

MAY 4 1971

LON NOL AGREES TO TITULAR ROLE

Will Be Cambodian Premier,
but Sirik Matak Will Rule

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Special to The New York Times

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, May 3—Gen. Lon Nol agreed today to end the two-week-old Government crisis by serving as titular premier of a government in which Lieut. Gen. Sisowath Sirik Matak will hold the principal executive power.

The agreement was announced in the National Assembly this morning by its President, Brig. Gen. In Tam, and made official by an announcement from the office of Chief of State Cheng Heng.

It was reached in a conference at the bedside of General



Denis Cameron

Sisowath Sirik Matak

Nol, the partly paralyzed leader who precipitated the crisis on April 20 by resigning as Premier for reasons of health.

The general's health has not markedly improved, but efforts to form a government without him have proved futile.

The official announcement stated that "the crisis could be resolved only if Marshal Lon Nol would agree to direct the government." The National Assembly promoted General Lon Nol to marshal at the time of his resignation, but this has not yet become formal.

The statement continued:

"The formula to apply will be one that will permit Marshal Lon Nol to be chief of the government, thus lending moral credit while effective conduct of the affairs of state will devolve upon the high personality who has the full and entire confidence of the latter.

"In that spirit, the new ministerial cabinet will function under the effective direction of Lieut. Gen. Sisowath Sirik Matak, acting as delegate of Marshal Lon Nol, Chief of Government."

Both Given Military Duties

Last week, Mr. Cheng Teng appointed Generals Lon Nol and Sirik Matak to parallel functions on the military side, naming General Lon Nol commander-in-chief of the armed forces and General Sirik Matak his delegate.

Today's decision, which is expected to win Assembly approval as soon as General Sirik Matak has formed a cabinet, in fact ratifies the state of affairs existing since General Lon Nol suffered a stroke last February.

As Deputy Premier in the outgoing Government, General Sirik Matak acted as chief of government and the armed forces. Until then, General Lon Nol had concentrated on conducting the military side while his deputy headed the civil affairs of government.

General In Tam came to the Assembly this morning from the meeting at the house of General Lon Nol—who he said was "still on his stretcher"—and announced that he must decline the mandate to form a government that Mr. Cheng Heng had offered to him Saturday.

"I decline," he said, "to make possible the search for a government of national unity."

Discouraging Consultations

Behind the terse statement, according to informed sources, lay a day and a half of discouraging political consultations in which General In Tam, a political independent, learned that he did not have the substantial backing that would enable him to serve as the full-fledged chief of government.

The naming of Generals Lon Nol and Sirik Matak to head the armed forces, a power until then reserved to the chief of government and now restored to him, in effect removed the conduct of the war, the principal business of the government, from the Premier's control.

General Lon Nol's younger brother, Lieut. Col. Lon Non, acted as intermediary between Generals Lon Nol and In Tam in the last two days and apparently made it plain to General In Tam that military matters would remain under the control of General Lon Nol or persons acting on his behalf. By last night, General In Tam appeared ready to refuse to accept.

This morning's meeting, attended also by General Sirik Matak, Mr. Cheng Heng and Ong Sim, Senate President, resulted instead in General Lon Nol's change of mind.

In addition to partial paralysis of his left side, General Lon Nol suffers from mild diabetes and chronic high blood pressure.