NSC BRIEFING   2 March 1955

CAMBODIAN KING'S ABDICATION

I.   In suddenly deciding to abdicate, Cambodian king Norodon
     repeats on a more positive scale a tactic he used to get
     his way from the French.

   A.   In 1953, after issuing an unprecedented blast against
        French policy during a stay in New York, he refused
        to return to his capital until French met his demands.

   B.   His present gripe is against both foreign and domestic
        criticism of his plans for constitutional reform.

   C.   Wants to replace elections scheduled for April with
        referendum which would decide whether or not consti-
        tution would be drastically revised in a manner which
        would virtually eliminate political parties in which
        there is considerable republican sentiment.

   D.   He conceives his program as a device to meet both
        demands of democracy and Cambodian desire for
        paternalistic monarchy.

   E.   King's particular annoyance is International Control
        Commission's concern with what he conceives to be
        purely domestic affairs.

   E.   Canadians, Indians, as well as British have charged
        his plan not compatible with Geneva agreement which
        called for elections in 1955 under constitution then
        in force.

II. Norodon is thoroughly sincere and also highly sensitive to

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A. Chosen for his job in 1941 by council or regents because he was related to both of two rival branches of royal family.

B. Until two years ago showed little evidence of being anything more than playboy and never seriously bucked French control.

C. After finally standing up to French, he won for Cambodia a considerable measure of real independence.

D. Abdication (is) in favor of his father, Prince Suramint, ~~is irregular since Cambodian practice is for monarchs~~ APPARENTLY APPROVED ~~to be chosen~~ by council of regents.

    1. Suramint, never king, has had no active part in government for years past.

III. Doubtful that king intends to drop out of political scene.

A. But Cambodian stability bound to suffer by his precipitate act.