



PLAYBOY

Playboy Interview: Norodom Sihanouk

By Debra Weiner
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" We Cambodians believe in rebirth. If I am to come back as a human being, I pray for only one thing: I don't want to be king, nor prime minister "

In the past year, as America's foreign policy has undergone scrutiny on almost all fronts, there has been a tide of books and movies examining the legacy of the war in Vietnam. A disastrous consequence of that war was the devastation of Cambodia, the grim final scene of a drama that concluded with one of the worst genocides of the century--the deaths of an estimated 700,000 to 2,000,000 men, women and children in the "killing fields." Caught in the spotlight of the past 20 years, like a tragic character lurching about the international stage, is a curious, poignant and still fascinating world leader: Norodom Sihanouk, royal prince.

Today, Sihanouk, living in exile, is an eloquent eyewitness to that era. Lavishly subsidized by the People's Republic of China and North Korea, he travels constantly, speaking out for his country, a kind of Flying Dutchman crossing and recrossing Cold War boundaries in search of nurture for his shattered land. Tenaciously, he continues an impassioned struggle to regain power, while he explains to all who will listen the global jigsaw puzzle that is his nation's history--a history in which America has, in recent decades, played a substantial role.

Often labeled vain, mercurial, bombastic and opportunistic, as well as charismatic, intelligent and charming, Sihanouk has shared power with Japanese Fascists, French colonialists, Khmer Rouge Communists--and

now seeks assistance from America, the country he sees as most responsible for his personal downfall and the near destruction of his people. The fact that he survived the successive waves of domination by outside powers is testament to his resilience. Despite his chameleonlike ability to change his coloration according to the political winds, he has always stood for the independence of his country. To many, he is a prism, or perhaps a kaleidoscope, through which the past 45 years of Western relations with Southeast Asia may be seen.

Sihanouk had a direct effect on the life of this country, as well, for it was after his overthrow, supported by the U.S., in 1970, that Richard Nixon ordered American troops to attack Viet Cong bases inside Cambodia, thus widening the war and prompting demonstrators to shut down nearly 500 colleges and universities across the country.

Between 1969 and 1973, American B-52s carpet-bombed the Cambodian countryside, dropping as many tons of explosives on that tiny country as had fallen on Germany during World War Two. By the time the U.S.-backed regime of Lon Nol fell to the Khmer Rouge Communist army in 1975, some estimate as many as 800,000 of Cambodia's roughly 7,000,000 population had already died.

Under the nearly four-year rule of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia was subjected to genocide of Hitlerian proportions. In December 1978, Vietnam invaded, and within six months, hundreds of thousands of Khmer refugees, escaping starvation and war, fled to the Thai border. Although today Cambodia is still occupied by Vietnam, a U.S.-supported Coalition Government--with Sihanouk as president; Khieu Samphan, of the Khmer Rouge, as vice-president; and Son Sann, of the Khmer People's National Liberation Front, as prime minister--continues to resist the occupation.

Unlike Ferdinand Marcos, Jean-Claude Duvalier, Anastasio Somoza or the shah of Iran, Sihanouk was apparently loved by the common people. Leftist intellectuals distrusted him; the right saw him as anti-American, implementing nationalist policies that cut into their profits; his military was appalled when he terminated U.S. aid. Yet, to the peasantry, who make up the bulk of Cambodia's population, Sihanouk has always symbolized their nation. Despite his reputation as a showman (actor, jazz saxophonist, film producer, horseman, gourmet, singer and composer), and even the rakish image of his younger days, his magnetic personality and god-king image have been a source of comfort to the common people--or so he says.

Although the UN has repeatedly affirmed the credentials of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea--and has also endorsed the seven-year-old resolution demanding Vietnam's withdrawal--Sihanouk remains a ruler without a country, with homes in Peking and North Korea. At the age of 64, he moves like a figure in an ancient Greek tragedy, proclaiming that he alone shoulders the fate of his country and the Khmer civilization.

Playboy sent free-lance writer Debra Weiner, who worked as a reporter in Southeast Asia for three years, to speak with Prince Sihanouk--first in New York, then in Peking--about the plight of his people and his country, as well as the vicissitudes of his life. Her report:

"I had read and heard much about Sihanouk's intricate personality, how he could be gracious and debonair one moment, tempestuous and tyrannical the next. Whether at his opulent palaces in North Korea and China, complete

with swimming pools, chauffeured limos and the finest of chefs, or globe-trotting the diplomatic circuit, Sihanouk still lives the life of the pampered prince. But at that first meeting in his suite at The New York Helmsley Hotel, he was a regal statesman--polite but reserved, his short, roundish body wrapped in an elegant gray pinstripe suit. He rambled in his oddly articulate way--wherever his mind led him.

Sitting in with us were his son-in-law Prince Sisowath Sirirath, who serves as Sihanouk's ambassador to the UN, and his chief protocol officer, Mrs. Khek Sisoda. Throughout the interview, both held their palms clasped together in front of their chests in the respectful 'thwai' position, per Cambodian custom when face to face with a former king. His Royal Highness, Prince Sihanouk, meanwhile, was seated stiffly on a sofa near an end table piled with books and chapters from his autobiography, *Bittersweet Memories*, published in France, as well as framed pictures of him with the peasants in Cambodia. Every now and then, he pressed a reprinted article or book into my hands, either to emphasize a point or to avoid having to repeat one.

He agreed to grant me a second audience to continue the interview. But since his New York schedule was packed, as was his agenda in France (where he was going next), our meeting would have to take place in Peking. As it turned out, I saw him again only a few weeks later, at a *soirée dansante* thrown by the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea as a birthday celebration for Sihanouk and reception for UN diplomats.

The main attraction of the party, of course, was Sihanouk. Gone were all vestiges of princely form and formality. This evening, he was pure actor. Early in the gala, he grabbed hold of the dance mike and, for the next few hours, serenaded his audience with old Sinatra melodies and night-club tunes, his usually high-pitched voice mellowing into a sweet alto.

More than a month had passed when we finally talked again. I was met in Peking by one of Sihanouk's aides at the high gray-brick palace gate and escorted past the indoor badminton court and the cinema to a large two-story yellow-and-gray building that had originally served as one of China's foreign-guest houses but now lodges Sihanouk and his entourage for several months each year.

Once inside, I was taken to a cavernous, rather bare reception hall where Sihanouk was waiting. Presenting me with a gift of colorful Chinese silk scarves, he led me to my seat at the far end of the room, patting the corner of the sofa adjacent to his chair to motion me to sit down.

It was ten A.M. as we toasted each other's health in fine French champagne and began what turned into an animated, reflective discussion about living the life of Sihanouk. Frequently laughing, utterly charming even when goaded or put on the line, he entertained even the most intimate questions. He is irrepressible. In response to one particularly personal question, he said to me, 'You are very charming. If I had a lot of money, I would like to have you as my wife.' When, after several hours, Mrs. Khek tried to curtail our talk, Sihanouk waved her away. Perhaps it had been a long time since he had talked about Sihanouk the person.

I arrived for our next meeting in Peking about three weeks later, expecting to pick up where we'd left off. I was mistaken. Perhaps it was his late flight from Hong Kong the night before or the more serious nature of my queries this final session that triggered his bad mood. Whatever the reason,

he began in a petulant, irritated tone and ended by shouting and flailing his arms as he paced about the reception hall like a caged tiger--screaming first at me, then at his pro-Khmer Rouge ambassador-at-large, Chhorn Hay, who had sat in on his last morning session, and finally stormed out of the room. A few days later, a brown envelope appeared under the door of the apartment where I was staying in Peking. It contained a lengthy addendum to our last two interview sessions, with a number of my questions, as well as his answers, rewritten. Unbeknown to me, the idiosyncratic Sihanouk had recorded our conversations. Needless to say, I did not use his version; what follows is edited from my tapes of our conversations."

Playboy: Your Royal Highness, you have been a king, a head of state and are now president in exile of Cambodia, but let us begin more personally. You live a lavish life subsidized by the Chinese and North Korean governments. Do you feel any discomfort, considering the living conditions of your subjects in Cambodia and in refugee camps?

Norodom Sihanouk: The poor, humble people of Cambodia don't criticize me. They don't resent anything, because they feel that they are like me. Some intellectual refugees say that the prince dances, sings and plays music while our people suffer. But at the same time, the people dance. I have photographs of many Cambodians enjoying the same way of life. Rich or poor, we like dancing, music and artistic performances. It is our way of life. In the refugee camps, they have their traditional and modern orchestras. They have their ballet troupes. They dance, they drink. The Cambodian way of life is like that.

So I don't mind those men who criticize me, because I know the majority don't. Even if I gave up dancing, champagne, good food, good clothes, I would still always have enemies.

Playboy: You have even been known as the playboy prince, have you not?

Sihanouk: Playboy? I don't know. But, ah, yes, I have had many adventures.

Playboy: For example?

Sihanouk: As king, we were not allowed to have more than one queen, but we were allowed to have hundreds of mistresses. You know, my great-grandfather Norodom had in his palace about 300, not wives, but, may I say, favorites. My grandfather Monivong was modest. He had only 60. My father was a playboy also. He had only one official mistress in his palace, but one day I discovered a book he wrote about his adventures. He had hundreds. But I lost all of that after the coup d'état.

Playboy: Your father kept a list?

Sihanouk: Yes, [Laughs] But I don't keep one. It would be very embarrassing for the ladies and for myself. So I don't write anything down. But my father, he was terrible. He did not write a line of his memoirs about politics, only about his love affairs. [Laughs] I prefer to hide my performances--I am not proud of them--and write only about politics. So having said this, I have had two official wives. First my cousin, a Norodom also, who was with me from 1945 to 1952. But she was, ooh, very jealous. She was terrible. She knew that her husband remained a playboy, so I could not have peace with her. She got fed up with my unfaithful behavior. So now we are divorced and

she is in Paris. But we are good friends. My new wife--from 1952 up to forever, I think--is Monique Izzi. Her father was Italian.

Playboy: Are you still unfaithful?

Sihanouk: When I abdicated the throne in 1955, I ceased having love affairs. As a king, I could afford to be a playboy, because I had wealth and, secondly, because it is in conformity with the traditions of Cambodia for the king to have many mistresses. But as chief of a political party, I had to run for election every four years. I could not be a playboy. Otherwise, political enemies would have said Sihanouk was not serious.

Playboy: So no more liaisons?

Sihanouk: None, but I have a very beautiful wife. Certainly, the most beautiful one I could find in Cambodia. [Laughs] And I continue to like music, singing, champagne parties, horses, good restaurants, sports cars. [Sips his champagne] You know, in affairs of the heart, there is no science, no technique.

Playboy: Were the women attracted to you mainly because you were king?

Sihanouk: I can't speak of all women, but power does attract women. Wealth also. But even if a man is not very handsome, if he is pleasant, makes good conversation and behaves well, I think that women will be attracted to him. It depends on the woman. I knew some Cambodian girls who refused to have love affairs with me. They said they preferred [whispers] strong men, tall men, even Africans, because they make love very strongly. Cambodians are terrible, no?

Playboy: Terrible?

Sihanouk: Yes, sexually. They like making love.

Playboy: Things could be worse.

Sihanouk: But, you know, I don't understand the ladies who make love with each other. I respect the freedom of individuals, but I don't understand homosexuals. I don't criticize them. I respect their way of life. But I bless heaven for allowing me to be very normal, very normal. I like only ladies. We Cambodians, you know, we believe in rebirth. So if I have to come back to this world as a human being, I pray for only one thing: I don't want to be king. I don't want to be prime minister. I want to be normal as a man. Not powerless and not homosexual. [Laughs] It is my only wish for the next life.

Playboy: Let's shift subjects. Do you have a hero?

Sihanouk: I have heroes--De Gaulle of France, Tito of Yugoslavia, Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai of China. They were great patriots, heroes of their nation, freedom fighters, liberators of their homeland. Second, they were very, very human. They were loved by their people. De Gaulle was criticized when he was alive, because the French don't like to love a leader who is alive. But the dead De Gaulle is loved by the whole French nation. And third, because they were faithful friends. They understood me, my motivations. They are not like those critics who believe I am dishonest, Machiavellian, and so on. No, they never believed that. Really, they are among the greatest in mankind's history.

Playboy: Which of their qualities do you try to emulate?

Sihanouk: Their dedication to their homeland, to their people; their dedication to national independence, freedom and dignity and their refusal to be the servant, the satellite of any superpower.

Playboy: Do you see yourself as the only person who can unite your nation? Some people call you Cambodia's last hope.

Sihanouk: You know, I don't want to appear as a man of pretensions, but I'm sure that without me, Vietnam will gain everything. I don't see anybody capable of replacing me and making himself accepted by the majority of people. Son Sann is getting old, and my son Ranariddh is a good military commander but not accepted by everybody. Still, when I propose something, my proposals are rejected, not only by the enemies of the Coalition but by the sponsors and my partners in the Coalition. So I am useless. I am powerless. I am now 64 years old. I may live a few more years, but the day I disappear, all chances for our side to retake Cambodia from Vietnam will also disappear.

Playboy: Does that frighten you?

Sihanouk: I am not frightened. The Khmer Rouge horrors were frightening. But to know that you are losing your battle, losing your country, is a feeling of sadness. You know, every night I take sleeping pills; otherwise, I could not sleep, because I am pessimistic, anxious, sad.

Playboy: In your memoirs, you wrote that when you became king, you had a recurring nightmare about failing your college exams. Do you still have nightmares?

Sihanouk: Yes, but now the nightmares are always of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge horrors or of the destruction of my country by the Vietnamese. Sometimes I see in my dreams my favorite daughter, Soraya-raingsy, killed by Pol Pot. I dream like that. And, yes, sometimes I see the Vietnamese. They come in a car, a luxury car. And I am standing there, half dressed, with bare chest, bare feet. And the Vietnamese, they come and say to me, "Please come with us." I say, "I cannot go outside my house; I have no clothes. I have just a sarong around my waist."

Playboy: What do you think the dream means?

Sihanouk: I think I am like a poor, naked man, without the possibility of joining the Vietnamese and without the possibility of saving my country. Because I am like a man without clothing. And, with the sleeping pills, I am like a dead man without any dreams.

Playboy: Are you afraid of dying?

Sihanouk: No, not at all. I am not afraid. But I am afraid of the next life.

Playboy: Why?

Sihanouk: I could have a very, very bad next life. If I have rebirth in Sweden or in the U.S.A., that would be all right. But suppose I meet with another Pol Pot; or I could live under the Vietnamese and Heng Samrin. Or suppose I become a baby born in a refugee camp under Pol Pot in Thailand. That would be horrible.

Playboy: Everyone has heard about the Khmer Rouge atrocities; many have seen The Killing Fields. But it's hard to understand how it happened. Who are the Khmer Rouge? Where are they from?

Sihanouk: Before the war in 1970, Cambodia had more than 7,000,000 inhabitants. We were a gentle, tolerant people, loving peace, freedom and individual liberties and dedicated to religions. Six million Cambodians were Buddhists, about 500,000 were Moslems and about 50,000 were Catholics. Our agriculture was prosperous. We had good soil. Every year, we could export surplus rice, corn, rubber, fish. Even without working hard, we had a good way of life.

But already in the Fifties, we had two categories of Communists. One group had been educated by Hanoi, by what was then called the Indochinese Communist Party, led by Ho Chi Minh. The second group was a left wing of young intellectuals who had studied in France and had become Communists. I called them Khmer Rouge. Khmer means Cambodian; rouge, red. Red Cambodian.

I was king of Cambodia then and had built primary and secondary schools for my people. But the universities weren't built until the Sixties. After secondary school, we used to send the best students to France. So Pol Pot, Son Sen, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary, all those men the world knows as Khmer Rouge leaders, got scholarships from me to study in France.

Playboy: So your government paid for their education?

Sihanouk: Yes, the government paid. [Laughs] And they were influenced by their studies in France. If you read the history of the French Revolution, there is a terribly fascinating but terribly bloody period called La Terreur--the terror--during which the revolutionaries began by cutting off the heads of the king and the aristocrats and, after that, making "a terror" among themselves. Those French-educated Cambodians were fascinated by La Terreur. And when they came back from France, they wanted to make a revolution. I had established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China by then, and they were invited to study communism there. They loved Chinese communism. They were fascinated by Mao's cultural revolution.

Playboy: The cultural revolution was so extreme, involved so much disruption and persecution, that even the present leaders in Peking condemn it as a catastrophe. Was that the Khmer Rouge's model?

Sihanouk: The Khmer Rouge didn't want to be just Communists. They wanted to be extremists. Their philosophy was a mixture of Hitlerism and Chinese cultural revolutionism. They wanted Cambodia to have a name in history, to be even more powerful than we were during the period of Angkor between the Ninth and 12th centuries, when the ancient kingdom of Cambodia dominated this entire part of the world. And in order to be a great nation, they said, everybody must be tough, like the people of Sparta in ancient Greece. And they had reason to believe they could succeed.

The Khmer reasoning was this: Since we defeated the Americans and succeeded in having the best army in the world, why should we fail in our attempts to make the rest of the nation as pure, as tough, as skillful as our army?

Playboy: So their aim was to turn an entire nation into an army?

Sihanouk: Yes. They had three steps to achieve their dream of creating a new society: the full evacuation of the population from Phnom Penh and other towns to the countryside; the building up of the strongest, toughest, most efficient army in the world; and the liquidation of all the corrupt and nonconvertible elements who handicapped society and who could not be transformed into the new type of Kampuchean. The Khmer Rouge did not appreciate our *joie de vivre*. We were like the people in your state of Hawaii or in French Tahiti, singing, dancing, making love, eating well. The Khmer Rouge came to the conclusion that the Cambodian people were lazy and that unless we changed our way of life, we could not become a big power as before. So to build up a new society, they had to wipe out our civilization and traditions. And they had to wipe out Buddhism, because Buddhism says, "Please be tolerant; please don't make war; make peace." Buddhism would not be good for making strong warriors.

Playboy: But why kill so many people?

Sihanouk: Like Stalin when he was in the Kremlin, the Khmer Rouge saw enemies everywhere. The intellectuals who were not like them were intellectually corrupt and had to be killed. The princes had to be killed, they said, because they were oppressors of the people. I did not oppress my people. I built for them schools, universities, hospitals. They had no reason to hate the monarchy. But those Communist Cambodians knew that in order to take power, they must kill the princes and all the royalist leaders. And after wiping them out, they wiped out the nonroyal republicans, the bourgeoisie, the rich peasants, the rich merchants, the industrialists--all of whom the Pol Pot group decided were enemies of the poor. Because to be rich, they had to have exploited the poor. In some Communist countries, they'd have put them in concentration camps and re-educated them. But the Communists in Cambodia said, "No, these people cannot be re-educated. We cannot change their minds or their hearts. They have to be liquidated."

And, you know, I spoke of Buddhism. We had 80,000 monks. And according to Buddhist law, monks are not allowed to work. They are to be fed by the other citizens, so they can make prayers for the rest of us. So Pol Pot and his group said the monks had to be wiped out, because they were making our economy weak. They ate the rice produced by the peasants, but they didn't participate in the building up of a prosperous economy.

And after that, red and red clashed. The Khmer Rouge started killing one another, because the ones who had chosen to be with Hanoi and Moscow--not with China--could not be trusted. They used to say, "We would prefer to have only 1,000,000 pure proletarians--pure, poor peasants--than to have many millions who cannot be transformed into good, pure Communists."

Playboy: How were they able to turn so many people into killers?

Sihanouk: In the circus, there are tigers that people succeed in taming to perform. So if you can change tigers into cats, you can change cats into tigers. And there were Cambodians ready to be tigers. Among some tribes of the South Pacific, Malaysia and Indonesia, there is a phenomenon called *amuck*. And from time to time, the people there become possessed by *amuck* and become violent and cruel. We Cambodians also have *amuck*, because we belong to that same family of Oceanic people. So Pol Pot--by separating poor peasants and young people from their parents and educating them into a new race, a *nouvelle race* trained to attack Cambodians--created a lasting

political and ideological amuck.

Playboy: Are killing and violence intrinsic parts of human nature?

Sihanouk: Yes. Look at your TV screen. Every day you have violence. In every country, you can find cruel people who like violence, who like killings. And Pol Pot encouraged those people to kill.

Playboy: Do you think Pol Pot ever had any feelings of remorse, of guilt? Was he ever horrified by the blood on his hands?

Sihanouk: Pol Pot and his group do not say that they are guilty but that they are aware of their mistakes. Remember, please, Hitler. Remember Himmler. There are people who like killing. A French proverb says, L'appétit vient en mangeant: "The more you eat, the more you get a good appetite for blood." Playboy: You joined with the Khmer Rouge against the U.S. and Lon Nol from 1970 to 1975. Even though you were in exile in Peking during that time, surely you had some idea of their plans.

Sihanouk: When the United Front, presided over by Sihanouk, won the war in April 1975, the Khmer Rouge told me that only seven leaders of the Khmer Republic would be shot. So I told them, all right, because I thought we could then have a general reconciliation. On the 17th of April, I even told the press in Peking, "You will see. There will be a general reconciliation." And the first reports from Phnom Penh said that the red Khmer and the republicans, the blue Khmer, were together on trucks, laughing and singing. But a few hours later, everything changed.

Playboy: When you returned to Phnom Penh, didn't you see what was going on?

Sihanouk: I saw the forced labor and the suppression of liberties and so on, but I did not see the killing fields. And after my resignation as president of the United Front in April 1976, the Khmer Rouge became very hostile toward me and I was kept under house arrest with my wife. The Khmer Rouge had wanted me to remain as head of state, as their figurehead, because behind my name, even with such a tough regime, they could be accepted by the international community.

Playboy: Was the policy of killing random or was it planned?

Sihanouk: Random? Not at all, not at all. I can say that everything was planned. Everything. The Khmer Rouge regime was very strict, like Stalinism. I am sure that it was planned in detail by the leadership--that Pol Pot, Ieng Sary, Ta Mok and the other leaders were responsible for the genocide policy.

Playboy: You and your wife were kept under house arrest for nearly three years. What did you do all that time?

Sihanouk: I had nothing to do. The Khmer Rouge would insult and slander the monarchy and my regime, so I had to listen to that every day and to their revolutionary songs, which were horrid. Also, I read. There were many books--French literature--in the royal palace that had been mine when I was king. I also had some books in Russian, Spanish, German and Italian. So I read them to learn something of those languages.

Playboy: Did you ever fear for your life?

Sihanouk: One night, they withdrew all the civilian staff--they were all Khmer Rouge, but I had cooks and so on--from my palace. They gave my wife and me meat and vegetables so we could prepare our meals. But I was frightened by the fact that they had withdrawn all the civilians so suddenly and put their toughest military troops all around our building. Before my resignation, we'd had good relations with the Khmer Rouge soldiers. But these tough troops refused to have conversations with us. So my wife and I were afraid we would be killed. As it happened, they did not kill us--I think because the Chinese leadership, the North Korean president, Kim Il Sung, President Tito of Yugoslavia and other Third World heads of state did their best to save me.

Playboy: Did you ever cry?

Sihanouk: Yes, yes, I cried. But not very often. Because we Cambodians hide our sufferings behind a screen of smiles. We prefer crying in our hearts--bleeding internally, not externally, if I may say so. But, you know, I cried when one of my daughters died of leukemia at the age of four in 1952, and I cried when I lost my mother in April 1975 here in Peking. A few times when I was under house arrest in Cambodia, it also happened that I cried. Once or twice, when I listened to the Voice of America and the BBC and learned about the sufferings of my people, I suffered with them, and so I cried. And I cried when I had no news from my children and grandchildren who'd been sent to cooperatives. But since my liberation by China in January 1979, I have not cried. I've had no opportunity.

Playboy: When did you learn the Khmer Rouge had killed so many in your family?

Sihanouk: The Khmer Rouge had told me that my children and grandchildren were still alive in a remote northern village in Preah Vihear province near the Thai border. Not until 1980 or 1981, when I met with refugees in France and in the United States who'd been in the concentration camps, the cooperatives in Cambodia, did I learn that five of my children and 14 grandchildren had been killed by the Khmer Rouge.

Playboy: Certainly, Pol Pot was responsible. Yet you've told journalists that you felt that Pol Pot was a nice man.

Sihanouk: He is a nice man. Yes, a nice man. He is very polite, with a civilized manner; and when he speaks of our country, he speaks well--of the necessity for us to unite, etc. If nobody told you that Pol Pot was Pol Pot, that he was Khmer Rouge, if you met him without knowing who he was, you could be seduced.

You know, we met twice. The first time was in March 1973. I lived with him and his comrades for a month in the jungle. They accompanied me from the border of Vietnam and Laos to Angkor and then on into other liberated provinces. I liked very much having conversations with him. The second and last time was on the night of the fifth of January 1979. You know, nobody likes to be criticized or insulted, and Pol Pot never said anything bad about me. Always very, very good things. So to me he was the perfect host.

Playboy: Even in 1979?

Sihanouk: Oh, yes. He apologized for not being able to meet with me, that he'd been too busy. And he praised me very much. He said that I was a great patriot. But thanks to Voice of America, BBC and Radio Australia, when I met Pol Pot that last time, I did know one thing: He was a killer. Not the killer of my children. He pretended they were safe. But I knew already he had killed innocent compatriots. So I could not be happy with him.

Playboy: Did it ever cross your mind that one day Lon Nol might depose you?

Sihanouk: I never imagined that. Really, never. But it was my fault, my mistake. Because I could not tell the difference between genuine and false friends.

Playboy: When you say friends, do you mean political confidants or do you mean intimate friends--people who can criticize you if they get annoyed instead of simply deferring to your Highness?

Sihanouk: I have a few friends. Not so many, really; but, yes, one or two. You know, before, I was like Louis XIV and the other kings of France and could not distinguish between the flatterers and the genuine friends. Now I can tell the difference; but of all the ones who did not flatter me, only one or two people are still alive. So I have no choice. I have no more friends. I am surrounded by enemies. [Sihanouk points to the gentleman sitting in on the interview] I know ambassador-at-large Chhorn Hay is Khmer Rouge. He tried to join my party to influence me. I said, "No, please stay a Khmer Rouge," because I prefer to have Khmer Rouge [laughs] rather than false Sihanoukists. My wife says that I no longer have any friends around me, that I am the only Sihanoukist left. The only royalist. My wife is right.

Playboy: Do you think Cambodia should have remained a monarchy?

Sihanouk: When we were a kingdom, Cambodia was great. Even without Sihanouk, when we were a kingdom, we were great. A king is not a political chef de parti. For a king, there is only one party--the country, the homeland. The Republicans, they think in terms of parties, political plans and so on. They don't think of the superior interests of the country. So even if we did not have Sihanouk, but instead my son installed as king of Cambodia, I am sure that Cambodia would be great again. We need a king, not a republic. As a republic, we lost our national dignity; we lost everything. Ssssss, just like that [points toward floor]--dirt, mud.

Playboy: Yet it was you who changed your kingdom into a republic. You gave up the kingship to become its president.

Sihanouk: Yes, I regret. I have always been a royalist. But now I have to accept the fait accompli. Just like my people inside Cambodia--they hate the Vietnamese, but they have to accept them.

Playboy: At first, didn't many Cambodians support the Vietnamese invasion?
Sihanouk: Of course. Pol Pot was really very, very cruel, so the Vietnamese had a very good pretext to invade: to liberate our nation from the yoke of Pol Pot.

Playboy: For most outsiders, Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia came as a complete surprise. Why did it happen?

Sihanouk: During the war against the Americans from 1970 to 1975, the Russians, the North Vietnamese, the Chinese all supported the Cambodian Communists in their fight against the United States and Lon Nol's Khmer Republic. Then the Americans went home. Ever since, there have been only Communists in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. And now there is a split between the Communists. I call them churches: the church of Peking with the Khmer Rouge and the church of Moscow with Hanoi. It's like a religious war.

Playboy: Are you saying Vietnam invaded Cambodia merely for ideological reasons?

Sihanouk: No, the Khmer Rouge provoked the Vietnamese. Since 1976, the Khmer Rouge--as ultranationalists, extremists--had been at war with Vietnam with the very foolish purpose of conquering South Vietnam. So the North Vietnamese were provoked and, in December 1977, they invaded Cambodia for a few weeks. But nobody was aware of the seriousness of the war until the Vietnamese entered Phnom Penh in January 1979. Cambodia was not open to the outside world then, but the international community knew about the horrors, the genocide. It knew exactly what was happening and was very much against the Khmer Rouge. So when the Vietnamese entered Cambodia, they were our saviors. Everybody applauded. Applauded!

Playboy: You also applauded.

Sihanouk: Yes, but not now. Because now I know that the Vietnamese did not intervene in my country in order to liberate the Cambodian people. Not at all, not at all. The Vietnamese went into Cambodia to swallow up Cambodia, to physically Vietnamize Cambodia. They are encouraging Cambodians to flee in order to have an empty Cambodia, which they will fill up with Vietnamese. More and more Vietnamese officers, technicians and soldiers are infiltrating the so-called Cambodian army of Heng Samrin. Already there are more than 500,000 Vietnamese settlers in Cambodia. They are taking over our land, exploiting our natural resources. And in five years, there will be 1,000,000. That is why the Vietnamese can say that by 1990, their army will go home. After two decades, we will be a province of Vietnam.

Playboy: You actually believe that could happen?

Sihanouk: [Shouts] I believe! There are intermarriages between Cambodian women and Vietnamese men. Their children will get Cambodian citizenship, but in their hearts and in their minds, they will be Vietnamese. Already, many students are sent to North Vietnam, to the Soviet Union, to Czechoslovakia and East Germany to be indoctrinated. So we will become another race with another philosophy, another way of life, another way of thinking--a Vietnamese way of thinking.

Playboy: The young people who remain in Cambodia--what are they learning?

Sihanouk: The Vietnamese have rewritten the history of Cambodia. What they now teach the students and children is this: Sihanouk was a bad leader; Lon Nol was worse than Sihanouk; and Pol Pot was worse than Lon Nol.

Vietnam helped the Cambodian people and, because of this, Cambodia is now happy.

Playboy: But do Cambodians even care as long as Pol Pot is out of power?

Sihanouk: When the Vietnamese liberated Cambodia from Pol Pot, it was all right. But now many Cambodians don't like the Vietnamese, because step by step, little by little, we are losing our national identity, our soul. Many people now suffer because of the Vietnamese. The villagers are so poor. They are miserable. There is malnutrition. Each year the country lacks about 400,000 tons of rice. The international community sends gifts to the refugees in Thailand. But because the Vietnamese are hated by the international community, the Cambodians inside receive very little international help. And the Vietnamese themselves are very poor. Only the Soviet bloc helps them. Whatever aid goes through Phnom Penh is taken by the Vietnamese and their puppets. It doesn't reach my people.

Playboy: What about the reports of forced labor, that thousands of people from all over Cambodia are herded to the Thai border to plant mines, to clear the jungle?

Sihanouk: Yes, the Vietnamese are trying to cut off the resistance's supply lines. In the early Thirties, the French built what they called la ligne Maginot, a concrete line built of stones and cement against the Germans. The Vietnamese are doing the same, only their Maginot line consists of earth and bamboo. I think it is the biggest mistake made by the Vietnamese since their arrival in Cambodia in 1979.

The Vietnamese proclaim throughout the world that they are very popular in Cambodia, but why do they fear general elections? If they are, as they pretend to be, so popular, they would win an election. But the Vietnamese know that they'd be sure to lose now, because the majority of Cambodians would choose the Khmer Rouge as the lesser of two evils.

Playboy: It's hard to imagine people voluntarily siding with the Khmer Rouge, having suffered so deeply under them.

Sihanouk: Not everybody was a victim of the Khmer Rouge. My family, yes. But the dead, they are dead. They are no more in Cambodia to vote against the Khmer Rouge.

You know, the situation in Cambodia under Pol Pot was not so bad for everybody. The Khmer Rouge had their followers. They took care of the poor peasants and young people whom they'd separated from their parents. And there is a new generation that does not know much about the Khmer Rouge horrors. So now there are recruits. I am not an astrologer, and I don't like to predict the future; but I think that in the long run, more and more Cambodian citizens in the towns and in the countryside will abandon the Vietnamese and help the resistance.

Playboy: Some people think that the best way to solve the Cambodian problem would be for you to return to Phnom Penh and cooperate with the Vietnamese.

Sihanouk: Yes, the other side is more and more interested in getting Sihanouk. The Australian foreign minister, Bill Hayden, told me that if I decided to go back home to Phnom Penh, Heng Samrin, acting in conform-

ity with orders from Hanoi, would like to appoint me head of state. After that, I saw the [then] French foreign minister, Roland Dumas, who told me that Heng Samrin wanted to pay his respects to me. So they are both telling me that the other side wants Sihanouk. I know that China and Thailand fear that I could change sides. But no; I am a man of loyalty.

Playboy: Your critics would disagree strongly. They would say that the tragedy of Sihanouk was about your switching sides depending on who was in power.

Sihanouk: I did not switch, never! One day you saw me against the Americans and pro-North Vietnam, and another day, against Vietnam and friendly to the U.S.A. But I did not switch. The other nations, they changed their policy. In the Seventies, I supported the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese because I believed they were defending a just cause, leading a just struggle for the freedom of Vietnam. And I fought the Americans because I could not accept their illegal intervention in the internal affairs of my country. We were independent and we became a satellite of the U.S.A. Now the Americans are very respectful vis-à-vis the independence of my country and the Vietnamese have become colonialists in Cambodia. So I fought the U.S. when the Americans were the imperialists in Indochina. And now I fight Vietnam.

Playboy: You sound like Machiavelli: The end always justifies the means.

Sihanouk: How can Sihanouk be considered Machiavellian, without moral values, shifting from one side to another? I did not change my behavior. I am in favor of an independent Cambodia.

Playboy: Your critics would say you're an opportunist, that you would sleep with the Devil to achieve your end.

Sihanouk: As far as devils are concerned, the U.S.A. also supports the Khmer Rouge. Even before the forming of the Coalition Government in 1982, the U.S. each year voted in favor of the Khmer Rouge regime. But I don't accuse the U.S. of being opportunistic and sleeping with devils. The U.S.A. wants Cambodia to be independent, not a slave of Vietnam. That is why the U.S.A. votes for the Coalition of Democratic Kampuchea, even though the Khmer Rouge are still there. The U.S.A. says that it is against the Khmer Rouge, that it is pro-Sihanouk, pro-Son Sann. But the devils, they are there [laughs] with Sihanouk and Son Sann.

Playboy: Then you feel that morally, you would do anything for your idea of patriotism--even collaborate with the people who killed your children?

Sihanouk: Yes, to fight against the ones I don't hate and to stay with the ones I do hate, with the Khmer Rouge who killed my children, those reactionaries who deposed me. As a man, how can I be happy? I do not want to work with them. I prefer the Vietnamese. They never did anything to me. They did not kill any of my followers or my children. They are my friends, people to people. But now they harm my country, so I have to fight them. So, as a patriot, it is my duty to stay with the ones I hate and to defend my ideal of independence for Cambodia. If I were an opportunist, I would go to Phnom Penh. But I cannot be a quisling. I cannot be a collaborator, like the former head of state in France during World War Two, Marshal Pétain. I prefer to be

a small Charles de Gaulle, who resisted his enemies.

Playboy: Isn't Cambodia like many European countries during World War Two--caught in a superpower struggle?

Sihanouk: We are the victims of a hot confrontation by proxy. As far as China is concerned, it is by Khmer Rouge proxy. Vietnam is very independent-minded, but it is also a poor nation and needs Soviet aid in order to colonize Laos and Cambodia. Practically speaking, there are four countries that have a role in solving the Cambodian problem: the U.S., China, the Soviet Union and Vietnam.

Playboy: You've also received military aid from the United States. How significant is Washington's role in the conflict?

Sihanouk: [Representative] Stephen Solarz and other Congressmen succeeded in getting \$5,000,000 allocated for the national freedom fighters of Son Sann and Sihanouk. It's not very important as aid, but it is a great symbol of solidarity. I think that the American people will always be very sympathetic to our problems. There are now more than 150,000 Cambodians in the United States, and you continue to send humanitarian aid to the population at the Thai-Cambodian border. And the Americans must continue to play not only an important role but a global role in the process of solving the Cambodian problem. Why? Because it is a question not just of Cambodia but of stability and peace for Southeast Asia, for Oceania, for the Far East--that is to say, for the world. If you let the Cambodian war go on, it could spread into other countries, beginning with Thailand.

Playboy: What is the likelihood of a negotiated settlement?

Sihanouk: For the time being, there is no possibility of breaking the present deadlock, because the powers have an interest in letting the war go on. Strategically, China cannot accept Cambodia as a base for the Soviet Union and Vietnam. Thailand has to rely on the Cambodian resistance to fight the Vietnamese; otherwise, the Vietnamese army could threaten the peace and liberty of Thailand. So both the Chinese and the Thais have more interest in encouraging the Cambodian resistance to continue fighting. The Soviets need Hanoi for access to the strategic bases of Da Nang and Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam and Kompong Som in Cambodia.

Playboy: With Mikhail Gorbachev in power, do you sense any shift in the Soviet position on Cambodia?

Sihanouk: Gorbachev is as bad as his predecessors, only he smiles more and he has with him his beautiful wife, Raisa. They both are trying to show the world and America that they are not such bad people. The Vietnamese, I think, fear, or at least are disappointed, that the Soviets are trying hard to improve their relations with China and have agreed to speak about Cambodia with the Chinese.

Playboy: Is Moscow putting any pressure on Vietnam to compromise?

Sihanouk: The Vietnamese are a proud people. I don't think the Soviets can dictate Vietnam's behavior. But Vietnam is getting more and more isolated, which is very encouraging for us. The question remains, however, Is Vietnam impressed enough by the new development of events? Vietnam has

Cambodia in hand. Why should they give it up unless they are defeated militarily?

Playboy: Can they be defeated?

Sihanouk: They cannot be defeated, but we can bleed them more and more in order to accept a compromise. The Cambodians are also a proud people. They want their national independence restored. You know, I say that we are a gentle people, but we've had so many wars since becoming a state during the Angkor period. Since that time, we've had war, war, war. We knew World War One, World War Two, the Japanese occupation and so on. So we've had some training. [Laughs] Like your athletic teams or baseball teams, we have had good training in wars. We have ahead of us several years of hardship and bloodshed. But we can last.

Playboy: There are reports that the Vietnamese have been forced to tighten security inside Cambodia, that there are guerrilla attacks near Phnom Penh and that this year, compared with last, the Vietnamese had to deploy several times as many soldiers around the capital.

Sihanouk: When the guests of Vietnam in Phnom Penh, the Soviet technicians and advisors, want to visit the temples in Angkor, they must travel by helicopter. They can no longer take the roads. That means that our guerrillas are more efficient. Now the Khmer Rouge are everywhere in Cambodia. And my guerrillas are not just in three provinces, as before, but, with the Khmer Rouge, can go deep inside Kampuchea to attack the Vietnamese.

Playboy: There are also reports that many cities are now under curfew and that in parts of the countryside, bamboo stockades have been built around villages.

Sihanouk: Yes, strategic hamlets. Please remember the experiences of the U.S.A. and your South Vietnamese puppets Diem and Thieu, and your Cambodian protégé Lon Nol. They all made strategic hamlets. But what was the result? [Imitates Woody Woodpecker laugh]

Playboy: Why do you laugh?

Sihanouk: Because I see the Vietnamese making the same errors in Cambodia, the same mistakes as the Americans in South Vietnam. Only now the Vietnamese are our Americans in Cambodia. So I laugh.

Playboy: How do the people react?

Sihanouk: The peasants, they resist. The immense majority of my people are against the Vietnamese. We are helped even by defectors from Heng Samrin's administration and army. I have 1000--I repeat, 1000--defectors from Heng Samrin's army. So the situation in Kampuchea has changed in favor of my Coalition. There is a new turning point against the Vietnamese.

Playboy: So the Khmer Rouge are now the most important faction militarily.

Sihanouk: And they will remain the most important. Pol Pot is a very, very good military leader and strategist. He has succeeded in making his troops the best guerrillas in the world--even better than the Vietnamese. You know, as a Cambodian, I am proud of them, if I may say so. Not proud of their com-

munism but proud of their military capability, their dedication, their toughness, their skill on the battlefield. The Vietnamese fear them so much. That is why they have set as a condition for withdrawing their troops from Cambodia the liquidation of the Khmer Rouge--not just Pol Pot but the Khmer Rouge--as a military and political force.

It is a terrible situation for us. Without the Khmer Rouge, we have no credibility on the battlefield. Yet the very fact that the Khmer Rouge are the only credible military force is a stumbling block to a solution, because unless the Khmer Rouge disappear, the Vietnamese will not accept a political solution.

Playboy: Will the Khmer Rouge disappear?

Sihanouk: They will never disappear.

Playboy: If the Coalition fell apart, would you remain with the Khmer Rouge?

Sihanouk: I will stay. I have promised the resistance, the patriots, that I will stay in the resistance. I have no choice. I have to either go to Phnom Penh and consequently serve the Vietnamese or continue as chairman of the Coalition.

Playboy: When you were allied with the Khmer Rouge, you said in an interview then that you knew once the Khmer Rouge took power, they would spit you out like a cherry pit. And they did. Well, won't they spit you out again?

Sihanouk: Yes. There is a French saying, L'histoire est un éternel recommencement: "History repeats itself eternally." So now I'm going to a situation that I know well--the situation during the Vietnam-American war in the Seventies. I will be head of state with a Khmer Rouge army behind me.

Playboy: What makes you think the Khmer Rouge won't repeat the atrocities?

Sihanouk: They cannot be repeated. The situation now and the situation prevailing in Cambodia in April 1975 are not the same. After the departure of the Americans, the Khmer Rouge had no obstacle in their way to taking over Cambodia. Before, Vietnam was helping Pol Pot. Now the Soviet Union and Vietnam will not let the Khmer Rouge retake power. The Vietnamese and the Soviets would not leave Cambodia without a solid guarantee that the Khmer Rouge could not retake power. And please don't forget that the Vietnamese will not go home very easily. Even if they say they'll go home by 1990, they will remain on the border. And if the Khmer Rouge were to retake power, they would come back immediately, immediately.

Vietnam, unlike the U.S.A., will not go away. The U.S. is far away from Indochina. Once you decided to leave, your troops went home. But even if Vietnam says one day, "We will go home," geographically, they border Cambodia. Besides, the Khmer Rouge do not act alone. The Chinese and the Khmer Rouge, they are one team. And China cannot afford to lose the friendship of the United States, ASEAN and other countries in the free world that will never again accept the Khmer Rouge as dictators in Kampuchea. If one day there is a solution, it will be in the form of a four-party compromise government.

Playboy: At the Geneva Conference on Indochina, you were the master

diplomat, negotiating Cambodia's independence from France. Can you do it again?

Sihanouk: Before I could play the game of balancing superpowers--before I was a powerful head of state--I had a country. I could maneuver. I could play such a game. The U.S. press used to write that I danced on a tightrope. It was salt-water acrobatics. But now I cannot. I am powerless. I have lost my country. How can I be like before, walking the tightrope? I cannot, I cannot. I have this image in my mind: I see myself as a captain sinking with his ship. But at least I have the flag. Ah, yes, I am holding up the flag.

Playboy: It sounds like a Hollywood movie. Undoubtedly, Hollywood will someday make a movie of your life. Who should play the part of Sihanouk?

Sihanouk: There are two Sihanouks, the young playboy who was handsome and the old Sihanouk now. So there should be two artists. I am very ignorant about the new generation. I don't remember their names. But if the movie had been done ten years ago, I'd say Elvis Presley. My favorite actor was Clark Gable. Oh, I loved him. But, yes, Elvis Presley could play the young Sihanouk.

Playboy: Why Elvis?

Sihanouk: Because he was handsome and a little fat. And he played, you know. He sang. I used to sing and play the saxophone. Presley played the guitar. But never mind. And for the old Sihanouk, Charles Laughton.

Playboy: He was a good actor.

Sihanouk: Yeah, and he was fat as he got older. You know, when I was young, I wrote a few comedies. I also wrote scripts for a few films. I played myself. I've always been interested in the theater.

Playboy: In another interview, you said that Shakespeare would have been interested in your destiny.

Sihanouk: Oh, yes, I am very Shakespearean, a tragic hero with a tragic destiny and a country in a tragic situation. The French already have a play about me: The Terrible but Unfinished History of Norodom Sihanouk, King of Cambodia. It is very successful, like The King and I, only The King and I is a very happy story and my story is dark, very dark.

Playboy: Shakespeare's heroes are often responsible for their own downfall. Are you responsible for your own tragedy?

Sihanouk: In ancient Greek theater, heroes whose destinies were tragic were depicted as the victims of the gods. And I believe that I am like the Greek heroes, manipulated by the heavens.

Playboy: Usually, the Greek hero draws a lesson from his tragedy. What has the prince learned from his?

Sihanouk: Because I ignored the fact that the Kampucheans loved the United States more than Cambodia, I was the victim of my own army. I loved Cambodia more than the United States. That was my mistake. Because I was a proud head of state, I did not appreciate the policy of the United States, which supported Thailand and South Vietnam against me. And the U.S. State Department did not appreciate my policy of neutrality.

I cut off relations with the U.S.A. in order to be free to receive aid from the U.S.S.R., from China and others. But my officers were accustomed to getting money and material aid from the U.S.A., and they became very, very angry. The rich merchants and industrialists were also used to getting economic aid from USAID [United States Agency for International Development]. And there were many corrupt civilian servants in my administration who enjoyed U.S. economic aid. So when I cut off relations with the U.S., they got very angry and supported Lon Nol.

But the deposing of Sihanouk had very tragic consequences. We had war, war, war, and after that, we had Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. And now the Vietnamese. So if I could go back to the past, I would not be so proud. I should not have given up your aid. I am very sad to say that, because I am Kampuchean. I love only Cambodia. I assure you. I like many countries. Like but not love. Only for my Cambodia is there love.

Playboy: Do you accept some of the blame, then, for its ruin?

Sihanouk: No, all the misery of Cambodia comes from the United States. It comes from the Nixon-Kissinger policy to destabilize my regime in the Sixties and to support Lon Nol. And you lost the war in Southeast Asia because the regimes you supported in Indochina were very, very unpopular, very corrupt.

Playboy: As you've suggested, your regime was not free of corruption, either.

Sihanouk: But the ones in my government who were corrupt were Lon Nol and all his followers. They were corrupt. If I were corrupt, I would have much money in a French or Swiss bank. But I have nothing. When I was deposed, I had only a few clothes with me. My wife had nothing with her, no jewels. Without China and North Korea, we could not have survived. That is the reason I cannot be separated from them--because I cannot forget that when I had nothing, I got clothes, food, a house from China and North Korea. The money I spend to pay the bills here at the Helmsley Hotel, or to get my plane ticket to come from Paris, it is paid by China. And my clothes, I bought them in France, but they are paid for by Kim Il Sung, the president of North Korea. My necktie is French but bought with North Korean money. I have nothing. And the free-world press told the world that I was very corrupt. I protest. I protest!

Playboy: Then let us ask you a personal question----

Sihanouk: You know, you are the only one whom I have received so many times, to whom I have dedicated so many hours. I've never given so much to others, even to Khieu Samphan, to Son Sann, to [George] Shultz or to other journalists. My chief of protocol is a witness. But I cannot spend my life with you and with Playboy! I beg your understanding.

Playboy: Our question is simple: How should history remember Sihanouk?

Sihanouk: The only thing I want history to remember is what the world ignores--that after obtaining by my own efforts my country's independence from France, I was the only leader in contemporary Cambodia who built schools, universities, colleges, hospitals, roads, seaports, bridges, airports, factories for his homeland and for his people. But the world ignores that. History does not want to record that. But I did it, I did it. I have proof. I have pictures of my achievements that I can show the world. After that, they can

say I'm Machiavelian, that I slept with devils. They can say anything, but they must acknowledge that I am the man who built up his country, not destroyed it. You know, even my worst enemies agree on one point: If I am not the best leader Cambodia could have had, surely I am the least bad. I am not very proud to be the least bad, but at least I am not so bad as the other leaders in Cambodia. Ha, ha.

Playboy: Many people would envy your power, your influence.

Sihanouk: It is horrible to be a politician. I am disgusted, fed up with politics. Look at me now. I am the president of the very poor, very unattractive republic of Democratic Kampuchea. I am in exile because of politics. I feel very sad and ashamed.

Playboy: Why ashamed?

Sihanouk: Ashamed because I have no country. Ashamed to be a Sihanouk whose country is in the hands of a foreign power, whose destiny is to die far from his people. I am the victim of events, a victim of the Americans, of Lon Nol, of Pol Pot and now of the Vietnamese and of the dispute between Peking and Moscow and Hanoi.

Playboy: Do you disagree with those critics who say that you're vain?

Sihanouk: [Shouts] I have already given you books! They are proof that I have built many hospitals, built up my country! But if you refuse to read the text and to look at the pictures, you will certainly continue to say that I am vain. You are free to be on the side of my enemies. I don't ask you to be on my side. But I am at peace with my conscience. I will never surrender to the ones who criticize me, because they are bad people. They are dishonest. I refuse absolutely to surrender!

Playboy: Just one more question. You've been interviewed so many times; is there any question you have never been asked but would like to be asked?

Sihanouk: [Stands up, angry, and eventually starts pacing about the room, now and then waving his arms] I am fed up with questions! Yes, I am fed up! There are a few honest French and American journalists. If you read their writings, you will see that I am not a vain person. I have always loved my country passionately. [Louder] I will never betray my country! [Louder] I am not a traitor! You said that as a king, I liked people who flattered me. [Shouting] But it is the United States who likes the ones who flatter her! China likes me, but I never flatter China. Even though I criticize China, she continues to respect me. But you, the Americans, when somebody criticizes you or expresses convictions that are not yours, you don't like it. You say you can't trust Sihanouk. But my people--the genuine people of Cambodia--they trust me because they know that I am the only national leader of Cambodia who is sincere, who is not thinking of his interest but only of the interests of his country. So I think we have already had full discussions about almost everything and I beg your pardon, but I can no longer go on, because really I am exhausted.

Playboy: Thank you very much for your time.

Sihanouk: [Shouting as he heads toward the door] You have had more time than any other journalist--hours and hours of questions and answers! Really,

my wife advises me not to have interviews with a journalists, because I have nothing to gain and everything to lose. Whenever I'm with a journalist, I always leave defeated. So please excuse me now; I have to join my wife. I have to. Ambassador Chhorn Hay will see you out.

