not have us involved in the Cambodian civil war as we had been in Vietnam, where we had become one of the combatants. It considered a manpower limitation a good way to reduce the risk of involvement, and it was. The limitation on numbers of people limited what we could do. Inevitably, it forced us to rely more on the Cambodians and not do things for them.

The manpower limitation made for a much more efficient mission. If we hadn't had that limitation, we could well have had a thousand Americans in Phnom Penh. There would have been people running around without anyone knowing what they were doing; there would have been a lack of coordination and control -- that would have been a tremendous problem, as I am sure it was in Vietnam. It would have resulted in an excessive militarization of our efforts. The manpower limitation kept the effort in civilian hands. The Ambassador was completely in charge; there was never any question about that. He used me as his agent to deal with all agencies' personnel. I never had any problems; Dean always supported me and all the staff understood that when I spoke, it was on his behalf; they knew that it would have been very imprudent to try to end-run him or me.

Prior to our arrival, the Embassy had been "cheating" on the manpower limitation. I am sure that our predecessors would not have called what they did in those terms, but that is the way I saw it and that is the way John Dean saw it. The Embassy had a plane -- an old DC-5 (a very peculiar aircraft model that wasn't widely used -- not many were made), or maybe it was a kind of DC-6. It looked something like a large DC-4. I guess it was actually chartered by AID. It would fly in from Bangkok every morning to bring people in to work in the Embassy and then fly out in the early evening, taking the same or other people out of Cambodia. The head count (or "head-room" count; i.e., can you bring someone else in under the 200 people limitation?) would be taken after the plane had taken off back to Bangkok. The 200 limitation was interpreted as applying only to Americans who were staying in Cambodia overnight.

That interpretation was an evasion of sorts because the plane would sometimes bring in dozens of people -- sometimes ten, sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty or forty, all of whom lived in Bangkok. It was a very expensive commute. The people would be rotated; that is, people would be brought in who would stay for a few days to accomplish a certain task -- e.g., auditors. When they would leave, another group might be brought in for a few days. These were people from all agencies -- military, civilian, State, AID, all agencies. This process complied with the law because the count was made only of those who stayed overnight.

Dean and I decided that this process was too much of an evasion and that it might in fact backfire. Congress could have accused us of evading the law and might well have further restricted the manpower limitation, thereby increasing our problems. You can't really run an Embassy if people are spending much of their time running back and forth across country boundaries. I was in charge of the daily head-count; I would send in a report every day on how many were working for the Embassy on that day and it had to add up to 200 or less. Ambassador Dean decreed that the head-count would be taken at noon, after the plane had disgorged its passengers and before it had taken off again for Bangkok. We continued to bring people in from Bangkok, but we required that any arrivals be balanced by departures the previous evening. That required coordination among all the elements of the Embassy. If the AID mission director came to me to say that he needed someone from Bangkok, he would also have to tell me whom he was sending out, unless I happened to have a vacancy from another Embassy element. I would check up periodically to make sure that there wasn't any cheating.

The new system worked well. We had fewer people and we were much leaner. One day, I took the count at noon and it turned out to be 201. I was a little upset and I went to see the Ambassador. I told him that we would have to report to the Department that we had exceeded our total for that day. I wondered what would happen in the Department. Would the overage be reported to Congress? He thought that it probably would be, since it was a violation of the law. We discussed it for a while; I was unhappy, although we had a good explanation. One of the staff took sick and missed his flight to Bangkok. He stayed home in bed and didn't tell anybody. His replacement, unaware of the illness, came in from Bangkok and made for the overage. It was a perfectly logical and reasonable explanation. Ambassador Dean didn't seem overly concerned.

Then we decided that in fact this event could be turned into a positive asset. It would display our honesty. All our reports had been at the 198 to 200 level and might have been viewed as just a

routine notice. The "blip" that we would be reporting would show that we were following the law conscientiously. We were always up to the maximum or very close to it because as soon as one agency didn't use its full complement for a day, another would immediately levy a request for an extra body. There were always people sitting in Bangkok just waiting for space on the complement so that they could get at their job.

So when we reported the overage, we suggested that the Department report it to Congress as an indication of our *bona fides*, unless of course the Department thought that Congress would become overly upset and might take some retaliatory measure, like reducing the assistance levels. We suggested that the Department report this inadvertent mistake, for which we apologized, but it did prove our honesty. The personnel limitation was maintained until the very end, when we began to pare down the staff in preparation for our evacuation. In general, the limitation was very annoying; it had been strongly opposed by the Department, but in retrospect, I think Congress had taken the right and wise course. It was a way of limiting our involvement; it made us leaner and more efficient; it kept us on our toes and certainly counteracted the tendency of bureaucracies in difficult situations to simply blossom and keep growing. Every time the bureaucracy faces a problem, its first answer is "more people," which only creates more problems -- more people to worry about, more security problems. Our operation in Phnom Penh did fail in the sense that the government we were supporting may have lost the war and we failed in our attempts to find a peaceful solution. But it was not a failure because of lack of manpower.

Q: Let me ask you a couple of questions at this stage. One, did you have a considerable number of Congressional visits?

KEELEY: Yes, we did. These visits were critical in our decision-making. In one instance, we had a major Congressional delegation in about March 1975 consisting of senior people who had been in Cambodia before and knew the situation well. They were also visiting Vietnam. It was clear from the conversations that both Dean and I had with the delegation that there would not be any further assistance which would be approved by Congress. That was important in our planning. There had been a lot of people who kept hoping that we could keep the war going through the end of the dry season at one time or the wet season the next; they lived in the constant hope that a change in the weather would make a difference in the war.

But that Congressional delegation made it eminently clear in their private comments that the war was losing support in Congress. Vietnam was a different issue. They made it clear that we would not be appropriated an additional penny and that when the currently available funds were exhausted, that was the end. That meant the war would be over, because without American aid the Cambodian government would collapse.

At that time we had already been in an evacuation planning mode for two months. Dean and I agreed, after our discussions with the delegation, that it was time to pick the final evacuation date.

Q: Then the second question: have you reached any general conclusion about Congressional involvement in the micromanagement of foreign policy in situations such as Cambodia?

KEELEY: I didn't sense any problems there. It was clear that Congress was having a major role in setting policy and in determining what we could do. I don't consider putting a staff limitation on an Embassy as micromanagement; it is a device to control certain outcomes. It can also be done by imposing a limitation on financial resources. I would consider it micromanagement if we had been told that the Attaché Office could only have 25 people and the CIA station could only have 15 and State could only have 12, etc. That kind of detailed management has to be left to the Ambassador and his staff. But setting an overall ceiling -- whether in personnel or financial terms -- within which the manager had to accomplish whatever he could, does not seem to me to be micromanagement. Congress set a general policy for Cambodia, which undoubtedly made some in the Executive Branch very unhappy. The general Executive Branch attitude was that Congress had approved support for the Cambodian government and that it therefore had a responsibility for approving whatever funds and people the Executive Branch thought necessary to maintain that government in power. If Congress had not wished to support the Cambodian government, then that would have been another matter; then no funds or people would have been necessary. In fact, I think the proper Congressional posture falls somewhere in between these two extremes and that what it did in Cambodia was not micromanagement.

Eventually, of course, there were no further Congressional appropriations. We were also losing the war and that undoubtedly had an effect on the Congressional action. By the Fall of 1974, matters were deteriorating drastically. We were wondering how long we could hold on. We did have an appropriation and thereby had some funds left to support the Cambodian government.

The critical event was the loss of the Mekong. It was closed by the rebels, denying the river as a supply line from Saigon for the Cambodian government. That meant that all our supplies had to be airlifted. That became very expensive; for example, you had to bring in petroleum products in large rubber bladders carried by cargo aircraft rather than in tankers. The bladders only held a limited amount of fuel; nevertheless, they were very heavy and difficult to load and unload, not to mention that they were hazardous. Plane after plane would land and by the time they unloaded, all we had was a tankful of POL. The river route was a much easier supply route.

The government's enclaves got smaller and smaller. Supplies had to be dropped by parachutes because it was not possible to land planes in some of the enclaves. The government's territory was being squeezed. When you got to an all-airlift situation, the main airport, Pochentong in Phnom Penh, was critical; the rebels were starting to bombard it with rockets. That made the situation very dicey because airplanes are very fragile, particularly transport planes. When there is a risk of a howitzer shell or a rocket raining on the airport as the pilots are trying to land, you begin to face the end of the road. When the airport was no longer available, that would have been the end of our support line and we would be forced to leave or surrender.

Many of the enclaves were beginning to be cut off from airplane landings. First, we would turn to a short strip aircraft, then to a helicopter, and eventually we were forced to drop supplies by parachutes. The rice had to be packed with styrofoam under-carriages, because otherwise the rice bags would burst on impact, particularly since the drops had to be from high flying aircraft to keep them from being hit by ground fire. And we had to use high-speed parachutes to assure accuracy of delivery to small enclaves; otherwise we risked supplying the enemy surrounding the enclaves.

People have accused the Embassy of running the war. It wasn't true; that was the responsibility of the Cambodian military. I thought our military people in Phnom Penh, whose job was logistics, did an excellent job under the circumstances. More and more refugees were pouring into Phnom Penh, which was another sign that events were turning against the government. The U.S. military briefings were much more upbeat than they should have been. The briefer would usually come from Saigon, because that is where the military intelligence headquarters were. Sometimes we would be briefed by a senior officer from the Seventh Air Force in Thailand. I remember that once the river was closed, there was a change in the mood of the briefings; they were no longer quite so upbeat. The charts which showed the lines of progress suddenly turned down rather than up, and in general the briefers, although trained to be upbeat, tended to be much gloomier. I sensed that if they knew what they were talking about, we had crossed a watershed.

In December, 1974, there was a conference of all American Far East Ambassadors in Hawaii, I think. Ambassador Dean went. I had only made two trips out of Phnom Penh since I had arrived six months earlier, just for lack of time. Essentially, my trips had been limited to home-to-office and office-to-home day after day. I had gone south to a port (which had been known as Sihanoukville in earlier days) to dedicate a pier we had built for the Khmer Navy. The Ambassador was supposed to do it; he became occupied with some urgent matter. So I went down to cut the ribbon and ate a meal with the Khmer Navy people. The Cambodian Navy commander, an admiral no less, Vong Sarendy I believe was his name, was American trained; he was a jolly fellow and we were very friendly with him. He was in fact an outstanding officer.

My other trip was with Bob Miller, who was our Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Indochina, who had come to Cambodia on an orientation visit. He asked whether he could be taken to the front to see the war; perhaps it was the Cambodians who wanted to show him the war. He was a very experienced officer, who had served in Vietnam and had been working on Indochina affairs for many years. But he had not seen much of Cambodia. So I asked our military and they asked the Khmer military; they loved to show off to visiting firemen. So they selected a point not too far away from Phnom Penh which could be reached by helicopter rather quickly. The site they selected was particularly interesting because it was a hill top -- called a phnom -- on which stood a Buddhist temple. The Khmer Rouge had taken the hill, desecrated the temple and despoiled the site. They had subsequently been beaten off and had retreated. The hill top was still smoldering. So that was the site that the Khmer wanted us to see; it showed how irreligious and atrocious the rebels were. I thought it would be all right; it would provide a good view, because Cambodia is a very flat country and the hill top would provide a good observation point.

It turned out to be one of my worst misadventures. It was not my fault; I just happened to be an innocent participant. So we got into the helicopter; we had U.S. Marines, from the Embassy security detachment, and Khmer troops with us. We landed on the hill, which was just a little knob sticking up out of a flat plain. We looked at the burned-out temple; everything was black and charred -- awful. Then we were supposed to take off and fly on to another town, an isolated enclave -- I think it was Kompong Chhnang -- north of Phnom Penh. We looked around and went back into the helicopter. The pilot checked his helicopter and said that it was carrying too much weight; he couldn't take off. A helicopter has to go down before it can go up; it doesn't rise

straight up, as people think. It needs to put its nose down and gain some speed before it can really rise. Although we were on a hill, the pilot couldn't head down because there were trees all around and he would have hit them. So he said that some of the passengers would have to disembark. Bob and I were seated in the middle; we were flanked by soldiers with full packs. They opened the doors and jumped out. The pilot then took off, barely skimming the trees. He went a few hundred yards, maybe half a mile, and dropped down into a grassy field. He then instructed the remaining passengers to leave because he wanted to go back to the hill top to get the soldiers who had been left behind. So we jumped out; there we were in the middle of a grassy field in full view of anyone who might be looking, in no-man's land. We didn't really know where we were. We couldn't order the pilot to do anything else; he had to go back to get the soldiers who had been left behind.

His plan was to bring the soldiers back to the grassy field, where he would then pick us up and off we would go. It was a great plan; it left Bob and me standing in the middle of nowhere feeling very stupid and quite concerned about our lives. We thought we might be captured by the Khmer Rouge, which would have been the worst outcome of all. We might have just disappeared and the people at home would have wondered how stupid we could have been. We could just imagine the comments that would have been made about these "two stupid Foreign Service jokers who had just gone out on a joy ride to see a temple and then had been captured in an open field." There would have been little sympathy for us! We spent a nervous few minutes while the helicopter went back up to the hill top and then returned to get us. It was a lesson for me. You are more effective in your office at headquarters, handling the telephone and the typewriter, than being involved in observing the war.

When I was in college, studying literature, I read Thomas Mann -- it was he, I think, who said, "Anecdotes are not literature." I do tell anecdotes, because I think they do give insights into situations which pure analysis does not. Analysis gives you opinions but no feel for events; analysis does not tell you what it was like living and working in Phnom Penh in 1974-75.

The history of the "controlled solution" is John Dean's, although I worked closely with him on it. He worked full time on it, mostly with the leaders of the government. It is a very interesting story. The effort to find a solution was a clear indication that we thought that the war was not winnable; that it had to come to a conclusion and the way to avoid as much bloodshed as possible was to find a transition to a new situation which would not be a victory either for Lon Nol or for the Khmer Rouge. That was probably an unachievable objective, but the effort should not be criticized.

The problems from our perspective were several. For one, the Khmer Rouge were unacceptable; we could never convince the press on how brutal they really were. The press was a losing proposition; both Dean and I had a lot of dealings with reporters, usually separately. The press people thought we were manufacturing the stories of Khmer Rouge brutalities and atrocities; they thought we were spreading propaganda in order to maintain support for our war effort. They would not believe the stories we told them, but we had good intelligence on the Khmer Rouge's brutalities in the areas that they controlled. We knew how they treated the villagers from reports by refugees arriving in Phnom Penh from Khmer Rouge controlled territory. You could expect these refugees to tell you horror stories, but I think they were largely true. We were not surprised

by the bloodshed that occurred after the government's defeat, but we were surprised by the wholesale forced evacuation of Phnom Penh and other cities that the Khmer Rouge imposed. It was a reversion to a medieval agricultural society. I guess we should not have been surprised if we had been better prepared; for example, I learned much later, after I had left Cambodia, that Khieu Samphan, the Khmer Rouge deputy leader, the man who was almost lynched recently when he returned to Phnom Penh, had written a dissertation while a student in Paris which, if read carefully and discerningly, would have provided a clue to the ideology that the Khmer Rouge supported -- an agrarian primitive society, anti-merchant, anti-urban, anti-Chinese, anti-Vietnamese. We frankly didn't have time to read old dissertations, but someone in our government should have.

The "controlled solution" was probably not really in the cards, but from our perspective it was absolutely impossible as long as Lon Nol was in charge of the government we supported. It was not only Lon Nol; there was a Khmer Rouge list of seven people marked for death, including his brother, Lon Non, and General Sosthene Fernandez, the head of the Army, Sirik Matak, Sihanouk's cousin, and some others. They were known as the "Seven Devils" who had been marked for death. There was no way to create a new regime that would include them, but there were others who might have participated and who might have been acceptable. Similarly, a new government could not have included the well known Khmer Rouge leadership. We were not convinced that a solution was therefore possible, but we kept working for it. The key was the Chinese, because they supported the Khmer Rouge -- much more so than did the North Vietnamese.

As we tried to work out the arrangements, Dean kept pleading with Kissinger to talk to the Chinese to see whether they wouldn't cooperate in trying to bring some solution to the Cambodian problem, as is being done now -- many, many years later. We kept suggesting that Kissinger approach the Chinese to tell them that we wanted a peaceful outcome without the bloodshed that was being spilled and would continue to be spilled. We wanted the Chinese to use their influence with the Khmer Rouge while we would use our influence with Lon Nol and his group. Toward the end, there was a little more interest in Washington in working out a solution, but by that time Lon Nol's situation was desperate. Everyone knew by that time that Lon Nol would be defeated; it was too late for any accommodations. I am sure that the Khmer Rouge sensed the victory which they achieved; they would not have seen any necessity for compromise.

Earlier on, John Dean, and I agreed with him, thought it was possible to achieve some kind of compromise. But he had a very difficult time convincing Kissinger that he should intervene. I think Kissinger saw the compromise as an anathema because he probably saw it as an abandonment of an ally, which would have been a fundamental departure from his world view. According to this view, if your ally is Lon Nol, even though not the greatest guy in the world, he is nevertheless your guy and on your side. Lon Nol was accused of corruption, most of which was not true. When he was finally ready to leave, we offered him asylum in Hawaii, but he initially went to Indonesia. He said that he had no money, and although people had accused him of corruption, he said he did not have a dime. I think that was true; he may have had a lot of Cambodian money. I am sure he did; he used it to buy people's loyalty. We helped to arrange the transfer of \$500,000; Lon Nol wanted one million, but the other half never was transferred because the war ended in the meantime. So what had been transferred was all that he had to live

on and he had an entourage of approximately 37 people, or some figure like that; \$500,000 doesn't go very far with a group of that size. So Lon Nol was nowhere near as corrupt as he was reputed to be. He may have collected Cambodian money illegally, but he was not like Marcos or Mobutu, who stashed millions or billions in hard currency overseas.

Lon Nol had to be removed from the scene. He could not be the catalyst for a new political situation in Cambodia. But Kissinger was not willing to consider such an outcome. He preferred to go down with Lon Nol than to torpedo him or to spirit him out of the country. Eventually, of course, Lon Nol had to leave under Khmer Rouge military pressure. But John Dean was forbidden to mention the possibility of a voluntary departure to him; even if Lon Nol had raised the issue, Dean could not have discussed it, which makes for a very peculiar situation. I think there was a lack of trust; the assumption was that if the American Ambassador was permitted to answer the question, he might have tried to stimulate the question. Every other ambassador in Phnom Penh, every other diplomat, every government official had come to the conclusion that Lon Nol had to leave before peace could be discussed and implemented. There could be no "controlled solution" with Lon Nol still around, because he had become the symbol; he was the hated enemy of Sihanouk. We all agreed that Sihanouk was the only solution. I realized that, after having been in country for a month or so. I suspect Dean knew it long before he got there. Sihanouk was the key to a solution then, as he still is today. He is the only Cambodian who can manage the country.

Lon Nol had overthrown Sihanouk and had forced him out of Cambodia. He was therefore an anathema; the two could not be put together. Eventually, Lon Nol left of his own volition; he was not kicked out. John Dean followed orders strictly. It was an extremely uncomfortable experience, because when everyone else, including the subject himself, was saying that the only solution was Lon Nol's departure, the American Ambassador, who represented the Cambodian government's principal supporter, couldn't discuss the possibility. When Lon Nol finally called Dean in to announce that in his view the only solution was his own departure, and to ask whether the United States would help, only then could Dean say "Yes."

Q: How was it possible for Ambassador Dean to find a "controlled solution," as apparently his mandate was, when he couldn't even discuss one of the key ingredients to that solution?

KEELEY: That is the very point I'm making. That problem became evident as time passed. I am not sure that in fact he had that mandate. Dean sensed that he had that mandate; he thought that he had been selected for Cambodia because of his efforts in Laos. Dean may have misinterpreted his appointment. He thought that he had been sent to Phnom Penh to repeat what he had done in Laos, where he brought three parties together -- the Communists, the anti-Communists, and the neutrals -- to form a coalition government. The Laotian government later collapsed and the Communists took over.

There were never any written instructions that I ever saw which gave Dean the mandate to find a "controlled solution." But Dean clearly interpreted his appointment as approval of his accomplishments in Laos and as an invitation to duplicate his Laotian efforts in Cambodia. I am sure he felt that if he could replicate the Laotian outcome in Cambodia, that would have been wonderful. He had not asked for written instructions; he just assumed that he had been chosen

because the Secretary liked his approach and ideas. What he had done in Laos was well known and I think his assumptions may well have been justified. If one wanted to be really cynical, perhaps all the Administration wanted was for Dean to hold the fort long enough until the Vietnam situation could be sorted out. People are "used" in that way. He certainly was not instructed not to seek a solution in Cambodia.

But we made it eminently clear that there was no compromise or peaceful "solution" possible as long as Lon Nol was in power. The solution would have to come without his participation. The other obstacles might have been willing to stay out of a new government, if Lon Nol was not involved. But we could never explore those possibilities because we couldn't get over the first hurdle. We could never get a cease-fire and get all sides to talk because Lon Nol was still around. His relationship with Sihanouk made any progress impossible. You can't expect someone to deal with the guy who threw him out of office, particularly Sihanouk. He is called a "God man" or a "man God." He is a different personality; he is a monarch, the son of a monarch. Lon Nol was a peasant who rose to power through the military. They were not in the same category. I learned to respect Lon Nol a great deal because at the end he saw the situation clearly and took the right action. He got out alive, fortunately. The others practically all died.

The situation changed drastically over the ten months we were in Phnom Penh. In the first place, we lost the use of the Mekong. In the second place, we had an answer from Kissinger after he eventually talked to the Chinese. He went to China and we placed a lot of hope in that visit. He went, he returned; we had no report on his trip. We begged for some information; eventually we got one line saying, "Chinese not interested," meaning that they were not interested in discussing a Cambodian solution. That message must have been received sometime in January, 1975.

The situation also changed for me personally. As I mentioned, John Dean went to Hawaii for a Chiefs of Mission conference. I was left in charge; I got a duodenal ulcer -- not because I was left in charge, but that is when it happened. It was in part from over-work; in part, it was self-induced, because I took too much aspirin. I had an upset stomach; I had diarrhea; I took a lot of Alka-Seltzer, which contains a lot of aspirin although I didn't realize it at the time. I thought I was taking an ant-acid, but in fact I was pouring acid on top of acid. Eventually, that punched a hole in my duodenum. Fortunately, it healed by itself, but I lost a lot of blood -- perhaps as much as half of my blood. I insisted on waiting in Phnom Penh until Dean returned; I was in the local hospital there, under constant guard by members of our U.S. Marine detachment. I had a very fine doctor -- a French military gastro-enterologist, who became a close friend. My code name for our Marines was "Locker Room," so that the Khmer Rouge would not know who was in the hospital if they were listening in to our voice communications via walkie-talkies. They were only three miles away at that time and were monitoring our radio transmissions, we had to assume.

I thought that I had to stay in Phnom Penh until John Dean returned. As soon as that happened, he immediately evacuated me to Bangkok and eventually I was returned to the United States. The doctors didn't want me to receive any transfusions in Southeast Asia because the blood supply was suspect. But just for safety's sake, two or three Marines with my blood type and who had indicated a willingness to donate were standing by ready to provide their blood to me directly without going through any processing at the local hospital. That was fine with me, but the doctor didn't think it was necessary, because the ulcer had healed completely and the

bleeding had stopped. I spent about a month away from Phnom Penh. My doctor in the States suggested that I build up my blood supply naturally; so I relaxed, ate a lot, exercised and went to a cold climate -- cold climates encourage blood production. We went to the Catskills, where we have a family place. It had a lot of snow and ice.

When I returned to Phnom Penh around the 20th of January, three things had happened. The Mekong was closed as a supply line, as I have mentioned. The second was that the season had changed to dry, which favored the Khmer Rouge. And thirdly, there was the Kissinger message about the Chinese not being interested that I earlier described. Dean's view was, after that, that the war in Cambodia was lost. We would keep working and do the best we could to keep the war going and the government afloat. But with the money running out, the war was lost and any hopes of finding a solution had seriously diminished. It could have been that when matters really got desperate, the government would be more cooperative and willing to compromise; even if that had happened, the other side was becoming less and less interested in a compromise. One doesn't negotiate when one is winning; you only negotiate when you are in a stalemate.

At that stage Dean assigned me responsibility to plan an evacuation because he wanted the Americans to leave Cambodia alive. He saw no reason for any of us to lose our lives over Cambodia. He recognized that evacuation would be difficult because of the enclave situation and because the government was collapsing. He told me to concentrate on the evacuation while he continued to work on finding a peaceful solution. The military would continue to support the war effort.

We had always had an evacuation plan; it was very elaborate; it had a code name, "Eagle Pull." I took it out and read it again. I cranked up a committee. The plan involved the Seventh Air Force flying a certain number of aircraft into the Pochentong airport which would pick us up and fly us out. There were several critical elements in the plan. The first was who would be evacuated besides the official American community -- the answer to that evolved over time. That clearly included diplomats of friendly countries -- the French, the Indonesians, the Koreans, etc. In fact, I don't think we would have denied any diplomat the use of our evacuation facilities -- there were only a few missions left, all of whom represented friendly countries. We would also evacuate the press -- American and foreign. We would evacuate any American citizen. The only non-official ones were in the press or working for private voluntary organizations. There weren't any businessmen left, no tourists; there may have been a few hangers-on -- drug addicts or pilots -- soldiers of fortune -- who were flying rickety old planes just to make money. They were American citizens and they flew even in the middle of the war. A war attracts a strange batch of characters. We had one consular officer who did nothing but look after these stragglers. He traveled around handing out bodybags just like people are walking our streets handing out condoms. In fact, we left two Americans behind because we couldn't rouse them; we couldn't even find them. That consular officer had the worst job of all. All of the staff were designated as "wardens" responsible for a certain group of evacuees. He had all these soldiers of fortune -- the worst gang. He probably would have preferred to leave all of them behind, but his job was to get them out and he worked very hard. After the evacuation, when we had all assembled on the helicopter carrier, the *Okinawa*, he reported to me with a list of all of those he had evacuated. He told me then that two on his list couldn't be found. I told him we would report that if we could find any next of kin.

The critical matter in the evacuation was the timing. We were totally in the hands of the military. They would run the operation, but we had to decide the date. At an early meeting of the evacuation committee that I had formed -- about 20 people, representing all agencies -- I talked to the military representatives and told them that we had to choose a date. They thought that was not too difficult. In the first place, we had a limited amount of money; we knew when the various stocks -- rice, POL, ammunition (the three fundamentals of the war) -- would be depleted. The military representatives said they could have their logisticians go through their calculations again and would be able to tell us at the next committee meeting when the stocks would be exhausted. The final funds could be so allocated that the three principal stocks would be exhausted at approximately the same time. I thought that was great planning: the last grain of rice would be consumed as the last bullet was fired.

At the next meeting, the military had completed their calculations and thought that the stocks would be depleted on a certain day in mid-April. So we determined that the evacuation day would be April 12; in fact, Phnom Penh was over-run on April 17. During a following meeting of the evacuation committee, one of the military representatives said: "Mr. Keeley, I think you have to understand about how armies operate and how soldiers think. The important date is not when the materiel runs out; it is when the soldier senses that it is running out. The soldier doesn't know anything about Congressional appropriations or where the money is coming from or when it is running out or when a purchase order is sent in. He notices certain things; in Cambodia's case, in the kind of war we are fighting, the key date is not when ammunition deliveries stop to the front line troops; it is when it is no longer coming into the central supply depot. The word will spread very quickly that what is in the depot is all that's left. When we stop delivering to the depot, that is the key date; that is the last day to leave. That is when the word gets out and chaos ensues. So you want to leave a few days earlier. The same syndrome will be manifested with rice or POL; when they stop being delivered to the central distribution point, that's when the Cambodian soldier will know that it's all over". I will be eternally grateful for that piece of advice. So we reviewed the dates and selected an earlier date, the 6th of April, a Sunday. The planning thereafter went very smoothly. All of our lists of people to be evacuated were brought up to date. The wardens knew for whom they were responsible. The military worked on their logistics. They had beautiful plans. We consulted with the State Department. They approved the evacuation of our local employees, although they cautioned about over-loading the facilities. They set a ceiling on the number of evacuees, something like 900. We argued back and forth with the Department to some extent. We decided to evacuate local employees and their immediate families -- not extended families, which in Cambodia might have meant a whole village. We could have had one employee with an extended family of fifty people. We used the American definition of "family" -- spouse and children or something like that. There were of course problems with that definition, as there would have been with any. Someone had his grandmother living with him; she had no other means of support. Was she "family," or not?

The only serious dispute I got involved in with John Dean during my whole tour in Phnom Penh -- which is amazing, given the conditions we were working and living in -- was over the issue of the "family" definition. My driver -- who had literally saved Tom Enders' life -- came to me the day before evacuation and told me that he could not leave unless he could bring the other members of his family with him; that turned out to be nine people. Today, that driver is thriving

in Salem, Oregon working for the Nintendo Corporation. He had several children, but he also had his parents and his wife's parents, I think, all living in the same household. Dean said "No;" he said that the ground-rules had to be applied strictly to all. He thought if an exception was made for the driver, then he would have many similar requests and we would be in trouble. I disagreed, because this was my driver who had risked his life every day driving us who were targets. He had saved Enders' life. Dean and I argued; we got into a verbal fight. I told him that I wouldn't leave without my driver; he said he would order me to leave and so on. He finally relented; I told my driver that his request had been approved, but I swore him to secrecy; I told him that if the word got out about the exception we had made for him, it would create havoc.

I have to tell you an amusing side note about the relationship between an Ambassador and a DCM. I was using the fully armored car -- that is, the Ambassador's car. Dean had a Checker cab, which at that time the Department had provided to a few posts as the Ambassador's limousine. I had seen one in Kigali. But in our case the Checker had been assigned to the DCM. Dean liked the Checker because it had lots of leg room and it had jump seats, which he used for his briefcase. So he had appropriated the Checker for his own use. He traveled a lot in that cab because he did a lot of moving around. But the cab was not fully armored; not underneath, for example. It had plastic windows. I told him that he was crazy not to use the fully armored vehicle because he was the Number 1 target; the Khmer Rouge might have been happy to get me, but it was not like getting the Ambassador. Dean's response was: "You are about the dumbest guy I have ever hired to work for me. You are riding in the Ambassador's limousine; they don't know who the Ambassador is; they will target the car. It's you who is in danger, not me!" End of conversation!

Our evacuation was near perfect, particularly when contrasted with Saigon's, which was immensely difficult and a mess. Ours was as perfect as one could hope for in a war situation. Saigon had much more difficult problems; they had enormous numbers of people to be evacuated, including a very large number of Vietnamese; they had last minute problems caused by the collapse of the government. They may have delayed unnecessarily; they might have started earlier, but it is not really my role to criticize. In any case, our problems were much smaller. By evacuation date, we only had about seventy-five official Americans left in Cambodia; we had managed to send about two-thirds of the 200 out long before the final days. We had local employees to evacuate, but many fewer than in Saigon.

At the last minute, we received permission to evacuate all the press, regardless of nationality, and their local employees -- if they would vouch that they were "legitimate" local employees and not girl- or boy-friends or people trying to buy their way out. We were permitted to take any foreign diplomats who wanted to go. Then came the question of Cambodian citizens. We communicated back and forth with Washington, which is interesting in itself, if ever published, because although not lengthy or numerous, the messages covered the key issues fully. I think it was one of Dean's phrasings, which was included in my drafts, which became critical. His position was that it was improper for him or for me or for anyone to play God in the situation we had in Cambodia; we should not be called upon to decide which Cambodians lived and which might not. Those were decisions for the Cambodians to make. It was the U.S.'s responsibility to inform key Cambodian leaders -- the seven marked for death on the Khmer Rouge's list -- and their associates of our evacuation. It was up to them to decide who would go. We knew we could take

up to 900 people in total. There were 75 Americans; then also diplomats, the press, our own local employees and their families; nevertheless, that was probably no more than half of the allotted number. So there was plenty of room for the senior Cambodian leaders, those who would be in greatest danger.

We worked out a rather elaborate plan, which Dean himself had designed. There was an acting President after Lon Nol's departure, Sak Sutsakhan, there was Long Boret, the Prime Minister, there was the Foreign Minister, the senior army commander. We decided we would inform these four of our evacuation decision and would ask them to tell us which Cambodians were to be evacuated with us. We gave them very little time for decision, in order to minimize the potential wrangling that the issue might engender. We told them that the decision had to be made by a specified hour; otherwise they would be left behind. We didn't need to give them a lot of warning that the war was over; everyone knew that it was winding down and that one day the Americans would leave.

We prepared letters (in both French and English) to the four key Cambodian leaders saying in effect, but of course with great politeness, "Sorry; the game is over; we are leaving. Please be at the Embassy by 9:00 o'clock, Sunday morning, for evacuation. Bring anyone you want with you." The letters weren't that blunt; the wording was much more diplomatic, but that was the message. The leaders all got along with each other, but each had his own constituency and a piece of the country's political power. About a week or ten days before the end, Dean realized that we had left one person off the VIP list and that was Prince Sirik Matak, the cousin of Prince Sihanouk. He had been central to the 1970 coup that had brought Lon Nol to power and had overthrown Sihanouk. He was key because he was out of the power structure at that point. He had been in the government earlier, but had resigned and therefore was not on very good terms with the four leaders I mentioned earlier. We had to assume that he might not be told by them about the evacuation and would be left behind as a sacrifice; that was not fair. We had worked with him closely after the coup. In this instance we did in a sense play God.

Dean and I went to call on each of these five people. We didn't deliver the letters. Dean told each one that we would have to evacuate Cambodia some day; we were well prepared for that day and could leave safely. We invited each to come with us; it would be their decision. We could not tell them when it would happen, but told them that they would not have much warning. We asked each to send a trusted envoy to the Ambassador's house early (7:00 a.m.) each and every morning from that day on; one morning that envoy would be told that we would evacuate on that day or the following day and they would have to be ready in a hurry. They were all very appreciative. The Prime Minister thanked us and said he would be sending his young nephew as his envoy.

The morning of the evacuation came. We told the press at 7:00 a.m., and they were furious. I ran into Ed Bradley, now of "60 Minutes," in the chancery compound that morning and he gave me literal hell because he had not had enough advance warning to get some extra film into Phnom Penh so that the evacuation could be captured on TV tape in extenso. That got me rather upset and I told him that if he preferred to be left behind, he could call for his film; by the time it arrived, we would be gone. He said that if he had been advised one or two days earlier, he could have had the film. I told him that if I had warned him earlier, we would have had a mess on our

hands -- sheer chaos. He was absolutely furious; he said he could not explain his failure to capture the evacuation thoroughly on film to his superiors. In the end we did a big favor for Bradley and the other TV people. They got the story of the week, live, with lots of great action shots, and they got flown out with us on the Marine helicopters to the carrier *Okinawa*. They were stuck on the carrier until it got to port in Thailand, but Dean and I and our PAO -- Jim McHale -- took their TV film with us to Bangkok, to which we flew immediately courtesy of the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force, and the TV story of the evacuation (including Bradley's story) was featured nationwide on the evening news that very night.

Several things helped us immensely in the end. One was that Danang in Vietnam -- far north of Saigon -- fell first, before us and well before Saigon. The reports and pictures of that operation showed planes coming into Danang's airfield and many being unable to land. The airstrip was covered with people. You may recall the picture of the guy who ran the chartered airline during the evacuation punching out a Vietnamese who was trying to get into the plane. There were pictures of Vietnamese hanging on to aircraft wheels. That was the last plane out which probably knocked down some people when taking off. It was an absolute mess -- a fiasco -- and the pictures were very graphic and taught us a lesson. We saw the pictures in the "Stars and Stripes." I immediately called a meeting of our committee and we discussed the Danang nightmare. We also were going to use fixed wing aircraft; the Danang experience suggested that we might have the same problems. The American planes coming in would attract plenty of attention, and at a certain point that strip would also be covered with people, blocking all other landings. As I said, Phnom Penh was housing a million people and two million refugees. The airfield was surrounded by tents and shacks and was under constant rocket attack.

So, after consultation with the Seventh Air Force, we redid the evacuation plan entirely, post-Danang. We went to an all helicopter lift from a field about ten blocks from the chancery. It was a soccer field that we chose, because on one side were three or four tall apartment buildings -- eight stories tall -- on the river's bank. That protected our activities on the field from the view of people on the other side of the river. The Khmer Rouge were only one mile or so away. We assumed that as soon as they found out what we were up to, they would fire rockets and mortars; we wanted the landing area protected and the buildings would help do that. We changed the deployment zone to the chancery itself; we would transport people in cars and trucks for the ten blocks to the soccer field, where they would pile into the helicopters and fly out. That also meant that we would not fly to Bangkok, as we had originally planned with fixed wing aircraft. Now we would fly instead to a helicopter carrier cruising off the coast in the Gulf of Siam.

The whole evacuation had to be done in one airlift. We brought in about 360 Marines to secure the soccer field. There had to be enough helicopters to take out our 900 people and the Marines back to the carrier. It was done by about twelve helicopters, all in one lift. The critical point was that it had to be done in one trip because once the word got around as to what was happening, everybody would converge on the soccer field, essentially closing the landing field for a second round of airlift. The Khmer Rouge would also figure out what was going on and would begin to shell the field. That probably would have meant considerable loss of life.

There was also the psychological issue. Most of the people in Phnom Penh assumed that we were landing troops, when they saw the helicopter fleet landing, not to evacuate but to save them.

They considered this the first wave of an American military rescue effort, that is, an American military intervention to win the war! This we learned afterwards. The Khmer psychology is very peculiar. I was in Bangkok about two or three days after the evacuation in an Embassy office when I received a call from my former office in Phnom Penh. It was a senior man in the Cambodian government calling and telling me where and how to drop the rice supplies. He wanted to have them dropped in the Phnom Penh stadium because it was a big, protected area which could be used easily for that purpose. I just couldn't believe what I was hearing. I finally had to tell the Cambodian that the war was over; that there would be no more rice, no more supplies. Nothing else was coming. All the Cambodian would do was to repeat: "Just drop it into the stadium!" The mentality was unbelievable; it was so detached from reality.

The third thing that helped us in bringing off this operation successfully was the Khmer reaction to the evacuation offer. Almost nothing happened when we made it. The Acting President showed up with his immediate family and was taken to the landing zone. The Minister of Education and one other Minister showed up with their immediate families and they were evacuated. No one else showed up. It was about 9:00 o'clock, which was the deadline for beginning the departure. All of the five Cambodian leaders had gotten their letters that morning, but only one showed up. So we sent our Political Counselor, Ray Perkins, to Long Boret's house; he was known as a guy who would work very late into the early hours of the morning. We thought he might have overslept or someone had just put the letter outside the bedroom; they might have not wished to disturb the boss.

So Perkins sped to Long Boret's house, knocked on the door and entered. He thought he would wake the Prime Minister and help him get out. Instead he found the P.M. chairing a cabinet meeting around a table in the dining room. Long Boret had gotten the letter; he had read it; he knew that this was the day. But before taking any personal action, he decided to call a cabinet meeting to discuss the situation. He came out of the dining room to talk to Perkins. He said that the cabinet was debating what to do; the consensus, with which he agreed, was that they would all stay and fight it out. Perkins tried to explain that it was all over; the war had ended; there were no more funds or supplies and we Americans were leaving. The Prime Minister said that he and his colleagues had gotten the country into the mess they were in and somehow they would get it out of it. The cabinet had reached a collective judgment to stay and see the matter to its end. Perkins did not mention that two of the cabinet had already decided to evacuate. One cabinet member came out and told Perkins that he had to stay with his colleagues, but that he would appreciate it if we could take out his family. Perkins said "OK," but that the cabinet minister had to get word to them immediately.

I won't recount the story of Sydney Schanberg and his local employee, Dith Pran. It did not happen the way it has been presented in "The Killing Fields" or in some articles. In any case, in the end only a handful of Cambodians came out with us in the evacuation -- probably no more than a couple of hundred -- and practically none of the senior leadership.

As I mentioned earlier, our evacuation date was moved back by a week, that is, postponed, because of Washington's concern about Congressional action on the Vietnam appropriation request. We also shifted from a Sunday to a Saturday at the last minute because it was considered that local employees coming to the chancery on a Saturday would raise fewer eyebrows than if

they had come in on a Sunday. The shift of a week was very nerve-wracking; we had all the plans in their final status, in great detail. Everything was timed down to the last minute; all the groups knew when they were to move; the helicopters knew when they had to land and when they had to take off. It was very painful to then shift the dates, even if it was just for one week later.

The week's delay did give us a chance to review all of our evacuation planning once again, but if my memory serves me, we didn't make any last-minute changes other than the one I've just mentioned, shifting from Sunday to Saturday. We had already done so much fine-tuning, leaving nothing to chance, that we risked getting lost in the details. I tried to lighten up -- if that's the correct term -- one of our last evacuation committee meetings, perhaps the very last one, by reading to the staff a famous poem by the modern Greek poet Constantine Cavafy, perhaps my favorite poem of his. One of my brother Mike's specializations is the translation of all of the major modern Greek poets into English, and I had been reading some in his "Collected Poems" of Cavafy in those final days in Phnom Penh.

I won't quote it all to you now, just the final bit. But what made it seem relevant to me was this theory of Sydney Schanberg's and the rest of the press people that if only the Americans would get out of the way, the Cambodians on the two warring sides could get together and settle the thing peacefully, in a thoroughly Khmer manner. In other words, the press wasn't looking at the situation as one in which the barbarians were storming the gates, planning to massacre one and all inside as soon as they breached the walls.

Cavafy's poem is set in the "decadent" late period of the Roman Empire, when the barbarians coming down from the North -- the Goths and the Visigoths and so forth -- were besieging the Roman cities. The poem uses the repeated refrain, "because the barbarians are coming today," to emphasize the apprehensions/expectations of the citizenry, and describes all the preparations the citizens and the leaders of the city are making to greet the barbarians, with the emperor "sitting enthroned at the city's main gate," and the consuls and praetors wearing their embroidered togas and bracelets and rings and other jewels and "elegant canes beautifully worked in silver and gold." All of this is to "dazzle the barbarians" when they arrive.

Then suddenly the streets empty and everyone goes home "lost in thought." What has happened? This is how the poem ends:

"Because night has fallen and the barbarians haven't come.
And some of our men just in from the border say there are no barbarians any longer.
Now what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
Those people were a kind of solution."

Yes, the Khmer Rouge were a kind of "solution," but I won't claim to have anticipated, or predicted, just how "barbarian" they would turn out to be.

Before leaving the subject of Cambodia I should recount one other event, especially because so far as I know it's never been written up anywhere, and it ought to be in the record somewhere. I

hope someone, sometime will be able to convince John Dean to write his own memoirs of his diplomatic career, and this item would be one of the many fantastic stories in that account.

The night before our very last night in Phnom Penh John and I had dinner together at his house, one purpose being to drink up some of the last of his fine French red wine, so that he would have to leave as little as possible behind for the Khmer Rouge to consume. We did justice to a bottle and for reasons I can't recall we got to reminiscing about events of the past, including the famous televised Army-McCarthy hearings of the summer of 1954, and specifically the unforgettable exchange between Senator McCarthy and the Army's chief counsel, lawyer Joseph Welch from Boston, after the Senator had made some scurrilous charge about a young lawyer in Welch's firm being a Communist or something, with Welch intoning, in words separated by pauses: "Sir, have you no common decency? Have...you...no...common...de-cen-cy?"

Anyway, the evening before the evacuation -- that is, the next evening -- John and I were in our offices in the chancery cleaning up last-minute business (I remember Sid Telford, the security officer, came in at one point and reported that all the remaining official files had been incinerated), when suddenly a high-precedence, highly classified cable was delivered, the action copy to John and another copy to me. It was one page long, five paragraphs, as I recall. I read it and I was stunned. John came into my office holding the cable, and I could see from his face that he was even more stunned. "What does this mean?" he asked. I had the same question. The cable was from the Department, but gave no indication of who in the Department had authorized it, or drafted it, or whose idea it was. It was addressed to Dean personally. It suggested, in very polite and somewhat bureaucratic language, that it might be a good idea for Dean to stay behind in Phnom Penh when the rest of the mission evacuated the next day -- and there was a suggestion that the DCM stay behind with him, to keep him company I guess, so he wouldn't be lonely -- the purpose being to try at the last minute to work out some sort of solution short of a surrender by the Cambodian government and a victory by the Khmer Rouge. In other words, Dean was supposed to act as a broker between the two sides and work out a peace agreement.

What this meant to us was that Washington had finally agreed to Dean's long-standing proposals about a "controlled solution," but the absolutely crazy part of it was that this was very late in the day (to put it mildly), with the Khmer Rouge battalions a mile or so outside the city gates, and surely in no mood to talk about anything on the eve of their long-sought victory. I won't even mention the insanity of proposing that Ambassador Dean remain behind after the evacuation. He, if anyone, was on the Khmer Rouge "death list" and would be shot on sight if not sooner. What upset me most of all, but perhaps not John in equal measure, was that the end of the telegram left the decision up to the Ambassador, that is, the decision whether to remain behind or not. John said to me: "You'd better get Phil Habib on the phone. There's no time to send cables back and forth." Phil was the Assistant Secretary for the Far East, and was the "point man" in the whole government for Indochina, Vietnam, Cambodia, everything.

So I placed an urgent phone call to the Department via our still-excellent voice communications system, and at the other end I was told that there was a meeting in progress which included all the principals concerned with Cambodia, probably some sort of task force back-stopping our evacuation. Did I want Bob Miller called out of the meeting? Sure thing. I began talking to Bob about the cable, but I'm sure I was mostly incoherent. Among other things, we'd had no sleep for

more than a day and were extremely fatigued. After listening to me for a minute Bob said: "You'd better talk with Phil." I agreed, saying the Ambassador wanted to talk with Phil.

When Habib came on the line, I started in berating him, with no doubt an extremely angry tone, making the point that an ambassador, an experienced, trained, disciplined, career officer, can be counted on to carry out the Department's instructions, but that it was unconscionable for the Department to place its ambassador in the position where the decision was left up to him; if he decided one way he would be labeled a coward, and if he decided the other way he would be blamed for getting himself killed. I said the Department should tell the ambassador what he should do, and he would do it, but the responsibility for the decision would be the Department's, not the ambassador's. Habib must have been totally mystified by this tirade, because his only response was: "Who am I talking to?" I replied: "This is Keeley speaking, the DCM, and I'm putting Ambassador Dean on, and I am hanging up!" Whereupon I slammed the receiver into its cradle so hard I nearly broke it.

Dean had been listening in on his extension. I walked into his office. After a pause I heard him say, imitating Welch's slow intonation: "Phil, have you no common decency? Have...you...no...common...de-cen-cy?" Well, the upshot was that Habib explained to Dean in very guarded language that he should carefully read the cable again, keeping in mind (and this was of course new and important information) that the first four paragraphs of the cable had been drafted in the White House, "at the highest level," meaning by the President himself or by someone acting on his behalf, with his ideas, and that the fifth and final paragraph had been added in the Department, by Habib himself, presumably with the approval of higher authority, meaning Kissinger or someone acting for him.

While holding Habib on the other end of the line, Dean and I slowly reread the cable, and it all began to come clear: with Habib's gloss we were able to understand that President Ford had at a very late date (hours before the scheduled evacuation) become enamored of the idea of Dean's "controlled solution" and had offered the Ambassador a chance to try out his idea by staying behind in Phnom Penh to "work with" the two sides. Habib obviously thought this was an insane idea, but he had no choice except to send the cable, since it was the President's wish. But he had the good sense, and bureaucratic savvy, to add the fifth paragraph, which said in effect, if you wish you may ignore all of the above, or in other words, don't do it if you've got any brains. It was not a case (as I had alleged in my tirade to Habib) that the Department was pushing the ambassador out on a limb where his two alternatives were to display either cowardice or stupidity. Read with this background, Dean and I understood that what the cable meant was: the President thinks it would be a dandy idea if you wished to take a chance on working out some peaceful transition, with the Department adding, "Don't take this seriously. Proceed as planned. But we had to send this."

So Dean told Habib that we understood, thanked him for the explanation, and closed out the conversation jocularly by saying, "I'll call you from Bangkok." Habib wished him good luck. So far as I remember, we didn't bother to answer this last cable from Washington. Dean probably still has the incoming cable in his personal files. It's a classic. We can laugh about it now, but in our agitated and fatigued and worried state of mind that last evening in Phnom Penh, we didn't find it at all funny.

The evacuation went off beautifully, without major hitches. My hat was and is off to the military for the smoothness of the operation. No one was lost, no one was injured. We all got out safely to the carrier; a few of us then flew out by helicopter to Utapao Airbase and from there by fixed wing aircraft we went to Bangkok. We immediately "opened for business" in our Embassy in Bangkok. We were able to telegraph Washington within hours that we were all out; we could report who came out and who stayed behind -- such as Sydney Schanberg and some others. We explained each of the situations; then we spent the rest of the week closing the Embassy -- accounting, report writing, efficiency reports, etc.

Q: The famous New York Times picture of you and Dean getting off the plane with you carrying the flag was taken where?

KEELEY: That was taken at Utapao, in Thailand. Let me explain that briefly. It wasn't me carrying the flag. It was Ambassador Dean. It was sort of like Andy Warhol's prediction that everyone would have fifteen minutes of fame. I suppose that the pictures in the "Times" and on the cover of "Newsweek" and elsewhere that week was our fifteen minutes in the limelight. The picture showed Dean carrying the American flag in a plastic bag, with me walking beside him, my body cut in half on the "Newsweek" cover so that the flag was in the center of the picture.

Just before leaving the chancery in Phnom Penh at about 11:00, I went into Dean's office. I told him that the car -- my fully armored car -- was waiting downstairs and that it was time to leave. The wardens had reported that the place had been cleared out and that it was time to catch the last helicopter. When I entered the office, I found Dean kneeling on the floor cutting his ambassadorial flag off the pole with a pair of scissors. He couldn't get the brass eagle off the top of the pole so he could slide the flag off; it was supposed to unscrew, but it wouldn't budge. So I helped him cut the flag off. Then we took the American flag off its pole and took both flags with us to the car. We had a fully equipped Marine with us as a guard in the front seat and another Marine was driving. We drove by Dean's residence and saw that the American flag was still flying over his house, on a pole in the yard actually. We couldn't leave it that way. So we decided to take it down as well; in any case, Dean wanted to say goodbye to his household staff one more time.

Our original plan had been to evacuate both of our household staffs because they might well become Khmer Rouge targets and could have been in considerable danger. He had invited all of his staff to be evacuated, but some had refused, which made us very suspicious about whom they might be working for. We got out of the car, pulled the flag down, and put it in my briefcase, which was essentially empty. Dean went in to say goodbye to the servants and then we got back into the car and went off to our helicopter. When we got to the carrier, Dean was still carrying the office flags. Our senior American military officer in Cambodia, General Jack Palmer, pointed out that the American flag was getting all dirty, because helicopters have a lot of greasy areas. We too were filthy by the time we got to Bangkok.

We were sitting in the officers' wardroom. In the galley Palmer found a big plastic bag which had been used to keep bread that is made in the carrier's bakery. He folded the American flag very carefully and put it in the plastic bag and gave it back to Dean. That is the flag that Dean is

carrying in the "New York Times" picture, with its golden fringe -- an office flag. This explains the plastic bag in the picture. I was carrying the briefcase which held the Ambassadorial residence flag, which I gave to him later. He was more interested in the Ambassadorial office flag, which he planned to keep as a memento. The chancery flag was turned in to the Department so that it could be used again whenever the Embassy in Phnom Penh was reopened. That is what was done in Kuwait in more recent history.

My household staff had all agreed to be evacuated except for a young woman who worked as a maid-laundress. She was married to a Cambodian soldier and felt that she could not leave him behind. He, being a soldier, could not leave and his wife wanted to stay with him. She had no other family. I told her that once I had left, she could take all the supplies she wanted out of the house; there was a considerable amount still there. I told her to go to a pagoda and to explain the situation and to throw herself on the mercy of the monks. I thought they might take her in and protect her. She did survive. We learned much later through some of our household staff who did evacuate that the maid was okay and was working in a hotel in Angkor Wat. The rest of our staff came out along with their immediate families; they are all here. I mentioned the fellow in Oregon; one of them is in Texas. They are all doing fabulously. They own taxi-cabs, nice houses, etc.; they have all done brilliantly, in the traditional fashion of hard-working American immigrants.

There is one more amusing story about the household staff. When we got to Bangkok, John and I and our wives moved into the Ambassador's residence guest house. It was offered to us; there was no American Ambassador in Bangkok at the time. The Embassy offered us the guest house, which was certainly more comfortable than a hotel. It was very near the chancery. We had a pretty good time there; there was a swimming pool, which was made available to all the people in the Embassy. We had a nice party around the pool for all our Phnom Penh Embassy staff.

One day, while the four of us were eating lunch, I turned to Dean and said, "John, this soup reminds me of something which I had not had an opportunity to tell you earlier. I have to tell you now. About two weeks before we left Phnom Penh, our security officer -- it was Sid Telford -- came to me and told me that we had to do something about your servants. He thought that one of them was trying to poison you. I told him that this was a serious accusation, particularly since you were ill at the time, as you will remember. You were having stomach trouble, your blood pressure was rising, and so on. We all knew that. So I asked Sid what made him think you were being poisoned. He said he had just finished investigating a situation in your house. Your head steward had reported to Sid that the assistant steward, Son [who, by the way, we evacuated and who is now working at the Capitol Hyatt Hotel as a cook], had been spitting in the Ambassador's soup sometime between the time he picked it up in the pantry and the time he served it to you."

Dean, who was eating soup at the time I was telling him this, stopped and said, "He did not spit in my soup. I would have known it! But why did the steward make that accusation?" I said, "That is just the point. We think the head steward was just trying to get his assistant fired, because the assistant had reported that the head steward was working for the Khmer Rouge, and was actually trying to poison the Ambassador through the food he prepared for him; the head steward was a Khmer Rouge agent who had infiltrated the residence, according to Son, the assistant." Dean couldn't believe it. I pointed out that the head steward had not evacuated with us, using the

excuse that he couldn't leave because of his loyalty to his country. He had been provided an opportunity to leave Cambodia just before it was to be taken over by the Khmer Rouge and he hadn't taken it. Whom was he loyal to? The assistant steward did come out and was in the refugee camp. It seemed obvious to me that the assistant was loyal to us and had been falsely accused by the head steward.

Then Dean wanted to know how we had handled the matter. I said I had told Sid Telford to stay out of it, that is, the dispute between the two servants; that this was no time to upset the Ambassador. He was already sick; if he were told that his soup was being spat in, that would not speed his recovery. I thought that Dean might have fired the whole household staff and then would have to cook for himself. As for the idea that he was being poisoned, I thought that was far-fetched, and in any case the head steward would now be inhibited, once the accusation against him had been made by his assistant. That episode is just an illustration of how some of the staff came out with us while others didn't. Maybe it explains why.

Q: Let me ask a couple of questions about Cambodia during the 1974-75 period. First of all, was the Khmer leadership relatively competent?

KEELEY: I don't think competence was really the issue. The issue was whether they could command the loyalty of their own people and whether they could deal with the Khmer Rouge. They all had in common, as do all Cambodians, a hatred for the Vietnamese. The issue which was basic to Lon Nol's coup when he overthrew Sihanouk was essentially an anti-Vietnamese issue. He accused Sihanouk of having permitted Cambodia to be overwhelmed by Vietnamese -- Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese as well as some South Vietnamese. The Cambodians don't distinguish between North and South; they hate all Vietnamese. This is a hatred of long standing. The Khmer used to be the dominant power in that part of the world, when they had their great empires back from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries -- the Angkor Wat period. They eventually were squeezed between the Vietnamese and the Thais, both of whom were more aggressive and war-like. The original Khmer were very war-like also, but they had turned into a peaceful agricultural culture. After the end of their empire, the Khmer had to pay tribute to both Thailand and Vietnam for centuries and were dominated by both. So there existed and still exists a great mutual hatred among the people of the region. Eventually, the Khmer developed a major animus against the Vietnamese; there were massacres of tens of thousands of Vietnamese after the Lon Nol coup because that was what the Khmer had been told the coup was all about -- "Sihanouk had sold out Cambodia, ended our peaceful existence, had gotten us involved in the war." It was an unfortunate emotion for Lon Nol to stir up. The unsettled situation in Cambodia after the coup gave the Khmer Rouge an opportunity to become active with the support of North Vietnam originally and later of Red China. That was a political mistake by Lon Nol, but it was not an issue of competence.

Lon Nol was a military man. There were a lot of stories about him which I can't really judge because I met him very late in his career. He had had a stroke by that time and was physically and mentally not very strong. He was not very alert. He has been blamed for badly mismanaging the military campaign; for being corrupt; for making very strange and incomprehensible decisions, based on astrology and signs and fortune-tellers' advice. People would tell him that he needed to launch a campaign on such a date and in such a place based on some signs; all those

decisions were militarily wrong. He was obviously very superstitious and used strange decision-making practices that led him to actions which had no relevance to modern warfare. But all Cambodians believe in the influence of signs. Perhaps the Khmer Rouge didn't, and that would have given them an advantage, militarily speaking. From my reading of the history, Lon Nol did some very strange things, against the advice of his colleagues, strictly because his astrologer said that "this was a lucky day" to undertake whatever was the main initiative at the time. Very strange stuff! (But let's not forget, when we criticize, the role of astrology in the Reagan White House!) There were accusations that Lon Nol was deliberately hood-winked and used by enemy agents. Therefore Lon Nol's reputation was not all that good.

Long Boret was a very capable Prime Minister -- a good administrator. I don't know if he was honest -- no one in that government was very honest. But I looked at the situation in a somewhat different way. I didn't suspend my own morality, but the situation was such that people literally had to have command of a lot of resources to fight the war. They had to pay for their own troops; they had to buy to feed their own troops. In an economy that had totally collapsed, there were no tax revenues, no real government budget. When you order a commander to go defend a front, he will take the resources he considers necessary from wherever he can -- he steals, he buys, he deals. He doesn't necessarily put it in his pocket, but he spends it because that is his job. He had to keep his men alive. And Lon Nol did have some very competent military officers.

Lon Nol was heavily criticized for the "phantom troops" matter; criticized by us, I should stress. That was a genuine issue. People -- military commanders -- would report that they had a certain number of troops, which in fact they didn't have. The figures were invented, inflated. They were ordered to recruit a certain number; when they couldn't meet the target, they would bill for the maximum. They would take the salaries for the "phantom" soldiers and use the money to buy supplies and things that they needed, and to bribe people. Everybody had to be bribed; you had to bribe someone to take you across the river. In a war like that, all normal rules are dispensed with. We would say, "Eliminate the phantom troops!" The Cambodians would eliminate the existing ones and create new ones. It was simply a device to allow people to get their hands on resources which would otherwise not be available.

The country was in a state of total inefficiency by 1974. You couldn't really talk about competence and efficiency. "Competence" was defined as someone who did well in the war as opposed to someone who did a bad job. By 1974 there was no time or interest in looking at the means used. It was a matter of life or death. Some of the military were extremely brave and very able commanders, but corruption was rampant, as it was in Vietnam. It was corruption by any standards, but these were people who ended up losing their lives; I don't think many are on the Riviera in their palaces; they didn't end up with much, if they survived at all. The resources were all local currency; there were no means of acquiring foreign exchange or of smuggling money out of the country or of salting it away in Switzerland or any foreign country. It was not like Marcos in the Philippines -- a peaceful atmosphere where the kick-backs came from contractors and fees from anyone who wanted to do business. Even the Cambodian rubber was mostly under Khmer Rouge control. What little was exported by the government was handled by a French company, which as far as I know deposited the foreign exchange earnings in Paris in the company's accounts. I don't think the Khmer government got any of it. They probably got paid something in local currency, but not in francs.

Q: Tell us a little bit more about an Embassy's relationship with the press under the 1974-75 circumstances in Cambodia?

KEELEY: I personally followed the rules that I had always followed and that was to talk to the press; some FSOs avoid the press because they don't like to deal with them. They don't trust them. I began my life with a strong interest in journalism and thought that that was going to be my career. So I have always had some affinity for those who worked as foreign correspondents, because that was more or less what I had wanted to be. I also strongly believe in the principle that if you are interested in the policy you are pursuing, if you do not deal with the press you are in effect abdicating any possibility of having any influence even to the point of educating them -- making them understand better what you are trying to do. If you deal with the press you perhaps have an opportunity to influence what they are writing, to help them do better, to increase understanding. I am not talking about propagandizing them in favor of a certain policy, but if you don't talk to them, they are going to write something anyway and it is more likely than not to be hostile to the U.S. government or the Embassy.

So I have always seen press people; have always talked to them. I have tried to keep certain matters "off the record" because they had to be handled in that fashion; I talked to them "on background" at times, although my limitation was not always honored. But I have not had any particular bad luck with that; I do not regret it. I have never gotten into serious trouble for talking to the press. The most difficult experience I have had was in Cambodia, because the press corps in general was extremely hostile to our policy, even to our involvement in Cambodia. They were hostile to the Khmer government; they focused on the corruption and on the errors people made, such as the bombing of a town loyal to the government when they should have been bombing on the other side of the river, etc. That is the way "The Killing Fields" story starts; it was not a true depiction, because the guy who plays my role as DCM, Spalding Gray (although I was not in Cambodia when these earlier events allegedly took place), is pictured talking to the press, saying on the one hand that "it's a tragedy that the village got bombed, an accident," but on the other hand siding with the press and giving them the low-down on what really happened, blaming somebody else, I guess. That's not the way I would have handled it.

The problem with the press was that they didn't accept our information on how brutal the Khmer Rouge were and what a tragedy it would be if they won the war. They thought we were simply propagandizing to continue the war. We couldn't talk to them about all that we were doing to try to arrange a solution because the surest way to torpedo that process would have been to have it become public. For everyone to know that we were maneuvering in ways that might have meant Lon Nol's departure, or a cease fire achieved in cooperation with the Chinese, would have been greatly counter-productive; those were processes that had to take place in secrecy or they would simply not work. So those were matters that couldn't be discussed. So we projected the image of people who were in Cambodia just to fight a war or to keep it going -- a war that "should have stopped a long time ago," which was "far beyond comprehension" and just "plain awful" and just an "appendage of the Vietnam war, which also should have been terminated a long time ago." The Cambodian war was viewed as a sideshow which was not important to the people in Saigon, where "the real action was."

The press also succumbed to the myth that somehow it was the Americans who kept the war going far beyond what the Cambodians, even Lon Nol, wanted. That was personally painful, because I was never able to convince them otherwise. The press line was that if we Americans would just simply leave Cambodia, all Cambodians would get together, regardless of ideology or history or prior behavior, sit down together under a banyan tree, smoke a peace pipe, and arrange things in the Khmer way amongst themselves, because they were all members of one large happy family. The theory went that the Khmer were a distinct culture whose first love was for their fellow Cambodians; it was we Americans who stood in the way of a peaceful settlement. If we would just leave, it would all be over and peace would reign.

That attitude explains precisely why some of the press people stayed behind, including Sydney Schanberg. He was an advocate of the view I have just described. I had dinner with him many times in our last days in Cambodia and I knew precisely what his views were. I read them later on. He was representative of his peers and not unique. They seriously believed that as soon as we would evacuate, the Khmer Rouge would march into Phnom Penh and would hold a palaver with the leadership of whatever power establishment might be left. They probably didn't think that the process would proceed entirely peacefully, especially for people on "death lists." They may have assumed that those would escape with us or after us; in fact, some did and some didn't. Long Boret, in his peculiar way, after the Khmer Rouge were reported on the outskirts of town, instead of going to the stadium to get into a helicopter to fly out with his friend, the chief of the air force, Long Boret said that his duty required him to go to the radio station to broadcast a message to "his people." He wanted to explain what was happening and to appeal to them to stay calm and reasonable and to do the right thing. So he made his broadcast and then went to the stadium where his wife and children were supposed to meet him. He couldn't find them and wouldn't leave without them. He was captured by the Khmer Rouge and shot on the spot. That was the end of Long Boret. That was not the way I would have behaved, but I guess it might have been predictable in his case.

In fact, the Schanberg scenario did not develop. The Khmer Rouge took Phnom Penh, herded all the journalists, including Schanberg, into the French Embassy compound. There were no peace meetings; they went around shooting anybody they could find who may have been an official of the previous government. Then they forced everyone to move out of Phnom Penh; killed everyone who had any education; then they forced all the Khmer citizens out of the French compound. They dragged Prince Sirik Matak, kicking and screaming (I hope), out of the compound and killed him. He was the one who sent the famous letter that Kissinger used in his Congressional testimony. That was the only written response that we received to Dean's letters to the five Khmer leaders informing them of our evacuation plans. The Prince's letter, on blue paper and in a blue envelope addressed to John Dean, written by hand in French, which said in effect (I'm paraphrasing only a part of it): "Dear Friend and Excellency, thank you very much for your kind offer, but I have to stay behind. [Here I'm quoting from a translation I made of the letter at the time] I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people who have chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection and we can do nothing about it....I have only committed this mistake of believing in you." And he ended the letter by wishing Dean "goodbye and good luck," or something like that.

Dean handed me that letter, which I translated into English, and we sent it in to the Department

that night from Bangkok. Kissinger used it the next day or the day after during his testimony in support of additional appropriations for Vietnam. He was trying to make the point that the United States should not abandon its friends around the world. When you make a friend, when you help him, when he believes in you, you've got to stick with him and not walk away. That was Kissinger's argument to the Congress. I don't know that the letter had any impact. When Kissinger was writing his memoirs, he had one of his assistants try to get that letter, the actual document. I was called and he got my wife, who said that the letter belonged to John Dean, who considered it personal correspondence. He had kept it and my wife doubted that he would release it. But we also pointed out that a translation was available in the Department in the cable that we had transmitted from Bangkok. The French version had never been forwarded because it wasn't necessary. So I presume Kissinger will use that translation when he gets around to publishing the third volume of his memoirs, the part that will cover the fall of Cambodia and Vietnam. I assume that he wanted to check the translation for accuracy, or to make his own. But that's just a guess.

Q: Did we have any contact or communication with the Khmer Rouge? Not through Beijing or in any other way?

KEELEY: Not as far as I know. I suspect that any communications would have had to go through Sihanouk. When we speak of the Khmer Rouge, we should understand that the government's opposition was broader than that. Sihanouk was supporting the Khmer Rouge at the time and when they took over, he came back as Chief of State. Then they began to kill members of his family. He stayed around much too long.

I don't remember all the possible scenarios, but, according to our theory -- primarily Dean's -- if the Chinese had cooperated it would have been to restore Sihanouk with support from all factions. There might have then developed a national unity government on the Laos model. But Sihanouk could not have worked with people like Lon Nol or anyone in the Phnom Penh leadership. But there were a lot of other people, not part of the leadership, who could have spoken for the government party and who could have worked with Sihanouk. Of course, the Khmer Rouge would have had to be part of the national unity structure; in fact, we are seeing today what Dean hoped might have been achieved seventeen years ago. It is true that there are different factions today than there were then, but the situation was comparable. In lieu of the Khmer Rouge, who were thrown out, now there is a faction of principally former Khmer Rouge people who are supported by the Vietnamese. Then there is a pro-Sihanouk but independent group, led by Son Sann, and Sihanouk's group, and the Khmer Rouge. In effect, today there are four major factions. In 1974-75, there were two principal factions plus Sihanouk, plus others on neither side. But the solution would have been roughly the same as is being developed today. Had Dean been successful, Cambodia might have been spared millions of deaths. I am not saying that it was possible, but that is what we were trying to accomplish.

Sihanouk was the center-piece. He had to be restored as head of the country; he was the lynchpin of the whole structure. He was, and still is, the single Cambodian whom all respect, despite his checkered history, his shifts from one policy position to another. Even today, he is loved and respected by all ordinary Khmer people; from that point of view, he is quite an extraordinary figure.

A few years ago we went to the Cambodian New Year celebration with our former household staff, which was held in a high school auditorium in Arlington. Everyone was very excited because Sihanouk was in town, had been invited, and in fact came to the celebration. Two of our former household staff from Phnom Penh, dressed in natty suits, were on the welcoming committee, standing on the sidewalk to greet Sihanouk when he arrived in a long limousine accompanied by his French wife, Monique. I had never seen Sihanouk in person before, but on that night I was introduced to him. We chatted briefly. He went around and talked to his former countrymen. They all made their bowing, respectful gestures with hands clasped to face and forehead, with each one trying to bow lower than the other. Sihanouk is rather short, forcing some of the guests almost to the floor in an effort to be lower than him. He then sat down and talked to people of all stations of life; they were all one happy family. He then showed a film -- he used to be a film maker and he had brought one of his films. He had also brought a projector, ran it himself, fixed the reel when it broke, and commented on the film. It was an extraordinary performance; I can't imagine any other national leader performing as Sihanouk did that night. He has a common touch with his people; he has enormous empathy. I guess it's what we call charisma in a politician. That is what is being capitalized on now. If he lives for a while and is left alone, he may be able to put Cambodia back together.

JOHN GUNTHER DEAN
Ambassador
Cambodia (1974-1975)

John Gunther Dean was born in 1926 in Breslau, Germany and was educated at Harvard and the University of Paris Law School. His career included posts in Vientiane, Togo, Paris and Danang and he was ambassador to Cambodia, Lebanon, Thailand, India and Denmark. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2000.

DEAN: March 1974 I arrived in Cambodia. On my way out of Laos, and on my way to Washington, I had a long meeting with Tom Enders in Bangkok. Tom had been Chargé d' affaires in Phnom Penh and had done an excellent job. His briefing was useful. I respected Tom Enders. The media tried to give Tom a bad reputation, but the professionals knew better. Enders went on to become ambassador to many countries. He was also Assistant Secretary for Latin America where he was again criticized by the media. Later on, I used to get phone calls from the press or pundits inviting me to criticize Tom Ender's role in Cambodia. I did not comply. Most authors who have written about Cambodia did not know that Enders also tried to find negotiated solutions in Cambodia. He was way too intelligent a man not to see the problems ahead. As DCM or Charge, his recommendations to seek a negotiated solution also were not accepted, except that his recommendations were made in 1972 or 1973 when a negotiated solution was easier to implement. When I passed the confirmation hearings to be Ambassador to Cambodia, I flew commercially to Hong Kong, and from there, by a small U.S. Government jet, to Phnom Penh.

Since I had been to Cambodia before, I knew the important role Sihanouk Norodom had played

in his country. I respected Sihanouk, and even liked him, for his efforts to defend his people against all outsiders.

Q: Was he the King at that point?

DEAN: He was at that point Prince Sihanouk and resided in exile in Beijing. About 800 or 900 years ago, a Chinese envoy was sent to the court of the Khmer kingdom, and he wrote the first report about Angkor Wat. At the time, Cambodia was the vassal of China. Over centuries, as the Khmer kingdom lost power, Vietnam and Thailand tried to control what was left of Cambodia. Both the Thais and the Vietnamese had come originally from southern China and in their migration southward occupied certain areas which had been settled by the Khmers. In the early part of the 19th century, the Emperor of Annam even placed a viceroy on the throne in Phnom Penh. The Thais also had their eye on the Khmer provinces west of the Mekong, the rich areas of Battambang. Parts of Thailand and Vietnam had originally been part of the Khmer Empire. Hence, in the latter part of the 19th century, the Cambodians were quite willing to accept the far away rule of France. The French obviously had their own agenda in Cambodia, but in the 20th century they supported the Cambodian desire to remain outside the Thai or Vietnamese orbit. It was in 1941 that Sihanouk Norodom was selected by the French to take the throne. Sihanouk was only 18 years old at that time. The French preferred Sihanouk to a Sissavong who had a better claim on the throne but was less pliable and older than Sihanouk. Sihanouk was schooled by French advisers. He really was a popular ruler and many rural folks in Cambodia looked up to him not only as a ruler, but as an intermediary between them and their gods.

Perhaps I should add that when I arrived in Phnom Penh in 1974 I knew that Sihanouk had had a problem with the CIA. Back in the 1960s, Sihanouk had written a book "My War with the CIA." My former boss and friend, Randolph Kidder, was never allowed to present credentials to Sihanouk and hence, never served as U.S. Ambassador to Cambodia, although appointed to the job around 1966. Some people say this was the nefarious role of the French advisers who kept out the Americans. I did not see Cambodia - I still don't see Cambodia - in this way. The Cambodians saw the French for what they were, a colonial power with interests to play their "rôle civilisateur" (civilizing role), but also, the French dominant foreign role happened to fit the interests of the Cambodians. In 1966, some Khmer officials left the Royal Khmer Government and disappeared into the bush. They became the leaders of what became the "Khmer Rouge." They were critical of Sihanouk's way of ruling Cambodia. In 1970 when Long Nol and Sirit Matak overthrew Sihanouk, the latter was in France completing a medical tune-up in Grasse. Sihanouk first went to Moscow, and after a few days flew to Beijing where he remained for the duration of the war, until 1975. Hence, from 1970 onward, he saw the American support for Long Nol and Sirit Matak as a revolt against him. If you believe in democracy, there is no doubt that Sihanouk basically had the support of the ordinary people of Cambodia. Perhaps some of the better educated people were aware of Sihanouk's shortcomings. In 1970, the revolt which brought Long Nol and Sirit Matak to power made the United States, in Sihanouk's eyes, an adversary because he blamed the U.S. for supporting the coup against him in Phnom Penh. One must remember that at the beginning of the American intervention in Vietnam, Sihanouk had proclaimed Cambodia a neutral country. The U.S. considered the Ho Chi Minh Trail, on the extreme eastern border of Cambodia, to be part of the Vietnamese theater of operations. There is little doubt that the North Vietnamese used the trail inside Cambodian territory to move their

equipment into South Vietnam in order to come into South Vietnam as protected as possible and to attack the South Vietnamese army from the west. That led to a policy decision by the United States to bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

The bombing of the Ho Chi Minh Trail had preceded King Sihanouk's departure from the scene in 1970. He did not approve of the bombing, but he did not object, which was good enough for the American position. It led, however, to what we called American incursions into an area of Cambodia known as "the parrot beak." We used American ground forces for these incursions into a country which was avowedly neutral and where the ruler had been one of the founders of the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations. Cambodia was not in the same category as Vietnam. Sihanouk must be today the last survivor of the Bandung Non-Aligned Conference. After the 1970 coup in Phnom Penh, American bombing was then extended beyond the Ho Chi Minh Trail. At that point, American bombing was in support of the government which the Cambodians themselves established in the absence of Sihanouk in Beijing.

Long Nol and Sirit Matak were very different people from Sihanouk. The atmosphere had changed. Cambodia was now a war zone. I presented credentials to President Long Nol not in a government palace but in a military camp which looked like a Foreign Legion outpost with barbed wire and fencing all around it. Long Nol was a likeable man, but he had already had a stroke by the time I arrived. He was hence slightly handicapped and used a cane for walking. For a military man, his physical handicap must have bothered him psychologically. The credentials ceremony started a relationship where I would see the Chief of State very often. Many of my contacts with him were devoted to trying to help him correct some of the shortcomings of the administration in the country. Long Nol lived in a modest villa. His partner in the overthrow of Sihanouk, Prince Sirit Matak, who was Sihanouk Norodom's uncle, was no longer active in the government. When I got to Cambodia in March 1974, I called on him in his very elegant home and found him easier to work with than Long Nol. Sirit Matak spoke flawless French. He had been Ambassador to Japan, and was more of a cultured aristocrat than a military leader. We maintained a close relationship to the very end when I tried to evacuate him. He wrote this heart-wrenching letter which was read by the President of the United States to the American Congress in order to obtain funds for Southeast Asia.

Above all, I had a wonderful staff of 200 Americans, the number authorized as the ceiling for my staff. Some of them had their wives with them.

Q: Your wife was with you?

DEAN: My wife was with me. At the end of our struggle, about end of February 1975, I had to order all wives out of the country. The military situation in Phnom Penh had become too precarious. They were evacuated to a U.S. military installation in Thailand, awaiting the denouement of the war. Congress had mandated that at no time more than 200 Americans could serve in Cambodia. This excluded wives. It meant that at the end of each day, I could not have more than 200 people physically present in Cambodia. Hence, if people came in from the outside, from Washington or from CINCPAC (the headquarters of the United States Navy in the Pacific in Hawaii), I would have to order other people to take the plane to go over to Thailand and wait until the visitors had left. I applied the spirit and the letter of Congress mandate. The

longer I stayed, the more I realized that most of the country was no longer in the hands of the Long Nol and Sirit Matak regime. By 1974, Cambodia looked like a leopard skin with the Long Nol government only controlling enclaves, most of them linked to an urban center. Much of the countryside was held and controlled at night by the Khmer Rouge.

Permit me to broach a subject where I have doubts and where there is room for many different interpretations... The American bombings from the air of Cambodian areas far away from the Ho Chi Minh Trail were justified by us on the basis that they were under the control of the Khmer Rouge and hence against the Long Nol regime we supported. But those of us in Cambodia already then realized that these bombings created a great undercurrent of anti-Americanism among poorly educated farmers who only had to worry about survival. They then became easy prey for the Khmer Rouge to be recruited into their forces. They did not quite understand why they were being hurt. Did our policies of open support for a rebellious regime against Prince Sihanouk, the legal ruler of Cambodia, help the Khmer Rouge recruitment policy? Who were Long Nol's allies, in addition to the U.S.: the Thais, and South Vietnam - both countries who were feared by the average Cambodian. What about Cambodia's earlier declarations of neutrality? Nobody really respected that self-proclaimed neutrality of Cambodia. Neither the Long Nol regime, nor the Khmer Rouge, nor any of those countries supporting either side. But I am inclined to believe that all these factors helped the recruitment policy of the Khmer Rouge who made nationalism one of their central themes. That the Khmer Rouge were brutal, inhuman, and committed acts against humanity, everybody knew that, and during our tenure there we documented some of these events. The press went to see the various sites where the Khmer Rouge had committed these atrocities against their own people, in the years 1974 and 1975.

Q: You mean that it was already well-known, documented, how they were operating?

DEAN: That's right. We knew that the Khmer Rouge were ruthless butchers, and we had sent to Washington documented examples of their brutalities. The regime of Long Nol had some good generals who fought well. They also had corruption, soldiers not being paid, shortages of ammunition, etc... The job of our team of 200 military and civilians was to help and assist the Long Nol regime in rectifying some of the shortcomings so they could withstand the Khmer Rouge military attacks.

Q: Could you give me some names of the embassy staff and maybe your military?

DEAN: One of the finest military officers I had was Brigadier General Jack Palmer, who is dead. Jack was a dedicated military officer, with an able, beautiful wife who also worked with the wives of some of the senior Cambodian military officers. I remember him in one of the most difficult moments of his life. We were beginning the evacuation, on April 12, 1975, when he received a phone call from the Cambodian General in charge of the aviation who said: "Jack, are you evacuating and leaving us alone here?" Jack Palmer had to waffle his reply (i.e. deny) in order to ensure that the evacuation would go smoothly, but his relationship with the Cambodian General was one of honor and friendship and lying in the interest of the security of the American evacuation must have hurt. I remember seeing him as he answered that phone call. Our staff, both military and civilian, worked every day for well over 8 hours a day. All members of our staff were committed to doing their best to help the Cambodian Government to withstand the

Khmer Rouge and keep on fighting. I owe a particular debt to my deputy, Robert V. Keely, who got to be ambassador in three different countries and was a particularly well-known figure for his straight and honest stand in Greece. If our evacuation from Cambodia went so smoothly at the end, it is to his credit. We have remained friends ever since Mali where we first met in 1960. Keeley had been my choice for the position of Deputy Chief of Mission. Jim Engle had been in Phnom Penh in this slot, but he did not stay very long. Robert Keeley is a thoroughly fair-minded and honest man, one of the ablest drafters in the Foreign Service. While at times we differed and discussed matters, I usually ended up listening to him. The Chief of USIA was another great person. From time to time, I briefed myself the 20-30 accredited journalists on the state of play in Cambodia.

Early on in my tenure, I tried to find a person who could do for me in Cambodia what I was able to do in Laos to find a negotiated “controlled” solution. My orders when I had left Dr. Kissinger were: “John, you go there and fight and help the Khmers to withstand the communists’ efforts to control the country. Don’t get yourself involved in political solutions.” While I had these instructions from the Secretary of State, in early 1974 I received word from various sources regarding efforts by the Romanians to act as intermediaries. Every time I heard about possible intermediaries for negotiations, I would talk with my fellow Harvard graduate Sidney Shanberg. He later wrote a book which was made into a movie “The Killing Fields.” As a matter of fact, Sidney often wrote stories from Phnom Penh which tried to support my penchant for a “controlled solution.” At one point, I had told him: “You know, I understand the Khmer Rouge have a list of eight Cambodian leaders who have to be removed from power before they are willing to come to the negotiating table. I would personally urge all eight of them to leave Cambodia, if this would get both sides to the negotiating table.” Well, I did not know when I was on the record and when I was off the record. The New York Times printed my offer on its front page. Sidney was never unfriendly. The questions he asked - “What are you doing on the negotiations? How do you see the situation today?” - were usually designed to advance my idea of a “controlled solution.” At one point, he said on television, years later, “Kissinger shot the dove off Dean’s shoulder.” As for my messages to Washington, some people accused me of getting perhaps a little shrill. My leitmotif remained: “Time is not on our side. We must find a controlled solution. Otherwise, there will be a bloodbath.” The newspapers printed it. The Economist printed the same message a few weeks before we left Phnom Penh.

Q: Did you find that the State Department was leaking like mad?

DEAN: No. Very honestly speaking, we were in Cambodia and we really did not have the time to focus on how Washington handled our messages. We were living in a beleaguered city. We spoke to the press and we did not mind saying things the way we saw the situation. Miss Elizabeth Becker, the Washington Post freelancer, a lovely young lady and a highly motivated person, was in Cambodia in my days but she did not see the Khmer Rouge in 1974 or 1975 in the same light as we did. We saw the Khmer Rouge as a bunch of butchers. We could not turn over a nation of 7 million people to these butchers. Some of our critics in those days saw the Khmer Rouge as “agrarian reformers,” and that was how they tried to depict themselves. The international and American press was not on our side at that time. We were perceived as trying to hold on and impose our will against these “agrarian nationalists” who were opposing the “corrupt, imposed regime of Long Nol.”

Q: For the researcher in the future, I hope they will go back to the files of the "Washington Post," the "New York Times," and other newspapers and magazines to see how this whole period, 1974-1975, was being reported.

Was there any place to negotiate? This seems sort of amorphous.

DEAN: This is exactly the position Dr. Kissinger explains in his book which was published in June of 1999. He claims there was nobody to negotiate with in Phnom Penh. Let me explain what I meant by a "controlled solution." A controlled solution is that if you have the desire to find a negotiated controlled solution, you can find it. It may be a bad one. But my position, starting in 1974, and it got shriller and shriller as we came towards April of 1975, was that a bad solution is better than a human tragedy. The world is not white or black. It very often can be very dark grey. But at least, it would not lead to turning defenseless Khmers over to the Khmer Rouge. The argument you will find in all our messages was always the same: there is still a pro-government army, a fairly efficient navy, and a fledgling air force fighting on the side of Long Nol. In addition to the military, a group of hard working, well-educated Cambodians who understood the danger of a Khmer Rouge take-over, remained in Phnom Penh. A civilian administration remained in place - perhaps not always efficient - but it was there. Hence, we had something to negotiate with. When the other side takes over and there is nobody to negotiate with because they are all gone - the army, navy, air force, civilians - it is a simple take-over; it's a defeat and it leaves all power exclusively in the hands of the victors. In my vision, the man who undoubtedly enjoyed the most support in Cambodia remained Prince Sihanouk, even when he was in exile in Beijing. I tried to get him involved in a search for a compromise solution. I urged that we try Malaysians as intermediaries. The Malaysians offered themselves for this mission. The Indonesians offered themselves. The French were always there, willing to find an alternative solution to fighting until the end. Whatever a "controlled solution" entailed, it would have been contrary to what we had tried to achieve by the policy pursued by Washington. I felt in Phnom Penh that we could not just walk away from our responsibilities to the Cambodian people. But, that appeared to me more and more a possibility.

Q: How about Congress?

DEAN: The reason I began to plan for an eventual closing of the American Mission to Cambodia was that Congress was debating the reduction or elimination of funds to support the struggle against the Khmer Rouge. We had no idea whether new funds would be voted for Cambodia, just to finish the fiscal year, or for the new fiscal year. In January 1975, I went on American and international television and pleaded: "Don't walk out on the Cambodian people, but rather give us the necessary funds so that we can keep going to gain time to find a "negotiated solution." There were Senators in Congress who agreed with my position. In fact, there was a move in Congress to vote an additional \$122 million for the period March-April to the end of June 1975, but during this period a negotiated solution should be found. Dr. Kissinger did not testify before Congress on this issue. He sent his Deputy. Perhaps he disapproved of this approach. Personally, I felt that even if we were dealt a poor hand, (perhaps no more funding), I still had to find a solution. I could not just turn over the Cambodian people to what we knew was a ruthless regime. Our messages from Phnom Penh were crystal clear: if the Khmer Rouge take control of

the country, there was going to be a bloodbath. The exact word was “bloodbath.” It turned out to be even worse: a genocide. Determined to find a controlled solution, I wrote through the French Embassy in Phnom Penh letters to my friend Etienne Manac'h who was at that time French Ambassador in Beijing. He brought about the meeting in Martinique in December 1974 of President Gerald Ford with the President of France, Giscard d'Estaing. They issued an invitation to Prince Sihanouk to return to Phnom Penh and head a coalition government representing the two Cambodian sides. Sihanouk at that time was the Head of the Khmer Rouge Government in exile. Probably Sihanouk was only the nominal head, but his name meant so much not only inside Cambodia but also on the international scene that his involvement would assure the success of this effort. To convey the invitation, the French sent an ambassador to Beijing but the Chinese authorities would not give him a visa. Sihanouk answered that the offer came too late and that he could not return to Phnom Penh. Was he a free agent at the time? I don't know. Did he really feel it was too late, that he saw the handwriting on the wall? He turned down the offer. I would like to say, the fact that the President of the United States did go to Martinique for this meeting and helped in issuing this invitation, showed there was in the United States some support for the effort not to leave Cambodia in an uncontrolled situation.

Q: You have these orders from Kissinger to fight the war. The reports going back were that the war was unwinnable. Your letters to Manac' h and others...

DEAN: The idea of working with the French may have been anathema to some elements in Washington. I was grasping at any straw. Whoever offered to help search for a solution, I passed it on to Washington. At the end, I got a message saying - and it is also in the most recent book of Dr. Kissinger - that there was a feeling in Washington that I was doing this for the record rather than really believing in it. I think Dr. Kissinger himself knocks down this thesis. Personally, I was not interested whether it would make the American negotiators look strong or weak, politically correct or incorrect, but as long as I had something to negotiate with, I was trying to find a “controlled solution.”

Q: At this point, it was not as though we were going to win the war. If you are not going to win the war, you either negotiate or you go down the tubes.

DEAN: Cambodia always was a side show. The big show was Vietnam. In 1974 the Vietnamese were still holding. It was only in 1975 that the South Vietnamese military really began to crumble badly. On January 1, 1975, I went by helicopter to look at the military situation in Batambang Province, the western province, adjoining Thailand. The Cambodian authorities admitted that the situation was not good. Visiting a Buddhist monastery in an out- of-the-way densely wooded site, I came across some magnificent ruins of a Khmer temple at least 1,000 years old. This antique site was not on anybody's map at the time. I felt like some of the early western travelers who first saw the Khmer ruins in the 19th century. I then went to the pagoda to bring rice to the monks. They took me outside in the back of their pagoda. There, in the ground, was a huge fabulous Cambodian sculpture, I would say 1,200 years old. The sculpture was so enormous - it was a four-face Cambodian sculpture, and only one side was easily visible - that a crane would be needed to lift it out of the ground. Fortunately, such earth moving equipment was not available at the time and the art piece stayed in the ground. I then rushed back to Phnom Penh because I had been alerted by radio that the Khmer Rouge offensive had started in earnest.

It was January 1st, 1975.

One of the people who was indispensable in our effort to resist the enemy's offensive was Richard Armitage, an Annapolis graduate, later Secretary of the Army and today Deputy Secretary of State. He was in charge of helping the barge convoys up the Mekong River from Saigon to reach safely Phnom Penh. These barges brought essential ammunition, rice, and other equipment. When the Khmer Rouge began to dig into the banks of the Mekong River in order to interdict the transport by river of essential items, we needed Armitage to help us. The Khmer Rouge were shooting at the river convoys from eye level. If there was ammunition on it, just one shot, and the entire cargo would blow up. Armitage thought of the idea of putting metallic armor around these barges so that the bullets would not penetrate the cargo. At that point, the Khmer Rouge found different kinds of rocket launchers which would go up into the air and drop into the barges.

Q: Sort of like a mortar.

DEAN: Like a mortar. When mortars were used, the armored shields were not of much help. At that point, General Jack Palmer, my Military Adviser, came to see me. He said: "John, we can't get rid of the Khmer Rouge dug in the sides of the Mekong River. Regular aerial bombing won't do the job. Could we authorize the Cambodian Air Force to use "lazy dog" grenades?" "What is a 'lazy dog?'" I asked. "It is a grenade dropped from the sky which explodes about six to seven feet off the ground. It has a tendency to explode at a level of a person standing up. That weapon is against the Geneva Convention," Jack said. "John, we should try that explosive in order to dislodge the Khmer Rouge so that we can get the river convoys through again - otherwise, we would have a huge problem of getting the necessary ammunition and food in sufficient quantities to those Cambodian areas holding out against the Khmer Rouge." I went into my office and reflected on the idea. I decided I would not ask Washington for advice. I had learned from General Abrams and General Wyant that I was in charge, and I had to make the decision. I knew that if I would refer the matter back to Washington, they would have had a tough time putting an affirmative reply in writing. (For once, perhaps Washington was happy that I did not put "the monkey on their back.")

Q: I am surprised - I mean, we have daisy cutters, and all this sort of thing - that are against...

DEAN: Allegedly, this weapon is against the Geneva Convention - which we had signed. Nevertheless, I gave the instruction to use it. I remembered the instructions that the Secretary had given me to "go and fight." We were in a war, declared or undeclared, and our job was to help the Cambodian forces to resist the Khmer Rouge. I gave the instruction to also use that weapon. But it was of no avail. The Mekong was progressively closed to our shipping going up to Phnom Penh. Therefore, our military in Washington, with the help of our military bases in Thailand, thought up an airlift like we had in Berlin, to supply by air Phnom Penh and the outlying districts under the control of the Long Nol government. Anywhere from six to eight DC-6s landed every day at the airfield in Phnom Penh bringing food and ammunition. These items were then redistributed to other areas.

Q: Was Sihanoukville open?

DEAN: Sihanoukville was open. There was severe fighting around Sihanoukville, but the road between Sihanoukville and Phnom Penh was kept open. That road is the link from Sihanoukville on the ocean, winding its way through a narrow mountain path, to Phnom Penh. It had been built by American economic assistance in the 1950s. However, the Khmer Rouge made increasingly determined efforts in early 1975 to cut the road at the mountain path and even tried to overrun the Long Nol troops at that post. Unfortunately, some of the troops had not been paid for some time and that gave rise to one of the more gruesome incidents, which I don't think is germane to our main story.

Q: What happened?

DEAN: They did not get paid, and when the paymaster came with the money many months later, they killed him. One of the main shortcomings of the Long Nol regime was inefficiency. In all fairness to the regime, it was difficult, when much of the countryside was in the hands of the Khmer Rouge, to get pay, food, and support to the troops on time.

Q: Let's talk a little about the military situation. What was the basic problem? Were the Viet Cong involved? Was the Khmer Rouge doing it on its own? Why were they so much more effective than the Long Nol army?

DEAN: The Khmer Rouge received strong support from the North Vietnamese, and also equipment from China. The Khmer Rouge had no transportation problem, i.e., getting supplies from North Vietnam to the areas under Khmer Rouge control. I am not sure where the Soviets stood. We had a Soviet Diplomatic Mission in Phnom Penh. As a matter of fact, we helped to evacuate a Soviet journalist in April 1975. The Khmer Rouge held most of the countryside at night, and certainly were also "present" during the day time. The Long Nol regime held the urban centers and small towns. In the countryside at night, the Khmer Rouge were able to move quite freely. They had no shortage of equipment. By 1974-75 more and more people had joined their ranks, by force, by conviction, or both. You must also remember that the father figure, Sihanouk, was Head of the Khmer Rouge movement and that mattered for the average, poor farmer in Cambodia. Sihanouk's role in the Khmer Rouge hierarchy was a major attraction for the average little Cambodian to ally himself with a cause headed by Prince Sihanouk. Sihanouk was a great asset to the Khmer Rouge.

Q: One hears so much about when the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh that you had basically very young kids doing this.

DEAN: That's right.

Q: Were mature adults involved too?

DEAN: Yes. But the bulk of the troops which entered Phnom Penh in April 1975 after the collapse of the Long Nol regime and our departure from Cambodia, were young people, many of them from the minority hill tribes who had been recruited by the Khmer Rouge. Among the adults were also some of the most brutal thugs, including some French-educated Cambodians.

Presumably idealists, they had become murderers. One of them was a graduate of Polytechnique, France's leading engineering school.

But there were also many Cambodians who honestly believed or hoped that once the Khmer Rouge had taken over, the Cambodians could settle their differences by peaceful means. For example, the Prime Minister of the Long Nol regime, Long Boret, believed that the old school "tie" of having attended the same French Lycee in Hanoi, back in the good old days, with some Khmer Rouge leaders, would help him to survive after the Khmer Rouge take-over. It was one of the great mistakes the Cambodian bourgeoisie made: that everything could be forgotten and forgiven. We knew what to expect from the Khmer Rouge and we tried to tell our contacts, especially towards the end, that a Khmer Rouge victory meant a bloodbath.

During most of my tenure, our team was sending back messages to Washington about the difficulty of supplying the Phnom Penh regime, the war weariness, and that time was not on our side. I pleaded for a "controlled solution." My Malaysian colleague agreed with that approach. So did the French. Every time I received an indication of a country trying to help us in the search of a "controlled solution," I would send a report to Washington. I understand that at some of Secretary Kissinger's early morning briefings Dr. Kissinger would inquire: "And what have we received during the night from Professor Dean in Phnom Penh?" He was skeptical of any effort by Embassy-Phnom Penh to find a negotiated solution.

Q: Was Pol Pot just a name, or was there contact?

DEAN: No. We had no contact whatsoever - direct or indirect - with Pol Pot. Pol Pot was merely a name. In Phnom Penh, we had contacts with Cambodians who knew other leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Also, the C.I.A. had a good idea of the make up and leadership of the Khmer Rouge. The daily briefings I received from Mr. David Whipple, C.I.A. Station Chief, helped us. He gave us documentation of some of the barbarous acts being committed by the Khmer Rouge before April 1975. We knew that the Khmer Rouge were not "agrarian reformers." In addition to the C.I.A. briefing, we also had a strictly military briefing every morning. Based on these intelligence assessments and our own impression received from traveling around the country or talking with knowledgeable Cambodians and foreigners, we continued to send message after message to Washington pleading not to abandon Cambodia to the Khmer Rouge. When in December of 1974 Sihanouk turned down the invitation of the Presidents of the United States and of France to return to Phnom Penh to find a compromise solution to the war between the two Cambodian factions, it looked as if Sihanouk was no longer a free agent and was merely being used by the Khmer Rouge for his tremendous prestige. But in earlier years, 1972-73, he might have been able to play that role. As a matter of fact, when I had finished successfully the negotiations in Laos in September of 1973, I had sent from Laos a cable to Washington in which I had suggested that the role of Souvanna Phouma in Laos could be duplicated by Sihanouk in Cambodia. After all, Sihanouk was one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement and favored a neutral position between two worlds. I never got an answer (but I still have in my possession that cable). When Sihanouk refused to play the role of peace-maker in December 1974, I looked for other ways to avoid a tragedy. But while remaining wedded to the idea of a "controlled solution," I did all I could to shore up the Cambodian military fighting the Khmer Rouge. Positions held by the Long Nol forces received our visit. Nine Generals who fought well

were rewarded. Ammunition and food were delivered and our staff made sure, to the extent possible, that the supplies reached their destination. Sometimes, some journalists misunderstood our efforts to praise and reward units who fought bravely against the Khmer Rouge. Some journalists covering the war may have misread completely the nature of the Khmer Rouge and what lay in store for the Cambodian people.

Q: Did you feel that the press in a way was exercising... I had the feeling an awful lot of the press in those days was pretty amateurish. They were all trying to make a name for themselves as being reporters. Did you have the feeling that they were trying to cut you down?

DEAN: I don't think they were trying to cut me down. They mostly thought that the U.S. was supporting a losing cause, and perhaps some journalists were not as moved as we were at the Embassy when in April 1975 we left Cambodia by helicopter. The departure of the American staff with some Cambodians on April 12, 1975 was for most of us a dramatic moment in our lives. Dieudonnee Ten Berge, a Dutch journalist at the time in Cambodia, wrote a book entitled "The Fall of Phnom Penh." In it she describes the last few months before the fall of Phnom Penh in April 1975, as seen through her eyes and other fellow journalists. She also interviewed me in the 1990s for her book. Some observers saw me as a dove, others saw me as a militarist. One journalist, Sidney Schanberg of the New York Times correctly saw me as a negotiator who saw the handwriting on the wall.

Little by little, reporters noted a difference in emphasis between Dr Kissinger and myself, on how to end the Cambodian struggle. My efforts to isolate Cambodia from Vietnam - something I succeeded in doing in Laos - were unsuccessful. In Washington, the majority of the Administration saw Cambodia as part of our overall effort to stem the communist drive for control over what used to be French Indochina. In this vision, the fate of Cambodia was linked to that of Vietnam. I saw every country with its own history and past. The fact that Cambodians have no love for Vietnamese was clearly brought out by the bellicose relationship the Khmer Rouge maintained with communist Vietnam during their years in power.

At the beginning of 1975, it became apparent that the Khmer Rouge offensive meant greater expenditure of ammunition by the Long Nol forces. The closure of the Mekong River preventing the supplying of military equipment, ammunition, and food to the Cambodians by this mode of transportation also meant switching to the use of U.S. airplanes to bring these essential items to Phnom Penh and the outlying districts under Royal Khmer government control. All this implied the need of additional funding, beyond the original amounts made available for Cambodia by Congress. In short, there was not enough money to keep on going until the end of the U.S. Fiscal Year: June 30, 1975. The Cambodian military also knew that. If there was a cut-off of U.S. funds, the Cambodians would no longer have the means to fight on. There would not be any food for the people in the government controlled enclaves ammunitions would run low. Some U.S. Senators came out to see for themselves what was going on. I met with them as a group, as well as separately. I pleaded: "Give us time to find a controlled solution." But that was not the official policy of the Administration. Certain Senators, Congressmen, and staffers returned to Washington and spoke up in favor of additional funding for Cambodia. It was March 1975. Was it too late? Perhaps.

In the meantime, our Mission in Phnom Penh was in a progressively more precarious situation. The Khmer Rouge were advancing toward Phnom Penh. Perhaps our telegrams to Washington became more alarming by the day. But all members of our Mission were trying to avoid a situation where the United States would leave Cambodia with its tail between its legs and abandon an ally that we had pledged to support.

Q: Was there much contact between you and Graham Martin? How did this work out?

DEAN: Yes, there was quite a bit of contact. As we approached the closing days of our presence in Vietnam, I got the impression from some telephone calls I received from Martin that, on certain basic issues, Ambassador Martin disagreed with top policy makers in Washington. In all fairness, the evacuation of Saigon was a much larger operation than our departure from Phnom Penh and also did not go as smoothly as ours did. I think Graham Martin was trying his best in Saigon but only came very late to the conclusion that a compromise settlement was needed. By the time he did, the North Vietnamese were at the gates of Saigon.

We did have a great deal of contact with Admiral Guyler, the Commander of CINCPAC, the U.S. naval headquarters for the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii, under whose military control we were. The Admiral and his predecessor visited us several times during my tenure. Relations were very cordial. When Admiral Guyler came, he came with 10 additional officers. Since I had a 200-man ceiling on our Mission, we had to put 10 of our people out of Cambodia in order to respect the letter and spirit of our commitment to Congress. The discussions we had with CINCPAC were especially useful as the time approached for our evacuation. When we left Phnom Penh on April 12, 1975, I took the American flag and the President's flag with me slung over my left arm. Graham Martin also left with the American flag in his arms. For me, it was a last minute effort to shield the honor of our country.

When I returned to the States after our departure from Southeast Asia, I went to see the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Sparkman. The two flags I had taken out with me from Phnom Penh were given back to me. The Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee indicated to me at that meeting that the U.S. Mission in Phnom Penh had done a good job for the United States. Unfortunately, the Senator was not as kind with Ambassador Graham Martin. I felt that my colleague in Saigon had a more complex situation in Vietnam. I also know that in the closing days of our presence in Vietnam, Graham Martin was desperately trying to find a compromise solution. When he retired from the Foreign Service, he took a number of messages which could have cleared his name with him. One day, after retirement, these highly classified messages were found in the trunk of his car. Apparently, his car had a flat tire. He closed the car, left it on the side of the road, and walked a couple of hundred yards to a motel where he spent the night. He had hoped to find somebody at the motel to fix the flat next morning. During the night, people broke into his car and opened the trunk. To their disappointment, there was no money, nothing of value, just a sheath of messages which he had kept as a way of clearing his name. The next morning, these messages were strewn all over the countryside. I lost contact with Ambassador Graham Martin. He had a very distinguished career. But when things go wrong, politicians look for scapegoats.

I was more fortunate than Graham Martin. Few people criticized my tenure in Cambodia.

Moreover, after our dramatic departure from Vietnam and Cambodia, people in the U.S. wanted to move on and forget about Southeast Asia. I was very lucky. I was offered a wonderful next ambassadorial position: Denmark.

Before closing the chapter on Cambodia, I would like to relate what was for most of us one of the most tragic moments of our service in Cambodia: the departure from Phnom Penh.

Q: Before we get to that. I've got two questions. Was Graham Martin telling you to hang in there? Were you sharing your ideas of how to get the hell out of this situation by negotiations?

DEAN: He was very much aware of my long struggle for a controlled solution. He obviously had much better links to the White House and the State Department than I did. I was a first-time ambassador. He had been ambassador to some key countries like Italy, Argentina, and Thailand. He knew a lot of people in Washington who listened to him. I sent him a copy of some of our messages addressed to Washington so that he knew what we were thinking and doing. I also visited with him in Saigon.

While our jobs in the evacuation were similar, they were also very different. The number of people for whom our Mission was responsible was limited. In Saigon, that number was enormous. For reasons I cannot explain, people in the United States thought we had done the best possible job under incredibly difficult circumstances. Graham Martin and his team did not get the same reception. Perhaps our Mission in Saigon was under the impression that the U.S. would not walk away from its responsibilities in Vietnam. After all, when the French were losing the war after the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the Geneva Conference of 1954 provided for an orderly controlled ending of the war. Could anybody think that we would leave Vietnam by helicopter from the roof of our embassy? Graham Martin's job was more difficult than mine. The evacuation of Phnom Penh had been planned with CINCPAC for many weeks. I am not sure that the same contingency plans were drawn up for Vietnam. In addition, in Saigon, the American Government was responsible for the safety of many more people than our Mission in Phnom Penh - American officials, plus private American citizens, more foreigners, more Vietnamese closely linked to the U.S... In Phnom Penh, we were able to move people over a number of weeks because we had empty DC-8s leaving every day Phnom Penh Airport for Thailand. This permitted us to move people out, and not wait for the last moment.

Q: Was it done quietly?

DEAN: It was well organized and those who needed to know how to avail themselves of U.S. assistance, knew how our system worked. Even Cambodians and foreigners in the outlying provincial enclaves knew about our daily shuttle service to Thailand. At the same time, Americans in the outlying districts came to Phnom Penh by helicopter and then flew by fixed wing aircraft to Thailand. In Phnom Penh, we had also sent all dependents out of Cambodia several weeks before the final evacuation.

Q: Our Mission in Saigon was doing some of the same. There was a period when we were even getting orphans out of Vietnam.

DEAN: We received the same request to evacuate Cambodian orphans and we complied with this request. They were moved to safety, but obviously they were only a small number compared to those who needed help. In the closing days of our presence in Cambodia, some events occurred in Southeast Asia which had an impact on our own decision-taking process. One of them was a difference of views with the Commander of CINCPAC, General Guylar, on how we would leave Phnom Penh. By that time, in March/April of 1975, the city of Danang in Central Vietnam had fallen to the North Vietnamese. The photograph in the newspapers reflected the effort of some people to flee the city. It was bedlam. In Danang, many Vietnamese had close links to Americans. They wanted desperately to leave Danang because they feared that their very lives were in danger. As the North Vietnamese advanced on the city, some desperate Vietnamese tried to leave on departing aircrafts which were full up, by holding on the wings of the plane. Others tried to climb into boats which were over-loaded and were pushed off by those who were in the boats. Seeing those pictures of despair in the newspapers, I had suggested to Admiral Guylar that we should leave Phnom Penh not by fixed wing because the airport was about 4-5 miles out of town, but from a football field very near to the Embassy, in town, from where we would be extracted by helicopter. After a number of exchanges of cables and after the Admiral had come to Phnom Penh himself to survey the situation first hand, our view prevailed. Selecting the safest, nearest, and most convenient site as the staging area for our departure made a great deal of difference when push came to shove.

There was also a difference of views with Washington over who we at Embassy-Phnom Penh were responsible for. Obviously, all official and non-official Americans were eligible for evacuation. In reply to a query about which Cambodians should we take out, Washington suggested: Cambodians in the government and Cambodian military closely linked to the U.S. Also, all well-educated Cambodians who Washington felt (and rightly so) were a target for the Khmer Rouge once they came to power. Our Mission took exception to that cable, pointing out that anybody who had been working for Americans, Cambodian or third country national, whether he or she was illiterate or a Ph.D., was in danger. Our team agreed that "we would take everybody who wanted to go, whose life could be endangered." We took gardeners, houseboys, Koreans working for our Mission, Cambodian Generals or Ministers, or educated Cambodians. One of them was a Cambodian atomic scientist who was still in Phnom Penh and who later went to work for the French Atomic Energy Commission outside of Paris. In short, we took people whose lives would be endangered when the Khmer Rouge came to power. I also sent helicopters into the provinces to bring back some members of the International Red Cross. Sixteen of them came back to Phnom Penh by U.S. helicopters. I went to see the Archbishop of Phnom Penh, At the beginning of the year, he believed that all clergy, nuns, monks, regard-less of nationality, would be safe. Some of the young French priests were not particularly supportive in their sermons of the American role in Cambodia. By the end of March 1975, I pleaded with the Archbishop to permit all Cambodian priests, nuns, monks, whose lives might be in danger, to leave with our planes for Thailand to await there developments. After a great deal of pleading, I was able to take out some 40 nuns and monks on the DC-8s to Thailand. The Cambodian Bishop of Phnom Penh refused to leave his flock and was among the first to be killed by the Khmer Rouge. Seven or eight years later, when His Holiness the Pope came to Thailand, where I was then the U.S. Ambassador, the same Archbishop (a Frenchman) accompanied the Pope on his trip. In front of the Pope, the former Archbishop of Cambodia - who had been my interlocutor in 1975 - fell into my arms and started sobbing and crying. Perhaps he had realized that back in

1975, he had waited too long in authorizing the evacuation of the Cambodian clergy and Christians. After the Paris Accords on Cambodia in the early 1990s, the same man was named again Archbishop of Cambodia. I can only assume that this very decent man was so horrified by what the Khmer Rouge did that he wanted to contribute to the moral and physical reconstruction of the Cambodian society in the 1990s. But the Archbishop was not alone in his assessment of the consequences of a Khmer Rouge victory. There were quite a number of people - both Cambodian and foreigners - who believed that one could deal with the Khmer Rouge. In my opinion, you could only deal with them if you had something to negotiate with. The existence of a Cambodian army, navy, air force, and educated elite which was able to govern, and major foreign powers who could help on the international scene, would permit the Phnom Penh side to have sufficient weight to be taken seriously in a negotiation by the Khmer Rouge.

In February of 1975, we had sent our wives and all dependents of our Mission to Thailand. We also reduced the size of our staff in Cambodia. The evacuation from Phnom Penh, which went off without a hitch, was run by my good friend, Robert V. Keeley. Again, I would like to give him full credit for all he did for our embattled Mission. We were also on the telephone with Washington shouting "Help us: We are going under. We are going to leave this country unprotected." On the other end, on the telephone, was our old, dear friend, Assistant Secretary Phil Habib. The time of negotiation had run out but even Phil Habib could not convince Dr. Kissinger that the existing "fight on" policy was going to lead to a disaster. (Ambassador Keeley's Oral History gives some interesting details on that telephone call and subsequent telegram from Washington on this subject.)

Q: There was no doubt by then about when this was going to end?

DEAN: Certainly by the end of February and the first week of March, the Khmer Rouge were pressing hard. We used that time to move as many Cambodians, Americans, and foreigners as possible to safety in Thailand. We had set up a system imagined by Robert Keeley (DCM), Ray Perkins (Chief political Section), and Tim Carney, a junior officer who spoke Cambodian. Tim became Ambassador later in his life. All those who felt endangered were sent out by plane over a period of 8 weeks before our departure. In addition, we had set up a procedure whereby key Cambodian leaders were told to send an assistant or secretary to the U.S. Embassy at 6:00 a.m. every day to find out the situation and decisions taken by us regarding taking people to safety. That system worked rather well when on this fateful day of April 12, 1975 we had decided to leave Phnom Penh by helicopter.

These aides and secretaries all came on the morning of April 12. One of them was the aide to Sirik Matak. We had prepared during the night a message stating that we were evacuating, and urging the recipient of the note to come along. In his reply to this message, Sirik Matak wrote one of the most heart-wrenching letters ever sent to an American official:

Phnom Penh
12 April 1975

Dear Excellency and Friend,

I thank you very sincerely for your letter and for your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular for your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it.

You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness under this sky. But, mark it well, that if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is too bad, because we all are born and must die (one day). I have only committed this mistake of believing in you the Americans.

Please accept, Excellency and dear friend, my faithful and friendly sentiments.

(signed) Sirik Matak

Basically, Long Nol was no longer in Cambodia. On April 1, 1975, Long Nol had left with his immediate family, via Indonesia, for Hawaii and had found refuge there. He died some years later a broken man.

Many people asked me whether Long Nol had stacked away millions of dollars in the United States? The answer is no. I think the Cambodian Central Bank had moved a few hundred thousand dollars in advance of Long Nol's departure, but it was not a huge amount. Originally, he had asked for a million dollars to be set aside for him in case of need, but to the best of my knowledge, at most \$500,000 were transferred by the time he reached Hawaii.

By the time the end came to the Long Nol regime, Long Nol himself was handicapped. He already had suffered a stroke. For such a man, with wife and children, and retainers, the amount transferred by the Cambodian authorities was not a huge amount. He had fought for his idea, his vision of Cambodia, and had placed his trust - like Sirik Matak - in the United States. I do not find it appropriate for me to criticize a man who had many flaws, but he certainly tried to keep the country together against the Khmer Rouge, a policy we supported.

The story of the Prime Minister's ending is tragic. Long Boret refused to be evacuated. He was a competent, able man much younger than Long Nol or Sirik Matak. When I personally went to see him, on April 12, the very morning of our evacuation, to ask him to take his wife and himself and his young children out of Phnom Penh because I feared for his safety, he thanked me but thought his life was not in danger. In his mind, he had me many contacts among the Khmer Rouge with whom he had gone to lycee in Hanoi. That "old school tie" would save him, he believed. So, I said, "Give me your wife and your children." Again, he refused. I thought he was making a grievous mistake.

Long Nol's younger brother, a military officer, had actually gone to a site north of Phnom Penh to talk to the Khmer Rouge about an unopposed entry of the Khmer Rouge into Phnom Penh. He was turned down. That man, so close to the Chief of State, was also under the impression that he could convince the Khmer Rouge to enter Phnom Penh peacefully.

Other members of the Embassy went to other Cambodian ministers in these fateful hours of April 12 to try to convince them to come along with us to safety. The American Marines who had come to secure the soccer field near the Embassy's Chancery did a magnificent job and made sure that all those who had found safety in the American Embassy - Americans, Cambodians, foreign nationals - could be taken to the waiting helicopters on the adjacent soccer field. The number of helicopters available was well beyond the number of people who showed up for evacuation.

Q: Where were they coming from?

DEAN: They were coming from town.

Q: I mean the helicopters.

DEAN: I think they were coming from Thailand and from U.S. aircraft carriers cruising off the coast of Cambodia. The job of the helicopters was to ferry all those who were leaving not directly to Thailand, but first on U.S. soil. That piece of U.S. soil were the American aircraft carriers on which we were to land. When I came back from Long Boret's house and the others had returned from seeing the other Cambodian dignitaries and generals, I realized that only one key Cambodian had asked for evacuation with us. It was General (retired) So Kam Koi, former President of the Senate, who had taken over as Chief of State on April 1, 1975, after Long Nol's departure. He came with his wife and family and we ferried them to safety.

On that fateful day, I said to General Palmer that I wanted to be the last person to leave Cambodian soil. I felt like I was the captain of the ship and, as the tradition goes, the captain is the last man to leave the ship. My wish was granted. Awaiting to be called to move to the extraction site, I was sitting in my office, fully aware of the meaning of the moment for our country. I read the letter from Sirik Matak which had arrived about 45 minutes earlier. Looking out of the window, I saw the Marines taking people to the helicopters and to safety. I watched the Embassy personnel driving themselves to do all they could to help those who had thrown in their fate with us. Many had worked all night long drafting the letters which were delivered in the early hours of April 12, offering to take them to safety. Robert Keeley had drafted that letter. Nobody was turned down for evacuation, including at the last moment, Sidney Schanberg's Cambodian staffer working for the New York Times. We took foreign nationals out, for whom we had responsibility, or even if we had no responsibility. We did not distinguish between illiterate gardeners and highly educated intellectuals. We took the Cambodian girlfriends of some of our bachelor staff members out to safety. I asked our resident military and the Marines in charge of the evacuation to take out anybody who wanted to go with us. At one point in my office, I took a pair of scissors and cut the American flag and the President's flag off the staff of the poles which were in back of my desk in the ambassador's office. I was trying to figure out a way of giving some form of protection to the symbol of our country and to the people whom I represented in Cambodia. Tears were rolling off my cheeks. I was alone. I took the two flags and put them over my arm. I got some plastic so they would not get wet. Unkind newspaper people wrote that I had put the flags in a body bag for dead soldiers.

On our way to the helicopters, I stopped at my residence where the American flag was flying,

and I struck the colors. I took the flag, the third flag, and put it with the other two flags. I asked the Cambodian staff at my residence whether they wanted to go with me. Some of them had been sent to safety before. Those who were still at the residence on April 12 thought they could stay behind without fearing for their safety. At that point, I abandoned the ambassadorial limousine and walked the rest of the way to the waiting helicopters with the American flags draped over my arm. As a Boy Scout in Kansas City, as an officer in the United States Army, and as a Foreign Service officer, I respected the Stars and Stripes as a symbol of our country. I was the last man in our Mission to leave Cambodia in a very large helicopter. One of the correspondents of an American broadcasting system sat next to me weeping because he understood what was going on. We landed on an American aircraft carrier. The entire extraction was called "Operation Eagle Pull." It was described at length in a Marine Corps magazine some years later.

As I landed on the deck of the aircraft carrier, the loudspeaker announced that "Operation Eagle Pull" was completed. I was asked to go into a large room and there I heard the President of the United States' voice speaking to me.

Q: This was Gerald Ford.

DEAN: He praised all 200 Americans who had done their very best to uphold the dignity and reputation of the United States. Years later, a book was published, "Exit Without Honor." I had a hard time understanding those who only criticized those who represented the United States under very difficult circumstances. We all risked our lives and tried to serve to the best of our abilities our country. The President of the United States, on the 14th of August 1975, months after the evacuation date of April 12, wrote the following letter;

"Dear Mr. Ambassador,

On behalf of the United States Government and the American people, I want to commend you and your staff for your valiant leadership and service in the successful evacuation of Americans from Phnom Penh. In reviewing the events surrounding the last few tragic months in Indochina, I can look with pride at your selflessness and devotion which are so appropriately in keeping with American sacrifices of the last decade. You were given one of the most difficult assignments in the history of the Foreign Service and carried it out with distinction. I know that all Americans join me in expressing our most sincere thanks and appreciation.

Sincerely,
Gerald R. Ford"

We left the aircraft carrier by helicopter and landed on a military base in Thailand. There, I was reunited with my wife. She had been with the wife of General Palmer at an American base, waiting for us. In whatever I did in my professional life, I always had full support from my wife. We are now married half a century. I am grateful to her and to all those with whom I served in Cambodia under very difficult circumstances. Whatever honors and distinctions were bestowed on me during my service, it was in recognition of all those who served our country with distinction. The Cambodian experience was a wrenching experience for all of us who served there. Whether they were secretaries or generals, ambassadors or clerks, we stayed in contact for

a long time.

After our evacuation, I was instructed to remain in Bangkok for three weeks, writing Efficiency Reports. All those who had served together in Cambodia - Americans and Cambodians - got together one last time on a pleasure cruise boat in Bangkok to say goodbye. As the leader of the team of 200 people, I was asked to speak. I thanked them for what they had done and for the valiant service they had rendered to our country. I closed my remarks on that occasion with a quotation from Shakespeare's Hamlet - Act I, Scene 3. It is Polonius speaking to his son Laertes:

“This, above all: to thine own self be true
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not be false to any man.
Farewell, my blessing season this in thee!”

This quotation became the leitmotif for the rest of my years in the Foreign Service.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point?

DEAN: Let's go and have lunch.

Q: We are back from a lunch break now. I've got a couple of questions I would like to ask you about your time in Cambodia. Did you feel that while you were dealing with the Cambodian problem, Watergate, the whole problem with Nixon and Congress, had an influence on our policy and efforts to get something done?

DEAN: I went at least once back to Washington. So did Robert Keeley, my deputy. We were all reading the newspapers of what was going on in the United States. The resignation of President Nixon was an important political factor. The Watergate scandal also meant that the focus of attention was domestic and there probably was not enough time or will to make a major shift in our policy toward Southeast Asia. There was some effort in Congress, in early 1975, to find money for Cambodia to continue the struggle. But that petered out when there was no strong support by the Executive Branch to get behind this alternative. Finally, military developments in Vietnam and in Cambodia made at the end the entire issue theoretical. TIME HAD BEEN AGAINST OUR POLICY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

Q: What about dealings with the Cambodians? I am talking about the working level? Each type of country is different when you try to deal with the bureaucracy and all that.

DEAN: All of us on that team of 200 spoke pretty good French. The only way you could interact with all of them, except for Tim Carney who spoke Cambodian, was to speak French. All members of our team were able to interact very easily with their interlocutors. The Cambodians are nice people. Perhaps they are not quite as work-oriented as others. They enjoy having a little bit of fun from time to time. But most of the Cambodian military officers and officials we encountered were first rate and worked very hard. When you finance the whole war effort and prop up the whole regime, obviously, whatever you say makes an impact on your Cambodian counterpart. It was not difficult to have access to people since they needed you badly to carry out their effort to withstand the Khmer Rouge.

Q: Did you get involved in trying to find out what happened in 1972 when a number of American newspaper reporters who came in to follow the incursion into the Parrot's Beak had disappeared?

DEAN: Yes, there was a sustained effort to find these people. But by the time I assumed charge of the Embassy, in March 1974, we were not able to move around freely. The newspaper people probably ran into some Khmer Rouge, who saw spies everywhere, and they were liquidated by them. The Khmer Rouge believed in cleansing the Cambodian society from the scourge of western culture, and the western press was one element of that culture.

Q: I am told that at one time targets for their annihilation were people who wore glasses because this showed that they were enlightened.

DEAN: They had certain criteria for annihilation: anybody who was upper class; anybody who was educated; anybody who opposed leveling society... People threw away their glasses not to be associated with these elements of society. No Cambodian dared to speak French because that meant you had been exposed to a foreign culture. The Khmer Rouge were fanatics and in remodeling Cambodian society they did not take into account the cost on human life.

Q: Did you get any feel that this was the culmination of French socialist idealism or something like that?

DEAN: Khmer Rouge ideology and action went much farther than that French socialist idealists, Jean Jaures and people like him, were highly respect- able.. The Khmer Rouge were revolutionaries, using violence, closer to the Bolsheviks who imposed themselves on Russian society in 1917 in order to impose a new political order and a new social order on their country. The Khmer Rouge were fanatical revolutionaries, and unfortunately some foreign observers, including Americans, did not see them in that light.

Q: What happened to people like Long Boret and Sirik Matak?

DEAN: Sirik Matak was killed on the 19th or 20th of April. The Khmer Rouge entered Phnom Penh on the 17th. Two days later, Sirik Matak was executed publicly, near the Grand Hotel in the center of Phnom Penh.

Q: Was it just out of hand?

DEAN: He was shot. Long Boret's ending was different. He thought he had "the old school tie" and he tried to find a way to ingratiate himself with the Khmer Rouge by saying that all Cambodians were part of the nationalist movement to rid themselves of foreign control. He found that he and his views were completely rejected. Long Boret, in an effort to flee from the Khmer Rouge, drove with his family to the Phnom Penh airport in a jeep. At the same time, some military officers from the Long Nol regime were trying to take off in a helicopter to save their own skins. Long Boret tried to climb on the helicopter with his wife and young children. He was brutally shoved off the copter by Khmer military into the jeep. The helicopter took off and

flew to safety. As for Long Boret and his family, the Khmer Rouge caught up with them and they were all assassinated.

Q: Let's move to... You spent several weeks in Bangkok.

DEAN: I was asked to write an evaluation on every officer. Also, Washington was going to be busy with the evacuation from Saigon at the end of April. For all these reasons, I was asked to stay in Bangkok for a few weeks longer.

Q: They wanted to keep you from...

DEAN: We left Phnom Penh on the 12th of April. On the 30th of April Saigon fell. I think Washington was involved, with CINCPAC, in making preparations for the much more difficult extraction from Saigon. Meanwhile, our team was kept busy in Bangkok, and out of the way of Washington. I also had to review the claims of all members of our team who claimed to have lost property in Cambodia. Some people came up with large bills. I lost one item for which I claimed something. I had a tapestry by Lurcat which I left behind. I put in a claim for that. In addition to looking after our American team, we had to be sure that the Cambodians we had taken out had enough rice for their stay in Bangkok.

My wife and I took to the Acting President of Cambodia, So kom Khoi, whole bags of rice so that they could survive while awaiting orders from Washington regarding their future, from time to time, we also shared some of our personal funds with our Cambodian friends so that they could take care of some urgent needs. Our team felt that we had a moral obligation to take care of those for whom we had taken responsibility by evacuating them with us. We continued doing these functions for about three weeks. As a matter of fact, to the credit of plain decency, some civilian food supplies (rice and dried legumes) left over from the Cambodian Aid Program were still in Bangkok. After April 12, when the Khmer Rouge had actually taken the city of Phnom Penh, the American authorities still parachuted some of the left-over supplies to the Cambodian civilian populations so that they would have something to eat.

I did not discuss enough the helpful, courageous role played by the NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) during all of my tenure in Cambodia. Some of the NGOs originally got their start in Indochina. Congress was willing to help these NGOs, but the NGOs themselves had to collect funds on their own. Among the NGOs in Cambodia, we had World Vision, Care, Catholic Relief Services, and many others. In previous chapters, I had already praised the unselfish, noble manner in which these various humanitarian organizations helped the suffering civilian populations. One humanitarian organization which always plays a special role in time of conflict is the International Committee of the Red Cross whose headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland. ICRC, as it is commonly referred to, helps both sides in a conflict. For example, they exchange prisoners. They do many jobs nobody else can do. The ICRC members were active and stationed all over Cambodia, including in Khmer Rouge controlled areas.

In the closing days of our presence in Cambodia, I asked the top ICRC official whether any of them wanted to return to the capital, Phnom Penh, in case of future evacuation. We did send at their request American helicopters into the provinces to pick up those who wanted to return to

Phnom Penh. Eighteen ICRC members availed themselves of that offer. As you know from the book or movie “The Killing Fields,” after the American Embassy evacuated Phnom Penh, the French Embassy acted as a haven for anybody who had stayed behind and feared the Khmer Rouge. It was only at that time, after our departure from Phnom Penh and before the French took out the last group at the end of April, that some critics of the U.S. realized that the Khmer Rouge were not a bunch of “agricultural Reformers” but brutal revolutionaries dedicated to remodeling Cambodian society. Shortly after the Khmer Rouge took over Phnom Penh on April 17, they started to vacate the city of its population. Old and young, male and female, walked for miles to new destinations selected by the Khmer Rouge. Some people in hospital beds were forced to leave Phnom Penh; many of them died and their beds were abandoned on the road. Many old people collapsed on the way. Those foreigners who had not left with the U.S. evacuator took refuge at the French Embassy run by the Chargé d'Affaires. Many U.N. people and foreign humanitarian workers found temporary safety at the French Embassy between April 12 and 30. Some Cambodians also took refuge at the French Embassy. The accommodations for these hundreds of safety seekers were rudimentary but the French did their best to cope with the influx of people - beds on the floor, basic food to survive... One day, a Khmer Rouge official came to the French Embassy, which by that time looked like a refugee camp, and asked: “Do you have any Cambodian citizens? If you do, they must be declared and given up to us.” I do not want to go into detail, but I heard from my French friends who were at the French Embassy during these fateful days, that humans react differently when their own lives are at stake. One European gave up his Cambodian girlfriend in order just to save himself and not endanger others. To the best of my knowledge, the French convoy left for Thailand from Phnom Penh at the end of April. We had left on the 12th. Sid Schanberg was one of those who got out with the French. He had to deny his American identity when their trucks were stopped by the Khmer Rouge on the way to Thailand. He said that he was French, and his beret on his head and a gauloise between his lips probably made his claim ring true. Some Cambodians in the French convoy gave themselves off as French. The French authorities had given them papers in order to document them as French citizens. This way, they had French protection. While in Phnom Penh, in the French Embassy, if a Cambodian was turned over to the Khmer Rouge, he or she had a good chance of being eliminated. One Cambodian lady had a coke bottle broken off in her vagina. Most of those who had found refuge in the French Embassy got out to safety. A few foreigners stayed behind, but they soon were disillusioned and left via Thailand.

Q: You mentioned, off the mike, an incident while you were still in Cambodia with the Israeli Embassy.

DEAN: As we had the DC-8s coming to Phnom Penh every day during the last six to eight weeks, bringing food and ammunition, on the return trip, these planes were empty. People for whom I had responsibility who wanted to leave Cambodia could come to a certain American office in Phnom Penh to obtain documentation for a flight to Thailand. We had responsibility for some 12-15 nationalities and certain Cambodians closely linked to the U.S. From Thailand, these evacuees had to find their own way to wherever they wanted to go. The standing order for all those to be evacuated by U.S. Government aircraft was the same for all: Two suitcases per traveler. That order applied to Americans, Cambodians, and other nationalities, including our closest allies (NATO members, Australians, etc.).

Q: Including the Soviets?

DEAN: I took one Soviet journalist out, but I had no formal responsibility for him. The Israeli Ambassador, whose first name was Shimon (Simon), came to me and said fairly early in April; “We would like you to take out our coding equipment. It's about 1,000 kilos.” I said: “Shimon, I really can't help you.” Israel had a large technical assistance program in Cambodia. “Any one of your technicians and embassy staff who wants to leave can take two large suitcases along. If you put some pieces of the coding equipment into these suitcases, then you can get much of it out.” Shimon said; “You are not really very helpful. I'll see about that.” I guess he sent a message back to Washington saying: “The Ambassador is not very helpful. The Israeli Embassy has coding equipment which we have to get out and Dean did not want to take it.” Next day, I received a message from Washington: “John, why are you difficult with the Israeli Ambassador and his request to take out their coding equipment.” I sent back a message to the Secretary: “Mr. Secretary. I am giving the Israeli Embassy and its staff the same treatment I have applied to all Americans and our closest allies who are still in Cambodia: two suitcases per person as they get on the U.S. plane leaving for Thailand. If you want me to give preferential treatment to the Israeli Embassy, please let me know, and I will comply.” I never received an answer to that message. As a result, the 1,000 kilos of the Israeli Embassy were left behind, near the Phnom Penh airfield, and never got out. I might tell how we handled our own encrypting and coding equipment. We put grenades in the machines and the equipment was destroyed by explosion. We did not have the time to take the coding equipment out because we sent messages until shortly before our departure. Hence, in the last minutes, we destroyed our equipment by explosives, as instructed by Washington.

Q: Did you have any problem destroying files, or was that done way ahead of time?

DEAN: That was done very early. The files and security equipment were destroyed days before the evacuation. The departure from Phnom Penh was orderly because we had six/eight weeks of 6/8 daily plane flights from Phnom Penh to Thailand, which permitted us to plan and draw down over a certain period of time. We were amazed that, on April 12, not more Cambodians wanted to leave. For eight weeks we had been taking people out from Cambodia, so people who really felt very insecure had been able to leave before our final departure. Others lived under the illusion that they could survive under Khmer Rouge takeover.

PAUL E. WHITE
Refugee resettlement, USAID
Phnom Penh (1974-1975)

Mr. White was born and raised in Indiana. He received his education at Sacramento State College, Valparaiso University and the East-West Center in Hawaii. He joined USAID in 1970. During his career with that Agency, Mr. White served in Vientiane, Seoul, Phnom Penh, Panama City, Lima, Guatemala City, Tokyo and Mexico City. He also had tours of duty at USAID Headquarters in Washington. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2006.

Q: You went to Cambodia from when to when, now? When you went out there in 1974, what was the situation?

WHITE: The situation was already getting pretty grim in Cambodia. There were a few cities that belonged to the Cambodian government. Most of the countryside did not belong to them at night for sure and even in the day the major road arteries were still mostly open when we got there but very quickly those were shut off. So within the first six months I was there they essentially had closed off the roads, closed off the river and Phnom Penh had essentially become an isolated city that had to be supported by air, a Berlin airlift kind of operation.

Q: How did you find the Cambodians vis-a-vis the Laotians?

WHITE: Cambodians were not nearly as friendly as the Laotian. The cultures are very similar, but you had a more difficult situation. They were more developed, more educated and so you weren't dealing with simple country people, you were dealing with people that understood more about what was going on around them. I liked the Cambodians but they were a little more difficult than the Lao. They were also very aware, from the time that I got there, that the Khmer Rouge were real butchers. This idea that no one knew that the Khmer Rouge was going to come in and commit the atrocities that they did is just not true. Whenever the Khmer Rouge came into a village they would cut off the head of the village headman and they were just really brutal. The Cambodians often would say, "They look like Cambodians, they speak Cambodian but they grew up in Vietnam controlled areas of our country and so they have Vietnamese hearts." So the popular sense was "We need to do whatever we can to prevent the Khmer Rouge from taking control of the country." And I guess no one was really listening to them.

Q: What were you doing?

WHITE: The same thing, I was working with refugees. We had a number of groups: the International Committee for the Red Cross, World Vision, Catholic Relief, CARE. Whenever there was a new group of refugees we would decide which voluntary agency, which NGO, would work with them and we would give them the wherewithal to set up soup kitchens, build houses and all of that kind of stuff. We were based in the embassy in Phnom Penh, which was different because in Laos we were not in the embassy, we had a separate compound. So that was my first direct exposure to being in an embassy environment, rather than an AID environment.

Q: Well how did you find the embassy environment?

WHITE: Good. I found, I guess the kind of things that you heard often, that State Department people didn't speak the language and those kinds of things, certainly was not true in Cambodia. There were three or four really good Cambodian language officers in the embassy. I found that everyone was doing their maximum to try to seek a solution in Cambodia. The picture that you often got was that embassy people were there in their pinstriped suits writing their cables back to Washington, not contacting the local people and living in a false environment with the diplomatic community. That certainly wasn't the impression I got. I had heard this in Laos as well. I found people that were really hard working and really understanding of the Cambodian

culture. The ambassador was John Dean [who served from April 1974 to April 1975]. John Gunther Dean, was an interesting... what I suspect, as I look back on it, is that he was probably looking far more for a negotiated settlement and trying to find ways to work towards a negotiated settlement, than perhaps he had authority to do. As I look on it now, those kind of negotiations happen at a different level and a different place than in an embassy. His stance from the beginning was more finding a way to make things work and negotiating

Q: The Khmer Rouge still was impossible to deal with, essentially.

WHITE: That's absolutely right. There's no way to deal with them. I was there when, February or March 1975, when a big congressional delegation came out. The concern of everyone was that funding was being cut off, at the very point where we had essentially tried to Vietnamize the Vietnamese Army and to work with the Cambodians to get them to take a larger role in everything, they depended on our support, at that point we were going to cut off the support as well. So it was Bella Abzug and Millicent Fenwick and all of these people came out to take a look at what was going on. I think they probably were not very helpful when they went back and you could almost see the beginning of the end.

Q: Did you find that, in a way, this resettlement, I would think as the Khmer Rouge encircled Phnom Penh, you begin to run out of room to resettle.

WHITE: Yes. I think, in Cambodia we weren't doing much resettlement. We were essentially moving people, we weren't moving people at all, people moved themselves. So essentially what we were doing there is just making sure that there were temporary shelters and medical care and soup kitchens. In some of the outlying provinces, like Battambang province, there were still refugees that had to be moved and resettled, but they were small numbers. The big problem was how to handle Phnom Penh that was under siege and increasingly what happened is everyone came into Phnom Penh.

Q: Well after Congress cut support, was this signal to everyone that this was the end?

WHITE: Certainly for people working there this was kind of the final nail in the coffin that things were going to end. We're talking about right at the end, now. We're talking about February or March of 1975 and the Khmer Rouge came in in April. So, yeah, I think people, probably that the embassy started an evacuation plan fairly early on, maybe in March of moving, originally dependents were asked to leave. There weren't a lot of dependents there, but there were some. And then gradually people were moved out, so that in the end it was not the massive evacuation that took place in Vietnam.

Q: When did you leave?

WHITE: I left just before the end. I was asked to go up to Battambang province and find all the Operation Brotherhood Philippine doctors and nurses that were working up there and get them to leave. The original idea was that after I did that I would just go up to the Thai border and cross over with a couple of Agency people who were also going to just close down their offices and cross over. When I got to the border I found I couldn't cross over because I didn't have any

identification. When we went back and forth to Cambodia we did so on a U.S. operated airlift run and didn't go through immigration on either side. So I couldn't cross the border and eventually had to work my way back down to Phnom Penh, which I did and then I left maybe a week before the evacuation. And my assignment was to go and work in Utapao an air force base in Thailand, where we set up a reception center to receive Vietnamese, Lao and Cambodians as they left to go wherever they were sent: some to the Philippines, some to France, a lot of them to this country.

Q: You were in Thailand, doing this, from when to when?

WHITE: I was in Thailand from the spring of 1975 for a few months. That was not a permanent assignment for me. That was while I was waiting my on-going, next assignment.

Q: What was your evaluation of how we were handling the people coming out of Cambodia and Laos and Vietnam?

WHITE: It was, there were a lot of people coming out and a lot of different levels of people. For instance, in Vietnam a lot of the Vietnamese Air Force people were flying out jets and landing them at Utapao, which gave the Thai heartburn, I'm sure. So those people were handled very differently than the people that were coming out that were essentially villagers. A lot of the people that came out were official, in one sense, in that they were somehow connected directly to the Americans, either government officials that worked closely with us or people that worked in our houses or other friends. So for those people, the processing was as good as it could be. It's difficult because what you were doing was sending some people off to foreign shores and other people were being assigned to refugee camps on the border and that was too much for me, to have worked in that area for ten years and seen people give so much to our country, the idea that we're going to send some people off to refugee camps along the border for a future undetermined, I requested to be assigned to Africa or to Latin America. I didn't want to get stuck there on the Thai-Lao border, having worked with refugees for ten years and speaking Thai, Lao and Cambodian. My future could have been working right there with people who had given their lives that we were, I felt, mistreating by not letting them into our country. So I left. That's when I moved to Panama.

MORTON I. ABRAMOWITZ

**Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Inter-American Affairs
Department of Defense (1974-1978)**

Ambassador Abramowitz was born in New Jersey and educated at Stanford and Harvard Universities He entered the Foreign Service in 1960 after service in the US Army. A specialist in East Asian and Political/Military Affairs, the Ambassador held a number of senior positions in the Department of State and Department of Defense. He served as Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research and as US Ambassador to Thailand (1978-1981) and Turkey (1989-1991). He also served in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Vienna. Ambassador

Abramowitz was interviewed by Thomas Stern in 2007.

Q: Tell us a little about ISA's organizational structure.

ABRAMOWITZ: ISA at that time was basically the foreign policy and defense center in the office of the secretary of defense. It was organized regionally plus the military assistance. Most of the daily interagency exchanges on foreign issues, including intelligence matters, and all relationships with foreign countries went through ISA. There were of course interchanges between Pentagon officials, civilian and military, with foreign officials, but these contacts were limited and some were vetted by ISA. I focused on broad issues of policy and strategy. I was particularly interested in pursuing how to maximize our security interests and those of our East Asia allies in the post-Vietnam era.

One of my earliest efforts to get a better feel for issues of national security in East Asia was to convene a standing Defense study group to look at our strategy there. The results of our efforts were provided from time to time to other U.S. agencies.

The first issue I had to confront after assuming the DAS job was, of course, Vietnam. By then the situation was pretty grim. While first and foremost a military matter, ISA had many interests of its own in the whole issue besides military ones. We were concerned about the accuracy of the reporting from Saigon. This was a question both of coverage and understanding. Were the reports from Saigon providing sufficient coverage of what was going in South Vietnam or was it skewed by perceptions developed in Saigon? Was it candid and a decent reflection of reality? I sent a number of my staff to South Vietnam to quietly examine the situation and get a broad range view of what was going on. I did not have a particular policy bent, but I did think that it was important for decision-makers to have as good and as objective a view of the situation as possible. I had full confidence that the people I sent provided their candid views of the scene as best they could. I had of course had been aware of the Vietnam situation when I was the POLAD in Hawaii, but my duties were more those of an advisor; in ISA, I had operational responsibilities toward the Secretary which required me to be as knowledgeable as possible about the Vietnam situation.

In ISA, I had some fortuitous circumstances, which prevailed with all three secretaries I worked for – Schlesinger, Rumsfeld and Harold Brown. My immediate boss, the ISA assistant secretary, allowed me to pursue a personal relationship with each secretary. I did not have to go through the assistant secretary to meet with the secretary. That lasted through three assistant secretaries – Gene McAuliff, Bob Ellsworth and David McGiffert. I talked to the secretary frequently, but I always immediately kept the assistant secretary fully informed of conversations and of any work generated by these exchanges. I didn't leave my boss in the dark. I didn't always forewarn them of upcoming issues; I couldn't because I never knew when the secretary might want to talk to me. But I did make sure that after any conversation, the assistant secretary was briefed in some detail. It was for me an excellent arrangement; I don't recall what arrangements my other DAS colleagues had, but it made life much easier for me. In part, I think the assistant secretaries allowed me that freedom because none of them had any particular background or perhaps even great interest in Asia. They were Euro-centric in the main.

I had 25-30 people working for me – half civilian and half military. My first deputy was a rear admiral, Tom Bagley, a fine officer who greatly helped me settle in to my new job. His successor was Bill Crowe, who was the closest officer I worked with. Working directly for Crowe was a team of eight or nine people concentrating on Vietnam. That team, mostly military officers, was quite good; they had good contacts throughout the building, obviously in the JCS. I myself worked hard to establish a relationship with all the service chiefs as well as the senior officers working on J-3 and directly for the chairman. Many of our conversations focused on broader questions dealing with our position in East Asia, what we could do to bolster it, the military assistance programs, etc. In the DoD bureaucracy, military assistance was the responsibility of ISA. One of the largest sections of ISA was the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA).

As for military assistance it was at times and in some countries the coin of the realm. It was vital for countries like South Korea and almost everywhere in the Pacific made life politically easier or much harder in its absence.

One of our joint (ISA/EA and DSAA) efforts in Vietnam was to gather a team (of which Rich Armitage, later deputy secretary of state, was a member) which was charged with rescuing from Vietnam as much military equipment as it could, to keep it out of the hands of the North Vietnamese. Armitage had been a Navy Seal and was instrumental in removing a lot of naval equipment, including ships, from South Vietnam. Most of it was consigned to the junk heap. Some of the last acts of members of this team concerned the evacuation of both Americans and Vietnamese from Saigon. The key was to find sufficient number of helicopters which was a very serious challenge. Ambassador Graham Martin, to his credit, wanted to evacuate as many Vietnamese as he could get aboard. He just wanted the helicopters to keep coming; he tried to delay the final departure, but we were not able, in the end, to meet his desires. Schlesinger had to finally put an end to the evacuation, leaving behind undoubtedly a number of deserving South Vietnamese. Time just ran out, and the last days were nerve-wrecking with the Viet Cong at the outskirts of Saigon and during the evacuation helicopters arriving later than anticipated. I spent those last days in the MCC (Military Command Center) along with everybody else. It was a dark time.

I recall another trying moment related to our last days in Cambodia. I remember vividly John Gunther Dean, our ambassador in Phnom Penh, calling me at 4 a.m. begging for help to save the city. He wanted assistance to forestall that outcome. I promised Dean that I would do what I could, but I knew in my own mind that we had reached the end of the road in Cambodia. I knew that Dean would be calling everyone in Washington, both because he did need help badly, he also wanted to make sure that the record clearly reflected the depth of the problem and his last ditch efforts to save the situation; another very dark occasion.

I did not know Rumsfeld or Brown when they became Secretary of Defense. But I was able to develop the same personal relationship with them that I had had with Schlesinger. The three of them were totally different – incredibly so. I liked working for all three.

When I first started in ISA, the issue was Vietnam. So my first effort to become educated was to go to Saigon. As a DAS, I was viewed by the military as the equivalent of a three or four star general. Sort of ridiculous in terms of the number of people who worked for me. I was given a

plane to travel around the country. I saw most senior Vietnamese and American leaders.. There was one event on that trip I shall never forget. In Saigon, I stayed with Marshall Bremen, our PAO in Saigon. We had taken the Foreign Service entrance examination at the same time and remained close friends ever since. Marshall hosted a party for me which was attended by our ambassador to Vietnam, Graham Martin – a legendary figure at State in his own right. I had first met Martin when I worked for Elliot Richardson. Graham was one of those who “walk the halls” of the Department of State, to get a feel for what was going to get the latest news, and advance whatever cause he had. He was an unusual man, well known for his determination and his deviousness.

At the party he and I had a furious argument about the situation in Vietnam. He took the opportunity to attack all “doubters,” focusing in on Ted Kennedy. Somehow or other, even though I was working for a Republican president, I found myself defending Kennedy. All the guests were left open-mouthed at the vigor of the argument, particularly since Martin was an ambassador not to be trifled with. I don’t think they had ever seen anyone talk to Martin as I did. The next day, I was at the air base leaving Vietnam, and Martin’s assistant came to see me. He had with him the book that I had written with Dick Moorsteen on China. He asked me to autograph the book for the ambassador, which I was glad to do. It was Martin at his best; he was making an overture, although I was at best a small mover or shaker in Washington. But Martin didn’t want me to leave Saigon with a bitter taste in my mouth; so he made his “peace overture” so that I wouldn’t inject my views based on a personal bias. That was Graham Martin. He also never feared to take unpopular stances.

I started at ISA in August 1974, just as Nixon was going down. His resignation added to an already over-complicated dangerous foreign policy situation. The American military were in great disarray. The Pentagon, military and civilian, was sinking into deep depression. Many, not all, thought that our days in Vietnam were numbered and that the end would be bitter with far reaching consequences. Morale was at an obvious nadir. Until April, 1975, I spent most of my time working on Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Again, as I said in my lecture at Harvard: “The end of the Ford years and the early Carter years were marked by defeat in Vietnam and the first recession in the overwhelming American dominance in East Asia. It was a difficult period for the U.S. and for me personally at DoD. It was bizarre to be the chief Senate witness for military assistance outlays when communist forces were mounting their final offensive against Saigon; it was terrible to be in the National Military Command Center listening to the evacuation of our Embassy from Saigon and the demands for more helicopters to move (evacuate) those Vietnamese who were close to us; and they were simply not there. It was painful to be called in the middle of the night by our ambassador in Cambodia begging for assistance as the Khmer Rouge approached Phnom Penh. It was disheartening in most of my years in the Pentagon to watch the incredible deterioration of the U.S. army, though that trend began to be reversed in great part by General Abrams and ultimately by the all-volunteer force.”

Before you turn to my next assignment, I should say a word or two about Cambodia and Laos. We had turned a page; the U.S. had more or less opted out of Indochina after our withdrawal from Vietnam. The general sentiment in Washington was that little could be done in and for

those countries. There wasn't much thought given to the consequences of political instability in both countries. Eventually, the ever increasing flow of refugees into neighboring countries brought Cambodia and Laos back into the limelight. The refugees bore witness to the catastrophes developing in both countries. The instability in the area became evident to all and its human consequences became a world-wide issue. By the time I arrived in Bangkok, the refugee issue was a deep seeded humanitarian challenge. It took us some time before we really became engaged. There was a period right after the end of the Vietnam War when we were mostly observers of a steadily declining human situation.

EDMUND Mc WILLIAMS
Desk Officer for Laos, Cambodia & Vietnam
Washington, DC (1978-1980)

A native of Rhode Island, Mr. Mc Williams was educated at the University of Rhode Island and Ohio University. In the course of his diplomatic career he served in several South East Asia posts including Vientiane, Bangkok and Djakarta. Other assignments took him to Moscow, Managua, Kabul, and Islamabad. In 1992 Mr. McWilliams was engaged in opening US Embassies in the newly independent states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. While his assignments were primarily in the Political and Economic fields, in Washington he dealt with Labor and Human Rights issues. Mr. McWilliams was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005-2006.

Q: Well, let's talk about Laos and Cambodia at the time. What was ticking? I mean, this is three years after we bugged out of the whole area except for our tiny foothold in Laos.

MCWILLIAMS: Well, there wasn't very much on our agenda in either country at that point. I had just come out of Laos, of course, and that was a very sterile relationship. There was a brief initiative, essentially from the State Department, to relax some of the restrictions on the relationship, trying to seek support for this in Congress which failed. I was a part of that but very minor effort. And of course with Cambodia at that point the Khmer Rouge were in control and we had virtually no contact at all with the Cambodians although I do recall at one point there was an attempt to begin at least communications, quiet communications with the Cambodians and this was to be accomplished through an initiative that myself and my director took by going up to the UN to meet with the Cambodian delegation and I forget frankly exactly the ruse under which we agreed to meet. But in the course of the conversation it was planned that actually as the junior officer I would say that in addition to the rather specific, and I can't recall what the issue was we were supposed to be discussing, that we would be open to communications on other issues as well.

Q: While you were there, I mean the two years you were dealing with Cambodia, were you getting any, what were we catching about later became know as the killing fields, the enormity of what was going on in Laos- or in Cambodia?

MCWILLIAMS: In Cambodia. Well, it was a very interesting time because as you remember at that point it was really very closed and there were rumors coming out of dreadful things going on and I can recall that some of the more left leaning academics, and there weren't very many academics focused on Cambodia but some of them, were reluctant to admit or to acknowledge, that the Khmer Rouge were doing terrible things. It was of course our point to suggest that this communist government was in fact a very bad government. But even we didn't have a lot of information.

Jumping just ahead a little bit. It was really only when the refugees began to pour into Thailand, across the border in '79 that it became clear just the enormity of what the Khmer Rouge had done. And I would credit Ambassador Abramowitz, who was then ambassador in Bangkok and his wife Sheppie for really alerting the U.S. administration and more broadly, I think, the international community just to the extent to which the people of Cambodia were suffering, both on the border and of course inside.

Q: We'll talk about that in a minute. But with Cambodia, I mean, from the administration point of view, the worst things were in Cambodia, the more easily it was to point to the horrors of communism. But then you had the, sort of the left wing which was quite powerful in those days in our intellectual environment because they had been opposed to the whole war in Vietnam and they were trying to portray all of this as, you know, these are the forces of goodness and light and all coming to the fore.

MCWILLIAMS: Regarding Cambodia and sort of the controversy about how to describe the Khmer Rouge government, I think that the United States government certainly initially, without any kind of contact with that government at all and knowing that it was a communist government, essentially an adversary obviously for us in the war was, we were disposed to be very critical of it whereas I think the left again, sort of remaining in their sort of war perspective were inclined to defend it to some extent. But I think both U.S. government and U.S. government critics were really unaware of just what was going on in Cambodia because it was such a closed society. I mentioned just a moment ago that there was basically a failed initiative at a very low level on our part to open at least communications with the Khmer Rouge. I should say the reason for that was in part our concern that the Vietnamese were emerging as real adversaries of the Cambodians and there was concern, at least at the analytical side to the extent also it influenced policy, that we may be facing tremendous Vietnamese pressure on Cambodia and that as a consequence we needed to be in communication with the Cambodians. In a sense we were correct because as you recall back in '79 the Vietnamese invaded Cambodia, of course, very successfully in terms of their military operation and we were faced with what I think we had feared in '78, that is to say Vietnamese communists controlling Cambodia and we saw this of course in the same old domino context, that this would ultimately pose a real problem perhaps for Thailand, if you had Vietnamese communists occupying right up to Bahambong, right up to the border of Thailand.

Just one little reflection. I recall, I described the Vietnamese invasion as very successful. A senior Vietnamese I recall at that time told a French colleague whom he knew very well that we, Vietnamese, had succeeded in everything we wanted to do in terms of the invasion except we failed to free Sihanouk. Meaning to say they failed to capture Sihanouk because Sihanouk was

then and I think to a very real extent even today remains a critical element in Cambodian politics even though he's now retired.

Q: You moved over to the Cambodian-Vietnamese desk. Well, let's keep with Cambodia first. Okay '79, why were refugees coming out? It had been four years.

MCWILLIAMS: Well now, I'm going to have to go back and scratch my memory here a little bit. As I recall the impetus for movement of Khmer inside Cambodia was the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime under Vietnamese pressure. Once the Khmer Rouge lost Phnom Penh, which was very soon after the Vietnamese invaded, of course, then you began to see the ability of people in Cambodia to flee. Not only the fighting between Vietnamese and Cambodians-Khmer Rouge but more specifically to flee Khmer Rouge control. Khmer Rouge control over Cambodia broke down and I think people were able to begin to move. So I think that was the impetus really that drove these people to the Cambodian border in '79.

Q: How did we view- the Vietnamese invasion was what? '79?

MCWILLIAMS: I'm trying to remember exact dates here. It was '79 because then of course it was followed by the Chinese invasion of Vietnam which was in December of '79.

Q: And you were at the desk at this?

MCWILLIAMS: Yes, yes.

Q: Well let's stick- we're getting confused here. We've got a war down south and a war up north.

MCWILLIAMS: Well, it was almost the same war. It was really a Chinese- the Chinese invasion was pretty clearly a response to the Vietnamese invasion of its ally the Khmer Rouge.

Q: Let's talk about how we viewed Vietnam going into Cambodia. I mean, we were saying was this ah ha, the domino has fallen or this was the Carter administration which had made a point of trying to distance itself from the Vietnamese war?

MCWILLIAMS: Well yes. There's a very important sequence here which I think we need to get into in the fall of '79. There was an attempt by Holbrooke to establish communications with Hanoi basically to begin to rebuild a relationship- to build a relationship with Vietnam. This was resisted in the Carter administration in part because also in the administration, particularly under the lead of Zbigniew Brzezinski there was an attempt to improve relations with China. And there was really a competition as to whether to move forward with Hanoi or to move forward with Beijing in the fall of '79. Holbrooke, because he was a very good political operator in part, was successful in moving and advancing the game with Hanoi even to the point where U.S. teams and Vietnamese teams were established to look at old- our old embassy facilities and where embassies might be established. There was a beginning discussion about establishing at least offices that would function as embassies and this is in the early fall of '79 and it was what was called the double track policy. That is, we're going to move forward with China and we're going

to move forward with Vietnam. And that was the administration approach. And then of course came the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and in December the Chinese invasion of Vietnam. And this essentially scuttled efforts by Holbrooke at that point to reestablish some level of communication with Hanoi, to establish it and say reestablish. So it was a very interesting and frenetic diplomatic period. I'm not sure if it's been very well covered in the literature yet but it was a very interesting time.

Q: Did that, I mean, did you find that you were almost having to look for, I mean, where were you, what were you getting-

MCWILLIAMS: There was a hell of a lot of work to do. At that time, of course, there was tremendous press interest and academic interest in both Vietnam and Cambodia, tremendous interest on the Hill as well, and it was a very busy job and frankly it was only thanks to an extremely good director, Steve Lyne, that I was able to keep my head above water. Certainly under the Laos, when I was Laos/Cambodia desk officer there wasn't a whole lot really to address but that one year working as Vietnam/Cambodia officer was extremely busy because simply so much was going on and I was new to the State Department bureaucracy, I had never actually worked in the State Department and only a second tour officer so I relied very much on leadership of a very good director, Steve Lyne.

Q: What was his background?

MCWILLIAMS: Steve, like many of the people working on Vietnam, had spent years in Vietnam. And he had also served on the French side, in Algeria, so he had French and he had Vietnamese and also had Cambodian experience so he was very well suited to the job, a very young man at the time, in his early 40s.

Q: When it happened, in the first place there was yet any foreknowledge of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia?

MCWILLIAMS: I think there were signs, yes, yes, yes. Yes, we did have some expectation because of course we were able to still to monitor Vietnamese military movements and-

Q: This was mainly by both radio and by satellite?

MCWILLIAMS: Intel, yes, Intel. But I do recall as it became clear that we were moving, that the Vietnamese were moving towards some sort of an invasion, some sort of military action, there was some frantic efforts on the part of the administration to get Hanoi to hold off making the point that if they were to invade it would be impossible at that time to move forward with any kind of a relationship, bilateral relationship, and I do recall efforts to communicate that to the Vietnamese. Obviously the Vietnamese felt that they had to address what they saw as a Cambodian problem.

Q: What was the- from the Vietnamese perspective what was the Cambodian problem? Why did they go in?

MCWILLIAMS: Well, it's important to remember the Cambodians, the Khmer Rouge were pretty aggressive. They had perceived Vietnamese living in Cambodia to be a threat to their national security, had forced many of them to return to Vietnam. There had been a number of skirmishes along the border over border questions between Vietnamese troops and Khmer troops. There had been a war of words of course. So it was a very bad relationship and quite clearly deteriorating for a couple of years. Almost immediately after the Khmer Rouge came to power the relationship between Hanoi and Phnom Penh was not good.

Q: Did offshore islands play any role when you were there?

MCWILLIAMS: Well, one of the territorial disputes that the Khmer Rouge had with the Vietnamese dealt with islands. And I had mentioned sort of the border dispute, indeed there were skirmishes. I think there were also some naval skirmishes between Vietnamese and Khmer. You recall that much of the delta of South Vietnam was regarded as Khmer Krom territory, that is to say originally Cambodian lands. And I think the Khmer Rouge in their bizarre approach to current politics were essentially very interested in reclaiming the delta, the Mekong Delta. So I mean, it was a bizarre government and I can't say that the Vietnamese were right to attack but I think given the circumstances, Vietnamese belligerence was not surprising.

LACY A. WRIGHT, JR
Director, Kampuchea Working Group
Washington, DC (1980-1981)

Mr. Wright joined the Foreign Service in 1968 after earning degrees at Mendelien College and Loyola University. His foreign service took him to Vietnam both during and after the War. Other assignments took him to Milan, London and Bangkok as well as to the State Department in Washington, where he worked with International Organizations in matters concerning refugees, and UNESCO affairs. Mr. Wright was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois. Mr. Wright was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

WRIGHT: Well, I was the director of the Kampuchea Working Group. We probably had, at any given time, maybe eight or ten people attached to us, some of them Foreign Service officers, some of them AID people, and it was a group that was constantly shifting and changing in its composition as people came and went. There was a group in New York of the international agencies and organizations, which was headed for a while by Sir Robert Jackson and of which UNICEF was a lead agency, and it was an effort to coordinate the activities of all the players, particularly the large international organizations. And they had pledging conferences and they had other kinds of meetings in New York, so one of our efforts was to follow these meetings very closely, be in touch with all the people involved, go to the meetings, report on them for the State Department and other agencies of our government—that was one of the things that we did. We also did the same kind of thing with regard to the voluntary agencies, which had their own organization in New York, of which Julia Taft was the head for a while, in fact, recently, I think. So we would sometimes go to their meetings. During the course of this, I made trips to Thailand,

trips to Rome, to Geneva—not a large number I don't think—because people or agencies in those places were all involved in this effort.

Q: How did you find dealing with the Thais with this mass of people on their borders?

WRIGHT: Difficult. The Thais, before I went to Thailand, which I did later, I was given a very good piece of advice by one of my teachers of Thai here at FSI, who was not a very good teacher of Thai, but he did leave me this one piece of wisdom. He said, "Don't forget when you get to Thailand that whatever you do to a Thai he will do back twice to you. If you are nice to him, he will be twice as nice to you, and if you are not nice to him..." The Thais can be extremely gracious, normally are extremely gracious. They have the best hotels in the world, I believe, for that reason, because they have this tremendous capacity for service and for making one feel good. At the same time, they have a very dark side, as is attested to by their murder rate, which is very, very high. That by way of introduction. The Thais, of course, did not want Cambodians on their soil, let alone Vietnamese on their soil. They made that extremely well known to us. We, on the other hand, for humanitarian and other reasons, wanted these people taken care of, and the only option that we saw was for them to be taken care of in Thailand. So we had to try to reach an agreement with the Thai Government for this to happen. And it did happen, albeit fairly grudgingly by the Thais. The Thais were very fond of being sanctimonious about all they were doing, and in some cases that may have been justified, but for the most part we were spending, of course, a very large amount of money in Thailand to take care of these people, and the Thai, on the other hand, were constantly setting up regulations which wreaked hardship on the people involved, not to mention the various kinds of chicanery and corruption that would normally go on in any kind of a situation like that and which did, indeed, go on in Thailand.

So, for example, none of the displaced people was ever allowed to leave the camp, and if such a person did, if he were found wandering around alone in Thailand—which happened from time to time—he was put in jail. And I've been to that jail in Bangkok, and believe me, it's not a nice place to be. And the Thai were pretty unrelenting about this. And we were often involved, for one reason or another, in trying to get somebody out of one of these jails or trying to convince the Thai to treat the people more leniently. Sometimes this was because such a person had a defender in the US Congress who wrote to us about him or her or for some similar reason we got drawn into it. So we were constantly talking to the Thai about better treatment for these displaced people and Vietnamese refugees.

Q: Well, while you were doing this, and particularly dealing with the Thais, there had to be an end plan. In other words, you had the Vietnamese, who were sort of our enemies, suddenly controlling most of the country. You had this amorphous group the Khmer Rouge, which were beyond the pale for any civilized party to deal with. And in a way no particular end in sight. And then you had these refugees and displaced people sitting in Thailand and also straddling the border. This sounds as open-ended as one can get.

WRIGHT: Yes, that's what the Thais thought. And by the way, your question has just reminded me. There was another curiosity ascribed to the Thai treatment of these people, and that was that, on the one hand, the Thai wanted people to be resettled because they wanted them out of there in any ways they could; on the other hand, they knew that if the Cambodians started to be resettled

in the United States, this would attract vast new numbers of people into Thailand in hopes of being resettled to the United States. So in the end, when you netted it all out, they were very much against resettlement in the United States for the Cambodians.

But you asked about the end game. I guess the end game in our minds was what, in fact, eventually happened, ten years or so later, which was that we always looked forward to the day when conditions in Cambodia would change sufficiently to allow these people to go back. Actually, I was gone from this by the time that eventually happened, and I think that when it did happen there was not too much controversy. I think people did, in fact, filter back into Cambodia, not only filter back but were taken back and assisted within Cambodia by the international organizations in a fairly peaceful way. Now a lot of other things more violent have happened since then, but I think at the time that that happened it was not so contested.

By the way, I've totally forgotten to mention another huge group of refugees—this time—who were in Thailand, and those were the Lao, up along the Lao border, large, large numbers of them as well who had fled in 1975, when the Vietnamese took over all of Indochina, and were still there. And there was a different wrinkle with them still, and that was that there was a great deal of sympathy for the Lao, particularly for the Hmong, which is a mountain tribe of Lao, who are different ethnically from the so-called lowland Lao, and who worked very closely with our Special Forces and others during the Vietnam War. And we felt that we owed them, as indeed, we did. And so we regarded them as refugees, capable of being resettled in the United States. The only problem was they didn't want to be refugees. They wanted to go back to Laos, by and large. Now many of them did come to the United States, and that was one of the problems because I guess they tended to write back the truth to the people in the camps, which was that they were having a difficult time. And so for years, people sat in those camps who could easily have been interviewed by the INS and gone to the United States. And this, too, became a subject of contention with the Thai Government: when are these people going to leave?

Q: What was the feeling--again we're talking '80-'81--about the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, that this was a sometime thing, or how did you figure that was going to play out at the time?

WRIGHT: I guess we thought it was a sometime thing, in the sense that the Vietnamese would gradually draw back some of their troops, but I imagine—I'm guessing a little bit now—that we thought that the Vietnamese would do everything they could to maintain a heavy influence over whatever government there was in Cambodia.

Q: Was there any reaching out with the Vietnamese occupiers and their collaborators in Cambodia with us or with any of the refugee groups in our dealings?

WRIGHT: I'm sure they were always trying to put on their best face for the international organizations and the voluntary agencies who worked in Cambodia. I don't think there's any doubt about that. I don't remember any instances where they could have been said to reach out to us. I think we were fairly implacable adversaries at that time and regarded as beyond the pale, although I might be wrong and there might have been instances where some probe was made.

Q: How about our embassy in Bangkok? I imagine that, in a way, they weren't very happy with the situation and you might have caught some of the brunt of the thing, of, you know, "You're screwing up our normal relations with this interesting country."

WRIGHT: This came later, I would say. During the period that I'm talking about now, Mort Abramowitz was our ambassador. Abramowitz was a decided partisan of the displaced people. There was no doubt where Abramowitz stood, and in fact, it was he who sounded the alarm to mobilize the US Government to do something about this human tragedy in the beginning. So it would be interesting to talk to him about this, but he was certainly regarded as a decided defender of the interests of these displaced people and, I presume, must therefore have been looked at with a good deal of suspicion by the Thai Government at the time.

Q: How about in Congress? You mentioned Steve Solarz. Were there others? Steve Solarz, as far as I know—I've been interviewing him and he's been off to Cambodia all the time—he's involved with the Pol Pot matter.

WRIGHT: Even now?

Q: How did you find dealing with Congress? Were you being called upon to testify and that sort of thing.

WRIGHT: I don't think I ever testified, although other people did that I wrote testimony for. And I talked to a lot of staffers. People like Solarz who felt very strongly that the United States had a humanitarian responsibility toward the people in these camps in Thailand, as well as others of them, although I haven't thought about this for a while, but there were a number of congressional delegations, particularly later, when I was in Thailand, who went to Thailand. I'm trying to think of somebody who would have been on the other side of this. It's hard to be against helping refugees, but I would say there were people—this might bear some more thought—who were not involved in this issue, and then there were people, like Solarz, who were very much involved in trying to get the United States to be a part of this humanitarian effort.

Q: Who did you report to and where did you fit in in the State Department apparatus?

WRIGHT: I reported to the refugee bureau, although we had a lot to do also with the East Asia bureau. In fact, specifically I reported to a deputy assistant secretary who was, at least, I think, for most of that time, Shep Lowman.

Q: How did you find it within the Department? You know we've been so involved in Vietnam. This is five or six years after the fall of Vietnam. Was there a tendency to say, "God, I wish this would go away," or did you find an engaged State Department ?

WRIGHT: Well, by that time, of course, although this was a big problem, it was by no means the biggest problem in the State Department . It wasn't the Vietnam War. As I say, the East Asia bureau was very much involved in this, particularly in the person of one of its deputy assistant secretaries at the time, who was John Negroponete, so I would say that within the refugee bureau this was a very large item. Up on the Seventh Floor, I doubt that it loomed nearly that large.

Q: Well, when you left this job in 1981, how did you see the thing standing? Did you see this as an open-ended problem, or did you see that there was a handle on it, did you feel?

WRIGHT: Well, again, to be honest, I don't remember what I thought, but as I look back on it, I think that we did have a lot of success. I was talking a few months ago in New York with one of the UNICEF officials that was very much involved in this. His name is Paul Altesman. And Paul at that time was a young aide to Jim Grant. Jim Grant was the very much beloved and very competent head of UNICEF during these years. And Paul was saying that from his point of view and his institution's point of view this whole effort was a tremendous success. When you think of the enormity of the job involved and even though it often didn't look like it at the time, to have received all these hundreds of thousands of people from three countries eventually into Thailand, taken care of them by and large, and then had them return either to their own countries or to third countries over however many years it was, eight or ten years probably, was really an effort that everybody involved in it could take pride in.

MARIE THERESE HUHTALA
Office Director, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia
Washington, DC (1990-1992)

Ambassador Huhtala was born and raised in California and Graduated from Santa Clara University. Joining the Foreign Service in 1972, she studied Thai and Chinese languages and became a specialist in East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Her overseas postings include Paris, Quebec, Hong Kong and Chiang Mai (Thailand). In Washington, she dealt primarily with East Asia and Pacific Affairs. From 2001 to 2004 she served as US ambassador to Malaysia and, from 2004 to 2005, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Ambassador Huhtala is a graduate of the National War College and the State Department's Senior Seminar. Ambassador Huhtala was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Okay, well Cambodia then.

HUHTALA: Cambodia. Throughout the 1980's the U.S. had been supporting the non-communist resistance to the government imposed after the Vietnamese occupation began in 1979. The resistance was led by a party called FUNCINPEC, who were royalists supporting Prince Sihanouk, and included the KPNLF of Son Sann. Khmer Rouge remnants were also involved in the resistance, though we always kept our distance from them. There had been a sort of low-intensity guerrilla war going on all through that period. We saw Hun Sen as a Vietnamese-installed stooge and we didn't think he had much credibility. He was in charge of this communist government in place in Cambodia all through the 1980s. The horrific events of the Khmer Rouge period had all become known by then., so many heartbreaking stories.

So negotiations started in about '89 I think, led by the five permanent members of the UN

Security Council, particularly the U.S., Britain and France. We had China's cooperation as well and put together a peace agreement which was signed in Paris in 1990. (I remember I drafted Secretary Baker's remarks for that. I thought that was kind of exciting.) The agreement led the way to the UN force which came in to restore order and produced the first elections in Cambodian history. Hun Sen reinvented himself as a democrat and leader of the Cambodian People's Party; he won the 1993 elections, together with Prince Ranariddh, the leader of FUNCINPEC. Because the results were very close, the two agreed to a coalition government in which they each became co-prime ministers, and there were dual ministers for some of the key ministries as well. Needless to say, this was a fundamentally unstable arrangement and boded ill for the future.

We had the sense during my two years on the desk that Cambodia was beginning to pull itself together and move towards a functioning democracy, though it still had a lot of problems, and not just the problems of poverty and corruption that any country in that region started out with. Boy, that was a country of shell-shocked people. The entire country had post traumatic shock syndrome in many ways. Every single Cambodian had lost people who were dear to them. An entire class of intellectuals and educated people had been completely wiped out. All educators were killed or executed, if you wore eyeglasses or if you were a doctor or a lawyer you were killed. It had just been a nightmare. Some of the same NGOs and charitable organizations that were helping out in Vietnam were also helping out in Cambodia. One good thing that we had to offer was a diaspora of Cambodians who had come to our country as refugees and got themselves educated. Some of them went back to head up human rights organizations, to help write the new constitution, that kind of thing. We did our best to facilitate that.

Q: Did you find within the Cambodian community problems of what we were doing and what was going on?

HUHTALA: No, we didn't have a lot of opposition, but there was a very interesting episode. One of the U.S. organizations that had been lobbying for renewed relations with the countries in Indochina brought a party of Cambodian dancers to the United States to go on tour. The elegant court dance that you probably associate with Thailand, originated in the Khmer Empire and had been almost completely wiped out under Pol Pot and then painstakingly re-established in the late '80s. Aged dancers were remembering enough to teach young kids the classic dance. So it was a historic event for this troupe to come to the United States, where they performed in several cities, including at the Kennedy Center. We all went to watch it. Of course we helped get their visas, which was still difficult at that period. Then while they were here, some of the dancers tried to defect and there was a huge political mess because the organizers were on the hook for getting them back. The dancers were giving press conferences; there was a public storm.

Q: What happened?

HUHTALA: A couple of them did get political asylum. They had a very good case actually.

Q: Was the Khmer Rouge back in the jungle or along the Thai border doing something?

HUHTALA: They had retreated to the Thai border and a couple of other isolated spots around

the country. Their leadership was scattered and they were not an organized force. I remember as part of this reconciliation process, Khieu Sampan, one of the original KR Politburo members and foreign minister under Pol Pot, returned to Phnom Penh for some official reason. A mob of Cambodians set upon him and beat him up, cutting his scalp; he had to be pulled to safety. The incident showed there were still incredibly strong feelings among the Cambodian people, even though most of them were not clamouring for a court process or war crimes trial at that point. I think they were just trying to forget the horror. They did put together several monuments to the genocide. There's the one at the Tuol Sleng Prison right outside of Phnom Penh that it will chill your bones if you see it.

Q: Is that the one with all the skulls?

HUHTALA: It's got a huge pile of skulls arranged behind a glass case but it also has mug shots of all the victims because the Khmer Rouge took a photo of each person before they bludgeoned them to death. There are hundreds of little black and white Polaroid pictures just wallpapering the entire building. It's the most horrifying thing to look in these faces of these people who know that they are about to die. Unforgettable.

Q: That's one of the most horrifying events of the 20th century in which there were an awful lot of horrifying events.

HUHTALA: Yes, it's right up there.

Q: Was Laos much of a factor?

HUHTALA: Laos was very much a satellite of Vietnam. It still is in many ways, a very backward country. Oh yeah, I didn't tell you this part. We had managed to keep our tiny mission going since 1975. When I was in Chiang Mai for instance in the late '70s my colleagues in Vientiane were not allowed to travel unless they got permission. They were really harassed by the government. Well by 1990 that harassment had pretty much stopped and we were able to normalize relations. We upgraded Charlie Salmon to the status of Ambassador and received our first ambassador from Laos. The Lao were cooperating very well on the POW/MIA side too so this was warmly endorsed by the League of Families and the other political actors. Nevertheless it's still very much a communist country, very repressive and we've never been able to make a lot of progress in our relations with Laos.

Q: Did you have any; did they hit your responsibility? You had some of these soldiers of fortune going out and trying to lead bands of people, I guess in the hinterlands, who were sort of playing Green Berets after the war is over.

HUHTALA: That happened before I came to the desk. That happened in the '80s, Bo Gritz and his people. That left a lot of echoes in the area. Also there'd been charges of "yellow rain," allegations of chemical warfare which have never been proven, to this day. This brings us to the issue of the Hmong people who had been our allies during the war.

Q: This is the mountain people?

HUHTALA: Yes, Hmong who had worked with the CIA in the resistance and fought very valiantly. Many of them came to our country as refugees settling in --

Q: Minnesota and places like that.

HUHTALA: Minnesota, also North Carolina, and the central valley of California. They have become a political force in terms of our relations with Southeast Asia now. Back in the early '90s that we were just beginning to see the outlines of that. Initially they didn't fit well into the United States. When the big wave of Indochinese refugees came to the U.S., at first there were efforts to settle them very evenly across the whole country. Vietnamese, Cambodians, Lao, Hmong, they were all going to be evenly distributed across the country. The first thing that happened was that they immediately clumped out into areas where they could be with their own people. So now there are Cambodians in Long Beach, Vietnamese in San Jose and Westminster and the Hmong in rural areas where they were able to carry out the kind of agriculture that they were familiar with. Unlike some of the others, the Vietnamese did extremely well economically, including in education as you pointed out. They've become stellar citizens and I think quite a few Cambodians have as well. The Hmong have not had such success in integrating.

Q: They didn't even have a written language as I recall.

HUHTALA: I don't think they had a written language; they practiced kind of an animistic religion and had a very different take on life, basically. The ones who came over as refugees, many of them have never learned our language. However, their kids are American citizens and speak wonderful English and are becoming something of a political force.

Q: Well this is America. We pick them up and we chew them up and out they come Americans. The real tragedy of America is often between the generation that first comes over but never quite get there and the kids have become Americans and the estrangement between the two. I mean it's very difficult because the parents have made the sacrifice and then the kids take off leaving their parents behind.

HUHTALA: I don't think Hmong kids are leaving their parents behind at all, really, that's not my experience, but they are able to give voice to some of the concerns and resentments that the older folks still have. There have been special bills in Congress to give them citizenship even though they can't pass the language requirement and that kind of thing. Well, who made that happen? Their kids.

Q: Ross Perot was sort of a true believer in the missing in action movement and all and he was a political force while you were there I think. Did his organization or his clout affect you at all?

HUHTALA: I believe that EDT, his corporation, was making some charitable donations when I was running that program. I left the desk in the summer of 1992 and he was just beginning to emerge as a serious presidential contender at that point. But we knew about him and about his views. He was kind of on the fringe there in terms of believing that there were still live prisoners being held in Southeast Asia.

Q: I would have thought it would be very difficult to deal with and understand the process of an American who looks you in the eye and says, "The Vietnamese have got Americans in tiger cages hidden in the jungle." One had to ask, first place it's an expense to do this and to what purpose outside just to be mean.

HUHTALA: I really put that down to the whole complex of negative emotions surrounding our involvement in Vietnam. The fact that it was the first war that America experienced where the majority of the country turned against it, it didn't have popular support. Remember the draft was still in place and so many unwilling people were being either sent off to fight that war or they were fleeing to Canada. It was a different war than the kind of thing we'd ever had before in many, many ways. Then of course we lost, and the country fell to the communists. Everything that we had been trying to prevent happened, so add that into the mix of normal resentment and sadness after a war and after you've had heavy loss of personnel. Add into this all this other negativity and you get a lot of conspiracy theories and that certainly is what happened. There are still people in this country who harbour very deep, dark thoughts about Vietnam.

CHARLES H. TWINING
Ambassador
Cambodia (1991-1995)

Charles H. Twining was born in Maryland in 1940. He received his BA from the University of Virginia in 1962 and an MA from the School for Advanced International Studies in 1964. After entering the Foreign Service in 1964 his assignments included Tananarive, Dalat, Abidjan, Bangkok, Cotonou, Douala, Ouagadougou, and Honolulu with ambassadorships to Cambodia and Cameroon. Charles Stuart Kennedy interviewed Ambassador Charles H. Twining in 2004.

Q: Today is the 9th of July 2004. In 1991, what happens?

TWINING: In 1991, we had gone through the Cambodian peace process, after lots of angst and arguments and effort. Finally, we had a peace agreement for Cambodia, on October 23, 1991. I didn't attend the final ceremony because it was purely ceremonial, I instead had been brushing up my Khmer, and tried to get started on the details of reopening our mission in Phnom Penh. That took a lot more time. I had the chance to select the personnel that I wanted to go with me, to be out there with me, to make sure that all the principal personnel received Cambodian language training, at least to some degree. That was the period leading up to when I went into Phnom Penh on November 11, 1991.

Q: You were there until when?

TWINING: I stayed there until late November 1995.

Q: That was a real tour, wasn't it?

TWINING: It really was a real tour. I was the logical person to go, because I had done a year of language training 1974-75 under some talented Cambodians, then went to Bangkok for two years and spent a lot of time on the Cambodian border. Then, I went back to the Thai/Cambodian border, beginning in 1980, to deal with the refugees. I was involved in Cambodia again throughout the peace process. Nevertheless, it was difficult to leave; I had a son who was starting high school, and my other son was starting junior high school. Cambodia was a place where there were no educational facilities, except in Khmer. I had to leave my family behind for four years.

Q: In the first place, was there any problem with the Senate, as far as confirmation?

TWINING: No, the problems with the Senate were really over the peace agreement: was it favoring the Khmer Rouge? As I mentioned earlier, there the argument was, was it better to have them inside or outside the peace agreement? For me, Prince Sihanouk resolved that early on saying, "I'd much rather have them inside the tent where I can watch them, rather than outside, where they are always looking at my heels." This was an argument we had to make over and over, to skeptics on Capitol Hill, including Senator John Kerry. Once we got past the skeptics, who said, "We're going to bless this, but we are going to be watching carefully," from then on, it was okay. I didn't need Senate confirmation. I went out as Chief of Mission, and I called myself special representative, as did other ambassadors and the UN representative.

Q: I don't understand this, why weren't you going out as...

TWINING: In 1991, Cambodia was still run by the regime which the Vietnamese basically put in place in 1979. It was a regime we didn't recognize. The Cambodian peace agreement had as an internationally accepted objective that the UN operation would lead eventually to free and fair elections in Cambodia. It would be the result of those elections, the government that emerged as the result of those elections, that we would recognize, one to which we would formally accredit an ambassador. While you call yourself Chief of Mission, and you have all the perks and responsibilities, you didn't need the Senate confirmation that grants you the title of ambassador. It is a very fine distinction, and frankly in hindsight, I'm not sure it was a very important distinction, to play the game that way. But, in any case, that is how we started out. That is how all the other permanent five members started out. In the eyes of the administration, I was not an Ambassador nor a Chargé d'Affaires, yet I was Chief of a Diplomatic Mission. It was a very strange charade.

Q: So, this wasn't a trick to get past Senate confirmation? This was more an international diplomatic nicety?

TWINING: Yes, I guess you could call it a diplomatic nicety. It was just an issue of avoiding recognizing a government that we did not consider to be a legitimate government. How did I get by it? We were able to produce a letter for President George H. W. Bush's signature in 1991. Basically, it was a letter of accreditation, which I presented to Prince Sihanouk. We all recognized Sihanouk as the head of state. I was able to present to Sihanouk a letter accrediting me. I'm not sure he saw any difference between that letter of accreditation and a normal letter of

credential. It was signed by the President of our country. In the final analysis, the distinction is not terribly different. I was frequently called ambassador. It was too complicated to explain to people this fine nicety of the situation.

Q: What about the Cambodian community in the United States, at this point? Did you have contact with them? Had these groups coalesced enough to become a player in the American political scene?

TWINING: They had coalesced enough in the U.S. At that point, they were very anti-communist. They were all anti-Khmer Rouge. They had basically left Cambodia because of the Khmer Rouge takeover, either escaping across the border, or getting out just before Cambodia fell in 1975. They were also anti-Vietnamese. Vietnam was the old traditional enemy of Cambodia. It had been eating Cambodia up by bits and pieces for a very long time, going back into the French period, and even before then. And Cambodia was now run by a regime put into place by Vietnam. They were, therefore, hostile to that regime in place. They supported the anti-communist groups vying for power in Cambodia. They were organized to the point where they made their views known to the Congress, to the President. You took those views seriously. Indeed, they were views with which we officially agreed. At the same time, we had to argue with them for the need as Prince Sihanouk said, "To get everyone inside the tent," including their enemies. These were the Phnom Penh regime and the Khmer Rouge. It was an argument we had to continue to make.

Q: Who was your DCM?

TWINING: My DCM was a good Asian specialist, a fellow adept at learning languages, including Khmer, named James Bruno. Another important player was Mark Storella, who was political officer. He, as you may recall, was the fellow who was our Asia watcher over in Embassy Paris and our link with Prince Sihanouk's party and other important Cambodians in France. He then came out as the political officer.

Q: Are they both still in the service?

TWINING: James Bruno now has retired. He had last been in Hanoi. Mark Storella is now our Deputy Chief of Mission in Phnom Penh.

Q: You went there in late 1991. Talk about what you saw in Cambodia and Phnom Penh.

TWINING: Yes, I would like to very much. I arrived on November 11, 1991. I arrived with a chap who has been a close friend of mine, Mr. Sos Kem. He had been chairman of the Cambodian language department at FSI when I was there in 1974, 1975. There were also a couple of TDY people from Bangkok, to help us get going.

When we arrived in Phnom Penh on a Thai commercial flight, we had no idea what kind of reception we would have. This was, after all, a place run by a regime with which we didn't even exchange a word of greeting, during all the Paris negotiations, and the negotiations in Beijing, Jakarta, and with whom we ended up getting peace in Cambodia. We never spoke to them.

Again, you have to question the wisdom of that, but there were people at the White House and others who were very conservative, who felt that we shouldn't give one inch to these Vietnamese puppets, as they were thought to be, which wasn't the case. We arrived in Phnom Penh November 11, two and a half weeks after the signing of the Paris peace accords. Again, we didn't know what reception we would get. There were journalists taking my picture. I was on the front page of *The New York Times*. There was a Foreign Ministry representative there to greet me, Americas chief Theam Chuny, waiting in the old airport VIP room with a frayed carpet. You realized just seeing that VIP room what the state of Cambodia probably looked like. But it was interesting coming into Phnom Penh because there was only one hotel in Phnom Penh, the Cambodian. Embassy Bangkok had sent over a fax asking for reservations, but the hotel never received the fax.

Suddenly Cambodia was the story of the hour. Again, recovery from genocide, all this kind of thing, really gets the juices flowing. There were 400 journalists in Phnom Penh. There were all the other embassies coming in to get set up. An Australian military element had just arrived to help set up UNAMIC [United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia] which was to prepare for the arrival of the peacekeeping operation. We came in from the airport. Someone had lined up a car for us to get into. We saw this city, which had not at all recovered from 1975, when it was emptied out by the Khmer Rouge, no maintenance no anything.

We arrived at this hotel, full of all these foreigners, from all these different groups. There was no room at the inn, whatsoever. We didn't know what to do. Finally, the hotel was able to make room for a couple of us. That hotel is where I lived for two years. What was good about the hotel was that if you needed to get word to a UN official in the middle of the night, in case of a crisis, or if you needed to contact the French ambassador at some point, it was so easy to knock on the door, or slip a note under the door. You would see each other at breakfast. It was almost incestuous, but it was a good way to operate. The bad part was the journalists all knew where you stayed, too, and your door would be knocked on at all hours. In that first flurry, you had CNN, all the important media in the world, which descended on Phnom Penh.

My arrival on the 11th was followed four days later by the arrival of Prince Sihanouk. The Phnom Penh authorities tried to get the royal palace, which had become decrepit as well, in some kind of shape, for Sihanouk. Of course, Sihanouk's arrival received lots more attention. The last time Sihanouk was in the country was when he was in there as a symbol for the Khmer Rouge, but as he called it, he was under "palace arrest" the whole time. He was a symbol, but in name and image only. He had no authority. He had lost 15 children and grandchildren to the Khmer Rouge slaughter or to disease. He had very bittersweet memories himself about coming back. But, like any other Cambodian, he was thrilled to set foot again on Cambodian soil. It was a very exciting period of time. I presented my own credentials to Sihanouk four days later, i.e., the letter from Bush. The Prince and I had had a relationship during his time in exile, when we would consult with him and his party on the peace process.

The credentials ceremony November 19, 1991 was the beginning of a very strong relationship with Sihanouk, who proved to be indispensable, almost as an umbrella for the peace process. Every Cambodian would look up to that umbrella; even the Khmer Rouge had to respect him. The Cambodian instinctive respect for the king was virtually universal. Sihanouk and his

presence enabled us, despite daily challenges to the peace agreement, to restore peace to Cambodia, because no one in the final analysis would stand up to Sihanouk. His instincts were good instincts. He told me frequently, “You know, I made many mistakes in my past.” He would often refer to the U.S./Cambodian relationship, of course, which was terrible during the 1960s. But, I would say, “Your Royal Highness, we all make mistakes.” He said, “No, believe me, I made more mistakes, and I have to live with that for the rest of my life.” Sihanouk was an interesting person to deal with, and he proved to be a valuable and indispensable player in the whole peace process.

Q: What was the government plan when you arrived there? How did you deal with it?

TWINING: As I said, coming into town, you saw the city, which had deteriorated. Phnom Penh used to be considered a pearl. Phnom Penh, in the early 1960s, was probably much nicer than Singapore in the early 1960s. But Phnom Penh had deteriorated badly just like the rest of the country. The regime running the country had no money to fix up anything. It was hanging on by the skin of its teeth. I had to decide early on what my own relations would be with the Phnom Penh regime.

There were those in Washington who felt strongly that I shouldn't talk to its officials, I shouldn't be seen with them. I felt, “My heaven, I was there. They were part of the peace agreement, so we had to deal with these people.” Honestly, we found people almost hungry for attention. We didn't have to give them much attention, at first. For example, we might need only to complain about roadblocks outside the city. You were not going to respect those roadblocks. You were there as a representative of the United States. With the Cambodian peace agreement, you had the right to go anywhere you wanted in the country. If it was only to tell them this, they welcomed your coming in and telling them this. This was a regime that was maybe two deep in a ministry, that is to say those people who really had any ability to make decisions, any knowledge of how to run a government. You realized that you needed to work with them. Again, they were party to the Cambodian peace agreement. You realized you could help bring them along to respect the terms of the peace agreement. So, that was the way I decided we had to work things. Indeed, my point of view won out.

Q: As I get it, Sihanouk was the king, the head of government, at that time, or not?

TWINING: No. Under the Cambodian peace accords, we established an idea that came from my office, I think, more than anywhere else. That is something called the Supreme National Council. We were saying that the Phnom Penh regime would be in charge initially until the UN operation came in full force, continuing to administer the great majority of the country. The Khmer Rouge administered their little areas of the country. The non-communist groups administered their tiny areas of the country. In reality, 95% of the country was in the hands of the Phnom Penh regime. So, we said each group can administer its part of the country, but the Supreme National Council would be constituted as the overall governing body of Cambodia. On the Supreme National Council were the four Cambodian parties, two non-communist, the Khmer Rouge, and the Phnom Penh authorities. Also present were the five permanent members of the Security Council. The UN special representative also had a seat – the most important among foreigners – at the table.

Prince Sihanouk was chairman of the Supreme National Council. He was head of state, not head of government. We basically said there was no government. The Supreme National Council was to make rules for Cambodia and to work with the UN, and coordinate with the rest of us, the activities leading to peace and elections in Cambodia. We did not recognize any government *per se*, during that period.

Q: The prime minister, I guess, was?

TWINING: Hun Sen was Prime Minister of the Phnom Penh regime (formally, the State of Cambodia) at that time, and is today Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Q: Who had been there for a very long time.

TWINING: Since 1979. Since he came in, behind the Vietnamese troops, although he first served as Foreign Minister at age 28, if I remember correctly.

Q: How important when you arrived there was Vietnamese influence?

TWINING: That's a very good question. I found myself thinking about that this morning. The view outside Cambodia was that the Vietnamese continued to run Cambodia, that the Vietnamese had made some dramatic withdrawals of troops but still had troops hidden in Cambodia. There was also the view that they pulled the strings of the Phnom Penh regime. They told them what to do.

However, as I mentioned before, there was the view of then Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach that a Vietnamese Can't tell a Cambodian what to do, because they will react and do just the opposite. Cambodians do have a visceral reaction to anything Vietnamese. Still, the Vietnamese had influence. People like Hun Sen and almost his entire regime had basically fled Cambodia, either before or during the Khmer Rouge period, to save their lives.

Q: Fled to Vietnam?

TWINING: I'm sorry, had fled to Vietnam, from Cambodia. Even many of them had been in the Khmer Rouge, like Hun Sen. But the Khmer Rouge was always turning in on themselves, and these people had to flee for their lives. They owed something to Vietnam, for allowing them to stay and organize a resistance with Vietnamese help, to come into Cambodia. So, there was a natural inclination to work with the Vietnamese and at least to listen to the Vietnamese. An important duty for the UN, more than we initially realized, was that as it came increasingly into Cambodia, especially with the full-fledged UN operation called UNTAC, the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, which arrived February/March 1992, it had to be alert to each and every rumor of Vietnamese presence anywhere. Were there Vietnamese advisors in a ministry? It had to investigate that. Were there Vietnamese troops hidden in the rubber plantations of eastern Cambodia? It had to investigate that. Indeed, the investigation turned out, without exception, to show there were no Vietnamese sitting in the shadows of Cambodia, despite many Cambodian preconceptions to the contrary.

Q: Did you get the feeling that the Vietnamese had had enough of this too? I think it's one of these things we're they were thinking that they were stuck, and all they wanted to do was get the hell out.

TWINING: Absolutely. This was very true in Cambodia. The Vietnamese would confide in you that it had been so difficult working there. I had heard of Vietnamese advisors who had been in ministries, up until 1989, early 1990. They made it no secret to their colleagues in ministry X that they were happy to go home. You heard it over and over. But, again, this had to be proven to the world, including to people in Washington, that the Vietnamese had indeed left.

Q: So, what were you there for?

TWINING: We diplomats, the permanent five, the ASEAN ambassadors, Australia, Japan, Germany, were all there to support the UN operation in Cambodia, and to make sure the Cambodians respected the peace agreement that the UN was there to implement. Frankly, every day was a challenge. Every day, something would happen where you had to weigh in with one player or the other. The only group I could not talk to, was not allowed to talk to, was the Khmer Rouge. That was simply verboten. That meant if we wanted to make sure we conveyed a message to the Khmer Rouge, I had to work through the Chinese, basically. Sometimes through the UN, but especially the Chinese. That is why it was so important for the permanent five to be in place. There was one day we were together five times during the day, for different meetings, because of different crisis. We were always together, as the five permanent members of the Security Council, the five ambassadors in Phnom Penh.

We had to work with the ASEAN diplomats, as well. They, too, had their entrées into the parties, so we established something called the core group. The perm five, the main ASEAN...

Q: The main five again were?

TWINING: The U.S., U.K, France, the Soviet Union, and China. So, we five ambassadors also formed a core group together with the main ASEAN ambassadors, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, the main ASEANs, because we had to make sure that we coordinated our approach on Cambodian issues. There were often times we would feel strongly about bringing in the Vietnamese and the Lao, and did so. We wanted to make sure Cambodia's neighbors, plus Thailand of course, were also involved in any decisions, and weighing in. It was important. The Vietnamese ambassador and I maintained close relations, establishing a dialogue we both found very useful. This was the way we worked things.

Again, there were so frequently crises. One crisis that arose early on was on November 27, 1991. The Khmer Rouge finally, a couple of days earlier, sent two important people to Phnom Penh to become part of the SNC. One was a so-called acting President Khieu Samphan, another was a military general named Son Sen. Two days later, they were viciously attacked in the house they had rented. Indeed, Mark Storella and I went over to the area. We had no relations with them, but something was happening, and we wanted to see what it was. We stood outside. A mob was attacking the Khmer Rouge leaders, who frankly were there to help carry out the peace

agreement. We wanted them to carry out the peace agreement. People were up in a tree watching. The tree started to topple over. It was a small tree, and it fell partly on me. People had invaded the Khmer Rouge house. The next thing I saw was a bloodied Khieu Samphan and Son Sen coming out of the house, under some protection of the Phnom Penh regime, to get into a car, and get out of there.

We were very suspicious. What was really happening? Why was this mob suddenly going after the Khmer Rouge? Was it a spontaneous thing? I was convinced it wasn't a spontaneous thing. Indeed, I heard afterward from a close friend of mine, who had been on the roof of his apartment building, close by, that he spotted people with walkie talkies, saying, "Tell them to advance now," or "Wait, keep them back." These were people from the Phnom Penh regime managing this "demonstration". I am confident that was true. They are the ones who finally rescued the Khmer Rouge when it had gone far enough. This demonstration was hardly a positive move and influenced what happened next.

The Khmer Rouge left Phnom Penh immediately. That was the end of the peace agreement for the moment. The Khmer Rouge started to act out on the battlefield again. They began to shoot at UN helicopters, UN vehicles. It became a bad time. This resulted from a serious miscalculation on the part of, I'm convinced, the Phnom Penh regime. For months, Sihanouk and others, the Chinese, worked to cajole the Khmer Rouge to reenter the peace process. The crisis lasted for six months. Note that an important part of the peace agreement was to get the armies of all four parties to come into cantonment camps and disarm, prior to demobilization. The non-communists were willing participants. The Phnom Penh regime was less willing. It started to bring in some guys with arms that were so antiquated you wondered where the real arms were. When it was obvious the Khmer Rouge were no longer involved and didn't send troops into cantonment, then the Phnom Penh regime stopped playing ball, based on that. So, it really had bad effects. The entire cantonment, disarmament, and demobilization process was a failure. There was no longer any confidence.

The UN, the UN special representative for UNTAC arrived in early 1992, Mr. Yasushi Akashi of Japan, a UN career official. The diplomatic role, and Akashi's role, was still to try to get all the Cambodians to work together. If they didn't work together, if we didn't have a semblance of peace in the country, how could we have free and fair elections? We finally, by hook and by crook, got the Khmer Rouge back into the process, but without significant change to the military equation. We realized in hindsight that the UN operation should have been a Chapter 7 operation. It was a Chapter 6 operation.

Q: What is the difference?

TWINING: The difference is: Chapter 6 is for peaceful settlement of disputes. You get peacekeeping troops (in Cambodia we had 16,000 for heaven's sakes), but they cannot use their weapons at all except in self-defense. Chapter 7 is a more aggressive way of operating to ensure peace. That is what we have had to have in places in Africa. The peacekeeping force is more assertive. It's not just a question of keeping two parties separated; it's a question of enforcing UN decisions. Akashi, on the day he left Cambodia in August 1993, told me at the airport, "We should have had Chapter 6 ½." We didn't need to be completely assertive, to enforce UN

decisions, but we needed to have more ability to use force than we had under Chapter 6. Personally, I believe the Security Council adopted Chapter 6 because potential troop contributors did not want to take casualties. Indeed, a senior UN official told me that officials of six of the twelve troop contributors told him outright, “no casualties,” during the organizational negotiations in New York.

That was the weakness, because it meant the UN could not enforce the agreement when it came to cantonment, disarmament, and demobilization. It meant that the UN, which sent people into each ministry of the Phnom Penh regime to exercise control couldn't enforce its decisions. If it was supposed to run the Ministry of Interior, run the police, in reality it couldn't enforce its, or SNC, decisions. It meant that the Hun Sen regime continued to have a leg up, to administer Cambodia, basically. This was a real weakness, due not to the peace agreement but to UNSC decisions for implementation.

On the other hand, we had to make things work as best we could with those tools we had. That included Prince Sihanouk weighing in with the individual parties to make them play the game according to the rules of the peace agreement. It was just a very dynamic time. What it led to, finally, was a UN run election. The UN normally just oversees elections, but on May 23, 1993, it actually ran the elections. It organized the elections in Cambodia. That was a key date. It remains a key date, because the elections chose members of a constituent assembly to write a constitution. That assembly then turned itself into a national assembly, party representation the basis for forming an internationally recognized government. Those elections were so important.

Up until that time, the Khmer Rouge hadn't really decided how to play the game. We got them back on the Supreme National Council but they refused to participate in the election. I was under instruction to avoid the Khmer Rouge, to the point where I couldn't even shake their hands, if they were facing me in a receiving line. Once at the Royal Palace, Khieu Samphan and Son Sen hid behind a potted plant to avoid our mutual embarrassment. Later, Khieu Samphan said to me, “Mr. Ambassador, this is ridiculous.”

Q: Who was Khieu Samphan?

TWINING: He was the putative president of the Khmer Rouge or Democratic Kampuchea, as it was called formally. He was a member of the Supreme National Council. Cambodia used English, French, and Khmer. I used each language about a third of the time. He said to me one day in French, when he was in a receiving line, with Sihanouk and the other Cambodians on the SNC, “Mr. Ambassador, this is ridiculous. Let's at least shake hands.” I said, “You're right, it's ridiculous.” At least, I shook hands with the man. But I was forbidden to engage in substantive meetings with him.

Q: I'm almost worried about this, as far as diplomatic relations. When the going gets tough, we withdraw our most experienced person in a country, i.e., the ambassador, to show disapproval. The whole system is almost designed to create a breach, rather than to heal a breach, by telling people they can't do what they are supposed to do.

TWINING: I agree with you 100%. We always need to maintain contact. If you withdraw the ambassador, for God's sake, keep a chargé d'affaire, and vice versa for the other party. Whether it's Western Sahara, an independence movement, or some other element we don't recognize, we still should be able to talk to them. It was absolutely true in Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge, as well, in my view.

Q: This is tape five, side one, with Charlie Twining. Were the perm five all in agreement? I'm thinking of the Soviets and the French veering off in a different direction.

TWINING: You know, I guess what had happened before we went into Cambodia, was important. We had the Paris conference in 1989. We then had perm five meetings. We also had meetings together with ASEAN, all leading up to November 1991. In the course of those meetings, often the people were the same people. For example, the Chinese ambassador and the Soviet ambassador had been in every single meeting with me, along the way. From 1989, 1990, 1991. We knew each other well. We were used to going back and forth. The French and the British ambassadors were new, but the French and the Indonesians had co-chaired the entire peace process. Because of that, our relations with the French and Indonesians - Ali Alatas was the Indonesia Foreign Minister, and Roland Dumas the French Foreign Minister, and the people at the Quai d'Orsay - our relations were very close. We had worked together so much. So, once we were in Phnom Penh, we had gotten over the threshold of national arguments, if you will.

By that time, the Chinese realized that being tied to the Khmer Rouge was doing them no good. The world had changed. The Khmer Rouge were a part of history they didn't want to bother with any longer. They were opening up to the non-communist Cambodians. They were opening up to others in the world, not to mention the United States. The Soviet Union had Vietnam and the Phnom Penh regime incumbent like a yoke around its neck. They had been supporting these people. They were no longer in a position to support anybody. They couldn't support themselves. So, they themselves wanted to deal in a much more macro way on Cambodia. We found a genuine solidarity in viewing Cambodia. It really made it much easier to work together, to get an agreed point of view, as we worked with the Cambodians and worked with the UN. Indeed, the UN and we five ended up working so easily together. It really was a remarkable process. Had we not all worked together on the peace agreement, I think we would have continued to wage our little battles in Cambodia.

Q: Akashi is Japanese, right?

TWINING: Yes.

Q: How did you judge him?

TWINING: Akashi had a difficult role. Here was a man who was a professional UN civil servant. With any civil servant, there is a certain amount of cautiousness as you move forward in the world. He became head of a peacekeeping operation of 16,000 soldiers, 3,000 police, 3,000 civilians, a total of 22,000 people. This was the largest peacekeeping operation the UN ever had, the first peacekeeping operation that was so comprehensive in approach. The refugee part of it, the developmental, rehabilitation part of it, the taking over, theoretically, of a government, and

trying to run the administration of Cambodia. He was dealing with this terrible rebel group, the Khmer Rouge, which part of the time wasn't even open to dealing with the UN. It was very tough for Akashi.

At the same time, Mr. Akashi had a very difficult Secretary General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali. The UN organization itself was not organized to support a comprehensive peacekeeping operation. Akashi went back to the UN saying, "I've got to have visa specialists who can work with the Cambodian Foreign Ministry, visa people to make sure visas are given out in a non-partisan fashion to people." Passports were to be given, not just to the Phnom Penh regime people, but they also had to be given to the non-communists and the Khmer Rouge. The UN said, "We don't have any visa specialists." Akashi said, "It's part of the peace agreement that we will have people specialized in all kinds of government functions", and he insisted that New York had to come up with people who had the needed areas of specialization. The UN was very slow on logistics. It wasn't prepared to handle the logistical demands. Again, Boutros-Ghali also had very fixed views on things.

Q: Madeleine Albright was responsible for our opposing his reelection. But, personally, was this a real problem?

TWINING: Personally, he was a nice individual. I met with him at various times. He would meet with the perm five when he would come to Cambodia. We would sometimes go to New York. He was personally a nice man, but he had very fixed views. Akashi, for example, early on said, "You know, all there is right now is state radio. We have to find a way to get news out to Cambodians that is unvarnished by ideological input, such as the state of Cambodia, the Phnom Penh regime puts into it." These efforts to try to take over state radio finally had some success, but it took a long time. He said, "The UN needs its own radio." Boutros-Ghali said, "The UN doesn't have radio stations." Akashi said, "I think this is the only way we can get out to the public what is happening." Boutros-Ghali opposed it until maybe late 1992. Finally, Akashi wore him down. He said, "Well, alright."

UN radio was one of the biggest successes it had in Cambodia, because otherwise, where were Cambodians getting their news? Mainly, from VOA. Now, every UN peacekeeping operation, to my knowledge, has a UN radio station. Akashi had to wear down Boutros-Ghali. I give him a lot of credit. My main criticism of Akashi came when... He knows it; we talked about it over and over. One day, Akashi and his military commander, a wonderful Australian General named John Sanderson, decided they would go into the Khmer Rouge area. This is sometime during the first half of 1992. They wanted to assert UN authority, but they also wanted to talk to the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge put a bamboo pole across their highway. Akashi and Sanderson said, "We cannot force our way in. We're Chapter 6, we cannot force our way in." Well, I reacted very strongly. Others did, too.

Some of the non-communist Cambodians said, "My gosh, you go into our territory, you mean you won't go into theirs?" Hun Sen also reacted. I reacted very strongly by saying, "This is a place where you should have forced your way in." Again, both of them told me, "We did not consider that to be in our mandate." It showed something to the Khmer Rouge regarding UN weakness, something the UN could never overcome with the Khmer Rouge. Of course, it's a

judgment call, and I could see their point of view. I just felt it was the wrong call at the time. Akashi was a very good man. He tried his best. He would get caught between competing agendas of the Cambodians and Prince Sihanouk, who felt he was still the sovereign of Cambodia. No one should tell him what to do. I believe that Boutros-Ghali and the UN organization should have been more responsive than they were, or than they could have been. I give him credit for doing as much as he did.

Q: In a way, I can see it must have been difficult for you, being an American, who is proactive. If you need a radio, for God's sake, put up a radio. But, also seeing the garbage not being collected, or something. Did you almost have to sit on your hands to keep from getting involved in what amounts to nation building? Were you there as a consultant, for this government? You weren't out to do anything outside of that? Were you just part of this consultant apparatus or were you able to get out and do things?

TWINING: It was somewhere in between. I was doing all the above. Theoretically, you were there as a diplomat, and you did nice diplomatic things, and went to cocktail parties, if you will. But that wasn't getting the job done. It was obvious from day one you had to be proactive. You had to be proactive, diplomatically, but you also realized that the garbage needed to be picked up, if you will. A multi-faction regime had almost no ability to pick up the garbage. Phnom Penh, in 1991, was garbage strewn. Squatters were living in the majority of the buildings. It was really in bad shape. Our job was to make sure the people charged with carrying out tasks, carried them out. Therefore, we pressed the UN. "Okay, you inserted people into the governor's office of Phnom Penh. You have to try to give them the resources and the support they need to make sure the garbage gets picked up."

Finally, I think it was the UN, or it may have been another country, because of the pressures about garbage, which gave some garbage trucks to Phnom Penh. The UN and the Cambodians in Phnom Penh made sure those garbage trucks moved. That they had gas to move, and the like. You needed to stay on top of these things. You had to press to make sure things were done, when necessary. You also had another tool. That was your own aid program. The UN tried to coordinate all assistance, at least for the rehabilitation of Cambodia. UNDP was a strong player, the strongest of the UN specialized agencies in Cambodia. You had considerable coordination with UNDP to make sure things got done. It was similarly aware of the need to have the garbage picked up.

At the same time we, the French, and others, had our own bilateral aid programs to use for institution building, or use to help with infrastructure, or to use in support of non-government organizations. Your aid programs would help support the overall objectives that you were there to meet. You tried to coordinate these things as best you could. The main thing was to get the people responsible for getting things done, doing so.

Q: For the person who reads this, I said, "garbage." It's an example, but it's a generic term, meaning, lights, and electricity, whatever you're talking about.

TWINING: Good.

Q: But, did we go in there with an AID program? Did we have AID people or was that to come later?

TWINING: No. We brought in an AID program, not long after I took over. My office had worked with counterparts in AID Washington for almost two years previously in thinking through what AID might do after a peace settlement. AID wisely had set aside funds in its budget. The AID program wasn't large, but it was large enough. We decided we needed to support some of the things that UN agencies were doing. We couldn't give support to the Phnom Penh regime. But we could support NGO development, for example. When I went into Cambodia, basically there were no NGOs. Cambodians didn't have non-governmental organizations.

Early on, we started using our AID program to bring in the American Red Cross, for example. Catholic Relief Service was there doing some things on the international side. The international NGOs needed support. We insisted that the Phnom Penh regime had to allow local NGOs to get started. I give Akashi a great deal of credit, because once he got there, he felt, too, that NGOs were an awfully important tool in democratic and other development. One of the things the U.S. did, for example, when NGOs started up, was support a project to train paralegal people who would stand up in courts to help defend Cambodians, the Cambodian Defenders Project. There was no way of Cambodians defending themselves, in tribunals, which were pretty puny tribunals to begin with. So, we looked for ways like this to help Cambodia get going.

I must admit I was overjoyed, when by the time I left Cambodia, toward the end of 1995, there were at least 400 Cambodian indigenous NGOs. When I happened to go back in 2001, there were more than ever. Nobody any longer knew how many there were. NGOs provided important ways to get things done. You assisted local NGOs and budding political parties by supporting efforts by the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute to do training of Cambodians. How do you do financing? How do you organize how to run for elections? There were other efforts to help with local development and human rights.

Q: Did you have a real embassy? Were there political officers, things like that?

TWINING: I'll never forget. Early on, we had a wonderful secretary come from Bangkok to become our secretary at the U.S. mission, which is what we called it, Eunhee Aruizu. I remember we had staff meetings sitting on her bed in the Cambodiana hotel. We had at first a communicator with a satellite communications device. We had an admin person who came over from Bangkok before replacing him with our own, Jim Derrick. We started to form a small nucleus of an embassy. Before we left Washington, I had to do a memo to Lawrence Eagleburger, who at that point was Deputy Secretary of State, getting approval for slots to set up the embassy, the mission. Eagleburger said, "Look, we want to keep this a very small embassy. All agencies together should never total more than 10 people." I thought it was nice, but I didn't think it was realistic. You're talking about other agencies, AID coming in alone would be several people. In any case, those were our marching orders. We lined up a DCM, political officer, consular officer, economic officer, a secretary, and an admin officer, as the core. AID sent in at first a TDY AID officer, then a permanent director, Lee Twentymen. Mr. Kem Sos stayed on as special assistant. Captain Rich Arant started a POW/MIA office.

Well, that is how we began. Then it started to grow. Obviously this core of a U.S. mission became the core of an embassy. By the end of 1991, we were fully staffed. The people who had been in Cambodian language training, which again I insisted upon because you needed it if only to order a meal, a bowl of soup, arrived. Those who came from Bangkok, such as the secretary, studied Cambodian in Phnom Penh. Things began growing. We needed AID people to implement the program. You couldn't rely on Bangkok. We needed regular administrative staff to do things. You couldn't rely on Bangkok.

When we first opened up, soon after I got there, Embassy Bangkok sent over a couple of vehicles that it was going to dispose of in a sale. All we could do was try to keep them running, but they were better than nothing. That was the way we got started. I had to make a decision early on about where to put an embassy. In fact, an advance team was sent out to look at the building situation before I arrived. I decided, and my view held, that the old American embassy, a big white building which the Cambodian fisheries service occupied after 1979, was such a symbol of the pre-Khmer Rouge period, located right in the heart of Phnom Penh and a good place for demonstrations to occur, was inappropriate. We didn't want to go back to this facility. The fisheries service was in it; let them have it. The large building would have cost a fortune to repair.

Eagleburger said he wanted 10 people, and I said, "Fine." I wanted to get a small building hidden off the main streets, where we could have an embassy. I didn't want a place that would facilitate hostile demonstrations. I didn't want a place that symbolized the war years. So, this is what we did. We found a little villa, which was fixed up as our mission headquarters. The key day was in the spring of 1992, when we raised the American flag over that villa, and made it the U.S. mission. After the elections, it later became the U.S. embassy. Since then, we have outgrown the space. Staff members kept increasing. USIA came in. Before our opening, the Defense Department said it didn't need an attaché in Phnom Penh, and then it was clamoring to get in a year later. Now the U.S. is building a brand new embassy in Phnom Penh, because we have outgrown that villa, and the other villa nearby, attached to it. That is how we started out in Phnom Penh with the U.S. mission.

Q: How about instructions from Washington? Were you given relatively free reign, because it doesn't sound like the sort of thing... You know, if you're consulting at a hotel at night with other missions, it's a pretty fast-moving town.

TWINING: I guess that was the beauty. You didn't have very good communication. You had a little piece of equipment that could shoot out short messages and receive short messages. Maybe that was just right, because honestly, this was such a new kind of hotel room operation. I had to decide what I was going to call myself, as a title. The State Department couldn't make up its mind what to call me. As I mentioned earlier, I called myself U.S. Special Representative and our office was the U.S. Mission. None of this fit easily into the State "mold".

It struck me, moreover, that State didn't always have to know everything we were doing, how we were doing things. State had to know what we needed, in terms of support. State had to know how compliance with the peacekeeping agreement was going on. State had to know how the UN

was doing, because we were paying one-third of the bill. I knew the basic guidelines about the Khmer Rouge. I interpreted more flexibly the guidelines about dealing with the Phnom Penh regime because it was a reality we had to deal with. We had to make a lot of decisions on the run, if you will, and tell State about them afterward. State was supportive. I don't criticize State or the White House. They basically had confidence in those of us on the ground. We just made sure we had enough communication to keep that confidence. Also, I came back every three months for a week, partly to see the family, but also it was a chance to consult. I would see the Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs. I would see the Assistant Secretary of State. I would see NSC, the Pentagon, AID. It was important to maintain dialogue.

We started getting visits too. The more visits you had, whether it was Senator McCain, or Senator Kerry, or Senator Bob Smith, or the POW/MIA people, or people from the administration, or key staffers from Capitol Hill, the more they realized the conditions under which we were working. You tried to get them out of Phnom Penh. Again, I made a point early on that we had freedom of travel. You didn't take your life in your hands by going into the Khmer Rouge areas; the Khmer Rouge were not a friendly party to the United States. In most other places, if you could get over the hellish roads, you could get out and about. You realized you needed to get visitors out and about. Of course, a lovely benefit of being in Cambodia was Angkor Wat.

I went to Siem Reap where Angkor is located. Often, I took visitors there. In 1991, Angkor was empty. There would be nobody else there. It was spooky. There were some guards around, military personnel from the Phnom Penh regime. A guard would be guarding the big temple of Angkor Wat. It was one guy with a little AK-47. Khmer Rouge were not far away. They would come in at night sometimes. You had to watch out for cobras because the place was grown up in high grass. Angkor was a lovely place to visit. I never saw all the hundreds of ruins. Every time I went, I tried to see one more. But I could never see them all. It was great seeing one of the wonders of the world. Again, you wanted to get visitors there, and we did.

Cambodia was not just a war torn, decrepit country; it did have a proud history and culture. You wanted to enjoy these at the same time that you were trying to make sure that peace was restored. Our secret goal, we, the British, the French, was to defang and get rid of the Khmer Rouge. In the final analysis, that is what happened in Cambodia.

I should talk a little about the Khmer Rouge. Again, they themselves never quite knew how to react to the peace agreement. Pol Pot, the head of the Khmer Rouge, was an isolated figure. He himself may have made the decisions, but he was not where it was happening. Even some people in the Khmer Rouge who were in Phnom Penh didn't tell Pol Pot everything they were doing, I suspect. The group had isolated itself from the peace process. Once their two key individuals were attacked soon after the peace process began, the Khmer Rouge isolated themselves for six months, as we noted, and their participation remained uneven after that.

In some places, they would cooperate with the UN. There was a place in western Cambodia, Thmar Puok, where there were some Australian police officials. I give them full credit. They were in a non-communist area, but the Khmer Rouge were five kilometers nearby. The Australians started reaching out to the Khmer Rouge about working together. By gosh, the local

Khmer Rouge said, "Yes, okay." I remember going into this area that the Australians helped open up, one where the Khmer Rouge had strong influence, and going by a guard shack. The Khmer Rouge guards would look at me and I would look at them. I would keep driving. They would go back to sitting down. You always wondered how much Khmer Rouge central authorities controlled their local cadres. You wondered that during the Khmer Rouge era, as well as even when I was there. The Australians, in little Thmar Puok were able to get the police of all four factions to sit down and work together. That was really an accomplishment.

On the other hand, the Khmer Rouge sometimes made it clear that they had force they could command. One day Australian Ambassador John Holloway and I were in Thmar Puok. Suddenly, we were surrounded by 300-armed Khmer Rouge. They were carrying signs like, "Down with the peace agreement," and "Down with the West," things like that. We didn't know how to react. We were by ourselves. There was nobody protecting us, whatsoever. We were in a car. We decided that we couldn't do anything so we would keep going in the middle of 300 Khmer Rouge soldiers, demonstrating against us. At one point, the Australian ambassador got out of the car and told a marcher that he wanted to buy one of the signs. I think it said, "Down with Australia," or something. The Khmer Rouge guy said, "Meet me around the corner afterward." They were showing their strength, but at the same time, they didn't know how to deal with us.

To us, a key issue was whether the Khmer Rouge would participate in the elections? All of us, the UN first and foremost, Sihanouk, everyone encouraged the Khmer Rouge to participate. "Bring some candidates into areas where you are. Let them stand for elections." They had been indecisive for months, which showed they didn't know what to do. They finally said, "No," and you wonder if that wasn't a real mistake for them.

On election day, May 23, 1993, we found the Khmer Rouge villages also wanted to go and vote. They had to come out of the Khmer Rouge areas, walk into non-Khmer Rouge areas and go to the ballot box. You heard stories about them not knowing what to do. You started hearing, mid-morning, of the Khmer Rouge spreading the word to villagers, "Don't vote, don't vote. We don't want you in it." It was too late. One Cambodian woman told me she saw a whole village walking down the road in northwestern Cambodia to go to vote. She said to them, "Where are you going?" "We're all going to vote." "Do your leaders want you to vote?" They said, "We're going to vote anyway." We realized the Khmer Rouge was crumbling. That was a good sign. Had they participated in the process, maybe it would have been different. But at that point, they were losing control of people, and they never regained it.

Q: Did anybody talk about what was the ideology of the Khmer Rouge? I gather it came out of the French intellectual stuff in Paris in the 1920s, or something, and turned septic. Did you get a feel for the forces at the time?

TWINING: It was a strange combination. I would see the Khmer Rouge coming out of the cold, if you will. This was in 1993 and onward. Whole Khmer Rouge units would say, "We're tired of living in the forest. We want to come in." Their families wanted to come in and be normal people again. You would see these people who were illiterate farm boys and illiterate farm girls. That was it. Yet, whom did they have in Phnom Penh? They had these educated people. Khieu

Samphan, the putative leader of the Khmer Rouge had a Ph.D. I read his dissertation, from France. Pol Pot had also studied in France but failed his exams twice. He never finished. Yet, he was the leader of the Khmer Rouge. These were pseudo-intellectuals, I would call them, who were seized by the writings of Jean Paul Sartre and Marx. There is a place on the Left Bank of Paris where they and their comrades would gather on Sunday afternoons and talk about the dialectic and Cambodia when they were students in the early 1950s. I went to see it once. These were mostly people who really never learned very much about the real world. They were all caught up in this funny ideology. Pol Pot worked in a commune in Yugoslavia one summer, for example.

I mentioned earlier that in 1967 there was a peasant uprising in a place called Samlaut in western Cambodia. Because the villagers were getting less for their rice than before under Sihanouk's regime, they couldn't live on that amount. The Khmer Rouge, the pseudo-intellectuals who had been in Paris in the early 1950s, asserted leadership over such peasant sentiment - that they were being treated unfairly - in western Cambodia and far northeastern Cambodia. You had this "marriage" of the two groups that lasted throughout the whole period of the Khmer Rouge, the uneducated and the pseudo-intellectuals. That is the way it went. Finally, I was convinced that the Khmer Rouge leadership, however much they may have believed in the early 1950s in the ideology, by the 1970s it was simply a way of seizing and holding onto power. That's all. They used these people. They used the appeal of King Sihanouk. In 1970, he was so irritated at the Lon Nol coup that he called upon people to rise up and support him, and they could do so by supporting the Khmer Rouge, another mistake he acknowledges he made. They used all of this to get people to rally to the Khmer Rouge, but supporters were mostly rural people who probably had a sense of grievance, but also didn't know any better.

Q: You were there when the Soviet Union came apart. Did that have any effect?

TWINING: I suppose it had an effect. Soviet Ambassador Yuri Myakotnykh became the Russian ambassador, but he had no money to fund his embassy anymore. What he did was very clever. Aeroflot still flew into Phnom Penh from Moscow. He took all the Aeroflot receipts and used them to pay for running the embassy. He was thus able to maintain a facade of a normal embassy operation. I remember well, he acknowledged by telling me, "You know, in the past, they were always so accustomed to getting aid from us, we have no more aid to give them." You felt embarrassed for him. As you sat in donor coordination meetings, each of us would say what we were doing, and what we intended to do, and how it all supported the overall objectives. The Russian would sit there and say, "I'm sorry, we have nothing we can do right now," except to try to continue to support any Cambodian students studying in Russia so they didn't starve to death. That was about it. You felt sorry for them.

The Cambodians were not fools. They realized that their "Big Brother" who had been helping them during the 1980s, no longer was there to help them anymore. That helped them shift to looking much more at increasing ties with Asia, and developing ties with the West.

Q: Did the United States have any attraction to Cambodians, or were they really looking toward ASEAN and China?

TWINING: They were probably looking toward us more than toward ASEAN, at first. We kept saying, "Look, it's healthy to look at ASEAN. They're your immediate neighbors. They're the ones you need to trade with, to have political relationships with." I don't want to exaggerate VOA's influence, but it really made a name for America. The Phnom Penh people listened to VOA, just like everyone else.

Q: We had Khmer broadcast.

TWINING: We had Khmer broadcasts. Prince Ranariddh, the son of King Sihanouk, was basically prisoner in Phnom Penh during the Lon Nol regime, until they let him out. He learned English by listening to VOA. He acknowledges that to this day. America had a lot of influence. We were also well known as one of the backers of the Paris Peace Accords. We had also opposed Hanoi and were known for our communist opposition to communism. That got a lot of Cambodians thinking that we were maybe the saviors, if you will. It enhanced our image further than it should have because we didn't have the means to deliver. America was interested in Cambodia mainly because we saw the killing that had taken place from 1975 until the end of 1978, and remained horrified by it.

Like Rwanda afterward, we wondered whether we should have done more to try to prevent it. We wanted to make sure it didn't happen again. That is why we were involved in the peace agreement. Was that the basis of a long-term relationship with Cambodia? No. Cambodia is basically a country in the second or third tier of countries. That is how one treats it. It was ridiculous to have this over confidence in what America would do for Cambodia. It was in our interest to make sure the Cambodians dealt more with Southeast Asians, and open up to the whole world. That is the message that I continued to give them.

Q: Did we have any type of visa program to, in particular, get students to the United States?

TWINING: We started a consular operation in Phnom Penh in 1992, just to try to give normal visas. We didn't really have a government program to get Cambodians to the U.S., unfortunately. Indeed, once we had a government program for Indochina, it was oriented toward Vietnam, much more than Cambodia. There were private organizations, though, like the Indochina Reconciliation Center, which did try to help Cambodian students come to the U.S., but that started very, very slowly.

Q: I would have thought that this would have been a venue that the French would have jumped into with both feet, the civilization process and all that.

TWINING: That is very good, Stuart, because the French did. In fact, we would often tell Washington, not that we were rivals of the French, but that this was what the French were doing, and why can't we do something comparable? The French were good at starting up a scholarship program for Cambodians to go to France. I take my hat off to them. When I saw that we weren't really in a position to do the same, my point of view was the more exposure the Cambodians could have to the West, whether it was France or West Germany, or the UK, or Sweden, the better I thought it was for Cambodia. All of their orientation had been to the Soviet Union and

Eastern Europe. It was time to broaden those minds. They wanted broadening. I was glad people like the French stood up and instead said they would give scholarships.

Q: On the Cambodians, I served my time in Vietnam. I have the greatest respect for the Vietnamese. They are hardworking people. I wouldn't be surprised if we had a Vietnamese origin president, at some point. They are extremely bright people. What about the Cambodians?

TWINING: I don't know what it is in a national character. You as an old Indochina hand know the saying, "The Vietnamese make the rice grow, the Cambodians watch it grow, and the Lao listen to it grow." I think there is something to that. There is an assertiveness among the Vietnamese that is not as much there with the Cambodians. The Cambodians are a gentler people. That is the reality. You have one very prominent Cambodian, Ambassador to the UN Sihan Siv, who has really worked himself up into positions of responsibility. You have other Cambodian Americans who have done well. A number of them have gone back to Cambodia. Some of them are in the Cambodian government today, as representatives of non-communist movements, with ministerial portfolios. On the other hand, they're not as assertive as the Vietnamese. It's a national characteristic. That is the reality.

Q: I wanted to talk about the relations with Prince Sihanouk. In my oral histories, I've talked with people who used to play volleyball and basketball with Prince Sihanouk, way back in the early 1950s. They had something called the "Sihanouk rules." In basketball, if you ever got hold of the ball, you let him take a shot, and then you went back. In volleyball, you never spiked the ball to Sihanouk. As time went on, he kicked us out. We had a lot of trouble. But, it is a very, very long relationship. During your time, how did you all work with him? Was he part of the consultant thing? Did he sit around with a group, and talk about what to do or not? How did this work?

TWINING: We had a lot of contact with the Prince, who became King after the 1993 elections. Sihanouk made a decision early on, right after he got back in 1991. He said, "The Supreme National Council will meet at the Royal Palace. If I am chairman, I will give it that status. We'll meet at the Royal Palace, rather than in a building of the Phnom Penh regime." That not only gave it a status of independence from the Phnom Penh government, but at the same time, it kept him fully involved. Not only the Supreme National Council, but also refugee meetings were held there. We had a wonderful UN refugee coordinator named Sergio Vieira de Mello who ran those meetings.

Q: He was one of those killed in Iraq.

TWINING: He was subsequently killed in Iraq. He did a spectacular job with the peacekeeping operation. De Mello was one of my best friends. We would get together on Sunday afternoons and drink wine and eat cheese together when we were both in Cambodia. There would also be rehabilitation meetings at the palace. All of this was under Prince Sihanouk's imprimatur and participation. When I was especially concerned about something, I would often get together with him quietly, privately, before SNC meetings, for example. He and I would go down the corridor, just the two of us, and talk. We established ways of communicating via someone on his staff. He would often sit down with the five permanent members when we had problems we wanted to

discuss in general with him, or together with Akashi and others. Sihanouk was very flexible. We had a lot of discussions together.

Sihanouk wasn't playing volleyball any longer, but he would often find reasons to give a dinner. The Chinese government assigned him a chef, from China. He was a wonderful chef. We got wonderful food. In fact, Sihanouk's personal staff was from China. The North Koreans gave him his bodyguards. That is just one of the funny ways Cambodia works, was working and still does. He would have evenings where he would begin by singing. He loved to sing. I've got four or five of his CDs. So, instead of volleyball, there would be sing-a-thons, if you will. These would go on until 12:00, 1:00 a.m., with dancing and the like. I often danced with Princess Monique, now the queen. It was very pleasant. Sihanouk brought a spice of life. Something very Cambodian was restored with Sihanouk coming back to Cambodia. I don't think there can ever be another Sihanouk. As I said before, he was indispensable to the peace process. In fact, we who often work on peacekeeping operations - there is one in Burundi now, for example - often regret that there is not a respected Sihanouk kind of figure who can be above all politics.

Q: Hadn't he really turned into an elder statesman? Would he sit back and ruminate about... You know, he's been through everything you can think of, including palace imprisonment, under the Khmer Rouge, exile in China, and what have you. Did he turn into someone who said, "We tried this, and it didn't work?" Did he seem to know with the Khmer what would work and what wouldn't work?

TWINING: He was 100% Khmer. By the time I went to Cambodia in 1991, and he returned to Cambodia, he was already an elder statesman. Indeed, he would call himself that. "I feel I'm an elder statesman today. I'm no longer the active ruler that I would have been 30 years ago." He recognized that. So, he would express his views, but you could also, knowing his views, talk to him quietly, and say, "Your Royal Highness," or "Your majesty (later), in line with your thinking about this issue, have you thought about extending that thought and adapting it in this way, a way perhaps that Hun Sen will find easier to work with?" He would often say, "You know, you're right. That would be better, if we could adapt it subtly." So, where he may have been on record as saying something publicly, he also had in his older age the wisdom that would enable him to shift gears in a constructive way. He knows his country, and he knows his people. Indeed, we as foreigners would often learn a great deal, have a great deal of insight from him, as to how something might work better.

Q: How about his son?

TWINING: Well, he has several sons and daughters. One of his daughters is an American citizen, in fact, as is a son. His most visible son is named Ranariddh. Ranariddh resembles Sihanouk physically. Ranariddh is highly educated. He is a doctor of law. He was co-prime minister after the elections. Even then, and even today as President of the National Assembly, he goes back to France every year and teaches law at a law school for a few weeks. Prince Ranariddh is a smart individual. He has lived abroad. He is probably much more of a world citizen than his father, who has more of an innate sense of how to deal with villagers. That is how destiny has shaped them. Sihanouk had formed a non-communist party, FUNCINPEC, a royalist movement. Sihanouk stepped down in the mid-1980s and let Ranariddh take over as

head of the party. Ranariddh continues to be president of FUNCINPEC. I think he would like to be the king's successor one day. Whether he will be is only 50, 50. [Postscript. Sihanouk later retired and his youngest son, Sihamoni, became King.]

Q: How about Hun Sen?

TWINING: Hun Sen is a street smart individual. Hun Sen came from a small village in a big province of eastern Cambodia called Kampong Cham. He followed the call of Sihanouk in 1970 and left high school to join the Khmer Rouge, which he understood was the anti-Lon Nol movement, the pro-Sihanouk movement. He escaped to Vietnam. He escaped to save his life in 1977. He came back in early 1979, behind the Vietnamese troops and became Foreign Minister at the age of 28. My Soviet ambassador friend met Hun Sen after the takeover. He went to Cambodia in February 1979 on a Soviet mission to see what Cambodia looked like. He said it was just awful, awful. He met Hun Sen at that time and said, "He's a very uneducated guy." Hun Sen didn't quite know what it meant to be foreign minister. There is always competition among Cambodians, and that includes among leaders of the Cambodian Peoples Party, the communist party behind the Phnom Penh regime. By 1991, Hun Sen was clearly first among equals. He is first among equals today. He didn't get there by being an apparatchik; he was there because he had political smarts. He had a connection with the military. He was ex-military, after all. Those were levers of power. We called it the Hun Sen regime, despite other important people who constituted rival power centers to Hun Sen. When I went back in 2001, on a subsequent assignment, for just a couple days, I saw a different Hun Sen. I saw a much more suave leader, a much more polished man in every way. He's just a very skillful politician, a very skillful individual. As he accumulated power, the more bodyguards he needed, the more behind the scenes maneuvering he had to do, especially as a result of the 1993 elections. He's there until someone gets him out.

I could work with him. He's an individual who speaks only Khmer. While my Khmer is not outstanding, he and I could deal with one another in Khmer. One night he called me up and said, "Look, we had a warning, if you will, to put it mildly, a terrorist warning, against your embassy. I just wanted you to know because I think you'd better take some precautions." I was glad he called me. He was someone I could deal with when we had concerns that the Phnom Penh regime needed to do such and such to be in compliance with the Paris agreements, or to honor the election results. He was someone I could talk to. I was especially pleased when my family came out to Cambodia for Christmas in 1994, on Christmas Eve Hun Sen and his wife had my wife and boys and me to dinner. I really appreciated that kindness. Yet, I also think of him as a man who was out to get and keep power, at almost any cost.

In those days, he felt he had to have good relations with the United States. That was a ticket, good relations with the West in general, but the U.S. in particular. Today, his ticket is good relations with China. I guess if I were in his position, I would adapt as well because we don't give much aid any longer. Our influence, unfortunately, isn't what it perhaps was. The Chinese are giving huge amounts of aid. He is working with his bread and butter. Anyway, that is Hun Sen.

Q: I think this is probably a good place to stop. We have talked about most of the personalities, but I think we want to talk about the 1993 elections, and the aftermath, and what you all were up to. Also, at the end, what was your embassy like? It was a very interesting time.

TWINING: It was a very fascinating period of my career, and the relations with the new China.

Q: Is there anything that we have been talking about that you want to mention as a subject?

TWINING: No. I really think we have hit the main things. Let's talk about the elections, and we'll go from there.

Q: Today is Bastille Day, July 14, 2004. Leading up to the election, I heard it was quite an apparatus there. Did you find yourself playing host to an awful lot of observers? Did you get involved with the preparations to the election?

TWINING: With everything that led up to the election. In fact, we all focused so much on the election, that in hindsight, one didn't focus sufficiently on the aftermath. This was the first election the UN had actually run, as opposed to overseeing. It brought in a two million dollar Cray computer that needed special air conditioning. Of course, once the election was over, nobody was even there to take care of it any longer. The election drew in lots and lots of people. Lots of organizations came in. Just on the international side, there was a lot of activity. One of the things we funded and the UN also funded, was election education for the parties and for communities. After all, this was really the first free and fair election Cambodia may have ever had, though it had had elections during the Sihanouk period, which may not have been quite as free and fair.

It was exciting. My staff and I went around the country a great deal. The UN Special Representative went around observing preparations and stepping in unannounced on voter education campaigns and the like. At the same time, the Cambodian themselves who were running for the elections were all excited. They were titillated. What was going to happen? Could they have a chance? Parties you never heard of, which may have consisted of one or two individuals suddenly came out of the woodwork for the elections. You had elections to choose people to be in the constituent assembly, which as I mentioned before, became the national assembly after writing the constitution. Based upon the number of people elected per party, would you have a coalition government or would one party have control? About a week before the elections, I suddenly found the two leading non-communists, Prince Ranariddh and the old patriarch of Cambodia, Son Sann, both of them having second and third thoughts about their chances of getting anywhere in elections, fearing that Hun Sen and his people would simply, one way or the other, scoop up all the votes. I had to spend time either individually or with others, trying to talk the non-communists into staying in the elections. Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia office director Chris Lafleur helped me considerable. This was just a week before the elections, when you thought the non-communist leaders would have been at the pinnacle of success. Anyway, we passed through that. There were international observers from all over the place. Many Cambodian observers, and we encouraged all of them...

Q: With these observers, in a way, you were one of the point people by inviting all these people into Cambodia. These are known by some to be “sons of bitches” from out of town, coming in, poking around, not being particularly culturally aware or anything else. Was that a problem?

TWINING: You know, it really was not a problem. These people had the right attitude. They were well meaning. A number of them had had Southeast Asian experience or UN experience. The UN also had a lot of UN volunteers on board to do election monitoring and run the elections. It wasn't a problem. It just brought an influx of people, plus lots and lots of journalists. It went well.

The excitement really was on election day. The Khmer Rouge had threatened to blow everything up. A lot of Cambodians thought they well may. You had the non-communists who were up and down. Did they have a chance? Did they not have a chance? Should they stay in? You had nervousness, I think, on the part of the Phnom Penh leading political party, the Cambodians Peoples Party. How was it going to come out of this?

On election day, May 23, at 6:30 a.m., I heard loud bangs. I was still in a hotel room, overlooking the Mekong River. I looked out because when the Khmer Rouge were finally attacking Phnom Penh in 1974, 1975, they often attacked from the east. The Mekong was to the east of my hotel. I looked out the window, wondering whether the attacks had started. Instead, I was hearing thunder, and there was lightning. I thought then that with deluvium rains, nobody would even come out to vote and I went back to bed again. Finally, I roused myself thinking, “I should really go to a couple of the polling places to see what it looks like.” We had other people from the U.S. mission out in other parts of the country. I went to the national stadium, where I was astonished to find that I had to fight my way through the crowds. People were lined up by the hundreds, maybe by the thousands, to get into the national stadium to vote. I went to another polling place and found the same thing. Voters had turned out in droves.

Later that day, I went with UN Special Representative Akashi and some others in a helicopter to four or five remote provinces to see what the polling looked like. We went to the city of Battambang in the west, for example. I'll never forget walking into a polling place, and an old monk, maybe 80 years old, told me, “I waited all my life to vote. Finally, I have my dream come true. They are asking my opinion, and I will give it.” Old ladies, old men, young people were there, because under the rules the UN established, everyone could vote. In the past, monks didn't vote, and soldiers weren't supposed to. But this time people were voting, and they really were voting en masse. It was a very inspiring day. I think all of us who covered the elections that day were very inspired.

One of the interesting developments concerned potential voters under the control of the Khmer Rouge. The Khmer Rouge clearly did not know whether to allow their people to vote in an election the movement was boycotting. In some places they did allow villagers to vote, whereas in others they told people to stay home. We heard accounts of villagers in the northwest insisting that they would vote, regardless, and marched off to do so, with local Khmer Rouge cadres watching them go, openmouthed. It seemed to suggest that the movement was in the process of genuinely weakening. Then, of course, came the aftermath. It took a long time to count the votes,

despite the Cray computer. Cambodia, though a small country, has many remote areas, and ballot boxes had to be flown back to the capital.

Anyway, the election finally was over, and the results were announced. The FUNCINPEC party, Prince Ranariddh's party, received more votes than Hun Sen's Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP), which had actual control of the country. FUNCINPEC naturally expected to take over the government. Lo and behold, the Phnom Penh regime said, "No, you don't; you're not taking over." Already the UN was starting to pack its bags. It wondered what it should do. The troops were all ready to go home. Were they supposed to enforce the results? You had a real standoff.

Then, out of the middle of nowhere came a secessionist movement. Suddenly, we learned that eastern Cambodia was in a breakaway effort from the rest of Cambodia. Where did all this fit in? I was fairly soon convinced that the people in the Phnom Penh regime were behind this secessionist effort, as a way to press the world to accept their stand, at least to participate in the government. I came back to the U.S. for a week, during the stalemate. I learned that others in the international community thought that maybe there should be a compromise with the Phnom Penh government. After all, its CPP had gotten a number of votes, as well. Sihanouk stepped up and proposed, in the midst of the stalemate, that the two main parties form a joint government, a coalition if you will. This would include two co-prime ministers, with co-defense and interior ministers and a division of other ministerial portfolios.

The Cambodians could not say no to Sihanouk. Whatever they really thought, and I think some of them didn't like the idea, they said, "Well, of course, of course." Then, the UN had to weigh in. Other countries, like ourselves, were asked for our views. I was in Washington. I remember Deputy Assistant Secretary Ken Quinn and I sitting down. He said, "What do we do? We're the only ones now that haven't said yes." He said, "FUNCINPEC, the non-communists, the people we have been backing during all the years of communist rule, have won and they're going to be denied control and power. Yet, who is going to enforce their victory, and who is going to go against the king?"

Finally, the United States said, "Well, okay." I remember at the time thinking "Having two co-prime ministers vying for power, this is going to last one week." It lasted until 1997. It lasted four years, when Prime Minister Hun Sen moved against Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh, who was probably himself planning to move against Hun Sen, and simply took over power. Though, the two gave the appearance of trying to make it work. I would listen to them talk together in Khmer. In Cambodia, you would use the word, "older brother, younger brother," among really close friends. I heard Hun Sen calling Ranariddh his older brother, for example. We realized that maybe this did have a chance to work. But it was an awkward arrangement. It was the only place in the world that had two prime ministers. Yet, they had to get things moving forward, so that was the compromise that was reached.

The secession "miraculously" ended in the east once there was political agreement, and people went to work. As the UN operation was reducing from 22,000 people down to nothing, that summer of 1993, the fear was that its inputs into the Cambodian economy had been so great that suddenly Cambodia would go into a depression. I was one of those who suggested, "There are so

many international organizations here, and international NGOs, and embassies, that I think the dip in the economy won't be as pronounced as people think." Indeed, it turned out not to be.

There was a new sense of confidence in Cambodia as a result of the UN peacekeeping operation, the successful May 23 election, and the advent of a new government. While there were still hostile incidents coming from some of the remaining Khmer Rouge elements during the following year, at the same time there were an increasing number of Khmer Rouge cadres and their families who, tired of living in malarial forests for so long, started returning to settle in their home villages. I was one of those convinced the Khmer Rouge was disintegrating.

To its credit, the new Cambodian Government was pursuing with vigor military campaigns against Khmer Rouge strongholds. One longtime KR area since 1979 was called Phnom Chat, not far from the Thai border town of Aranyaprathet. In September 1993 the Cambodian Armed Forces were able to take the area, the KR leadership fleeing. I drove in through tall grass two weeks later to see this area of which I had heard so often. It was completely abandoned and, admittedly, spooky. The layout was what was fascinating and proved the wisdom of George Orwell's expression in *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others." At the base of the hillside were small homes of rank and file Khmer Rouge. Farther up, in the middle, were a half dozen or so houses belonging to the higher level cadres such as Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary. At the summit, however, there was only one house, a large one. That was Pol Pot's, on which government soldiers had written all kinds of dirty expressions. Clearly, all Khmer Rouge were not equal, whatever the propaganda.

With the new spirit in the country, both investment and foreign aid began to be visible. When I first presented my letter of credential to Prince Sihanouk in 1991, he said to me, "You know, you Americans are known in this country more than anything else for building a highway to the port, from the center of this country, Phnom Penh, down to the Gulf of Thailand." He said, "That would have been over 30 years ago. Please, that road is in disrepair. The Khmer Rouge were hiding out on it to hold people up, to take hostages, for a long time. Please give it attention. It really needs redoing completely." With a new government in place, my own status changed from being a Special Representative to Chargé d'Affaires in 1993, to Ambassador in 1994. The U.S. Government also committed to rebuilding that highway, Phnom Penh's "lifeline". It was the biggest U.S. AID road building project, and probably the last one, with now perhaps the exception of the big road being built in Afghanistan. It was important support to the economy.

Cambodians wanted to make the new Cambodia succeed, and by and large they did. At the same time, the watchdogs were no longer there. Akashi left in August. His last words to me were, "Charlie, please remember Cambodia. Try to continue to give it support, even if it's no longer in the limelight, in the headlines." With the foreign presence largely gone, however, corruption worsened. It wasn't just the government – most of whose officials earned only a pittance that was corrupt. All sides were corrupt in Cambodia, and it is still a terrible problem. Thinking back over the peacekeeping operation and the peace agreement that we made, I wish we had thought farther than the election and had thought to keep some part of the peacekeeping presence in Cambodia, more as a reminder that the international community was watching than anything else. But that didn't happen.

In fact, once the elections were over, Cambodians were largely saying, as in Iraq today, “We’ve had enough of the foreigners telling us what to do.” Prince Sihanouk felt that, as much, if not more than anyone. He incarnated Cambodia. He was conscious that Cambodians were not entirely their own masters. I suspect he also believed he might resume his old leadership role. Indeed, in 1993 he became King again. I think he was disappointed because he found, under a democracy, however imperfect, that people don’t want a king telling them what to do. He had to be a little more reserved in giving advice, and he hoped his advice would be followed.

The next big event that happened in Cambodia was in 1994, a year later. There was an attempted coup. To this day, it’s not exactly clear why, and even who was acting behind it. Two or three nights before the coup, I went over to the home of the co-interior minister, Sin Song. There were two interior ministers, but this was the one with authority, the one from the Cambodian Peoples Party. I found him very depressed, very discouraged. He said, “Nothing is going right. We thought we would get democracy, and that the resources were being spread around for the good of the people. Instead, I see kleptomania on the part of everybody in the government. I just feel like doing something about it.” I said to him, “Your Excellency, work through the system. Don’t work from outside the system. If you work through the system, I think your chances are better. If you try a coup, you’ll find the United States cutting off all assistance to Cambodia. You’ll find the world reacting negatively to a coup. It will do you no good.” The Minister said he tried reasoning with Hun Sen, to no avail.

Sin Song fomented a coup a couple of days later. He was joined by one of King Sihanouk’s sons, Prince Chakrapong. It didn’t have a chance of success. Not many troops or police were loyal to them. It was put down. Sin Song fled to Vietnam. Chakrapong took refuge in a hotel. Suddenly, on a Sunday morning, I had a telephone call. “Prince Chakrapong needs you. He needs to see you.” So, I went to midtown Phnom Penh at 7:30, 8:00 a.m. An American journalist named Nate Thayer, the son of former Ambassador Harry Thayer, was with Chakrapong. Nate was working for the Far Eastern Economic Review.

With me was the other interior minister from the royalist, non-communist party, FUNCINPEC, You Hockry. He said, “Look, Chakrapong is held up in this hotel. He is afraid if he leaves the hotel, he is going to be grabbed, and who knows what will happen to him. He shouldn’t have been involved in what he was doing, but he was involved for whatever reason. We have to find a way to get him out of there.” The next thing I knew, on my cell phone was Queen Monineath calling from the palace, with King Sihanouk talking in her ear. I could hear him talking to her. They were saying, “Please try to work out a solution to get him out of the country.” I said I would try.

Prince Chakrapong also called me while I was standing down in the street, requesting political asylum in the U.S. I ducked the question, saying, “Your Royal Highness, I am in the middle of the street; how can I give you political asylum?” At that point co-Interior Minister You Hockry and I went up to the Prince’s hotel room and found a distressed individual. Once we convinced Chakrapong that he should leave the country, with Thayer witnessing, You Hockry took it from there, negotiating with the Hun Sen side for Chakrapong’s safe passage out of Cambodia. You Hockry escorted the Prince to the airport.

I strove to minimize my own involvement, hardly wanting to be seen to be in favor of a coup in a country where we were doing everything possible to try to hold it together and make a go of it after so many years of warfare and a large UN operation. The coup was a dumb move, in any case, and I still suspect there was more to it, e.g., an attempt by others to get rid of some troublesome individuals, for example, than was apparent.

Here we are 10 years later. Sin Song is back in Cambodia, back in favor. Chakrapong is back in Cambodia. I think he has an airline going. Cambodians make temporary alliances. They change their alliances, and they make new alliances. That is often the way it works, but it's better than outright hostility. The coup attempt happened in 1994. It's like every year, there is some event in Cambodia that upsets the normal pace of things.

Meanwhile, the economy was really starting to develop; the more people felt safe in going about the country, the more they felt safe in investing their money. King Sihanouk, after the road building started, was pointing down the road to me, Highway no. 4, and saying, "You see the new houses being built along that highway. Do you know what that means? Economic development is up, you will see." He was right. We were also negotiating with Cambodia at that time on an investment treaty which with strong labor provisions would dismantle tariff barriers between our countries. By the time I had left, garment factories were getting started, leading to exports to the U.S. and elsewhere.

The longer I stayed in Cambodia - remember I started working on Cambodia in 1974 and knew a lot of Cambodians - the more the Cambodians were pulling me into their internal squabbles, their power struggles. I had to step back and let them know that I was a diplomat representing the United States, that I wasn't there to make peace among Cambodians, particularly not at a time when they had their own elected government.

After all this time, Cambodia was becoming wearing. I realized that it was time for me to get out, that new blood was needed on the U.S. side in Cambodia. My decision to leave was helped by a call from the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, George Moose, asking if I would go back to Cameroon as ambassador, noting that our relations had not been the best in recent years and hoping that someone who knew the country could improve things. I agreed and returned to Washington and had my hearing in mid-1995. Senator Jesse Helms put a hold on me and other nominees because he didn't like the Chemical Weapons Treaty. At that point, I suggested to East Asian Bureau that I go back to Cambodia until things were worked out with the Hill. I remained at post until late November 1995.

Amazingly, the next event in Cambodia's ongoing political drama occurred just before I left. I was given a farewell party by Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Porter two nights before I left. At that party was King Sihanouk's half-brother, who was a fine fellow, Prince Norodom Sirivudh, Secretary General of FUNCINPEC. I noticed there were very few people there from the Phnom Penh regime side, from the Cambodian Peoples Party. I didn't know what to think of it. As soon as Sirivudh left the DCM's house, he was arrested by Hun Sen's police. A man who unfortunately doesn't always watch what he says, Sirivudh had said over the telephone about Hun Sen, "He's playing all these games. We're going to get him." Hun Sen decided it was a direct threat against him and arrested one of the principal players on the non-communist side. So,

I spent my last two days in meetings with co-Prime Minister Prince Ranariddh (Sirivudh's nephew and party chief) and with others on the CPP side, basically telling them, "If Sirivudh is guilty, then he deserves a fair trial." I passed that message to Hun Sen's people over and over again. It was with that crisis, in which Cambodian strongman Hun Sen eliminated a political rival in the fledgling democracy, that I would up my time in Cambodia.

Ten years later, Prince Sirivudh is back in Cambodia. He is the Secretary General of FUNCINPEC again and a senior official in the government. Such is the way of Cambodia.

Q: How did you feel? Were you the repository of all knowledge about Cambodia, or had they developed a cadre?

TWINING: It's a good question. We really tried to develop a cadre. I mentioned the people who went through Khmer language training, to be ready when we opened up in Cambodia, on a previous occasion. We insisted that the Department continue to train people in Khmer. The DCM, political officer, economic officer, USIA officer, were all succeeded by Cambodian speakers. They formed and continued to be part of an expanding cadre of Cambodian specialists. That's good because you need the younger specialists. By the time I left, we had a fair sized embassy. We had a defense attaché, despite DOD saying earlier, "No, they don't need to be there." That operation built up. We were doing military cooperation activities, de-mining training. We had a larger AID operation. We had a good, active USIA operation. The place had built up to a degree that we probably should have anticipated, but really didn't.

By the time I left, I sent a cable out saying, "The Khmer Rouge are finished." Indeed, they basically were. I suggested that Cambodia, if anything would have more problems in the future than it had in the past, as the Cambodians worked out how to make their country move forward, and how to do it together, which has not proven to be easy in a country with little real democratic tradition, weak institutions, and a society destroyed by the Khmer Rouge.

Q: By the time you left Cambodia, what was its position, vis a vis ASEAN?

TWINING: By the time I left... We had tried increasingly to try to get Cambodia to relate to Southeast Asia. Its ties with Vietnam, its ties with Russia, were more a thing of the past. Cambodia needed to trade with Southeast Asia. It shouldn't just look to the West to be the savior. Indeed, it was related to Southeast Asia. Trade was increasing. Investment was coming in from Southeast Asia. So, what is the logical next step? The logical next step then was, "Should they join ASEAN?" They were thinking about it, and yet it was daunting to both the Cambodians as well as the Vietnamese and the Lao. ASEAN, even when I was in Phnom Penh, had something like 300 meetings a year. The Cambodians were saying, "How could we possibly go to that many meetings? How many English speakers do we have to go and sit in that many meetings?" They were hesitant about it. ASEAN, for its part, was a bit reluctant, saying, "We're very comfortable, we the six members of ASEAN, the old members, Do we really want to open the door to new ones?" We would have to suggest to ASEAN, "Look, it is in your interest to rope in the three Indochina countries, to pull them into the Southeast Asia orbit."

Slowly but surely that was coming about. It was very healthy. What stopped Cambodia's joining ASEAN was Hun Sen's assumption of full power in 1997. Just when Cambodia should have gone into ASEAN as a full member, that was delayed until things were ironed out between Hun Sen and Ranariddh.

Q: So, you left there when?

TWINING: 1995.

TIMOTHY MICHAEL CARNEY
UN Director of Information and Education
Phnom Penh (1992-1993)

Ambassador Timothy Michael Carney was born in Missouri in 1944 and graduated from MIT in 1966. Carney studied abroad in France for a year before joining the Foreign Service. In the Foreign Service Carney served abroad in Vietnam, Lesotho, Cambodia, Thailand, South Africa, Sudan, Indonesia, and as ambassador to Sudan and Haiti. Ambassador Carney also spent time working with the Cox Foundation, USUN and the NSC. Carney was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2002.

CARNEY: Yes. I was in a holding pen. When the Paris Agreements for Cambodia were signed in October of '91, it was clear that a senior U.S. official was going to be part of the mission. Yasushi Akashi was ultimately named SRSG, and I went up to New York and talked to him in December or January of '92. He wasn't sure what he wanted me to do. It might have been human rights or something else. He talked about the elections. I remember saying to him, "There is a key aspect of those elections. Given what's happened in Cambodia, people have to know their vote's secret." These were going to be the only elections the UN had ever actually conducted. I said, "But more than that, they have to be assured that their village's vote is secret lest the victors ultimately wreak wrath through denial of development monies just to make an example of the village that did not vote for them." Akashi was so taken with that that he decided I ought to be director of information and education, which is what I went to Cambodia with the UN to do.

Q: So you went to Cambodia from when to when?

CARNEY: March 25 of '92 to August 1, '93.

Q: Talk a bit about Akashi.

CARNEY: Akashi, very Japanese, career UN, played things pretty close to his vest much to the annoyance of the other UN people who were part of the UN mission to Cambodia known as the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia. He was extremely good with Sihanouk, not bad as a diplomat. He was okay for that job but he needed a lot of stiffening and the stiffening came to a degree from his deputy, Behrooz Sadri, also a career UN officer, but more so from the Force

Commander, an Australian, John Sanderson, who wound up head of the Australian forces and, now in retirement, is Governor of West Australia at Perth.

Q: How did you operate with him?

CARNEY: Very much hands on; one on one direct contact. He had a daily staff meeting for the senior staff. He would have, every 6 weeks or so, a meeting with my division, Information and Education, looking at things we were setting forth.

Q: What were you doing?

CARNEY: We were doing about 4 things and we were doing it in print, which included posters, comic books, leaflets, pamphlets, and posters and banners. We were doing it in radio, radio broadcasts to provide information on what the UN was doing in Cambodia in the first place and then on what you as a Cambodian had to do to register to vote, where to vote. Then we were evening the information playing field by giving the various political parties a platform to voice their views. Then we were doing all those things through TV as well. We had a TV studio which ultimately proved able to produce an hour of TV a day. Our radio effort came to produce 15 hours of programming a day, live from March 1993 to the end of the UN Mission.

Finally, the Paris Accords gave to the UN Transitional Authority control over specific fields of governance - military, administration, and information, press. There was a Civil Administration component set up as part of the UNTAC structure and the head of that, a French judge, gave to various other components the right of control over their specific area. So, my division had control over the field of information, which essentially meant enforcing what we drafted in conjunction with the 4 Cambodian parties (except the Khmer Rouge who boycotted the drafting effort), the Media Guidelines, whereby if there was a violation of fair comment or libelous statements, we would order a right of reply by the offending media.

That was a fascinating year and a half partly because of the control dimension, but even more so because of the very great complexity, including trying to stand up a radio broadcast facility from “not even a paper clip” as one of my staff members described it. We did it... First of all, you had the programming aspect. We programmed basically through soap operas - aunt, uncle, nephew and niece - all this in Cambodian – beginning with nephew wondering who those people in the blue berets are. Then it went on to more complicated soap operas that had a man with a gun come into their house on stilts and say, “It doesn’t matter what Radio UNTAC says, you all are going to vote for my party.” Then when he left the aunt would say, “Why did you tell him we’d do that?” The uncle would say, “You can tell him anything, but your vote is secret. You vote the way you want. You can even take bribes from him and you can vote the way you want. They’re the ones who are wrong and they’re intimidating us. We can lie to them. It’s okay.” That’s a specific example of one of our soap operas.

Q: You were saying on the vote that the ballot is secret. That I can take. But when you say that you can’t tell how the village voted, that gets very tricky.

CARNEY: It turned out to be easy to do. They moved the ballot boxes from each constituency

voting place to the province capital and mixed them all together and counted them there.

Q: We're so used to having a local vote.

CARNEY: You're right, there is a philosophical argument that you really do want the local vote, but in the circumstances, the electoral component, run by a white Zimbabwean as it turned out, much to the UN's chagrin, they were looking for diversity, essentially accepted my argument that secrecy outweighed other considerations.

Q: Who were the contending parties?

CARNEY: There was a raft of 24 or more parties, but the essential contending party was the incumbent, the Vietnamese installed authority, the Cambodian People's Party. There were 2 non-communist parties, but the main one was a party that was run by Prince Sihanouk's son, Norodom Ranarith, and a separate non-communist party run by a former Cambodian republican, the late Sonn Sann that was not sufficiently active and got very few seats as a result.

Q: Did the Khmer Rouge...

CARNEY: The Khmer Rouge ultimately refused to participate in the process, did not canton their troops as required by the Paris Accords, did not play the radio broadcast tapes that we gave all the factions to play until we got our own radio broadcast facility 4 months before the elections. Essentially, as I argued just after the elections in a seminar in Singapore that has since been published, the Khmer Rouge decision doomed them as a force in Cambodian political life, which is no loss.

Q: No, it's no loss at all. Often the group will feel they can avoid something and if they guess wrong, time moves on.

CARNEY: They tried to have it both ways for a long time with 2 of their senior figures who were resident in Phnom Penh for a long time, months, looking at creating another United Front style political party. Ultimately Pol Pot decided that they wouldn't take part, they would try to sabotage the elections and see if the Khmer Rouge could reemerge as a coalition player in a future Cambodia. That just simply didn't work because they lost their foreign support completely, and the other Cambodian parties were able to come together to form a sufficiently strong military to resist them and even ultimately if necessary to crush them.

Q: Did the Chinese play a role in this?

CARNEY: The Chinese, I dealt with them pretty regularly. They played a forthcoming role in this. They had several people on the UNTAC staff, including a couple of Cambodian speakers. My division, however, had almost all of the foreign speakers of Cambodian. If I had thought about a Chinese, I would have asked Beijing to give me one. But I just didn't think about it. I had 15 foreigners who spoke Cambodian, 15 of the 45 expatriates in the Information and Education directorate.

Q: While you were doing this, did the State Department have any say or do anything?

CARNEY: In order to join Akashi's staff, I formally resigned from the Foreign Service with right of reemployment, and joined the UN Secretariat. Article 100 of the charter specifies that members of the Secretariat will only take orders from UN officials. I think that's why the Department insists that people formally resign even if they have rights of reemployment. In the 18 months I was with the UN, I was not a Foreign Service officer, which had the collateral benefit of enabling me to sue Radio France International when their local correspondent broadcast an entirely too clever piece accusing me of being a CIA agent in deep cover in the UNTAC apparatus with the goal of denying to the true victors, the Cambodian People's Party, the fruits of their electoral win. I took them to court in France. I ultimately won one franc in damages and \$8,000 in legal fees, which didn't cover what it cost.

Q: Were the French playing a role in this?

CARNEY: Yes, indeed. They tried to torpedo the Australian effort to have General Sanderson as force commander by giving an extra star to their Brigadier. The Australians then gave an extra star to their man, who wound up a 3 star. The Frenchman was a 2 star. Loridon was the Frenchman's name.

Q: What was the French game?

CARNEY: Well, it was L'Indochine Francaise. "We're the ones who have the experience and the background here." But, they didn't have any Cambodian speakers. I can't imagine what they were thinking. I tried to get a French woman who was particularly gifted at Cambodian studies, but she was working for this Centre Nationale de Recherche Scientifique and wasn't interested, so I got an East German, an Australian, a Brit, a Canadian, and a bunch of Americans.

Q: Did you find the UN apparatus in New York a problem or not?

CARNEY: It was a great problem, and (UN Secretary General) Boutros Ghali did not shine. He initially on his first visit to Cambodia argued that we really didn't need a radio broadcast facility. I had on my way to Cambodia stopped in Bangkok and the Thai foreign ministry press head, Sakthip Krairaiksh, who is currently ambassador in Washington. Sakthip and his wife, Benjapa, were at Vicki and my wedding- (end of tape)

I stopped in Bangkok and talked to Sakthip Krairaiksh about using the joint VOA -Thai AM transmitter at the airport to broadcast UNTAC material because it was maybe a million watt AM transmitter and it could be heard in Cambodia past the Mekong. Sakthip said, "Yes," but USIA had to agree. I sent a message off through the embassy in Phnom Penh - we had a chargé d'affaires at that time, Charles Twining - and the word we got back was, "Of course, you can have 4:00 AM as your timeslot." That was so inadequate that I mobilized Akashi to get hold of rather more senior people than the head of USIA. We got a couple of slots at prime time. So, we sent our tapes to Bangkok for VOA to play on AM, as well as the various FM stations of the Cambodian parties. Thais were very active, very forthcoming on this. I used my contacts with a Thai of some dubious background, a businessman who was close to the Thai military intelligence

side, to get me a trip to the Thai border to go in and see the Khmer Rouge. We got there but they wouldn't receive me.

Q: What about the Vietnamese, the Hun Sen regime? How did you find dealing with them?

CARNEY: I personally dealt with Hun Sen and irritated the hell out of him on any number of occasions. The radio broadcast facility got under his skin because we were basically telling it like it was, and it didn't make him happy particularly when we began to broadcast the electoral results that went against the Cambodian People's Party. Ranarith's party won about 46% and Hun Sen's party 38%, so they essentially lost the election.

Q: Why did the French have a particular dog in this election?

CARNEY: Basically they argued for realpolitik that Hun Sen was the strongest and his people were the most capable and besides that, they weren't going to give up governing the country anyway.

Q: At the end of this, when the election came, was there any apparatus to make sure that the election took hold?

CARNEY: That was a weakness of the Paris agreements. The only entity that persisted after a constitution was drafted - and the end of the UNTAC period was defined as the ratifying of the constitution - was a UN human rights center. There wasn't a real follow-on. That's a flaw of the drafting of the Paris Agreements that you can argue by hindsight, and indeed it has been argued in any number of publications. What happened after the elections was, the People's Party was very reluctant to accept the results. There was a little bit of theater when one of Sihanouk's sons, who was close to Hun Sen and other leading figures in the People's Party, staged a secession of a number of the eastern provinces of Cambodia. Akashi was stiffened in his resolve by Sanderson and a number of other UN senior figures and that secession failed, but the compromise that resulted was a co-prime ministership of Hun Sen and Norodom Ranarith. That government persisted until 1997 when Hun Sen essentially ran a coup and took over all by himself.

Q: Were any of the people that you knew in Cambodia still around, or was that whole class wiped out?

CARNEY: I wondered that myself. A number of people got out, including some of my ex-wife's relatives. My first wife was ethnically Cambodian. When I went to Phnom Penh the first time with Senators Danforth, Baucus, and Sasser in 1979, I found myself looking at all the small crowds around us when we were on the street in Phnom Penh and realized I was looking for somebody I knew. I ran into some people that I knew on the Thai-Cambodian border, and helped them, including some of my ex-wife's relatives, and brought them to the refugee center at Khao I Dang. But when I was back with UNTAC, almost the first thing I did was, I asked where one could play tennis. I went over and there were a number of the entraineurs, the trainers, whom I had learned and played with at the Cercle Sportif in the period I was there, all of them a bit older. A couple of them had died, but most were still there. Of the political figures, there were very few. Most of those people had either gotten out or been caught and killed by the Khmer Rouge,

so I didn't see anyone there. But of course, I had known a lot of the new figures from the period of negotiations that I had sat in on as NSC staff member, as well as people whom I had met with the two CODELs that visited in '79 and the one in 1981.

FRANKLIN E. HUFFMAN
Public Affairs Officer
Phnom Penh (1995-1997)

Acting Public Affairs Officer
Phnom Penh (2002)

Franklin E. Huffman was born in Harrisonburg, Virginia in 1934. In 1955 he graduated from Bridgewater College and immediately joined IVS. From 1967 to 1985 he was a Professor of Southeast Asian languages and linguistics at Yale and Cornell. His second career was as a Foreign Service Officer with USIA where he was posted to London, Rangoon, Marrakech, Paris, Washington, Phnom Penh, and Wellington, with subsequent WAE tours to N'Djamena (Chad) and Phnom Penh. Mr. Huffman was interviewed in January 2006 by Charles Stuart Kennedy

Q: So you were in Cambodia from when to when?

HUFFMAN: From January 1995 to January 1997. A January start was off cycle, but they wanted to fill the vacant position.

Q: What was the situation like in Cambodia when you got there?

HUFFMAN: Well, there was a great deal of political turmoil. You have to go back a little while to explain what the situation was. The Khmer Rouge, from 1975 to 1979, led one of the most extreme agrarian revolutions in history; they had emptied the cities and destroyed money and murdered all those people who were educated, or who were in any way associated with the elite of society. Just how many people lost their lives under the Khmer Rouge continues to be debated but estimates range between one and two million, which would have been roughly about 30 percent of the population of the country at that time. It was a revolution that got out of control. The intensity of the reform differed from one part of the country to another, depending to a certain extent who was in charge. There was a lot of getting even taking place, a lot of the poor people rising up and saying okay, it's really okay to kill these wealthy people and these white shirts and these urbanites who have always oppressed us. Some experts on the situation feel that it was not so much that Pol Pot personally ordered all of the executions, it's just that things got out of control and he wasn't able to control the situation. Ironically, of course, Pol Pot and Ieng Sary and Khieu Samphan and all of the leaders of that revolution had acquired their revolutionary ideals studying in Paris, but they took it to a much greater extreme than even the Maoist agrarian revolution in China. Then the Vietnamese came in after the Khmer Rouge had been in power for almost four years. The Vietnamese invaded in 1979 and basically pushed the Khmer Rouge out westward toward Thailand, and many of them escaped over the border into

Thailand. The Vietnamese installed a puppet government, made up of people who had been in exile in Hanoi. The U.S. government supported the three Cambodian opposition groups along the Thai border – basically the royalists, the democrats, and the Khmer Rouge. For political reasons we supported the Khmer Rouge for the Cambodian seat at the United Nations rather than that of the Vietnamese puppet government installed in Phnom Penh, which is one of the darker periods of U.S. policy.

Q: Yes.

HUFFMAN: Basically we were still piqued about Vietnam; the rationale was that Vietnam had invaded a sovereign country and their puppet government should not be recognized. But some contrarian historians think that the Vietnamese should have been thanked for what they did. But the Vietnamese were not able to completely expel the Khmer Rouge and finally it became such an economic and military burden to them to run the country that they withdrew a decade later, in 1989, leaving in power the people they had installed. Of course a major reason for their withdrawal was the collapse in the mid to late eighties of monetary support from the Soviet bloc.

So when I got there, you had had an election following the Paris Peace Conference in 1991 (which took place actually while I was in Paris and I was involved in that to a certain extent). The UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia, usually referred to as UNTAC, from '92 to '93, mounted one of the largest UN operations in history, with 20,000 personnel and at an estimated cost of \$2 billion. They succeeded in administering an election in May of 1993. There were three major parties, one being the Cambodian People's Party, represented by Hun Sen, head of the former communist regime installed by the Vietnamese, another was the royalist party headed by Ranariddh, son of Prince Sihanouk, and the third was the Buddhist democratic party headed by Son Sann, which was perhaps the party favored by the U.S.. In the elections, it turned out that the Royalists actually won and the CPP (Cambodian People's Party, Hun Sen's party) came in second. But the CPP refused to accept the result and in fact there was a movement of six provinces in the east to secede from the country. Finally with the help of the king they compromised, with the king saying, "Look, we'll have two prime ministers and you can share power; let's just overlook the fact that the Royalists won; you boys be good now and Ranariddh will be the first prime minister and Hun Sen will be the second prime minister." They also had two Ministers of Defense and two Ministers of the Interior. Sihanouk was made King as a symbol of the unity of the country, but he was pretty much a figurehead. So the situation when I got there was that the two main parties were competing for power and not much was getting done in terms of the efficient running of the country.

Things were pretty tense, given the fact that the struggle against the Khmer Rouge was still going on. The Khmer Rouge were still holding out in the mountains of the north and west, the Royal government troops were unable to definitively wipe them out. And they would kidnap some Westerners from time to time. There was a notorious case where they kidnapped -- I think it was a Frenchman, a Brit and an Australian -- off of a train heading down to Sihanoukville and finally they murdered them. So it was a time when things were pretty dangerous. Plus of course there was a terrible problem in Cambodia with landmines where 200-300 people a month were getting legs blown off from landmines that had been left behind from the various wars. It was estimated that there were roughly 10 million landmines in a country of only nine million people,

and there are as a result some 30,000 amputees in Cambodia.

Our objectives in Cambodia were basically to support the idea of transition to democracy, an independent judiciary, transparency in government and in business dealings and so on. We had a speaker one time who came over and said that there's an inverse relationship between foreign direct investment and the amount of corruption in a country, and that if all the fundamentals were in place, foreign direct investment would flow in and would dwarf any aid the USAID was giving the country. But if the fundamentals were not right then any aid that USAID might give was money down the rat hole. This did not make the USAID people too happy because he worked for one of their grantees. But this was the kind of thing that the Cambodians needed to hear, because corruption was rampant, judges were for sale, and there was democracy in name only.

There was quite a bit of violence, intimidation of opposing parties and there would be some bombs thrown; in one instance a bomb was thrown in one party's political rally and about 18 people were killed. Opposition journalists were intimidated or arrested, so it was pretty ugly. But progressively, during my two years there, Hun Sen, the former communist and the one who had refused to accede to the Royalists victory in the elections, gradually consolidated his power until finally in 1997 he engineered a coup against the Royalist prime minister Ranariddh and sent him into exile. In the next election in 1998, five years after the UNTAC election, the CCP won again, basically by intimidation, and the Royalist party, which had won the first election, was now in a subservient position to the CCP and that's basically what is continuing today -- Hun Sen is continuing to consolidate his power. And what used to be referred to as one of the UN's few success stories has turned out to be less than successful in establishing a democracy in Cambodia.

I was sent back to Cambodia on TDY from New Zealand to cover the 1998 national elections, five years after the UNTAC elections. Scores of international observers came in and they looked and watched the voting in the various districts and provinces, and they decided that, "Well, you know, it seemed like it was basically a free and fair election." But what they didn't understand was that the fix was already in before they got there. Dictators become very proficient in learning the jargon that they're supposed to use to satisfy the international community and get the donors to give them money. Meanwhile, under the table, they've got the fix in already, and they do whatever is necessary to perpetuate their power.

The State Department has never given credence to the excuse of "Asian values" by dictators such as Lee Kuan Yoo in Singapore to justify authoritarian rule, but in fact authoritarianism and patronage are seen as the proper way to run a government, not only in Cambodia but in Asia in general. The problem for U.S. diplomacy in touting Western-style democracy is that in Asia, harmony between the peasants and the power elite (who are after all powerful because of good deeds in past lives) is more important than the right of individuals to challenge the power structure; in fact to do so is considered somewhat improper in Asian cultures.

Q: Well what were you doing? I mean, can you talk about your work in that environment?

HUFFMAN: Well, we had just resumed diplomatic relations about two years before I got there

and we were still in the process of really establishing an embassy there. We didn't have proper embassy facilities or grounds, we just had a collection of residences that were kind of tied together with a fence around them, and that was the embassy and it wasn't very secure. We didn't even have any Marine guard contingent at all because the first ambassador, Charles Twining, was opposed to that. He said it sends the wrong message and sets a bad example. But anybody could lob a grenade over the fence. I was in the process of trying to establish a U.S. Information Service, American Studies Center and Library and so on, so I was pretty busy getting all that set up and recruiting Fulbright students and trying to get some educational and cultural exchanges going. A major problem was finding Fulbright students who spoke enough English to study in the U.S. Language was a problem in recruiting U.S. speakers, because you had almost no speakers who spoke Khmer, so that limited the kind of audiences that you could send speakers to, unless you resorted to a very cumbersome process of consecutive translation (nobody could do simultaneous translation between English and Khmer). There was the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace that was made up mostly of ex-patriots who had studied in the United States and some people like that who knew English well enough that we could place some speakers there, but you were limited in how many venues you had. You couldn't go to the university and have somebody speak in English unless you were going to go specifically to the English department and talk to those students of English. We placed an English teaching specialist at the University every year through USIA's program of English Teaching Fellows. And of course we had programs of donation of books to the university library and to the National Library, which during the Khmer Rouge had been used as a military barracks, with the books just thrown all over the place and pigs rooting about like a pigsty. The needs were so great and in so many areas that we just couldn't do everything that needed to be done in terms of educational and cultural exchanges and English teaching. Add to this the fact that as the USIS post was just getting established, the staff were not as experienced as you would find in a normal post, where the American officers can come and go while the local staff provide the continuity.

Q: How did you find the media there?

HUFFMAN: Well, there was a clear division between the international media on the one hand and the local press on the other. Because of the large UNTAC operation and the international involvement in the country at that time, there was a lot of interest on the part of the international press in Cambodia. I had frequent requests for interviews with the Ambassador from prominent journalists, such as Ron Moreau of Newsweek, Keith Richburg of the Washington Post, Peter Arnett of CNN, and Seth Mydans of the New York Times. All of the major news services – AP and Reuters and AFP (Agence France Press) and the BBC -- had bureaus in Phnom Penh and they tended to be rather antagonistic toward the policies of the U.S. government. I never understood quite why that was the case, but it was, I think, mainly because they knew the kind of corruption that was going on and the attitude of the press frequently is highly moral, and they have the luxury of saying to us that we should not have dealings with these people at all, while of course we're there to have dealings with them and, if possible, to influence them in the right direction. So it was a rather tough job from the standpoint of press relations. We arranged press conferences for visiting U.S. officials, such as Under Secretary of State Strobe Talbot, or Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Winston Lord, who had not yet been appointed ambassador to China, asked me to participate in a murder board for his press

conference, and I said here's what they're going to say and they're going to ask why we are dealing with this thug government, who have subverted the elections? It turned out that he was asked exactly the questions I had anticipated. But there were some more pleasant duties, such as taking Senator and Mrs. John McCain to dinner one night when the Ambassador (Kenneth Quinn, who succeeded Charles Twining as Ambassador) had a conflict, and lunching with Sam Waterston of "Law and Order" fame, who was visiting Cambodia with a delegation looking into charitable ventures.

Now, the local press, of course, was the focus of much of our work in supporting freedom of the press and journalistic ethics and all that, but there weren't really any genuinely independent local media. There were usually 30 to 40 local newspapers -- some would start up and others would close -- but every one was the mouthpiece of a particular political party or interest. There wasn't anything like an independent newspaper that presented the unbiased news. There were two local English language newspapers which were relatively independent. One, the biweekly Phnom Penh Post, was started as a commercial venture by an American named Michael Hayes, and it was a quite good newspaper, but he had to struggle to make ends meet, as he had to have it printed in Bangkok, and as there were not enough English speakers to buy it. And then there was a daily, The Cambodia Daily, which had been started by an NGO, supported by the Japanese. Michael Hayes, the editor of the Phnom Penh Post, used to complain, "They don't have to make a profit, they're supported by an NGO and here I am trying to run a newspaper and make enough money to stay in business." But these two English language papers did provide excellent training for young journalists, both Cambodian and American. There was a modicum of freedom of the press if you didn't go too far -- I think the Cambodian press was freer in those days than it had ever been in the past. But they didn't understand that freedom of the press entailed the responsibility to print only the truth, to check your sources, and not engage in libel. There were incidents of editors having grenades thrown into their offices or shot by "unknown" assailants if they got too outspoken.

Q: How about the role of Vietnamese? Was that the big menace on the border there all the time?

HUFFMAN: Well, there has historically been a great deal of enmity between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese and there's a tendency on the part of the Cambodians to ascribe all kinds of skullduggery to the Vietnamese. This is compounded by the fact that Hun Sen himself had gone into exile in Vietnam. He was a former Khmer Rouge but in the early days defected and went to Hanoi and was part of the regime installed by the Vietnamese, so there's a lot of suspicion that the Vietnamese are really pulling the strings in the government and that there are a lot of government officials who are really Vietnamese and they've taken Cambodian names, and there are a lot of such conspiracy theories. The joke is that whenever you have two Cambodians you'll have three political parties. So yes, there is this conflict between the Khmer and the Vietnamese, and during the UNTAC period there were stories of Vietnamese bodies floating down the Mekong River -- Vietnamese who had been killed in local conflicts or by the Khmer Rouge.

Q: Did you get out into the countryside much or was it pretty unsafe?

HUFFMAN: It was pretty much unsafe in those days. There were certain places you could go. Usually you had to fly to Siem Reap to visit Angkor Wat. Some people went by road but you

were in danger of being killed or kidnapped by the Khmer Rouge who still operated in the mountain areas, not to mention the danger of landmines. USAID helped rebuild the highway from Phnom Penh down to the beach area at Sihanoukville, but even then you were encouraged to drive only in the daytime and not get off the road because of the danger of landmines. So we were pretty circumscribed as to where we could travel, but we did get out to some of the closer provinces that were relatively safe.

Q: So were able to visit Angkor Wat?

HUFFMAN: Yes, we got up there several times during that tour; all in all I've visited Angkor about a dozen times. Angkor Wat itself is the largest religious building in the world, but is only one of some 25 major temples in the Angkor area of some 100 square miles. I've seen Borobudur and the pyramids and Machu Picchu, but Angkor is certainly the most impressive ruins in Southeast Asia, maybe the world, both in terms of its size and of the artistic quality. The temples were built between the 9th and 15 centuries, when the Angkor Empire was the Rome of Southeast Asia, covering what is now Cambodia, south Vietnam, southern Laos and eastern Thailand. It is ironic that Southeast Asia's major attraction is in little, poor, war-torn Cambodia, but it is an important source of foreign exchange for the country. I heard somebody just the other night who had just come back from Angkor, and who was decrying the fact that it was so crowded with tourists from Japan and China and Thailand and Malaysia. I said well, you know, I'm very happy for the country because this provides jobs and foreign currency, and makes some contribution to the development of the country.

Q: Well, in your contacts with the Cambodians, both professionally and socially, did you find that there was a real gap, since the Khmer Rouge basically tried to wipe out the intellectual class?

HUFFMAN: Oh yes indeed. One of the most serious obstacles to development of the country is the lack of expertise. There were no doctors, there were no teachers, there were no technicians -- they had all either been killed or exiled. And curiously, as we've seen in several countries where you've had expatriates come back to try to help develop the country, it doesn't work. The attitude is, "Well, we stayed here and we suffered under the Khmer Rouge and the Vietnamese regime and we didn't run away and now it's our turn. You ran away and had a better life, now don't come back and tell us what to do and how to run the country."

I'll give you an example. There was an organization set up called CANDO, which stood for Cambodian American National Development Organization, a very nice acronym. They brought all these 20-somethings back from the United States, from California and from Michigan and Arlington and wherever they had been and they had degrees in health and education and this and that. So they were going to come back and be a Cambodian Peace Corps. Well, they weren't accepted. Here were these young people, they weren't making much but they were making maybe \$700 a month, which was about 20 times what a government minister was making (officially, at least). Furthermore in Asian culture you can't have young people coming in and telling the elders what to do. After about two years they gave up and left. This was the case of many expatriates who came back and tried to help. They were not accepted. There's one in particular who has just stayed, trying desperately to find a niche where he could be useful and the

poor guy has been pushed from this job to that and basically humiliated; he used to come to my office and complain, but what could I do? It's unfortunate because the country desperately needs the expertise of the expatriates.

Q: How sad. Well, then you left there in '97

HUFFMAN: Yes, January '97.

Q: Was this your last overseas assignment?

HUFFMAN: No, actually, I did a six-month WAE as PAO Phnom Penh in 2002, two years later. The previous PAO had curtailed for medical reasons several months earlier, and they needed somebody to fill the gap while the PAO-designee finished Khmer language training. As I had already served in Phnom Penh and knew the language, I was the logical person for the area to send. The fact that I was well known in Khmer academic circles also worked to my advantage. My English-Khmer Dictionary, published at Yale Press in 1978, was on the desk of every minister. This gave me unique access to many of my contacts. When I first visited the Minister of Culture in 1995, during my first tour, he bowed to me, and said, "So you are the Professor Huffman! You have saved our language!" This was a bit of an exaggeration, of course, but it was true that my dictionary, appearing after the destruction of so many scholarly works by the Khmer Rouge, became the standard authority for translating abstract English vocabulary on such topics as democracy building and economic development into Khmer.

Q: Did you find significant differences from your earlier tour in, what was it, 1995?

HUFFMAN: Yes, the situation was both better and worse. Prime Minister Hun Sen had consolidated his power over the country, as a result of which security was much better than it had been in the 90's. The Khmer Rouge movement had totally collapsed, partially as a result of Hun Sen's offer of amnesty, through which several thousand Khmer Rouge troops had defected to the government side, and several high-ranking officials had been given monetary inducements to defect. Pol Pot himself had died in isolation in the mountains in 1997; some people think maybe his own people turned against him but it's not terribly clear. You could travel freely throughout the country, with the result that tourism had increased, especially to Angkor, and more remote provinces had been opened up to tourism. On the other hand, democracy and human rights were in retreat, as Hun Sen had cowed the opposition through intimidation and threats of violence, local human rights organizations were weakened, and the press was more restrained. Foreign investment from Western sources had dried up, replaced by those countries and businesses willing to pay kickbacks to corrupt officials. Companies from China, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand accounted for the majority of investment in the country. Corruption was rampant, with government officials, especially military officers, claiming land traditionally owned by the peasants for their own purposes, engaging in illegal logging and smuggling. Extravagant mansions and expensive cars had multiplied in Phnom Penh, while the countryside, as had been true for centuries, benefited very little from development. So, as you can see, it was a mixed bag.

Q: Did you feel that you were able to accomplish anything in six months?

HUFFMAN: Yes, actually I felt pretty good about the tour. Knowing the country and the terrain as I did, I felt that I was at the top of my game. I managed to get the educational and cultural exchange programs in shape, recruited all the candidates for the following year's Fulbright and International Visitor programs, allocated all of our budget for grants to various human rights, educational and civic society organizations, organized a performing arts visit by an American jazz group, dealt with the press, and gave four or five outreach speeches myself.

On the other hand, I was less successful in completing the three main assignments I had been given in Washington. The first was to persuade the Ambassador, who was considered a bit of a loose cannon, to clear any speeches or statements to the press with Public Affairs at State – in other words, go out there and whip the ambassador in shape. I smiled. When I got to post, the Ambassador said to me, "I know what they told you in Washington, but I know the situation better than they do in Washington, and I'll say whatever I please. If they don't like it, they can fire me." In fact, he was eventually fired, or called home early. He stood up for what he believed, and I admired him for it. A conservative cabal in Congress had instructed USAID to support only the Sam Rainsy Party, which they were convinced was the only democratic party in the country. Now Sam Rainsy was not inherently any more democratic than his opponents, but even if he had been, the Ambassador argued that to support one party constituted unwarranted interference in the country's internal affairs, and that the U.S. should be even-handed in supporting democracy among all the parties. I believe he was right, but you can't fight city hall.

My second "mission impossible" was to reclaim space for the Public Affairs Section (as USIS was now called) that had been usurped by the Embassy. The problem was that the Ambassador had requisitioned the USIS building, containing the USIS library and offices, for his own use while another building was being hard-walled by OBO, and had shoehorned the PAS offices into a tight space in the admin building, and had relegated the library essentially to a stairwell. I was unable to correct the situation at that time, but I did manage to secure the promise of generous space for the PAS offices, library, and auditorium in the plans for the new embassy which was being built, and which was in fact just completed and dedicated in early 2006.

My third mission was to improve the morale of the public affairs staff, which was of course demoralized by the confiscation of their physical space, the downgrading of the library, and the vacancy in the PAO slot. I feel that I achieved a certain measure of success in this third assignment, by involving the staff in the planning for space in the new embassy, getting stalled programs in shape, and raising the profile of our programs both within the embassy and in the Phnom Penh community. So I did complete about one and a half out of three assignments – not bad for government work.

Q: Do you maintain contacts with your friends and colleagues in Cambodia?

HUFFMAN: Yes. My wife and I went back to Cambodia in December of 2004. I had offered to donate my collection of Cambodian books to the Buddhist Institute Library, and I was invited to give a lecture at the Buddhist Institute on that occasion. The event was attended by our Ambassador, Charles Ray, and by the Cambodian Minister for Religions and Cults, and it was quite a nice affair. On the same trip we visited the Consul General and her husband in Chiang Mai, and also stopped off to see friends in the embassy in Rangoon and take another trip up

Mandalay and the ancient capital of Pagan, which for some reason they now spell “Bagan.” So Southeast Asia continues to hold great appeal for me and my family. In fact we are thinking rather vaguely that when my wife and I both retire, we might like to spend our winters in Thailand or Cambodia.

MARIE THERESE HUHTALA
Office of Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand & Vietnam Affairs
Washington, DC (1996-1998)

Ambassador Huhtala was born and raised in California and graduated from Santa Clara University. Joining the Foreign Service in 1972, she studied Thai and Chinese languages and became a specialist in East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Her overseas postings include Paris, Quebec, Hong Kong and Chiang Mai (Thailand). In Washington she dealt primarily with East Asia and Pacific Affairs. From 2001 to 2004 she served as US Ambassador to Malaysia and, from 2004 to 2005, as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs. Ambassador Huhtala is a graduate of the National War College and the State Department’s Senior Seminar. Ambassador Huhtala was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Let’s talk about Cambodia.

HUHTALA: Okay. Cambodia, oh my God.

Q: This would be ‘96 to

HUHTALA: We’re still talking 1996 to ‘98.

Q: ‘96 to ‘98 okay.

HUHTALA: When I had left VLC in ‘92 Cambodia was under UN mandate and they were on their way to free elections; it was a budding democracy. When I returned in ‘96 it was becoming a real mess. By that time, Cambodia had a system of two co-prime ministers co-existing uneasily, Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen, who had never really lost power.

Q: He was the man who had originally been put in by the Vietnamese.

HUHTALA: The Vietnamese, that’s right and he headed something called the Cambodian People’s Party. Prince Ranariddh was the son of Prince Sihanouk, who became King Sihanouk after the 1993 elections. Prince Ranariddh headed up the royalist party called FUNCINPEC (it’s a French acronym). Besides the two co-prime ministers, there were dual ministers heading up several key ministries, including Interior and Foreign Affairs. The rest of the ministries were sort of divided between the two parties. It was supposed to be a functioning government, but of course this was recipe for real instability, and it did not work very well. There was a lot of

rivalry isolated violence.

In addition, the Khmer Rouge were still out there. In fact the first month that I was on the job, in August of 1996, the Khmer Rouge remnants around the country announced that they were all going to turn themselves in to the government to be peacefully demobilized and the ongoing insurgency was going to end. This was a great thing but it left open the question of what do you do about the Khmer Rouge leaders who were still out there. Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Khieu Sampan and other truly bad guys who had perpetrated the horrible genocidal regime in the 1970s. Ieng Sary cut a deal that fall of '96 with the government to escape any prosecution. He rallied to the government and in exchange was given control of the area of Cambodia near the Thai border including the town of Poipet. This town had a lot of gem resources and drug running and who knows what else. It became a sort of Khmer Rouge fiefdom in the very questionable deal that had been reached.

We had a full Embassy in Cambodia by this time, including an aid program and we were trying to help move them towards democracy. There also were U.S. NGOs present helping to write their constitution and a nascent American Chamber of Commerce. We were trying very hard to help Cambodia move forward. In the spring of 1997 Secretary Albright was planning a visit to Cambodia. She was due to go to Hong Kong for the July 1 handover of power to the People's Republic of China and planned to visit both Vietnam and Cambodia while she was in the region. We were trying to negotiate the details of her Cambodia stop, but our ambassador, Ken Quinn, was arguing against it out of security concerns. Right about then, in May, open fighting broke out in the streets of the capital, Phnom Penh, and a rocket landed in the backyard garden of our ambassador's residence. That sort of put the kibosh on the idea of the Secretary of State coming into town. We were still trying to negotiate a stop at the airport. We were hoping that the two co-prime ministers would come and meet with her and she could lecture them and tell them to get their act together and stop feuding and try to have a government that works because obviously theirs was not working. Our DS people of course, our diplomatic security, absolutely refused to have her come into town. The government was arguing back that the capital was perfectly safe and she should come to the Interior ministry for her meetings. We were proposing a meeting in the diplomatic receiving room of the Phnom Penh airport. In the end Hun Sen flatly refused to meet at the airport, so the stop was cancelled.

On July 5, warfare broke out on the streets of Phnom Penh, the two sides fighting each other with tanks and military force. At first it was called a coup; it looked as if Hun Sen had decided to eliminate his rivals and just seize power. But at the same time we had evidence that Prince Ranariddh's people had been the first to put tanks on the streets so, it was a very murky situation, really hard to tell what was what. We were very concerned about the American citizens there who were gathering in a ballroom at one of the hotels. Ambassador Quinn went and spoke to them and rallied them and this was a good thing. He also got in his diplomatic vehicle and went around the streets of Phnom Penh looking for politicians that he could bring together, which I didn't think was such a great idea.

We had set up a task force of course. The call had come in to me from the Ops Center on that Saturday night and I said, "Fine, we'll set up the task force." I took the first shift (midnight to 8:00 am) rather than call my people in; they were summoned to start on Sunday morning. Those

first hours, it was terrifying. A gas station right next to our embassy had been hit; there was a huge pillar of black smoke visible on CNN amid great confusion. Our Ambassador could not be reached immediately because he was out there looking for politicians. It was not a good situation. Several days into this crisis, Thailand sent in a C-130 to evacuate its nationals and offered us room on the plane. We did not take it because the Ambassador said, "No, we don't need to do that." Thus that opportunity to get people out easily fell through. Our military started putting together plans for what they call a NEO, a non-combatant evacuation operation. They brought in a huge task force and set it up in Thailand (again, our good ally Thailand) at the Utapao air base. They began assembling a huge force to go in and evacuate our people by force if necessary. Still the Ambassador was opposed to any draw down of official Americans. Finally we had to send an action memo to the Undersecretary for Management, Pat Kennedy, to order a draw down because it was evident the situation on the ground was way too unsafe. I still don't understand for sure why the Ambassador was opposing this. I think he was very concerned about the political signal this would send to the Cambodian government if we start taking our citizens out. In my opinion we had passed that point long ago.

Q: This thing of where you almost put your priority and the obvious thing has to be, you have to put American citizens ahead of diplomatic concerns.

HUHTALA: So this happened, but the result was the staff members who were evacuated were very, very unhappy, even more unhappy than evacuees are normally. It's very disruptive to have to pack up your family and leave suddenly in the midst of a crisis. But these people had been told by their Ambassador, "Don't worry, it's going to be fine, you're going to stay here," and then the mean old State Department ordered the evacuation. I went to a meeting that Pat Kennedy had with the evacuees in the State Department about a month after they had left post. They were all really opposed to what had happened and very, very disgruntled. It was really unfortunate. We were trying to help them, giving them allowances and trying to figure out when they could go back, and they were just furious at us.

Q: We've had, this is a perpetual thing. One, the situation when you're on the ground often doesn't seem as serious as is reported by the media and then in Washington we're all haunted by the idea that if you lose any Americans it's our fault. That's the motivator. We've done this during the Middle East; most people probably keep a suitcase packed.

HUHTALA: Yes, and for Cambodia it was a relatively new embassy and this had never happened before. In my opinion we should have gotten them out a lot earlier than we did. We eventually did do that. It just left a real residue of unhappiness, I think.

Q: Did you find that, had we lost our ability to play a role in Cambodia when all this was happening?

HUHTALA: I think we had been already in the process of losing that ability because Hun Sen is not a man that you can reason with. He's a real tough case. Although he wanted good relations with us if he could have them it wasn't essential to him, I think. When pressed, he would always choose his own political survival. I don't think that our having pulled our people out in the midst of that crisis mattered to him in the slightest. I really don't. What did matter to him was that we

imposed economic sanctions. We announced right after the violence started that we were going to restrict our aid only to humanitarian purposes and we included our support for the Cambodian Documentation Center in that which was still tracing the victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide. Maternal child health projects, HIV/AIDS projects, de-mining, we were going to continue all of those but none of the bigger reconstruction efforts that we had been planning to do. For instance, helping the education ministry get on its feet and build schools. So we kind of took ourselves out of the picture that way because of what had happened. We went to great lengths not to call it a coup because if it had been a coup then that would trigger further steps according to U.S. law; besides it was not at all clear that what happened was a coup.

Q: What had happened?

HUHTALA: I've never known to this day exactly what happened but fighting broke out and Hun Sen and his party really seized that opportunity to chase the royalists out, basically. FUNCINPEC forces may well have instigated the fighting. Prince Ranariddh took refuge in Thailand and remained there for another year. After a lot of diplomacy, a lot of efforts, a group call the Friends of Cambodia was formed to sort of exert diplomatic pressure on them, including the U.S., Japan, Indonesia, Thailand, Australia, Canada and others. The Cambodians agreed to have new elections, which took place in 1998, to try and get a new legitimate government because this dual headed government, this co-prime minister business had obviously failed.

Q: We had something like that in Laos way back. This was during the war; a communist, a royalist then a sort of in between.

HUHTALA: Yes, back in the '80s.

Q: Back in the '80s. What sort of role did the Vietnamese play during this?

HUHTALA: They were very concerned. Hun Sen was actually on vacation in Vietnam with his family when the balloon went up. This was taken by many Cambodians darkly, as an indication that the Vietnamese were behind it. But I'm convinced that they were as surprised as anybody else. That's why I tend to think that it was the royalists who started it; Hun Sen just capitalized on the opportunity. There are some people in Congress and elsewhere who think that Hun Sen is the devil incarnate and believe absolutely that he ordered this and that he was behind it. I just don't think he would have been on vacation deliberately when it happened. I really don't.

Q: Were our relations with the Vietnamese such that we could say, hey help us get this thing straightened out at that time?

HUHTALA: We did say that. We did ask for the help from all the countries in the region. They didn't particularly do much for us. I think they were worried about instability on their border. I think they had long since stopped viewing Hun Sen as their man. (Parenthetically, this is just interesting, our Ambassador, Ken Quinn, always talked with Hun Sen in Vietnamese, because Ken had served in Vietnam early in his career and spoke good Vietnamese though he didn't speak Cambodian. Hun Sen spoke Vietnamese from his days in exile there.) I've always discounted these claims of a Vietnamese role in the violence. After it had happened I think their

main concern again was not having huge instability on their border.

Q: When you get right down to it the Cambodians and the Viets don't get along.

HUHTALA: No, they don't at all.

Q: You go back a millennium or two and they've been fighting over things. It's very much like saying, well Vietnam and China are as close as lips and teeth, they ain't.

HUHTALA: No, in fact that was always a big propaganda point for the Khmer Rouge, which remained politically active through this whole period. They were constantly accusing Hun Sen and his people of being Vietnamese sympathizers or proxies. I just don't think there was anything to that. The ironic thing about Hun Sen, is that unprincipled as he is, he's very pragmatic. He saw the writing on the wall that an election was going to be the next step, the way that he would legitimize himself. So he became an outstanding politician. All over Cambodia there are "Hun Sen Schools" that have been built. Remember I told you we no longer were assisting them with infrastructure. He saw to it that there were little country schools built all over the country and he went and personally inaugurated every single one of them and set up the CPP party office right next door; this was real classic, grass roots politicking. Whereas the royalists basically were spending all their time either in Paris or in Thailand and whining about what was happening and asking for assistance but they didn't do anything near that level of political organizing. When the elections happened in '98, Hun Sen's party won, and not entirely due to corruption, apparently. He is something of a democrat. This is the irony of it.

Q: What about Japan? Japan played a fairly significant role in Cambodia.

HUHTALA: The Japanese were very much involved and when we dropped the ball on our reconstruction assistance, for instance, they picked it up. They had a lot of large infrastructure projects going. They were also very active diplomatically. There was this organization formed call the Friends of Cambodia. Stanley Roth who was the Assistant Secretary for EAP was very instrumental in that, and he conferred with the Japanese a lot. They worked together to set this up. Ali Alatas, the foreign minister of Indonesia, was a leader in this group. So were the foreign ministers of the Philippines and Thailand. The group included the U.S., Japan, the Southeast Asian countries, Canada and the EU. We had several meetings of the group in Manila. It was instrumental in persuading Hun Sen to stop the violence and go down the path of having an election. We also persuaded him to allow Prince Ranariddh to come back into the country; the Prince was made President of the National Assembly instead of being co-prime minister. Even then he refused to back to Cambodia for the longest time so the National Assembly couldn't meet. He was just acting petulant and crazy. Late, when I was in Bangkok, the Ambassador and I went and called on him and urged him to go back and pick up his responsibilities. He was just not a statesman at all. So yes, the countries in the region, especially Japan, were very active in trying to salvage the accomplishment that we all had made through the UN process and through all of the assistance that had gone in.

Q: Did you find in our Congress particularly with maybe outside forces surrounding them, there are the professional Vietnamese haters, northern. Did they see Hun Sen as being the devil

incarnate; were they somebody you had to pay attention to?

HUHTALA: The East Asia subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee had a hearing on this in July 1997. I'll never forget, Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a very outspoken member of that panel, said during the hearing that Hun Sen should be executed. I thought it was quite outrageous to say that about a head of state of a country that we recognize but that was his feeling.

I need to tell you too about another politician named Sam Rainsy. He represents a third party in Cambodian politics. He's a French citizen actually, as well as a Cambodian, educated in France, playing a very major spoiler role during all of these events. Also every time he felt personally threatened he would come into the embassy and ask for us to protect him. Ambassador Quinn would take him in and protect him. We finally worked out a policy whereby his Quinn's successor said to Sam Rainsy, "You are a French citizen and the French embassy is thatta way." Sam Rainsy was extraordinarily gifted in currying support in our Congress. He has presented himself as the only true democrat in Cambodia. He's not, by the way; he even has ties to the Khmer Rouge, but that is the image he projects. Every time an adverse event happens in Cambodia he rushes over to Washington and meets with receptive members of the House and Senate. Then the State Department is asked, "Why aren't you doing more to support Sam Rainsy?" It's a vicious circle.

On Easter Sunday of that year, '97, before the balloon went up in July, I was playing the hand bells at our church when I got a phone call. Sam Rainsy was organizing a protest outside a government building in Phnom Penh. He and his little crowd of supporters were doing their peaceful demonstration when they were set upon by persons unknown who fired grenades at them. One or two persons were killed and an American representative of the International Republican Institute, IRI, was wounded. Because IRI was involved, and because they all think that Sam Rainsy is the only true democrat in Cambodia, this became a huge issue on the Hill. Who organized a grenade attack? Who would do that? Must have been Hun Sen, they concluded. Personally I think Hun Sen would have been too smart to do that because these people had a permit and they were engaging in a legitimate activity.

But somebody clearly had attacked them, and it was important to find out who. In order to be helpful, we offered the services of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) to look into this matter because an American citizen had been injured. The FBI sent in a special agent who talked to all parties, he heard all kinds of fantastic stories. Some pointed to Hun Sen, some pointed to Sam Rainsy himself. It was horribly murky as things usually are in Cambodia and it increasingly appeared there would be no way to determine what happened. It was not really a U.S. responsibility to do so but the FBI was lending a hand. Sam Rainsy meanwhile was really hoping that the FBI would issue a report saying Hun Sen was behind it. He really was pushing for that. The night that he was told by our Ambassador that we weren't going to be able to make that kind of a determination he stormed out of the embassy, furious, and denounced the whole process. The FBI agent concluded that his personal security was probably being compromised. He left Cambodia, went to Bangkok, and gave a press conference at which he was asked, "What is the conclusion?" There were Rainsy supporters there, maybe Rainsy himself, I don't remember, pressing him, "What did you conclude? Who was behind the grenade attack?" He said, "It's

unclear, we can't come to a determination," and then returned to Washington.

Out of this grew the myth of the "FBI report." Rainsy and others claimed that the agent had submitted a report, that he had made a decision but it was secret, and he wasn't going to share it. In fact, all the agent had was his notes from interviews; there was never a formal report. Nevertheless we began to get insistent calls from the Congress to release to them the FBI's nonexistent report. What State did was refer the matter to the FBI. I don't remember whether the FBI ever shared those interview notes or not. All of this occurred during the build-up that awful spring when the Secretary was trying to get a trip arranged and tensions between the two co-prime ministers were coming to the point of ignition. Rainsy was stirring the pot, and he continues to do this. If you ask many of our Members of Congress they will tell you that he is the one who should be the leader of Cambodia. He's a true democrat and Hun Sen is just a thug. We've never been able, I think, to get beyond that mind set with regard to Cambodia. It's true that Hun Sen is ruthless and opportunistic, and he's certainly no favorite of mine, but in many ways Rainsy is just as bad.

Q: What about Laos?

HUHTALA: In Laos, we had an Ambassador there of course. We had normalized in '91 and Wendy Chamberlin was our Ambassador, greatly beloved by the Lao people because years before she'd been a volunteer teacher there before she joined the Foreign Service. She spoke Lao and she had a very dynamic personality. Wendy tried very hard to move the Lao in the direction of opening up and liberalizing so that we could have stronger relations.

During that period we signed a bilateral trade agreement with Laos. The Lao were very anxious to have most favourite nation (MFN) status which is now called normal trade relations, NTR. They didn't have MFN at the time and they knew that they needed a trade agreement first to get it. The Lao delegation came to Washington and came into the first meeting to negotiate the bilateral trade agreement and the minister who lead the delegation said, "Where do I sign?" They were ready, so it was pretty easy to negotiate an agreement. Of course an agreement like that has to be ratified by the Congress and the Congress has to agree to give most favored nation status. At that time the Lao unfortunately were engaged in stupid human rights abuses. There was a group of Lao villagers who had converted to Christianity and there were American missionaries with them and they were caught reading the Bible in their homes. The Lao authorities clamped down and arrested the American missionaries, eventual expelled them and put the poor Lao in jail. Naturally a huge uproar in Congress ensued, as you can imagine. Wendy was there behind the scenes saying, "This is insanity. Do you or do you not want trade relations with us? Congress takes all of these things into account." The Lao said, "This has nothing to do with trade." Well guess what, it does. She was very frustrated. Also there was a Hmong insurgency, you know the Hmong people who had fought with the CIA during the war. There was an active remnant up in the hills that was still resisting the government. By this time we had sizable populations of Hmong resettled in the United States, many of them with citizenship.

Q: Some up in Minnesota.

HUHTALA: A lot in Minnesota, central valley of California and North Carolina, Senator Jesse

Helms' home state. A group of them in their beautiful tribal costumes had paid a visit on him on New Years Day. He was enchanted with them. They were good citizens now and they had grievances about their homeland so he was very interested in their cause. I remember we were up in the Senate for a hearing. The budget committee had taken up the matter of whether or not we should grant MFN to Laos. On that very day -- and I think this is just a coincidence -- on that very day there was a delegation of Hmong in their bright red tribal outfits who had come up to the hill to lobby for support in general. They found out about the budget hearing and the two events sort of collided and it went off the agenda. We have never been able, to this day, to get normal trade relations with Laos because every time we get close the Lao authorities crack down in some way on either religious practice or human rights in general. That was frustrating, I have to say.

WILLIAM N. STOKES
Comments on Cambodia

William N. Stokes attended the University of Chicago and Columbia University specializing in mathematics and physics during World War II. After joining the Foreign Service in 1946, Mr. Stokes served in China, Japan, Morocco, Tunisia, Thailand, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by William Knight in 1992.

Q: *Alright, let's stay substantive for this one last element of your impression of the situation in Cambodia vis a vis Chinese policy right now. I know you're not currently expert in it but is it your feeling that the Chinese are still pursuing Mao's old continental policy in Cambodia with the Pathet Lao?*

STOKES: Well not with the Pathet Lao, with the Mer Ruge.

Q: *Mer Ruge, yes.*

STOKES: Well, China has historically, long before the communists under the various empires and continuing on, has felt that it should have a direct and important role and influence in all the countries that were part of its earlier sphere of influence, and Cambodia would be one of them - although far from the most important. The reason it comes to the forefront right now is of course that Cambodia is weak and divided and this is in a way kind of left over from an earlier period. When Norodom Sihanouk was king of Cambodia he and the Thai had endless battles along their frontier. The Thai frontier with Cambodia consists of provinces in which the population is largely Khmer so the Thai organized its own insurrection called the Khmer (Inaudible) or Free Khmer that did bring an insurgency along the boundaries against Cambodia when Sihanouk was there. When Sihanouk fled to China and lived in China for many years after he was overthrown by Lon Nol it was at that time that the Chinese took up an interest in his cause and began developing a policy of direct involvement in Cambodia through Sihanouk on one hand and Praphast on the other. It's a question of what works. In other words, I think they would have pursued support of the insurgency in Thailand if it had been successful, but it wasn't. In the case of Cambodia they still had instruments to play, and they're still playing them. But they're playing

it in a nuanced way. They're trying to balance water on both shoulders, they don't want to give up their hand in the game and on the other hand they don't want to make themselves pariahs in Accion - nor have it envenom their relationships with the rest of the western world so I expect that they would be reasonable within a degree but not give up support for elements that have been dependent on them.

Q: And do you think Praphast is really quite dependent on the Chinese?

STOKES: Yes, I think I don't know enough to say anything very profound on this subject, but he's gotten his arms from the Chinese and he clearly seemed to be someone who is, it may be a little embarrassing to some of the, probably was embarrassing to the government in China of Zaus Yang who was focusing on the internationalist point of view. Now you have a continental crowd back in charge in China again, and the continental crowd would be more open to Praphast. Zaus Yang would have sold him down the river by now. Again you see that ebb and flow of the Chinese communist leadership between internationalists and the continentalists and Zaus Yang looked with his enormous success in promoting agrarian privatization in China and an astounding ability of China to go from being an important importer of US wheat to being self-sufficient in food by Zaus Yang's policy of giving the peasant the use of fruit of his own land, even tenure over it, if not amounting to ownership. And then Zaus Yang wanted to apply the same purposes to industry. And this, of course, brings me to my next involvement in China that doesn't directly involve the foreign service, but it was certainly a wonderful perspective on what is happening in a country, that I was regional manager for AT Karney of our industrial modernization work in China. I visited some 220 Chinese industrial establishments ranging from incredibly vast first auto works in Chong Chun with a work force of 475,000 as you can imagine to small factories in the countryside. And each day, 2 or 3 or 4 days with the factory staff and leadership talking about the problems of their factory and their relationship with the authorities and transportation and what life was like. So there all holes are no longer barred, you're not seen as an outsider, you're one of the family and I think there's a dimension there of diplomacy that really ought to be explored.

End of reader