

CHAPTER: VI
PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES

86. Quite early in its career, the International Commission took up the question of liberation and repatriation of the prisoners of war and civilian internees with the Joint Commission.

Article 16 of the Geneva Agreement laid down that:-

"The liberation and repatriation of all prisoners of war and civilian internees detained by each of the two Parties at the coming into force of the present Agreement shall be carried out under the following conditions:-

(a) all prisoners of war and civilian internees of Laotian and other nationalities captured since the beginning of hostilities in Laos, during military operations or in any other circumstances of war and in any part of the territory of Laos, shall be liberated within a period of thirty (30) days after the date when the cease fire comes into effect;

(b) the term "civilian internees" is understood to mean all persons who, having in any way contributed to the political and armed strife between the two Parties, have been arrested for that reason or kept in detention by either Party during the period of hostilities;

(c) all foreign prisoners of war captured by either Party shall be surrendered to the appropriate authorities of the other Party, who shall give them all possible assistance in proceeding to the destination of their choice".

This specified that:-

(i) only those taken prisoners or detained in Laos would be the subject of an exchange;

(ii) all Laotian and foreign prisoners of war and civilian internees would be liberated by 5th September, 1954.

87. The International Commission at its fourth meeting (17th August, 1954) decided to ask the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" and Franco-Laotian Delegations to submit to it, lists, numbers and plans of the release of prisoners of war and civilian internees. The Commission noted at its meeting of 1st September, 1954 that the Franco-Laotian Delegation had communicated the numbers of prisoners of war and civilian internees.

Lists,
Numbers
Plans of
Release

88. The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side, on the other hand, submitted on 17th August, 1954, a project regarding the procedure for the exchange of prisoners of war and civilian internees. The following were the salient features:-