

Sihanouk's Reaction to Khmer Rouge Victory

Peking

Norodom Sihanouk indicated yesterday he probably will not go to Phnom Penh for some time, despite the victory of the Khmer Rouge insurgents.

When he does go, he said, it will be to play a role in "national union" and not to take political control.

Sihanouk spoke at his residence after a reception for the ambassadors in Peking of 70 countries that have already recognized his exile government, the Royal Government of Khmer National Union.

Reacting to news of the Khmer Rouge victory in Cambodia, Sihanouk said, "When joy and happiness are so deep, one cannot say anything."

"My passion is Cambodia," he said. "Thus the glorious way it has emerged is my finest reward. My faith for tomorrow no longer interests me. What kept my flame burning is this goal which I have had for my country. That has now surpassed my hopes because we have indisputably defeated the Americans."

Sihanouk did not make it clear when he thought he would return to Cambodia.

He pointed out that the condition of his mother, Queen Sisoswath Kossmoak, is very serious, that she will probably die soon and that he would attend her funeral in Peking before going to Cambodia.

On his return he will play a role of "national union," he said.

He went on: "The Red Khmers want me to be head of state and they have very recently stated that they are anxious for me to be head of state for life . . . The Red Khmers are also asking me to help them in arranging . . . for perfect harmony among Cambodians.

"I will thus be the symbol for national unity, national union and national harmony."

He emphasized that he would leave "the reins of government totally and for always to the Red Khmers." He added that the rebuilding of a war-devastated Cambodia would be possible only if problems "among ourselves" are avoided.

"The Red Khmers tell me they are not Communists," Sihanouk said. "They want a people's democracy, in other words, they want affairs to be run by the people. They

certainly are far to the left, but they tell me it is false to call their regime Communist.

"We don't want to humiliate anybody, not even our American adversaries who talked about a bloodbath, etc . . . They said that after they left, we would end up acting like highwaymen in Phnom Penh, that we would end up by liquidating the Lon Nolists, etc.

"Well, we have proved that we have the necessary political maturity, that we have behaved as a state worthy of that name. We have allowed our adversaries to survive after they laid down their arms. Well, that means that he will also conduct ourselves in the future as a people with the desired maturity."

Cambodia will follow a policy of peaceful coexistence, Sihanouk said. "We shall always struggle against all attempts to sabotage the independence won so dearly," he added.

"We are all the prouder since we have opened a wide breach in the rampart of American imperialism. And other victories for the third world will come out of that breach . . ."

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