

Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side have been detaining a large number of civilians. These civilians may be conveniently described in the following categories:-

(a) Political Internees

are those who took part in political activities. The exact Franco-Laotian and Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" claims are not known. The Franco-Laotian side say that they have handed over 70 political internees (38 Vietnamese and 32 Laotian). The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side claim to have released 61 Laotian political internees before the cease fire and handed over another 132 political internees (126 Laotians and 6 French Union) after the cease fire;

(b) Ordinary Civilian Internees

The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side deny holding any ordinary civil internees. They assert that their organisation was based on voluntary co-operation and that never followed a policy of victimisation. Hence they have scrupulously maintained that the 193 Laotian civilians so far released or handed over by them were all political internees and not ordinary civilian internees. The Franco-Laotian side, on the other hand, have received most of these prisoners as ordinary civilian internees. They have moreover given a list, according to each province, of civil internees presumed to be held by the other Party. They have accused the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side of detaining in Sam Neua 180 administrative officers and other civilians belonging to that province as well as civilians (like the former Governor of Xieng Khouang) of other provinces. Their second accusation is that the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side refused to hand over many of the prisoners on the plea that these prisoners wished to stay under the "Pathet Lao" administration. How far this is correct, it is difficult to estimate. By 31st December, 1954, the position of the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side, in this regard, was not known.

The exact number of civil internees now claimed by the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side is 226, besides some among the 20 persons mentioned above as "unspecified". The Franco-Laotian side handed over to them 99 ordinary civil internees (54 Vietnamese and 45 "Pathet Lao"). The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side accuse that many of these civilians "never took part in any political or military activity and hence should not have been exchanged" under Article 16 of the Geneva Agreement.