

REFERENDUM:

42. As stated earlier in the Report, on January 24, it was announced that the Government headed by His Excellency M. Penn Nouth had resigned and that the King had appointed an all-party Government presided over by His Excellency M. Leng Ngath which was entrusted with the task of preparing and organising the legislative elections, after holding a referendum on the results of the Royal Mission. The referendum was to be held on February 7 and the period of 70 days' preparations for the elections was to begin on the same day, the elections themselves being scheduled for April 17.

43. A Royal Message published on January 24, after referring in detail to the achievement of national independence by Cambodia, stated:

"On this day, when I address you the present Message, I believe within my soul and conscience that I have accomplished the mission for the Fatherland and yourselves with which you had entrusted me.

"In accordance with my promise, I submit the results of this Royal Mission to your judgment which you will freely express with regard to myself in a referendum.

"In order to keep another promise I had made in respect of the parliamentary regime, the general elections for constituting the new National Assembly will be organised immediately after the referendum.

"This referendum and these elections, except in a case of force majeure, will take respectively on 7th February and 17 April, 1955.

"An Elections Government, entrusted with the task of preparing and organising this referendum will be constituted immediately, comprising as usual the heads or representatives, properly designated, of all political parties which have been legally constituted."

44. The text of the Royal Message quoted above is attached as Appendix "E".

45. The exact wording of the question to be put to the people in the national referendum was published on January 28, and it was: "Has the Royal Mission been accomplished to the satisfaction of our people?" The affirmative reply "Yes" to this question was to be symbolised by the voter inserting a white voting slip into the box and the negative reply "No" by inserting a black voting slip. Army personnel and Bonzes (Buddhist monks) were also to take part in the referendum, though under Cambodian law they are not allowed to participate in parliamentary elections.

46. The International Commission decided that the referendum did not fall within its competence since it was not envisaged at Geneva and was also extra-constitutional. The Commission came to the further conclusion that the referendum was an internal domestic matter, for the conduct of which it had no responsibilities to discharge.