

I certainly hope the situation in Cambodia will not now be allowed to develop as did the situation in Vietnam. I deeply regret that the United States Government has considered it necessary to take this step, but we are somewhat reassured that President Nixon has given an assurance of the limited nature of these operations and that United States forces will be withdrawn once their immediate objectives are achieved. It would be tragic, and I am sure this view is shared not only by all Members of this House but by the American people themselves, if these operations were to result in a further escalation of the conflict in Indochina.

(2) P.M.

I thought it might be useful to the House if I were to begin my remarks with a short historical background to the events that we are discussing this afternoon.

The 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina drew up cease-fire agreements for each of the three Indochina states. As one of the countries invited to serve as a supervisory power on each of the three international commissions provided for in the cease-fire agreements, Canada undertook, together with India and Poland, to see whether or not the parties involved in the agreements properly implemented the terms of those agreements to which they had subscribed. In Cambodia these parties were the Cambodian national armed forces, on the one hand, and the Cambodian resistance forces and Vietnamese military units, on the other.

The implementation of the 1954 cease-fire agreement for Cambodia proved to be a straightforward matter. The more purely military provisions were put into effect without too much difficulty and, with the Cambodian elections of 1955 over, the Canadian delegation urged that the Commission should be disbanded. In Canada's opinion, the job for which the Commission had been established had been completed. We were not, however, able to convince our Indian and Polish colleagues, particularly when it became clear that the Cambodian Government wished to see the Commission continue in being. So the Commission remained in Cambodia with its personnel progressively reduced, until by 1958 only a token staff was left.

Until about 1963, there was not much for the Commission to do. The renewed conflict in Vietnam, however, began increasingly to be felt in Cambodia -- often with tragic loss of Cambodian lives and property. As the situation in Vietnam deteriorated, incidents in the border area between Cambodia and South Vietnam became more and more frequent. For their part, the South Vietnamese and the Americans maintained that any incidents in which they were involved resulted from clashes with Vietnamese Communist forces who were making use of Cambodian territory as a sanctuary to which they retreated or as a base from which they operated against South Vietnam. The charge was also increasingly made that the Vietnamese Communists were making use of Cambodia as a supply-route, both in the northeastern province, along what was called the "Sihanouk Trail", and through the ports along the Gulf of Siam.

Since early 1968, the Cambodian Government itself has complained publicly of the activities of Vietnamese Communist armed forces on Cambodian territory. Evidence substantiating these complaints was contained in an official Cambodian Government report made public in October 1968 in which the Cambodian Secretary of State for National Security reported that armed Vietnamese