

Lon Nol Assures Chinese in Cambodia

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, May 19—Premier Lon Nol told the Chinese minority in Cambodia today that despite Communist China's rupture of diplomatic relations and its support of the exile government formed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Peking, they need not fear for their safety or their livelihood.

His statement followed by a day a circular issued by the First Deputy Premier, Sisowath Sirik Matak, instructing all public officials to take measures to prevent any actions that might harm Chinese living in Cambodia.

These moves were regarded here as an indication that Cambodia hoped to offer Communist China no provocation to intervene militarily.

The Chinese minority estimated at 600,000 in this country of seven million, compared with a Vietnamese minority put at about 400,000. Impartial observers said before the outbreak of open warfare that pro-Communist sentiment among the Chinese was the same as that among the Vietnamese.

Chinese Are in Business

In a country in which the ethnic majority, the khmer, have provided largely the growers of rice and the employes and officials of the government, the Chinese have provided most of the business acumen and shopkeepers and the Vietnamese the manual skills.

The two statements were in sharp contrast to the policy adopted by the Government toward the Vietnamese minority.

Until many Vietnamese had been killed, most had lost their jobs and most families had been gathered in so-called assembly camps to await repatriation to

South Vietnam, no national figure issued any statement that a distinction must be drawn between the Vietnamese Communist invaders and the Vietnamese living in Cambodia.

The statements that finally appeared — none signed by either of the principal figures—followed worldwide indignation over the fate of the Vietnamese in Cambodia and the intervention in Cambodia of South Vietnamese and American troops against the Vietcong and North Vietnamese troops advancing from their border sanctuaries toward Pnompenh, the capital, and elsewhere in the center of the country.

Approaches Are Different

Some observers said the two statements about the Chinese minority indicated the implicit continuation of a policy line traced earlier by Prince Sihanouk, the deposed Chief of State, that identified Vietnam, Communist or non-Communist, as the immediate enemy—to be openly identified as such—and Communist China as the potentially greater enemy that must be placated.

In sharp distinction to statements about the Vietnamese minority, in which Vietnam is always described as the hereditary enemy, Lieut. Gen. Lon Nol and Maj. Gen. Sirik Matak in their declarations depicted as a traditional friend. The Premier cited "the centuries-old friendship between Khmers and Chinese," while his deputy underlined "ethnic affinities" and an existing "mixture of blood and race" between the nations.

The Government's differing attitudes to the two large minorities are apparent in Pnompenh's daily life: business continues as usual, with Chinese names figuring prominently in

the daily list of donors of funds on behalf of the defense forces.

Hosts apologize for poor service since their Vietnamese staffs have left, and restaurant owners do the same.

The differences are even more striking in so exposed a town as Kompong Cham, which was turned into a battlefield last weekend. All the Vietnamese were interned and finally repatriated, while the Chinese shopkeepers are doing business as usual.

There is an 11 A.M. to 7 A.M. curfew for Vietnamese in Pnompenh, while Chinese enjoy full liberty of movement. Authorities describe random arrests of Chinese as results of an excess of zeal by vigilante groups while accepting as normal arrests of Vietnamese.

In his circular, General Sirik Matak, who has divested himself of his title Prince and has demanded that he no longer be called "Your Highness," warned against such exercises. He said such acts might give the Chinese Communist Government a pretext to attack Cambodia.

General Lon Nol, in his appeal, addressed himself only to the Chinese and asked them "to observe public order, avoid committing any acts harmful to the good functioning of the country, that is subversion, opposition to the Government, in the political as well as the economic realm."

In return, the Premier specifically assured the Chinese of their right to reside in Cambodia and guaranteed the security of their persons and the right to exercise their professions. He continued: "The Government requires from them only one thing, that is, respect of all valid laws."