



SIHANOUK: A MAN TO BE WATCHED

In his brief introduction to, of all things, Prince Sihanouk's book My War with the CIA, entitled "In Greece as in Cambodia," Andreas Papandreu was moved to say the following: "...the Greek people deeply admire the peoples of Indochina. It is they who have borne the main burden -- a spectacular and appalling burden-- in the struggle for independence and self-determination. They have shown the way. We will follow." [Monthly Review, Sept. 1973, p. 64]

He said further:

"...the nations that have fallen prey to aggressive American imperialism must coordinate their actions on a global basis -- since the aggressor himself operates on a global basis. But beyond this, the Third-World liberation movements need, in their struggle against US imperialism, the active support of the anti-imperialist camp. There is widespread concern in our ranks that the increasingly complex nature of superpower relations and politics may tend to limit the willingness or the capability of anti-imperialist nations to contribute actively to the liberation struggles of peoples in Asia, in Latin America, in Africa and in southern Europe. Such a development would be no less than tragic. Not only for the already 'occupied' nations of the Third World, but also for the anti-imperialist superpowers [i.e. the USSR and China] themselves. If the hawks of the United States are met with subservience and passivity by the other giants of the world, then their positions will become more and more hawkish. There should be no doubt in anyone's mind about the nature of American imperialism." [Op. cit., pp.63-4, Our parenthesis]

This statement by a Greek national bourgeois anti-imperialist patriot is far more advanced politically from the working class viewpoint than almost everything being written on the present international scene by so-called proletarian revolutionaries. In a sense the SWG bulletin is an attempt to carry through Papandreu's accurate observations to their proletarian conclusions.

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In the past 1½ years, President Nixon, the chief representative of US imperialism, has made a trip to China and a trip to the Soviet Union. Chairman Brezhnev, the chief representative of Soviet social-imperialism has now visited the USA. All signs point to a similar visit to the USA in the near future from Chou En-lai, the chief representative of the Chinese revisionist leadership. During the period of these visits, economic and cultural relations between US imperialism on the one hand, and the two large members of the so-called "socialist camp" on the other, have accelerated at an extremely rapid pace.

For more than five years SWG* has been attempting to warn the proletarian vanguard of the oppressed nations concerning the developing rapprochement of both the Soviet Union and then People's China, with US imperialism, the main enemy of mankind. Time and again we've pointed out that US hegemony in a developing 3-way partnership for division of the world with the Soviet Union and China is aimed first and foremost at crushing the national liberation movements of the oppressed peoples in Asia, Africa, Arabia, Latin America and Afro-America.

The aim of this article is to contribute to the alertness of our comrades in Cambodia and throughout the rest of the world in our dealings with US imperialism. If we fail to pay sufficient attention to the political and diplomatic initiatives of US imperialism we stand a good chance to fritter away in the negotiating process what the masses of the oppressed nations win for themselves and the international working class on the battlefield with their tears, sweat and blood.

*Originally Youth for Stalin

Right now the US imperialists are in the process of an orderly retreat in Indochina which has been the focal point of the world-wide struggle against US imperialism for more than a decade. Among other things the oil imperialists pushed the Watergate scandal to force Nixon to ease up on the US operations in Cambodia. The dominant wing of the US monopoly capitalist class has determined that the main tools of their state apparatus -- their diplomatic corps, intelligence apparatus, and their military forces which are presently training for desert warfare -- must now be concentrated against the rising struggles of the oppressed peoples of Arabia.*

Yet in spite of US imperialism's urgent need to move their personnel and materiel into Arabia, the Indochinese political vanguard and the international working class has not taken advantage of this opportunity to bring the US imperialists to their knees in Indochina. Why is the international Marxist-Leninist movement permitting US imperialism to make an orderly retreat when we have the opportunity to rout US imperialism?

US imperialist advisors and spokesmen like the syndicated columnists Evans and Novak understand well what is going on. In June of 1972 as US imperialism was pushing Hanoi toward a settlement, they wrote that:

"the day before Mr. Nixon arrived in Moscow, the North Vietnamese army newspaper ... accused the Soviet Union of putting its own 'national interests' over those of the world revolution...: 'Communists always consider the revolution of each nation an inseparable part of the world revolution. They never set national interests against the interests of world revolution nor place private national interests above the common interests of the world revolution, much less serve their own national selfishness.'

"The only way to deal with Mr. Nixon's latest offensive in Vietnam is by 'a relentless attack against the US imperialists.' But what did the Soviet Union do? Hanoi hurls the accusation in polemical terms: 'By ignoring and tolerating the US imperialists' crimes, one cannot repel their aggression. By showing weakness, one cannot punish their aggressiveness.'"

A few days later, with Nixon in Moscow, the Soviet revisionists responded:

"Reminding Hanoi that it owes much to the 'enormous support' of the Soviet Union in the 10-year war against the South, Radio Moscow sang the praises of the Vietnamese Communists but added a pointed warning: 'The war of aggression in Vietnam can be ended only through negotiations ... practical experience clearly shows that the Vietnam problem cannot be solved by military means.'" [Op. cit.]

I.F. Stone, a radical liberal US imperialist bourgeois spokesman playing a role "sympathetic" to the Vietnamese, i.e. encouraging the North Vietnamese to settle, wrote at the same time:

"Without the enormous resolution and courage of the Vietnamese, what would Moscow and Peking have to offer Mr. Nixon, what would they have to sell? Peking bought its admission to the United Nations, bought its way out of containment, with the blood of the Vietnamese people. The same commodity -- in such plentiful supply -- brought Mr. Nixon to Moscow. All those bright hopes of expanded US trade and credits which Nixon emissaries have been dangling before the Kremlin since Secretary of Commerce Stans went there last year rest on Mr. Nixon's desire to buy some Soviet 'restraint' on Hanoi.

"...President Nixon has mined North Vietnam's harbors and stepped up the bombing of Hanoi, Haiphong, and the supply roads leading into China, with no more than toothless protest from either of Hanoi's great allies."

* The struggle in Arabia is spearheaded by the Palestinian Arab masses and by the outstanding revolutionary government of People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen).

Another US columnist who described some of the process leading to the January 27th "ceasefire" in south Vietnam was Robert S. Elegant of the Los Angeles Times. In January, 1973, he reported from Hong Kong that:

"Well informed diplomatic sources here indicated yesterday that pressure from Peking and Moscow played a major role in inducing the Vietnamese Communists to return to the conference table....The diplomats pointed out that neither Peking nor Moscow now feels that continuation of hostilities is in its interest. The Chinese do not wish to imperil their rapprochement with the United States by the pro forma expressions of support for Hanoi they must utter....The Soviets fear that their plans for Europe, now proceeding well, could go awry if they do not use their influence with Hanoi to secure some further concessions....Together with Soviet pressure, the Chinese swayed the wavering political bureau of the North Vietnamese Labor (Communist) Party. The faction in the Hanoi Politburo that favors present accommodation...therefore prevailed."

The process which led to the Vietnamese leadership's settlement with US imperialism in January 1973 was completely involved with the diplomatic maneuvers initiated by US imperialism and carried through by the Russian and Chinese revisionist leaders.

Since Nixon's two trips, flippant news items exposing US hegemony in its relationship with China and the Soviet Union, and exposing the anti-oppressed peoples character of these relationships are now commonplace. For example, take these two items from Newsweek:

"Peking Votes for Plowshares" -- "Peking has given Hanoi the word that it now favors political over military tactics in Indochina. Le Duan, the veteran secretary of North Vietnam's Communist Party who is rated as the real power in Hanoi, tried and failed to get more military aid during his recent visit to Peking. The Chinese want to emphasize reconstruction of Vietnam's battered economy." [7/2/73]

"Hanoi Gets the Word -- Again" -- "Hanoi, turned down by Peking in its quest for more military aid, got the same treatment from Moscow. During his recent visit, the Russians told Le Duan, secretary of North Vietnam's Communist Party, that they would finance economic aid but not arms, the same message the Hanoi official got from the Chinese. His Soviet hosts also pressed Le Duan about observance of the Paris ceasefire agreements with the U.S." [8/13/73, p.13]

It is of strategic importance to US imperialism that it extricate itself militarily from Indochina and concentrate its forces in Arabia. And Chinese and Soviet rapprochement with US imperialism provide some basis for US imperialism to "have its cake and eat it too." For the forces in leadership (pressured by the Russian and Chinese revisionists): in Laos, Prince Souvanouvong, and in Vietnam, the PRG in the south and the revisionists controlling the Lao Dong Party in the North: have been willing to accept the kind of "partial" victory that include reactionary coalitions and continued US economic presence.* This guarantees that the US imperialists will retain the reason and opportunity to come back with its army in the event that US Big Business is ever threatened by independence movement struggle for expropriation, labor struggle, etc.

With the powerful backing of the Russian and Chinese revisionists, US imperialism is being saved in Indochina and the conditions are being laid for an inevitable new struggle from "scratch" by the Indochinese people in a tragic repetition of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and the Agreements on Laos of '56 and '62.

* In SNG Bulletin #7, "Fighting Talk on Indo-China: Which Side are Sihanouk and the Chinese 'Cultural Revolution' On?", 10/10/70, pp. 3-4, we noted some of the US imperialist investment which had already taken place in south Vietnam. More recently, it was "revealed that South Vietnamese officials had opened sealed bids from international oil companies seeking contracts for offshore exploration and awarded four companies representing as many countries, the right to drill for the suspected oil deposits. Contracts were awarded to Mobil, Exxon, Shell and Sunningdale. Mobil and Exxon are American-owned, Sunningdale is Canadian and Shell is owned jointly by American, British and Dutch concerns." [Muhammad Speaks, 8/10/73, p.21]

The treacherous influence of both the Russian and Chinese revisionists on the national liberation struggles of the Indochinese peoples flies in the face of the correct concept, put forth by Che Guevara among others, that we (the international working class and oppressed peoples) need "two, three, many Vietnams." The Russian and Chinese revisionists have helped make it possible for US imperialism to escalate and refocus the various parts of its War against the peoples of Indochina while they've helped keep the Indochinese peoples from developing a coordinated fighting front.*

Yet the peoples of Indochina have decisively and heroically shown that they would rather die on their feet fighting for their national liberation than live on their knees as slaves of the US imperialist oppressors.

In Cambodia, the vanguard forces of the Khmers Rouges have apparently kept the people's heroic initiative in their hearts and minds and as the basis for their revolutionary program and activity. For into the midst of the delicate, vicious, and extremely important "negotiations" on Indochina between US imperialism on the one hand, and the Russian and Chinese revisionists and the Indochinese national bourgeois leadership on the other, the Cambodian masses, led by the Khmers Rouges, are waging their national liberation struggle with the aim of achieving military victory and on that basis genuine independence.

Why is it that the Khmers Rouges are not "playing ball" with Russian and Chinese revisionism? Because the Khmers Rouges, representing the Cambodian proletariat and poor peasantry, developed and grew strong in opposition to Sihanouk, a representative of the Cambodian national bourgeoisie (and at times even of the Cambodian comprador class), and during that period, they received support neither from the revisionists in the Soviet Union nor from the revisionist leadership that became dominant in China in the course of the "Cultural Revolution."

Since the CIA engineered the Cambodian coup in 1970, the Soviet Union has recognized Lon Nol's regime as the legitimate authority in Cambodia. Thus the Soviet revisionists have openly sided with the US imperialist puppets in this country. Part of the axorse given for the Soviet continued support of the US imperialist puppet regime is the idea that the Cambodian Communists are leading the struggle there as opposed to the National United Front of Cambodia (NUF of C). This position has been echoed in the Daily World, the daily publication of the CPUSA.

During this same period, the Chinese revisionist leadership have given all out support to Sihanouk as the supposed head of the united front coalition. As we pointed out, the Chinese leadership never gave Chinese support to the Khmers Rouges while they were struggling against Sihanouk. Chinese "support" has come only after a front was achieved with the Sihanoukists and then the support has been to Sihanouk and the Sihanoukist wing of the NUF of C. The RL ("Revolutionary Union") and the Guardian newspaper, two US sychophants of the Chinese revisionists, have been among the loudest in praise of Sihanouk. Their only mention of the Cambodian Communists ironically appeared in a polemic by the Guardian editor Irwin Silber against the pro-Soviet Daily World. Silber says, "The Cambodian national liberation movement is led by the NUF which is a coalition, headed by Prince Sihanouk. The Pracheachon, which is the only equivalent of a Communist party in Cambodia is a member of the front." [Guardian, 5/9/73, p.9]

Mao Tse-tung (who Silber claims to follow) taught that, "Without the Party's firm leadership, no revolutionary united front can win victory." ["The Present Situation and Our Tasks," Dec. 1947, "Selected Works," Volume IV, p. 171)

It is absolutely necessary for Marxist-Leninists to support both the

* In practice, when US imperialism needed to concentrate in Arabia, the Russian and Chinese revisionists have aided US imperialism in getting cease-fires, settlements, etc. in Indochina; when it needed to concentrate its firepower in Cambodia, it was able to conclude a settlement or had a "cease-fire-in-place" with the Vietnamese and the Laotians.

national movement against imperialism and specifically its NLF organization while at the same time, supporting the proletarian party's leadership in the class struggle within the united front for proletarian hegemony. A Marxist-Leninist's failure to support either element in the struggle, the mass movement or the vanguard party, is opportunist and objectively counter-revolutionary.

Silber correctly exposes the Daily World statement that "The Cambodian national liberation movement is led by the Cambodian Communist party" as "nothing but a disguised attack on the NUF." But Silber and the other religious "followers" of Mao themselves support the national bourgeois elements, the Sihanoukists, within the NUF, attempting to isolate and bury the Communist leadership necessary, as Mao says, to lead to victorious national liberation.

The bankruptcy of both the Daily World and Guardian (reflecting the Soviet and Chinese) positions on Cambodia has come quite abruptly to the surface in recent months.

Sihanouk himself has been saying repeatedly that he is merely the nominal head of the NUF government but that he has no real power, that the power lies with the Khmers Rouges, that it is with the Khmers Rouges that US imperialism must try to make their deal, etc., etc. This gives the lie to the Guardian position that Sihanouk is the leader of the front. On the other hand the Soviet Union has now agreed with US imperialism and Chinese revisionism to try to bring back Sihanouk! Where does this leave the "poor" Daily World hack who said correctly that, "One of the greatest dangers of the present movement, when the NUF is scoring stunning military successes, is that the US, Lon Nol, and Sihanouk, with the cooperation of China, will reach some kind of accommodation with the aim of heading off the revolution"?

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On July 12, 1973 Thomas B. Ross, writing in the Chicago Sun-Times, reported that:

"President Nixon is ready to dump the entire US-supported regime in Cambodia and roll back the clock to 1970 by accepting the reinstatement of Prince Norodom Sihanouk with no strings attached. Highly placed Administration sources reported ... Mr. Nixon has received tentative support from the Soviet Union for the reinstatement of Sihanouk.... Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's National Security Advisor, is expected to solicit China's endorsement during his visit to Peking this summer, probably within the next four weeks.... Meanwhile, Serge Romensky of Agence France-Presse reported from Peking that Sihanouk warned there Tuesday night that President Nixon had but one 'tiny door' through which to pull out of the Cambodian mess -- direct negotiations with the Red Khmers, if the Communist tribesmen agreed to it.... Sihanouk said Kissinger could use Chinese Premier Chou En-lai as an intermediary to put forward proposals for negotiations with the Khmers, thus 'leaving open a tiny door.' 'It is now up to the Americans and the Red Khmers -- the future masters of Cambodia -- to determine whether or not they want to hold talks,' he said. ...US officials are optimistic that Sihanouk can be reinstated in an arrangement by the three superpowers that can salvage something of Mr. Nixon's 'peace with honor' policy." [Our emphasis]

Almost three years ago on August 7, 1970 Muhammad Speaks published an article written by Dadi Hassimtou of the Afro-Asian Liberation Press entitled "A Closer Look at Cambodia's Coup: Why Did Sihanouk Choose Lon Nol to Rule in his Absence?"*

Hassimtou reported:

"Experts on Cambodian politics find it interesting that Sihanouk appointed the CIA-connected Lon Nol to rule Cambodia when the prince and his family packed up and left for Paris -- allegedly for health reasons....

* This article was reprinted in full as it appeared in Muhammad Speaks in SWG Bulletin #7, pp. 20-21.

"Why did Sihanouk -- who is now hailed as a progressive liberator, even as a revolutionary-- place the Lon Nol-Sirik Matak group in power?"

"That question puzzles many Cambodians who, like Sihanouk himself, have known for the last ten years or more that the Lon Nol-Sirik Matak crowd directly represents French and US interests and is their arm of oppression within Cambodia.

"Leaders of the Red Khmers believe that Sihanouk, Lon Nol and other forces may have rigged the 'coup' in order to prevent the increasingly strong and popular Red Khmers from taking over Cambodian leadership through a revolutionary coup...."

"Prior to his downfall, Prince Norodom Sihanouk himself had also opposed --violently at times-- the Red Khmers...."

"A Laotian revolutionary in Paris has expressed similar concern about Sihanouk's 'government in exile.'"

"What is the objective effect of the formation of this government?" the Laotian asked. "It is an attempt to prevent a truly revolutionary, anti-imperialist regime from coming to power in Cambodia. The Cambodian aristocracy does not like the idea of a united Indo-China led by peasant and workers parties. They like Cambodia as a pleasure resort and rubber supplier for the decadent Yankee and European aristocracy."

"Now they think they have two horses to ride. If Lon Nol temporarily crushes the liberation forces, all is well and good. And Sihanouk can remain in exile. He moved his wealth outside the country before he replaced himself with the reactionary Lon Nol. Apparently he did not want to struggle directly with the rightist forces."

"But if the liberation forces win as Sihanouk is betting, then a previously formed government of his choosing will be imposed again on the people." [Our Emphasis]

There we have it. The same powerful international revisionists of the Soviet Union and China who pushed the Vietnamese and Laotian vacillating leaderships to settlements, who helped to permit US imperialism its orderly retreat and continued presence politically and economically in Vietnam and Laos, are hard at work to install Sihanouk, "the three superpowers' choice," in power once again in Cambodia. Meanwhile Sihanouk is talking about fighting on and on in order to keep his ties with the Khmers Rouges who (as he himself admits) have the power and are leading the Cambodian masses in fighting on at this time, even without the active support of the rest of the Indochinese peoples and the international working class. If the three superpowers succeed in bringing Sihanouk back to the seat of power in Cambodia, all of Indochina will be temporarily pacified for imperialism, headed by US imperialism, while US imperialism concentrates its bestial war machine against the Arabian masses.

Sihanouk can perhaps be part of a united front coalition government. This is not what we're discussing here. We are discussing who will have the power, who will have hegemony within the National United Front, Sihanouk or the Khmers Rouges? The answer to this question will determine whether the Cambodian masses will fight on to military victory and genuine national independence at this time, and thus strike a mighty blow to US imperialism and its "era of negotiations."

Sihanouk then is a man to be watched.

CONCLUSION

The present leadership of both the Soviet Union and China have proved that they will not lead the oppressed peoples and the international working class in a coordinated fighting front against imperialism headed by US imperialism. We urge the Albanian Party of Labor, which has publicly stated its support for the struggles of the Indochinese peoples for complete victory, to call an international meeting to discuss, with a critical and wary approach to Sihanouk, our proletarian solidarity with the Khmers Rouges. We also make this appeal for an international meeting on Cambodia to the vanguard National Liberation Front organization of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen) whose Republic is now threatened with the same US imperialist firepower that was previously concentrated on Indochina.

Let the voice of the international working class be heard:
"We need two, three, many Cambodias."

Stalinist Workers Group for Afro-American National Liberation and a
New Communist International