

minor lapses, they have rallied round, particularly when urged by the Commission, to carry out these important tasks. Thus, notwithstanding early delays, withdrawals were carried out in time, and almost without incident. For this the Parties deserve credit.

195. Some tasks and problems still remain. The most delicate, difficult and at the same time important problem that awaits solution is that of the two Northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. With the withdrawal of foreign forces, the only ex-antagonists left in the country are the troops of the Laotian National Army and the fighting units of "Pathet Lao", and the only places where these two forces will be left near to each other are the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. Already reports of some incidents have been received. It is apprehended that unless the political settlement envisaged in the Geneva Agreement is reached at an early date, the provinces might become a source of constant friction and jeopardise the very objectives of the Agreement. The efforts made in this direction by the International Commission have already been described. The hopeful sign is the prospect of negotiations starting between the two Parties in January 1955.

Prospects of Solution of the Problem of the Northern Provinces

196. The Commission has the pleasure to record the help and cooperation that it has received from many sources during the period under review, First of all, the Parties to the Geneva Agreement, in spite of differences of opinion between themselves, have generally shown willingness and readiness to listen to the Commission's advice and to assist the Commission in carrying out its duties as envisaged in the Geneva Agreement. The Commission is thankful to the High Commands of the Franco-Laotian and Vietnamese People's Volunteers/ "Pathet Lao" Parties and to their representatives on the Joint Commission in this regard. The consideration that the Commission has received from the Royal Laotian Government, the cooperation that has always been available from the local authorities in the country and from the "Pathet Lao" authorities in the Northern provinces, must also be mentioned. The Commission is particularly thankful to the French Liaison Mission in Vientiane for its unstinted help in supplies and services. Above all, the members of the International Secretariat deserve praise and thanks for the way they served the Commission under very difficult living and working conditions.

Help and Co-operation Received

Sd/ J.N. Khosla Delegate of India and Chairman
Sd/ Léon Mayrand Delegate of Canada
Sd/ Marian Graniewski Delegate of Poland

Signed this 15th day of January, 1955 at Vientiane, Laos.