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Sihanouk pleads arms for his Cambodians

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Peking

Prince Norodom Sihanouk has issued an impassioned appeal to third-world countries to support his forces in Cambodia, and in effect, break the Paris peace agreement by supplying arms and ammunition.

The need for military supplies was the principal theme of a banquet speech in which the exiled Cambodian leader repeated his categorical refusal to negotiate a compromise solution to the Cambodian problem and demanded that the United States and its Indo-China allies cease all interference in Cambodia.

Both Samdech Sihanouk and his banquet host, Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, bitterly condemned what they described as plans to introduce Thai and South Vietnamese troops in support of the government of President Lon Nol, which is faced with the prospect of a cutoff of U.S. bombing support on Aug. 15.

But to diplomats, the most intriguing part of Mr. Sihanouk's speech was his plea for arms and ammunition from "all fraternal countries and anti-imperialist comrades-in-arms."

Samdech Sihanouk's pledge that his forces will continue the fight "even if there are left for them only the archaic weapons of their ancestors" left many diplomats with the impression that the military arm of the prince's united front government may be facing an arms and ammunition shortage greater than the Prince previously has been willing to concede.

If directed principally at China, there was nothing in Premier Chou's

speech to indicate Peking is ready to comply.

The Chinese leader made no mention of arms, limiting himself to a reiterating the demand that the United States immediately cease all its military activities in Cambodia. The Premier emphasized his government stands solidly behind Samdech Sihanouk's "just struggle."

Diplomats in Peking considered it highly unlikely Peking will agree to Mr. Sihanouk's plea since doing so would involve a breach of an international accord, and cut the ground from China's vigorous condemnation of U.S. military interference in Cambodia.

The Prince seemed to anticipate Chinese inhibitions on the subject by declaring that an effective response to his appeal "will not at all violate the spirit and letter" of the Paris accord, since the entire world knew that the accord and the article in it referring to Cambodia "are being violated from top to bottom and solely by the government of the United States."

Samdech Sihanouk seemed to indicate he was preparing for a determined effort to persuade the Chinese the time has come to abandon inhibitions about the Paris agreement. The Prince has spoken before of Chinese insistence on observing the accord, saying that Premier Chou emphasized that an arms consignment delivered shortly before the accord was signed was the last that China could give him.

For his part, the Chinese Premier looked forward confidently to the "total collapse" of the Phnom Penh government.

Prince Sihanouk denounced as a "propaganda trick" and "hypocrisy" suggestions by Washington that secret negotiations to end the war are under way.