

(c) the question of sites for the reception of the forces of "Pathet Lao" in the two provinces should be more exhaustively examined by the Joint Commission;

The Corridor

160. The International Commission further stated that the corridor, as given in paragraph 1 of Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement, did not form part of the concentration areas for stationing "Pathet Lao" units, but could be only used by them for free movement between the two provinces.

Views of Two Parties

161. Almost simultaneously, on 30th August, the two Parties in the Joint Commission signed an agreement fixing the number and extent of the Provisional Assembly Areas for the Vietnamese People's Volunteers, "Pathet Lao" and French Union forces. The agreement, however, nowhere mentioned the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, and was thus to be the cause of bitter controversy later. No reference regarding this omission was made to the International Commission until 7th September when the Franco-Laotian side informed the International Commission that according to them the question of assembly areas in these two provinces was "still pending". No compromise arrangement could be arrived at, since the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" Party continued to claim the totality of the two provinces as the final assembly area for the "Pathet Lao" troops, and the Franco-Laotian side denied their right to do so.

FVV/PL Contention

162. The contention of the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" Party was as follows:-

(a) the terms used in Article 14 clearly specified that the fighting units of "Pathet Lao" shall move into the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, pending a political settlement. This meant that the transferred fighting units of the "Pathet Lao" would station themselves throughout the two provinces, because the term "province" implied the totality of the territory within its limits and, if it had been otherwise, the wording would have been that the fighting units of "Pathet Lao" would move into a zone within the two provinces";

(b) the fact that no reference was made in the agreement of 30th August to Phong Saly and Sam Neua clearly indicated that the two provinces constituted in their totality the final regroupment area for the forces of the "Pathet Lao", and that no Laotian National Army Units existed there. This fact caused the two Delegations to give up selecting in the two provinces, Provisional Assembly Area necessary for the disengagement of the forces of the two Parties in regions where they were.

FVV/PL

163. The Franco-Laotian contention was based on the following points:-

(a) article 12 of the Geneva Agreement provided that "Pathet Lao" forces be stationed in 12 Provisional Assembly Areas, i.e. one area