

province of Xieng Khouang. Further, the Agreement specified that the Vietnamese People's Volunteers were to have 5 and the fighting units of "Pathet Lao" to have 6 Provisional Assembly Areas. In this agreement, it should be noted, no mention was made concerning the Provisional Assembly Areas for the fighting units of "Pathet Lao" in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. This complete absence of any reference was to be the cause of bitter controversy later. The Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side quoted it as an assurance on the part of the Franco-Laotian side to consider the two provinces, not as Provisional Assembly Areas, but as the final assembly area for the fighting units of "Pathet Lao". The Franco-Laotian side, on the other hand, said protestingly that they were only trying to facilitate the signing of an agreement by avoiding controversial matters;

(b) regroupment of Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" forces in the Provisional Assembly Areas was fixed for 5th September, 1954. The French Union troops had completed their concentration by 21st August, 1954, in conformity with Article 11;

(c) routes of withdrawal of the French Union and Vietnamese People's Volunteer forces from the Provisional Assembly Areas out of Laos as well as the routes within Laos for the movement of the fighting units of "Pathet Lao" were also drawn up;

(d) withdrawal of all the above-mentioned forces, excepting those covered by Articles 6, 8 and 14, was to be completed by 21st November, 1954.

52. A subsequent letter dated 9th September, 1954 from the Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" side proposed certain changes in the route of withdrawal from Lower Laos and proposed that withdrawal from:

- (a) the province of Pakse should commence between 15th and 20th September;
- (b) the province of Attopeu between 15th and 20th October;
- (c) the province of Saravane between 20th and 30th October.

53. All these suggestions regarding the route and schedule of withdrawal of Vietnamese People's Volunteers/"Pathet Lao" troops were accepted by the Franco-Laotian side on 13th September, 1954.