

But Could They Agree on the

By Art Buchwald

Will the United States survive the loss of Indochina? If past experience is any proof, the answer is "yes." For a year or two, or maybe three, there will be much soul-searching as to why Cambodia and South Vietnam went down the drain and a lot of finger pointing by everyone. But then, after a period of bitter silence, this is what will probably happen.

The People's Republic of Vietnam will start a Ping-Pong team. A small item about the team beating the People's Republic of China will appear in a newspaper in College Park, Md. This will give the University of Maryland a brilliant idea. Why not invite the People's Republic of Vietnam's Ping-Pong team to play against the best Ping-Pong team the Americans can muster?

The State Department is furious about the idea and reminds the students that we have no diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of Vietnam. But secretly they're intrigued with the idea. The Secretary of

State suggests the American cultural attache in Paris feel out the PRVN about a match. The answer comes back that the PRVN will not send a team to the United States but is willing to play the Americans in Hanoi.

A mixed team consisting of half American students and half CIA agents is sent to Hanoi and fiercely trounced by the Vietnamese. This gives the Americans an opportunity to invite the PRVN to the United States. When they arrive in Maryland with their team consisting of half Viet Cong students and half political commissars, a secret meeting is arranged between the Secretary of State and the coach of the Ping-Pong team who is really deputy secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

The coach suggests that the Secretary of State make a secret trip to Hanoi and visit with Gen. Giap, the president of the country. The Secretary agrees and flies to Pakistan where he announces that he has a bad stomach and will be out of action for a few days.

But instead he boards a plane and flies into Hanoi where he is given a state dinner of hot Vietnamese food

Shape of the Table?

Capitol Punishment

and toasts the friendship of the American people and the People's Republic of Vietnam.

The Secretary then flies directly back to Washington to report to the President that Gen. Giap would like him and his lovely wife to visit their country, something no American President has dared do since Thieu was driven from the mainland.

The U.S. President, who needs some way of distracting the people from domestic problems at home, considers the idea a bold stroke of diplomacy and one which will make him the leading statesman in the world.

He accepts the invitation and in four months the American people watch on satellite TV a grand banquet in the Haiphong Hall of Heroes where the U.S. President and the PRVN president pledge friendship and peace and sign a trade and cultural pact. This makes both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union furious, which is what the Secretary of State had in mind in the first place.

In no time at all every newspaperman worth his salt

visits the PRVN and writes back glowing reports on how clean the streets are, how hard the Vietnamese people work and the fact that there is no tipping in the country.

The PRVN sends us the famous Ho Chi Minh Ballet Theater and we send them Shirley MacLaine. Pepsi-Cola announces that it has made a deal to sell Pepsi in Vietnam, and IBM announces it will soon start repairing all the computers that broke down right after the war.

Then President Giap will be invited to Washington and there will be Vietnamese flags all along Pennsylvania Avenue and flying from the White House.

Eventually there will be few people who will remember that we were once at war in Indochina. The only time it will even come up is when a former president of South Vietnam dies in Switzerland, and the President decides to send Agricultural Secretary Earl Butz to his funeral.