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SIHANOUK COMMUNIQUE REJECTS CORRUPTION CHARGES

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[Text] Peking, April 2 (AFP)--By Pierre Comparet--Penn Nouth, private adviser to and spokesman for Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Wednesday rejected accusations that the Prince had been responsible for spreading corruption in Cambodia when he was head of state there. Mr Nouth said in a communique that the accusation had been made by "the March 18 coup d'etat group" led by General Lon Nol.

The adviser pointed out that, "except in the matter of foreign policy (a field reserved to him by the Constitution) Prince Norodom Sihanouk had transferred the executive's other powers to the so-called government of national salvation presided over by General Lon Nol." "The latter, aided by Prince Sirik Matak, with the backing of supporter-deputies, has always administered all the kingdom's affairs (beginning with the restoration of the national economy) as an absolute ruler and that since his nomination in 1969", the communique stated.

It went on to say that, moreover, Prince Sihanouk had been absent from the country for 3 months when he was "deposed" (illegally). Nothing, therefore, and no one (least of all Prince Sihanouk) has preventing the Lon Nol government and its "supporters" from "restoring" as they chose the kingdom's economy, finances and administration, without their needing to have recourse to a coup d'etat. "The truth is that it is they themselves and their ilk who have tarnished by their own corruption and dictatorship the good name of our 'Sangkum' movement."

Mr Nouth also announced that the "government of national union" announced in Prince Norodom Sihanouk's proclamation of March 23 "will not be formed till after the arrival in Peking of the accredited representatives of the Cambodian resistance (movement) now fighting inside Cambodia against the fascist clique of Lon Nol and his master, U.S. imperialism." The government of national union will be made up of young leading figures belonging to three groups, Mr Nouth's statement said.