

Difficulties encountered

88. The investigating Teams have been facing numerous difficulties: co-operation of the Parties often leaves much to be desired, interpreters have been found inadequate both in number and quality, and the difficulties of transport are both chronic and severe.

89. The lack of interpreters has proved a great handicap in conducting investigations. With the disbandment of the Joint Commission and the withdrawal of the Joint Groups, no interpreters were left with the Teams. The first request to the 'Pathet Lao' authorities for interpreters was made by the International Commission on 24th February. On 5th March, the Commission requested both the Parties to provide four interpreters for the northern provinces and a pool of interpreters at Vientiane. Although some administrative problems occasionally arose, the Commission did not experience any serious difficulties in securing Laotian National Army interpreters, but it did so in the case of 'Pathet Lao' interpreters. One 'Pathet Lao' interpreter reported for duty in Sam Neua towards the end of March. Since early May, this interpreter has been with the Sub-Team in Muong Peun and no other interpreter has been made available for the province of Sam Neua. This has meant that all investigations in this province except those near Muong Peun, have been held up for want of interpreters. Even in Muong Peun the investigations could not be carried out principally for want of other facilities from the 'Pathet Lao' local authorities, although a 'Pathet Lao' interpreter was available. The Fixed Team in Phong Saly faced similar problems and was inactive until early May, when a 'Pathet Lao' interpreter reported for duty. Numerous letters from the Commission have been sent to the 'Pathet Lao' authorities asking them to discharge adequately their obligations under Article 26. The 'Pathet Lao' informed the Commission early in June that it was difficult for them to find sufficient French speaking Laotians to act as interpreters. On 22nd June, the Commission sent a further letter to the 'Pathet Lao' requesting them to make all possible efforts to find the required number of interpreters, and let the Commission know definitely within ten days, whether these interpreters would be available or not.

90. Lack of air transport has also been a serious source of difficulty. The position regarding helicopters and light aircraft has lately deteriorated and the Commission is considering measures to remedy it.

91. Failure of the Parties to provide always the necessary facilities to the Commission's Teams has been another important reason for delay. The Commission has twice protested to the 'Pathet Lao' authorities against restrictions on movement of its personnel in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. This and other failures of the Parties to provide adequate assistance and facilities to the Teams have prompted the Commission to remind them on several occasions of their responsibilities in this field.