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**World of Politics**

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# Cambodia's Gambit For American Aid




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Arthur Hoppe's column does not appear on Thursdays

## Hong Kong

**A** FAMILIAR PLOY in this part of the world is the self-fulfilled prophesy, which consists of provoking a crisis in order to make it come true.

This gambit, frequently contrived by Asian generals seeking to scare up American military help, is now being played by the Cambodian leaders who seized power last month. And their tactic seems to be working.

Current trends suggest that President Nixon, despite his desire to lower the U.S. profile in the Far East, is edging towards a commitment to Cambodia. The prospect is a wider Indochina war that a measure of restraint could have prevented.

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**W**ITHIN recent days, apparently aiming to prepare U.S. opinion for such a move, administration spokesmen have suddenly discovered that the Communists are invading Cambodia — even though North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops have occupied large parts of that country for years.

Meanwhile, White House pronouncements indicate that the President may well decide to deliver weapons to the new Phnom Penh regime and perhaps authorize B-52 strikes against the Communist sanctuaries in Cambodian border areas adjacent to South Vietnam.

If initiated, the U.S. military aid program is bound to require American technicians and advisers. Inevitably, too, there will be a clamor for special forces teams and covert operatives and logistical units to support them and other outfits to support the logistical units.

It would be unfair, of course, to allege that Premier Lon Nol and his cohorts deliberately plotted to turn Cambodia into a battlefield when they ousted Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the former chief of state. Instead, they blundered into their present predicament as a result of two miscalculations.

First, by ambitiously deploying their ragtag army against the superior North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces implanted on their territory, they invited the Communist counter-attack that threatens their very survival.

Secondly, by encouraging or at least allowing their troops to massacre hundreds of Vietnamese civilians resident in Cambodia, they completed a fierce chauvinistic reaction not only in Hanoi but from Saigon officials.

In short, they upset the equilibrium that had preserved a fragile yet tolerable peace in Cambodia for years. This left them no option except to appeal for U.S. assistance.

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**O**NE OF THE absurd ironies in this alarming development is that many of the same Cambodian army officers now asserting their anti-Communist credentials tolerated and even collaborated with the Viet Cong until recently.

It may be, as the Nixon Administration appears to be agruing at present, that only U.S. intervention can save Cambodia from an imminent Communist takeover.

A broader and more pertinent question raised by the Cambodian dilemma, however, is whether the "Nixon Doctrine" portends American involvement in any country whose government itself induces its own disaster.

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