

NYTimes MAR 17 1975  
**Avoiding A  
Bloodbath**

By Anthony Lewis

WASHINGTON — The Administration's basic arguments for additional military aid to the Lon Nol forces in Cambodia have failed in Congress. Members right across the political spectrum now dismiss the talk of an American commitment and credibility.

The one remaining argument is that more arms aid will help prevent a "bloodbath" as the insurgents take over in Phnom Penh. This view has weight because it originated with Representative Paul N. McCloskey Jr., a longtime opponent of American intervention in Indochina. But not many have focused on precisely what Pete McCloskey said.

In testifying before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee last week, Mr. McCloskey emphasized the horror of what is actually happening now in Cambodia. In just the first two months of this year, he estimated, the war cost 15,000 lives and four times that many wounded. That is 75,000 casualties in a nation of 7 million.

Mr. McCloskey said he feared "vengeance" by the insurgents because Lon Nol's army makes a "practice of taking

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## ABROAD AT HOME

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no prisoners." (Congressional sources say the U.S., concerned at this practice, gave money for a P.O.W. facility—but it was never built.) Second, Mr. McCloskey said he was moved by grim refugee accounts of Khmer Rouge brutality. He told the Senators:

"I do not think I ever voted for this war, but I am a part of the United States which invaded Cambodia in 1970 for our own purposes, and caused a nation of 7 million people to lose 10 per cent of their people killed, half of their people refugees . . . We could not have a greater sense of guilt to any nation in the world than what we have done to these poor people. And it is that reason, that sense of guilt, that causes me to think we owe them the best chance of keeping the most number of Cambodians alive."

The McCloskey proposal was to keep the ammunition going to Phnom Penh until the wet season in June—and only until then, making June 30 the final cutoff date for arms aid. He said his aim was to keep the defense perimeter around Phnom Penh these few more months in order to let those marked for retribution by the Khmer Rouge to get away before power was transferred. These were his specific ideas:

● Lon Nol and his "top people" should resign. "I don't think there is any chance of Lon Nol stabilizing that country in any way. That government is corrupt and inept both . . . I don't think there is any chance whatsoever of negotiation with Lon Nol."

● Whoever takes the government over should then negotiate Phnom Penh's surrender. He should "take a white flag and go outside of the perimeter and try to turn the city over in condition for a peaceful transfer with people allowed to leave that would be simply subject to execution."

The essence of Congressman McCloskey's proposal is time to let people get out before the government falls. If the Ford Administration really agreed with him, it would accept his June cutoff date for military aid. But it does not. That is because it is not prepared publicly to admit his premises—the inevitability of Lon Nol's fall, the need to minimize bloodshed as power passes. It wants to keep the war going in the hope that something will turn up—and merely uses the bloodbath argument to that end.

Some Republicans, notably Senator Jacob Javits, may have supported more arms aid under the misapprehension that the Administration did accept the McCloskey view. Over the weekend the White House made clear that the President has not accepted a cutoff date, and officials disclosed plans to ask Congress for \$421 million more in arms for Cambodia after June.

Some will find the whole bloodbath debate unreal. What future possibility could be more terrible than the reality of what is happening to Cambodia now? If the concern is for the safety of particular people, how will delay help them? Mr. McCloskey's conclusion does not follow from his premises.

But there is a responsibility, as Mr. McCloskey says—a responsibility to try to minimize the final damage from a tragic American miscalculation. And there are things to do.

Large amounts of American food are going to Cambodia now, and more is in the pipeline. We could create an incentive for restraint on the part of the insurgent forces if we held out an offer of continuing shipments of food after any change of government—food and medicine.

We could also seek to introduce some international personnel into the situation in Phnom Penh as change occurs. Prince Sihanouk, the nominal head of the insurgent regime, has actually indicated that this would be acceptable—if American arms aid stops. In a cable last week he spoke, with that condition, of the insurgent party, government and army accepting "contact" with "Americans or France or the United Nations in order to arrange the question of a peaceful transfer of power."

Finally, it is an American obligation to get Lon Nol and those around him out of the country. The means are there: the airlift planes that land every few minutes and leave empty. Waiting will cost more lives, not save them. The time has come to put an end to the killing.