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We know that the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese in Laos number, according to the President's figure, 8,000—and these are North Vietnamese—something on the order of 97,000. They have advanced into and beyond the Plain of Jars and reportedly within 20 miles of the Royal Laotian capital of Luang Prabang.

We know also that as a result of the successes of the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese—and of just the potential of North Vietnamese successes—that an exchange of letters has occurred between Prince Souphanouvong, the leader of the Pathet Lao, and Prince Souvanna Phouma, Prime Minister of the Royal Laotian Government.

The letter sent by Prince Souphanouvong has been received by Prince Souvanna Phouma and, I dare say, that he and his cabinet are looking into the contents with great care at this time.

I assume, also, that what is contained in that letter has been brought to the attention of the U.S. Government and that it, likewise, is giving this matter careful attention.

I would hope, Mr. President, that the situation in Laos could be stabilized through a meeting between the two princes, who are half brothers for a discussion of the contents of the letter. It is to be hoped that some sort of agreement might be reached which would bring a degree of peace to a very, very peaceful people.

In addition, perhaps the International Control Commission, which is still functioning in Laos, and does maintain contact between the Pathet Lao strongholds at Samneua and Phong Saly, as well as in the territory under the control of the Royal Laotian Government, might be beefed up, that unknown, interim, interdiaries would be furthered, and that whatever services they could offer, to bring an end to the difficult situation in Laos, would be forthcoming.

Furthermore, I join the wholehearted in the plea of the President of the United States to the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, the cochairmen of the Geneva conference to reconvene that meeting—to me, it is immaterial whether it is the 1962 or the 1964 meeting—for the purpose of trying to bring about a guarantee of the neutrality of Laos which so many of us—14 nations—I believe agreed to in 1962.

It is quite possible that the situation unless faced up to in this manner, or something approaching it, may well get out of hand.

I would point out to my colleagues that at the present time there is a Chinese-built road extending from Phong Saly, one of the Pathet Lao strongholds, in the northwestern part of Laos through Meng La, in Yunnan, a Chinese province, down to Muong Sal, which in looking at the map I would hazard a guess is probably 20 miles from the border of Burma.

There is another road from Meng La in Yunnan extending southward toward Loei, a town called Muong Lo, which would tie up with the road to Dien Bienphu in Vietnam. In a southeasterly direction, the road extends from Muong Sal to Muong Houn, and it is within about 30 miles of the Thai border. According to my information, it is still being built.

It is estimated there are 8,000 to 10,000 Chinese along this road, mostly in labor battalions, but with a few antiaircraft battalions as well, for the protection of the Chinese roadbuilders.

All of these factors should be taken into consideration in any discussion of Laos so that the American people will have the facts laid out before them and the President of the United States will know that there are of just the potential and possibilities are in that country.

I commend the President for his showing of forbearance. But I disassociate the attacks on the Ho Chi Minh trail which are, in effect, troops of Vietnam and connected with the war in the fighting in other areas of Laos where, I understand, although it cannot be proven, that Thai troops have been involved in seeking to block the extension of the power of the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese.

Then there is the question of Cambodia. Some people seem to be very happy that Prince Sihanouk has been overthrown and is now in Peking where state-ments attributed to him have been issued of late. It is my understanding that Prince Sihanouk has indicated that as long as he is out of Cambodia, he will divide his time between Peking and Moscow.

I regret to see this form of event, because in my opinion Sihanouk was a very shrewd political leader dedicated to keeping alive the neutrality and the entity of Cambodia. He was able to keep his country in relative peace and stability, as contrasted with the surrounding circumstances because he was pressured from all borders, from the west by the Thais, and once in a while by red Khmer Communists from the north, by the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese, who number something in the order of 45,000 to 50,000 in the northern province of Cambodia stretched out from the east border of Vietnam to the west border of Cambodia at Battambang, which borders on Thailand.

Now we have a deposed prince, living in Moscow, who has accused the Switz-ers of having great sums of money in Swiss banks but the fact is that he has authorized all Swiss banks to disclose the facts to prove or disprove this charge.

He has been accused of a number of other things, but he can never be accused of his lack of dedication to Cambodia and its preservation. Before there is too much rejoicing at his overthrow, it would be well to bear in mind that of all the countries in Indochina, Cambodia under Sihanouk is the only country into which we have not had Americans fighting and dying during this tragic conflict. What do we expect now? Aid programs for Cambodia? An extension of military operations into that country? What would this Nation gain from that course?

I would join those who call for the overthrow of Prince Sihanouk and his being established in Peking, a new situation has developed in Southeast Asia as far as Cambodia is concerned. I re­iterate that it may well be that we were
not too happy with Cambodia's neutrality at times. But it was an area in which a certain degree of stability had been achieved in Southeast Asia.

If events develop to an extent that the President will have to make a decision about an escalation of the war or a civil war in Cambodia, I would hope most devoutly that this Nation would stay out of it and would not be at all involved in affairs of Cambodia. That we would not once again fall into the trap of extending aid to one faction and in that way taking the first step toward a new involvement. I would hope, rather, that this Nation would do all in its powers to keep the war from spreading beyond its present limits and thereby prevent a situation which would require an increased commitment of American forces rather than the phased withdrawal that the President has wisely put into effect up to this time.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, will the majority leader yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. Yield.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I thank the majority leader for yielding at this time.

I think this is the time to make it clear, as far as I am concerned, that I think the distinguished majority leader has correctly and accurately stated a point of view which Americans ought to listen to very carefully and with which I find myself in broad general agreement.

There has been, first of all, a tendency to regard Prince Sihanouk as something of a Charles de Gaulle of the far exterior, has proven to be a very shrewd manipulator of forces much larger than his own in offering a way to preserve this precarious neutrality for quite a long time.

There is also a tendency, I notice, in discussing the overthrow of Sihanouk to draw the assumption that because those who overthrew him appeared shrewd manipulators, the administration, but to try to be constructive and put out pitfalls and dangers which may arise. I am sure the administration is fully aware of these, but I assume that some comment from the Senate is welcome.

I am satisfied that the administration is doing everything in its power to accomplish this objective which the American people want.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I agree wholeheartedly with what the distinguished minority leader has just said. I want to assure him that my purpose in speaking is not to dictate the line we should take up in the administration, but to try to be constructive and point out pitfalls and dangers which may arise. I am sure the administration is fully aware of these, but I assume that some comment from the Senate is welcome.

I am heartened by what the minority leader said. Notes that so far as the joint leadership is concerned, there is an identity of views. It is unfortunate that so many of our people have come to think of Cambodia and Sihanouk as a playboy. He is a man of great ability and great capability, and great energy. He has had to perform a nearly impossible feat in keeping Cambodia, not only Cambodia, but also as far as American aid is concerned.

We should have learned our lesson and learned it well after what happened in Korea and what has been happening for all too long, for all too many years in South Vietnam. The figures there of what this war has cost us in manpower are appalling. The latest figures I have are as of March 19, less than a week ago, and they indicate that as of then, last Thursday, 269,719 Americans were wounded in South Vietnam, 40,547 were killed in combat, and 7,927 were killed in non-combat capacities. The total casualties so far, and they are still increasing, amount to 318,293 as of 1 week ago.

This is a high price to pay for an area which is not vital to the security of this country and never was. This is a high price to pay for a war which was a mistake. This is a high price to pay for a war which is a continuous tragedy and affects all elements of our population. In my opinion, it has had a large role in the development of domestic difficulties in this country. It has taken well over $100 billion of money to wage this war to which there really is no end in sight at the present time, money which

In large part could better have been used to face up to the problems of the ghetto to meet the needs of our people, and in that way to put to constructive use rather than destructive use.

I want to commend the administration for what it is doing in this respect, for the firmness it is showing against advice I am sure has been advanced that we get involved in this government and Laos. We do not know what kind of a government it is and only time will tell. In any event, I hope the administration will show a forbearance in line with congressional amendments that there be no use of U.S. ground combat troops in Laos or Cambodia.

I want to assure the administration, in my capacity as a Senator from Montana and as majority leader, that I will continue to do my very best to support the administration in carrying out the Non-Intervention Policy, so that we can end our commitment of 60,000 of our troops from Vietnam; and hopefully, if the opportunity arises, Cambodia and Laos notwithstanding, that phased withdrawal can be increased considerably.

The President has tried through the Geneva accords, through the International Control Commission and through private channels, with all means available, to have his command bring about a lifting of this shadow which overhangs all our lives, to the people of Cambodia and the East. I am sure that when the President comes back, he will bring news of some advance.

If we do not keep our feet on the path toward this objective, then I can see only increased costs, increased casualties, and if that is the case, we have had enough of both.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, will the Senator yield?

Mr. MANSFIELD. I am delighted to yield.

Mr. SCOTT. Mr. President, I do not want to prolong this discussion at all, other than once more to say that the distinguished majority leader has shown his judgment and his patriotism move hand in hand, as he indicates his support for the efforts of the administration. He and I both did our very best, with previous administrations and with the problems that were presented in foreign policy, to give support. We jointly will do it again.

I would add only one very small comment which in no way changes anything the majority leader said, and that is I often notice headlines to the effect that we are in a new war in Laos. Mr. President, there is no new war in Laos. The commitment of Americans in Laos on the ground, and outside of the air interdictions, has varied in the last several years between only 1,000 and 1,040 personnel, about one-half of which are civilians. Since January 20, 1969, deaths
in Laos on the ground have amounted to seven, one military and six civilian. This does not look like a new war.

I say this only to make the point that we must not have even that many casualties in Cambodia. We must have no casualties whatever in Cambodia if we can avoid it, and the way to avoid it is to have no commitment in Cambodia, as the majority leader outlined, and that is the effort through many nations to preserve the neutrality of that troubled state.

I thank the Senator.

Mr. MANSFIELD. Mr. President, I thank the distinguished minority leader for his remarks. I must reiterate that what we are both trying to do is to be constructive with an administration which did not start the war, but which was saddled, in effect, with a number of problems connected with it, and a war which seems awfully difficult to disengage from at this time.

I thank the distinguished minority leader.