

But none of the Canadians or the others knew anything very precise about such things as working and living conditions, communications, transport and so on in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia. The orderly way of proceeding would have been to send an advance party to investigate conditions on the spot, discuss administrative questions with the local authorities, and to report their recommendations. This would at least have provided a few facts. But there was no time for such leisurely methods. The Agreements called for each commission to begin its work on August 11, ten days after the opening of the New Delhi conference; and even this fact was not clearly established until after the New Delhi talks began. Some people had interpreted the Agreements to mean that since there were various dates for the cease-fire—ranging from July 27 to August 11—so the commissions would come into being on successive dates. A closer examination of the texts revealed, however, that all three commissions must be open for business on August 11, at 8.00 a.m. Peking mean time.

What had to be done in New Delhi, therefore, was to construct a rather elastic administrative framework, which—it was hoped—could be made to fit whatever differing conditions might be encountered. The three delegations, Canadian, Indian and Polish, worked in complete harmony on these practical problems. Tentative establishments were drawn up for the secretariats, and for the national delegations to each commission. Rough tables of accommodation required for offices and living quarters were prepared, even although what might be available was not known. Transport and communications and security were considered together with all the manifold administrative problems that must be solved if the communications were to work properly. Most of this could be only guesswork, but it represented the best guesses of experienced foreign service and military officers, and in the result it proved a very useful basis for the administrative structure of the commissions.

Administrative Plans Drafted

After five days' hard and very hot work, the administrative plans were roughly sketched out, and it was time to move on to Indochina. It had long since become clear that the three governments would scarcely be able to have their eventual commissioners on hand on August 11; time was required to appoint people and to extricate them from their present jobs. In fact, it would be a considerable achievement if there could be on hand a few people at each of the headquarters—Hanoi for Viet Nam, Vientiane for Laos and Phnom Penh for Cambodia—on August 11. The problem was least acute for the Indians, who were relatively close to the area of operations; the Poles and ourselves had very few people in this far-eastern region.

Despite various difficulties the three commissions were established on the required date. For the Canadian task, a group of army officers who came by air on short notice from Korea provided much of the initial strength. In Cambodia, Brigadier Morton, later to serve as Senior Military Adviser in Laos with the rank of Major-General, was named to act as Commissioner for the time being with a staff of two army officers. To Laos were sent two more army officers with Mr. Frank Ballachey, a Foreign Service Officer posted to Indochina as a Political Adviser, acting as Commissioner. Mr. Macdonnell was designated to serve as Canadian Commissioner in Viet Nam and started work with two army officers and the added luxuries of a senior clerk from External Affairs and an NCO. The Indian Air Force flew the Commissioners and staffs