

External Affairs in Parliament

Crisis in Laos

The following statement concerning the Laotian crisis was made to the House of Commons on January 16 by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green:

The Canadian Government has been very much concerned about this situation. We have been doing our best to help work out a satisfactory solution!

Canada's direct concern in this matter arises from our membership in the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Laos, which was established by the Geneva Conference of 1954. . . . Canada did not participate in that Conference but, together with India and Poland, was named to a Supervisory Truce Commission. It will be recalled that the International Supervisory Commission adjourned *sine die* in July 1958, following two requests by the Laotian Government for its departure. I have seen the suggestion made that this Commission was adjourned at Canada's insistence, but the insistence came from the Laotian Government, and the adjournment was approved by Canada and India, being a majority of the nations on the Truce Supervisory Commission.

In the second of these requests, dated May 22, 1958, the Prime Minister of Laos stated that the task entrusted to the Commission was "drawing successfully to a close", and he expressed on behalf of his Government "its profound gratitude for the efficacious assistance" of the Commission in re-establishing in the kingdom a "normal situation in respect of its unity, sovereignty and independence".

The normal situation to which the Prime Minister of Laos referred in his letter of May 1958, did not, unhappily, long prevail. In the fall of 1959 the Security Council took steps to send a Committee to Laos in the hope that this would stop the trouble which had already arisen there at that time. I believe there is still a United Nations presence in Laos, but obviously that fact has not prevented the civil war which is going on there at the present time.

In recent months the situation has become increasingly critical, so that at present there is not only a state of open hostilities, but also an absence of general international agreement on the identity of the legitimate Government. The Communist side is claiming that one man is the head of the Government and the Western side is claiming another man is. The conflicts within the country have engaged the sympathies and to some extent the support of interested powers outside. This is actually a question which the big powers must settle. If they do not agree to some settlement, in any event if they do not keep their hands off, it is quite impossible for other countries to bring about a settlement.

I need hardly remind the House that such a situation imperils not only the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Laos, which the