

Sihanouk Returns After 5-Year Exile; Cambodians Give Him Big Welcome

NYTimes SEP 10 1975

By DAVID A. ANDELMAN
Special to The New York Times

BANGKOK, Thailand, Sept. 9 — Five and a half years after being forced into exile, Prince Norodom Sihanouk returned to a triumphal welcome today in Phnom Penh, the capital of a Cambodia vastly different from the one he ruled for nearly three decades.

The special China Airlines Boeing 707 plane carrying Prince Sihanouk, his wife, Princess Monique, and a delegation of senior Cambodian leaders from Peking touched down at Pochentong Airport at 1 P.M.

At 7 o'clock a three-minute broadcast by the Phnom Penh radio announced that huge crowds had welcomed the returning monarch — crowds that included "people, soldiers of the revolutionary army, members of government."

'Five Testing Years'

Following the Prince off the plane were Premier Penn Nouth and Khieu Samphan, a Deputy Premier, who is generally believed to be the real power in Cambodia's Communist Government.

According to a statement released before the Prince's departure from Peking, he paid tribute to "the immeasurable sacrifices of the Cambodian people."

"In the course of these five testing years, we have been separated from you by the mission that you asked us to carry

out in the outside world," he said. "We have done all possible, spared no effort, used all the resources of our modest intelligence to obtain the best results possible."

There has been no mention in any of the speeches in the last few days during which Noradom Sihanouk's Chinese hosts bade him farewell, of his government in exile in Peking or of what the future might hold.

It was clear that the welcome was warm. Son Sen, the new Deputy Premier in charge of defense, was at the head of the welcoming party, which was introduced to the crowd by Hu Nim, the new Minister of Information. There were prayers by Buddhist priests, a salute to the flag and a welcoming speech by Mr. Son Sen.

Then the Prince, clad in a black suit in the current Chinese style, climbed into a car for a motorcade to the royal palace, the ancestral home of his family, where the royal

couple will stay—the first time it has been used officially since the military uprising under Marshal Lon Nol that sent him into exile.

How long Prince Sihanouk will stay this time is a matter of speculation. Western analysts here in Bangkok believe that his stay will not last longer than several weeks and that he will become roving ambassador for the new Government.

The new leadership, while describing him as chief of state, has seemed somewhat less than enthusiastic about having him actually at the head of the Government. The Samdech, as he is affectionately known to most Cambodians, still arouses strong emotional loyalties and is a potential focal point for dissatisfaction, something the new masters of Cambodia have little need for. That, it is believed, in why his return has been delayed since the Communists' victory in April—a period he divided between China and North Korea.

His exile has not been a time of great hardship, according to those who knew him in Peking, where the Chinese leaders accorded him every courtesy.

In the last week lavish farewell banquets were given and the Prince was reported to have conferred at length with the top leaders.

At the Peking airport military bands and thousands of colorfully dressed children were joined by a large group of Chinese leaders, including the senior Deputy Premier, Teng Hsiao-ping. Earlier, thousands more had given him a large sendoff in Tien An Men Square.