

# LON NOL TIGHTENS RULE IN CAMBODIA

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Ailing Premier Takes Over  
as Head of State and  
Nullifies Constitution

NYTimes By Reuters

PNOMPENH, Cambodia, March 10—Lon Nol, Cambodia's ailing Premier, took supreme power as head of state tonight and nullified the nearly completed republican constitution.

He announced the move on national radio and promised to continue the war against the Communists until he could establish peace through victory.

Earlier tonight, Cheng Heng announced his resignation as head of state in a nationwide broadcast in which he called on the army and the people to support Lon Nol. "I cannot be any longer chief of state," he said. "Lon Nol can be leader. So I give my position to Lon Nol."

Lon Nol, who is 58 years old, said that the special convention of former deputies drawing up the new constitution for Cambodia had made alterations in it since it had been handed on by the Cabinet. The nature of these alterations was not immediately made clear, but they were obviously displeasing to Lon Nol. He announced that because of them he would not carry on with plans to promulgate the new constitution and install a Presidential regime.

In his 10-minute radio address, Lon Nol, who is also chief of the Cambodian armed forces, did not say whether he would retain the Premiership.

His speech stunned Cambodian politicians who had been lining up behind him on the question of introducing a provisional presidential system when the Constitution was finished in the next few days.

They believed that he would wait for the introduction of the Constitution making provision for the presidency, a new Na-

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tional Assembly and a new Cabinet before seeking the nation's highest office.

But Lon Nol's speech ruled out the possibility of bringing back the Cambodian Assembly, dismissed by the Government last October.

The Cabinet, dominated by Lon Nol, will apparently go on ruling by decree.

## Move Follows Holiday

Tonight's move, which came just 24 hours after Lon Nol returned in improved health from a seaside holiday, indicated a breakdown in the delicate balance of forces governing acceptance of the provisional system.

The Premier accused the special constitutional convention, made up of former National Assembly members appointed to it by him, of ignoring the Government's intentions by altering clauses in the document.

Cheng Heng took office as head of state after the ousting of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in March, 1970.

Lon Nol was Premier at the time and has guided the country's affairs for the last two years despite a crippling stroke from which he is still recovering.

Cheng Heng said that he found his post a heavy responsibility in a time of national difficulties and called on all elements of the community to support Lon Nol.

Mr. Cheng, 52, an agricultural expert, became head of state almost by accident, but has been a mere figurehead with almost no political base of support.

He has often expressed the desire to leave public life.