

agreement itself. In this the commission has had some success; but it has also encountered difficulties, particularly, it is fair to add, because of the obstructive tactics of the communist government in northern Viet Nam. But here again it must be remembered that the responsibility for carrying out the terms of the agreement rests solely with the parties, who must cooperate with at least a minimum of good faith if the provisions of the armistice are to be properly implemented. All the commission can do is mediate, supervise and conciliate; it cannot enforce.

Notwithstanding these limitations on its powers and certain delays and obstructions that it has encountered - and they all have not been in the north - it is true to say that thousands of refugees from the north are now free in southern Viet Nam because of the international commission. As a matter of fact I think there has been a movement southward of something near half a million refugees. Most of them of course went south before the commission was established.

Our responsibilities on the supervisory commission in Viet Nam do not at the present time extend beyond the supervision of the implementation of the cease-fire agreement. The governments represented on that commission have not received any invitation or directive from the Geneva conference powers with respect to the supervision of elections that are to take place in due course in Viet Nam, as envisaged in the final declaration of the Geneva conference. It is expected, however, that we will be asked to do this along with the other two governments represented on the commission. So far as we are concerned, the responsibilities and procedures regarding the holding of elections would have to be defined satisfactorily and clearly by agreement between the parties concerned before we would be willing to undertake specific tasks in that connection as members of an international commission.

Now just a word about Laos, the second of these three countries. The main problem facing the commission in Laos has to do with the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua where the fighting forces of the so-called Pathet Lao, which have communist support, were concentrated pending a political settlement and their subsequent reintegration into the national community of Laos. So far as these northern areas of Laos are concerned, all you have to do is look at a map of that part of the world to realize their strategic importance, standing as they do between northern Viet Nam and Thailand. These northern areas have been the scene of numerous incidents involving both the communist Pathet Lao forces on the one hand and the royal Laotian forces on the other, and for which the former must bear the main share of responsibility.

Unfortunately, the commission's teams have not always been able to investigate these incidents as promptly or as thoroughly as was desirable. There is always a lack of communication facilities in that part of the country, and I am bound to say there has been no lack of communist obstruction. It is to be hoped that this state of affairs, which has caused us real anxiety on the commission, will be remedied. On the whole, however, the military provisions of the Laotian agreement have been fairly