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Pragmatic Cambodian Leader

Lon Nol

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 18—
"He is a block, he is a rock, massive, weighty," begins a Cambodian magazine article about Lieut. Gen. Lon Nol. The article goes on to say that the General, who emerged in Pnompenh today as Cambodia's new ruler, replacing Prince Norodom Sihanouk, "speaks little, in a bass voice and with a minimum of gestures." General Lon Nol, who is

Man in the News

56 years old, has been a magistrate, a civil administrator, a policeman and a soldier. He is known in Cambodia for his campaigns against North Vietnamese guerrillas prior to the Geneva Conference of 1954, which brought an end to French colonial rule in Indochina after the fall of Dienbienphu to Ho Chi Minh's Vietminh forces.

The leaders involved in the sudden turn of events in Cambodia were strikingly similar to those affected by the shift in power in Indonesia in 1965. There were many similarities between Prince Sihanouk and former President Sukarno—both being flamboyant men, mercurial and adept at demagoguery. General Lon Nol appears to be much like General Suharto, who came to power after the downfall of Mr. Sukarno. Both men are reserved, pragmatic, nationalistic and anti-Communist, without being dogmatic about it.

General Lon Nol is believed to have directed the sackings of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong missions last week in Pnompenh, and other dem-

onstrations that led to the ouster of Prince Sihanouk while he was in Moscow.

In the uncertain situation that follows, General Lon Nol can be expected to maintain the appearance ascribed to him by the Cambodian magazine. The article said that his imperturbable calm in all circumstances, the quarter-smile with which he tolerated a voluble questioner and the impossibility of discerning his humor had given him a certain air of mystery in the eyes of strangers.

Lon Nol was born on Nov. 13, 1913, in the province of Preyveng in southern Cambodia, where his father was

chief of a military post. He was educated in primary schools in Pnompenh and at the Lycée Chasseloup-Laubat in Saigon from 1928 to 1934, during the French rule of Indochina.

He was a magistrate in the tribunal at Siemreap, near the fabled ruins of Angkor Wat, until 1937, when he entered the administrative service. He rose to become a provincial governor in 1947, director of the administrative service in 1949 and head of the national police in 1951.

Entered Army in 1952

The next year, at the age of 39, he entered the army as a lieutenant colonel, fought against the Vietminh in Cambodia, and studied at the Royal Khmer Military Academy and in South Vietnam and France. He received his first star as a brigadier general in 1957, his second in 1958, and has been a lieutenant general since 1961.

General Lon Nol was made Commander in Chief of the Royal Armed Forces in 1960, Deputy Premier in 1963 and Premier in 1966. After an automobile accident in March, 1967, he resigned, but he returned to the Cabinet as Minister of Defense in April, 1968. He was named Premier again in August last year and retained his post as Minister of Defense.

An American who knew General Lon Nol several years ago said today the overwhelming impression he gave was that of a "man of reserve." General Lon Nol "was in the background then," the American said, "but he was in the forefront of the background."



Associated Press

Anti-Communist without being dogmatic about it.