

Commission's
contribution
to settlement

7. During this period, the Commission had been active in encouraging the parties to resume negotiations and for this purpose the Commissioners were in frequent touch with the Prime Minister, Prince Souphanouvong and other Laotian leaders. In particular, the Commission offered its good offices, both by direct correspondence as mentioned in Chapter II and informal discussion, to help the parties overcome various difficulties in their political and military negotiations.

Resumption
of negotia-
tions between
the Parties.

8. On August 19 the Political Delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao, under the leadership of Mr. Phoumi Vongvichit, sent a letter to the Prime Minister with a copy to the Commission (Annexure 13) requesting the Government to appoint a negotiating delegation so that the direct discussions between the parties might be renewed. The letter stated that the delegation of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao was ready to resume negotiations at any time. On September 16 a preparatory meeting between the delegations was held and negotiations were resumed on September 25. It was soon evident that there was an atmosphere of mutual understanding and a spirit of compromise existing between the parties, and that substantial progress was being made by both the Joint Political and Military Committees. Representatives of the National Assembly attended the negotiations as observers and there appeared to be broad popular interest in and support for the discussions.

9. Agreement on a draft Bill guaranteeing the civil rights of former members of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao and their sympathizers was reached by the Joint Political Committee, and the necessary