

# Lon Non Leaves Cambodia For Enforced Stay Abroad

*President's Brother, on the Way to Paris,  
Denies U.S. Pressure Is Behind Trip  
—Visit to America Is Planned*

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BANGKOK, Thailand, April 30—Brig. Gen. Lon Non, the controversial and powerful younger brother of Cambodia's President, Lon Nol, departed from Cambodia with his family today, but he denied that American pressure had forced him into temporary exile.

"All that talk is nothing but maneuvering by politicians; it is meaningless," he said in an interview aboard a Paris-bound airliner while it was on its way to its first stop, in Bangkok. "Actually I have wanted to take this trip for a long time."

The Americans, according to reliable informants, applied heavy pressure on President Lon Nol recently to persuade him to sideline his brother, who had become the power behind the throne. They reportedly also sought to induce him to share some of the presidential authority with opposition political leaders so as to broaden the Government and try to shore up sagging national confidence.

Both these American goals have been achieved, at least for the time being, with General Lon Non's departure today and the formation last week of a four-man executive council. The council consists of President Lon Nol and three opposition figures, who are ostensibly to rule Cambodia and share power equally.

Although the Phnom Penh radio announced nearly two weeks ago that General Lon Non would leave soon on an undefined mission to the United States, his departure date and his length of enforced stay abroad remained a matter of speculation and suspense in the capital.

During the in-flight, interview, the general, who appeared somewhat ill at ease, said he would be back in Cambodia in three months. He said he would spend his first month abroad in France and the two other months in the United States.

He has no special mission, he said, but his "general" mission will be "to bring fresh information to my friends in France and the United States about conditions in my country."

The 43-year-old general resigned about a month ago from his broadly defined Cabinet post, which seemed to touch on virtually all Government affairs. This was the first step in the scaling down of his political power.

## First Visit to U.S.

He said he would not re-enter the Cabinet when he returned to Cambodia, but that he would remain in the military and reassume his command of the Third Division "to help fight the aggressors."

This will be General Lon Non's first visit to the United States, although a son from a previous marriage is studying at the University of Miami.

The general said that once in America, he would ask for a meeting with President Nixon, but that none was as yet scheduled. Asked if he would seek more military aid for Cambodia in view of the stepped-up Communist offensive, he replied: "It is not my mission to ask for more aid. That is between President Lon Nol and President Nixon."

While abroad, General Lon Non said, he and his family will live in the Cambodian embassies both in Paris and Washington.

The general, who knows very little English and who spoke in French during the interview, said a major reason for his stopping in France first was to get a follow-up examination on a stomach operation performed in Paris a year ago. He pointed several times to his midsection while explaining this. He said he was not ill but simply needed a checkup.

Though he did not seem relaxed, he smiled often. The general, who has a thin mustache, was wearing a peppered brown cotton suit, with a pink and black Paisley tie.

The Lon Non party, traveling first class on a Boeing-707 of Air France, consisted of the

general, his bodyguard, his wife, two sons, aged 5 and 1, and a teen-aged female employe to take care of the younger child.

No special attention was paid to them by the crew and none was sought.

The departure scene at the Phnom Penh airport was curious. Although no announcement had been made of General Lon Non's departure, and his and his family's names did not appear as such on the passenger list, the Phnom Penh grapevine had nevertheless been working efficiently and dozens of friends and followers turned out to see him off. So did a score of reporters and television newsmen, part of the large foreign press contingent now gathered in Phnom Penh because of the Government's serious military and political troubles.

General Lon Non spent much of the time before the 5 P.M. departure in the V.I.P. lounge with close friends and some newsmen who slipped in uninvited. His wife and family waited in the regular passenger lounge — a common practice here, where women's social status is lower than men's.

The general finally emerged from the lounge and shook many hands, including that of Thomas O. Enders, who is deputy chief of mission at the American Embassy here. The presence of Mr. Enders was apparently intended to dispel, or at least soften, the notion that the Americans had railroaded General Lon Non out of town.

Mr. Enders exchanged brief but seemingly cordial pleasantries with the departing general. The American diplomat stands nearly seven feet tall, and in a crowd of diminutive Cambodians, neither his presence nor his handshake with General Lon Non could be missed.

## His Rise to Power

The fact that General Lon Non acquired enough critics and enemies to bring about his forced temporary exile is not entirely surprising.

When the war in Cambodia began in 1970 after the ouster of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, who now heads a government in exile in Peking, General Lon Non was a junior officer in the army who had risen out of the ranks of the police. He has continued to have influence in police and secret police circles.

After the stroke two years ago that partially incapacitated his brother, President Lon Nol, General Lon Non began assuming more and more of the presidential authority — unofficially and behind the scenes, of course, but apparently with the blessing of the President. Everyone from allies of the Government to other military commanders to opposition political leaders began complaining about his seemingly unlimited power.

Last fall, he was suddenly and mysteriously promoted from colonel to brigadier general, and he then assumed command of the Third Division. No logical explanation was given for the promotion — he had caused considerable dissatisfaction in military ranks and other officers said he was not a capable commander.

No specific criminal charge was ever made publicly against him, but he figured in a great deal of nasty and widely believed speculation. Many Cambodians believed he was behind the student demonstrations that forced Premier Sisowath Sirik Matak's departure from the Government last year.

Some said he had a direct line to the Government treasury and that his brother would sign any check he presented. There were rumors of Swiss bank accounts.

The removal of General Lon Non's political power and his dispatch into temporary exile represents a major concession on President Lon Nol's part. But informed foreign diplomats here believe it may well have been part of the price the Cambodian President had to pay for continued heavy American aid.