

Troops Loll in Sun in Calm Pnompenh

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PNOMPENH, Cambodia, March 18 — The dramatic statement today that "Sihanouk ceases to be chief of state of Cambodia" produced what was viewed as a surprising lack of reaction from the populace. Everyday business continued.

The sweltering day began with the closing of the airport, stranding tourists. The atmosphere was casual and no shots fired by troops lolling in the sunshine with their Chinese-made automatic rifles.

Armored cars are guarding the ministries, the radio

station and the post office. Three tanks are parked in the grounds of the Cambodiana, the still unopened luxury motel by the Mekong, one of Prince Sihanouk's projects.

Despite military panoply, the atmosphere was picnic-like. Until the announcement, most observers believed they were still witnessing an elaborate pantomime written and directed by Prince Sihanouk himself that began a week ago with the sacking of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong embassies. Foreign diplomats say they still cannot comprehend why the crisis has blown up now, since

Communist troops, which have been intruding into Cambodian territory for years, apparently have not mounted new incursions lately.

The new Government of Lieut. Gen. Lon Nol is stressing that people are united against the Communists.

The last message from Prince Sihanouk, published today, was prophetic. He blamed "extreme rightists" for taking advantage of the Vietnamese problem to challenge his policies. Perhaps that was the last straw for the Government, but two lavish Sihanouk movies full of fantasy were still playing.