

*Cambodia*

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PRINCE SIHANOUK TO LEAVE PARIS ON 13 MARCH

Phnom Penh Domestic Service in French 0530 GMT 13 Mar 70 D

[Text] According to an AFP dispatch of 12 March, Prince Sihanouk announced yesterday in Paris that he will leave the French capital today, Friday 13 March, for Moscow and Peking before returning to Cambodia. His stopovers in the Soviet and Chinese capitals will be shorter than initially planned.

Statement on French TV

Paris AFP in English 2031 GMT 12 Mar 70 G (FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY)

[Text] Paris, March 12 (AFP)--Cambodian Head of State Prince Norodom Sihanouk said tonight he had decided to return to Cambodia to re-establish the neutrality and the non-alignment which is the safeguard of our national existence.

He claimed right-wing elements in the country wanted Cambodia to enter the American camp, in which case, he said we would become in my opinion at best a second Thailand and at worst a second Laos or a second Vietnam. The Prince, who was speaking on a French television news programme, said it was right-wing and extreme right-wing factions that had organized attacks on the North Vietnamese and Provisional Revolutionary Government (Vietcong) property at Phnom Penh.

The right has taken advantage of my long absence, caused by my state of health, to try to change the political and ideological orientation of Cambodia, which up to now has been neutral and non-aligned, Prince Sihanouk said. The right would like us to move into the free-world camp, that is the American camp. If that happened we would become in my opinion a second Thailand and at worst a second Laos or a second Vietnam. Prince Sihanouk said he knew the rightist elements at the back of the present troubles. They were in parliament and even in the government.

Among the officers there are many who are nostalgic for American aid because it used to allow them to lead a comfortable lives, he went on. For myself, I want neither American satellisation nor Chinese satellisation.

"I therefore intend to return by a way of Moscow and Peking," the Cambodian leader went on. In both capitals I shall say that there will be a test of strength between myself and the centrists who support me on the one hand, and the elements on the extreme right. "I shall say in Moscow and in Peking that it is for them to choose between making Cambodia communist or leaving Cambodia neutral, which for them would be the best solution."

Prince Sihanouk said it was up to Moscow and Peking to tell the "Vietminh and Vietcong" to leave Cambodia. "If they did not do so they would not be able to complain if we go over to the American camp," he added.

Replying to questions from his interviewer, Prince Sihanouk said there had "certainly" been contracts between the American and the Cambodian right-wing. "The United States would like to penetrate into Cambodia to change the country's politics and ideology," he said, "I am sure the Americans have already made wonderful promises, particularly to the army."

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The Prince was also asked that international support he felt he could count upon. He replied: "France will certainly support us in our policy of neutrality because she is convinced that it is the only true policy for Cambodia and for all the countries of the former Indochina. I hope too that Moscow and Peking will support us, because it is in the interests of the socialist camp to maintain our neutrality".

Prince Sihanouk predicted that on his return to Phnom Penh there would probably be "a trial of strength between myself and the Cambodian right". The Prince went on: "As for the army, it will be divided. It does not hate me, but it is also attached to Lon Nol (General Lon Nol, army commander and acting head of state in Prince Sihanouk's absence), and he, like all army officers favours the right.

"If I do not receive communist support for the respect of our neutrality it is possible that I will resign.

"Anything can happen now; everything depends on the army. The army is very royalist: will it agree to remain poor"? Prince Sihanouk added: "If I am beaten in my confrontation with the right, the future will be very sombre. I believe foreign observers agree with me. I have no personal ambitions. I have had enough of power. I do not like civil war and I do not like making blood flow. But before withdrawing I shall speak to the army and to the people. I shall assemble the national congress. The people, youth, the army, will decide".