

# Cambodians Now Foresee Long Years of Strife

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PNOMPENH, Cambodia, June 11 — A quiet fear is growing in the Government and among civil servants that Cambodia faces years of cruel crises because of the foreign forces contending on her soil.

They do not act or talk like men who are outraged. Most of them are more bewildered by the violence and the rapidity of Communist attacks throughout the country and numbed by their belief that Cambodia is in a war she did not want.

A typical reaction—in the gentle, soft voice so often heard here—came from one of the most influential officials in the Government of Premier Lon Nol.

## Unrealistic Cheerfulness

"There is not much we can do to get help quickly," the official, who would not give his name, said in French. "The South Vietnamese cannot help us for they keep telling us they are as poor as we are and that they have worries too."

There are no signs of panic, only a more visible measure of nervousness in the capital as

the fighting spreads every week. The name of a village or a town seized by the Vietnamese Communist forces means the danger grows and grows.

Army officials facing Western correspondents still persist in a cheerfulness that is not always realistic. The phrase "the situation is in hand" means very little.

At a recent briefing for the press, Maj. Am Rong, whose own sources of military intelligence often seem meager, admitted a possibility that troubles many.

"Yes, I still think the Communists have the idea of attacking Pnompenh," he said. "That is why we are always in a defending position."

The official who would not give his name stood before a map and pointed to a disaster area: roads cut, the villages under Vietnamese Communist control, chunks of country where the enemy is free to move, the sites of fighting, and where he thought trouble would come next. It is not admirable in Cambodia for a man to show his emotions so this man did not as he spoke.

"What makes me heartsick

is this—you see the village?" he asked. "Last Thursday we sent down new troops to relieve the battalion that was very tired after much fighting. Look, the enemy is here and here and here. But we have so few weapons we could not give any new guns to the troops as they had to use the weapons already down there. The Communists attacked."

## Uncertainty Main Worry

The uncertainty ahead disturbs many Cambodians. They are beginning to realize that time is not on their side, that the Vietnamese Communists are among the world's best soldiers, and that Cambodia cannot lean on her friends for support.

In the eyes of some Cambodian civil servants, an educated élite but one that knows far more about France than the United States, only one thing is very clear: The Communist refuges in the eastern region are gone but now the North Vietnamese Army is everywhere. No one dares to say openly to an American here that President

Nixon risked everything Cambodia has, but they indicate in many ways that this is what they feel.

"We were not even consulted about it and the biggest gift we could make to the Americans was to let them come into our country," Nuon Khhoeun, a young official in the propaganda section of the Ministry of Information, said. "But now we are facing the consequences and they are not good."