

153. It should be noted that for quite a long time after the first meeting of the International Commission on 11th August, 1954, the military aspect was the more important one, since it was intimately connected with the plans regarding the establishment of Provisional Assembly Areas for the immediate regroupment of forces.

Military Aspect

154. The Franco-Laotian side asserted that there were on or before 6th August, 1954 (the cease-fire date), areas in Phong Saly and Sam Neua which were under control of their "Special Commandos." According to the Franco-Laotian side, the exercised military control over the Western parts of the two Provinces. The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side referred to these Commandos as "pirates" and refused to recognise them as forming part of the Laotian National Army.

Claims and Counter-claims

155. The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" party claimed that they had complete military control over the Provinces and that the "Pathet Lao" has now complete control over the Provinces; also that no Franco-Laotian troops have existed there since March 1953. They, however, accused the Franco-Laotian side of having paradropped some regular Laotian National Army Units after 6th August, 1954.

Military and Political Aspects of the Problem

156. The Franco-Laotian side, on the other hand, contend that there were very few "Pathet Lao" units in Phong Saly and Sam Neua.

157. The Franco-Laotian side rejected the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" Party's contention of constituting the totality of these two provinces into Provisional Assembly Areas for their troops and into final assembly areas for the "Pathet Lao" troops only.

158. On 18th August, both the Delegations submitted the matter to the International Commission for its recommendation. The problem was discussed at the 8th meeting (26th-29th August) of the International Commission and it was decided that, in view of the possibility of a meeting between the Prime Minister of Laos and the leader of the "Pathet Lao", the Commission should abstain from making too rigid a recommendation and aim particularly at summoning the two Parties to reconcile their points of view.

Problem referred to International Commission

159. Since the personnel necessary for the International Commission's Investigation Teams had not till then arrived in Laos, the Commission, in its letter of 30th August, 1954, recommended that the Joint Commission itself take the following measures:

Recommendation of International Commission

- (a) investigation by Joint Groups, in view of the stipulation in Article 12 regarding Laotian National Army Units in situ, as to whether there were any such units located in the two provinces or whether these two provinces were entirely under the control of "Pathet Lao",
- (b) both Parties should submit details of their forces in each province;

Difficulties and Delicate Problem