

infiltrate very often into our area and that during the exchange of fire it is quite possible that the soldiers of the Royal Army fire at the International Commission in order to throw the blame thereafter on the Fighting Units of the Pathet Lao." The Commission did not take any decision on this argument, nor was it able to investigate these incidents long after their occurrence. Fortunately, however, with the improvement in the general situation, similar incidents were not repeated.

10. Owing to the constant danger to the safety of team members, the Commission considered withdrawing the team but decided that discretion in this matter should be left to the team itself. The team decided however to stay on at Houei Thao.

11. On 17 January, 1956, the Commission sent letters to both the Parties exhorting them to implement the cease-fire agreement fully and to direct the local Commanders at Houei Thao to observe cease-fire from 20 January, 1956.

12. On 21 January, 1956 the firing increased in intensity. At 1500 hours when the team was engaged in the repairing of its bunker with the Commission's white flag prominently being displayed, five well-grouped shots were fired from the direction of the Pathet Lao post on the area where the team was working. One shot wounded an Indian signalman belonging to the team. The Commission felt that it was impossible to mistake the identity of the team or its members, and the International Commission could only presume that someone from the Pathet Lao side must have fired the shots.

13. A helicopter sent from Sam Neua to evacuate this casualty was unable to do so owing to the heavy firing from both sides. The casualty was later evacuated by helicopter during a lull period in firing.

14. From 22 January onwards there was comparative calm but intermittent firing and mine explosions continued. Certain Laotian National Army casualties wounded by mine explosions were evacuated in the Commission's helicopter.

15. During March intermittent fire continued to take place and there was tension between both the Parties at Houei Thao.

16. On 1 April, 1956, three Laotian National Army soldiers, apparently under the influence of alcohol and having become excited over the delay in the evacuation of Laotian National Army casualties, threatened with weapons in their hands the International Commission members. Due to the hostile attitude of these three soldiers, lives of the Houei Thao sub-team members were endangered. Because of this, a member of the team with his interpreter, who had previously been badly treated at Houei Thao in another incident, felt compelled to leave the place until the situation could be put right through the intervention of the International Commission. With the departure of this officer in such circumstances, the team at Houei Thao ceased to have any official status and their work practically came to a standstill.

17. The Military Committee carried out an on-the-spot investigation into this matter. The Commission wrote a letter to the Royal Government about the incident, demanding guarantee for the safety of the team members