

INTRODUCTION

Since the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos was established in August, 1954, it forwarded to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference on Indo-China two Interim Reports covering the activities of the Commission from its beginning to 30 June, 1955. These two reports were released to the public. During the last two years, the Commission kept the Co-Chairmen informed of important developments with respect to the relations between the Royal Laotian Government and the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao through a series of special reports and letters. The present Third Interim Report will, it is hoped, when read in conjunction with the First and Second Interim Reports, give a comprehensive account of the Commission's activities for the period extending from 1 July, 1955 to 16 May, 1957.

During the period from June to November 1955, the Royal Laotian Government and the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao - the two Parties to the Geneva Agreement who are referred to throughout this report as the Parties - pursued negotiations with a view to arriving at a political settlement in terms of Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement. These efforts, however, led only to incomplete results and hostilities continued, albeit on a small scale and in a sporadic manner, until April, 1956. A significant change was noticeable about the middle of 1956 when the two Parties met in Vientiane under the leadership of the Prime Minister of the Royal Laotian Government and the Chief of the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao. Two Joint Declarations on agreed principles for settlement were signed in August, 1956, followed by a series of agreements. These accords were reached through negotiations conducted in an atmosphere of goodwill and understanding and by the end of December, 1956, a Joint Declaration was issued, signed by the Prime Minister of the Royal Laotian Government, Prince Souvanna Phouma and the Chief of the Pathet Lao, Prince Souphanouvong, outlining the steps for a final settlement.

Efforts to conclude the settlement continued in the early months of 1957. At the end of the period under review the Commission was hopeful that vigorous pursuit by the Parties of a solution to the outstanding problems would lead to a complete settlement.

The generally favourable atmosphere generated by the signing of agreements and the exchange of views between the Parties in a friendly atmosphere, had its effect on the military situation. For a period of nearly a year, calm, generally speaking has been maintained throughout Laos. In so far as no full settlement has yet been reached, the possibilities of a deterioration of the situation cannot be entirely precluded.

In the present report the Commission, which did not participate in the negotiations between the Parties, has tried to indicate at some length the course of these developments of the last two years and the measures which it has taken from time to time to curb and control hostilities and to encourage the Parties to come to a settlement in fulfilment of Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement.

The Commission deeply regrets that on 9 April, 1957, due to an air accident three men lost their lives while in the service of the Commission. They were Lt. Col. Khushal Chand of the Indian Army, Mr. Roland Duthu, a French Civilian Pilot, and Sgt. Michel Gac, of the French Line of Communications in Indo-China.