

# LON NON OPPOSES U.S. IN CAMBODIA

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President's Brother Openly  
Bars Leadership Shift

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PHNOM PENH, Cambodia, March 7—The United States has been trying to bring about a change in Cambodia's leadership to halt the nation's decline under pressure from Vietnamese Communists and Cambodian guerrillas, but the effort has apparently been set back by the Government's strongman, the President's brother.

In the American view, the return of Lieut. Gen. Sisowath Sirik Matak to head the Government would be the best hope of restoring a measure of stability to a regime that is floundering at the edge of collapse while receiving about \$200-million in American military and economic aid a year.

But Brg. Gen. Lon Non, who is President Lon Nol's youngest brother, declared in an interview that General Sirik Matak must not be permitted to join the Government.

General Lon Nol, General Sirik Matak's archrival, is deeply distrusted by the United States and many Cambodians, who accuse him of far-flung political manipulations to realize a driving personal ambition.

## General Is President's Friend

Between the rivals stands the President, Marshal Lon Nol, who is partly disabled from a paralytic stroke he suffered two years ago.

General Sirik Matak is the President's friend and former confidant. But, it is said, General Lon Nol's growing hold over the President drove General Sirik Matak out of the Government last year and, to the chagrin of United States officials, continues to keep him out.

Under American urging, Marshal Lon Nol earlier this year asked General Sirik Matak to accept the vice presidency, which in the first term of the President under Cambodia's new republican Constitution is at the President's gift.

General Sirik Matak, however posed conditions, the essence of which was reported to be an assurance that the Marshal would keep his younger brother in check.

General Lon Non, who was interviewed at his own request, denied reports circulating here and abroad that General Sirik Matak would join the Government as vice president and take command after Marshal Lon Nol departed for medical treatment in the United States. He said that the President needed no treatment other than the daily exercises he has been taking since he suffered his stroke.

"If Prince Sirik Matak ever joins the Government, a mass movement would break out against him that could not be stopped," General Lon Non declared. "Only the Communists would profit from it."

This is believed to have marked the first time in the smoldering rivalry between General Sirik Matak and General Lon Non that one spoke out openly against the other.

As a result some diplomats here expressed the belief that either General Lon Non had obtained the President's backing against General Sirik Matak or that he was determined to force the President's hand by threatening to take the dispute to the streets.

General Lon Non said in the interview that his brother was aware of his views but did not say that the President shared them.

"The marshal never says anything," General Lon Non said, adding: "He must choose; on one side his friend, on the other his country. He will choose his country, naturally, but without offending his friend."

General Lon Non said that if the Americans believed that General Sirik Matak was popular, they should ask the populace, the intellectuals and the Buddhist monks.

He asked rhetorically: "Do you think that my political group would accept Prince Sirik Matak? Do you think Parliament would accept him?"

## Public View Is Discussed

In the absence of a viable tradition of political opposition, the tiny Social-Republican party grouped around General Lon Non dominates the scene and holds every seat in Parliament.

General Lon Non, as a minister attached to the Interior Ministry in charge of community development, mobilization and the rallying of guerrillas to the Government's side and as commander of one of the four divisions of the army, is regarded as the principal center of political power in Cambodia.

He said in the interview that his brother, as President of the republic, "must accept the general opinion."

"The public," he added, "suspects General Sirik Matak of wanting to restore the monarchy and become king."

Since leaving his post as effective head of the government after student demonstrations were inspired against him last year, General Sirik Matak has remained largely in his villa, seeing only his friends. He refuses requests for interviews by having his friends tell journalists that he cannot speak to the press so long as he would have to speak badly of his country.