

The Laotian Crisis before the Security Council

IN a dramatic and sudden appeal made on September 4, 1959, to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Government of Laos requested assistance of the international body and, in particular, the despatching to Laos of an emergency force with the greatest possible speed "to halt aggression and prevent it spreading". The Laotian appeal was the result of a situation which had been building up in that country during the previous months. This communication was the final step in a series of initiatives undertaken by the Royal Laotian Government to focus the attention of the United Nations on the increasing difficulties it had been encountering since the beginning of this year.

Background of Present Situation

To understand the current troubles, one has to go back to the Geneva Agreements of 1954 which ended the Indochinese War. These agreements guaranteed the independence of the small kingdom of Laos but in fact left the country divided, since, pending a political settlement, the fighting units of the Communist-oriented Pathet Lao were to be concentrated in the northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. An International Commission, composed of India, Poland and Canada, was set up to supervise the implementation of the Cease Fire Agreement for Laos. Laotian unity appeared to have been restored when the Royal Laotian Government and the Pathet Lao signed the Vientiane Agreement in November 1957, constituting the political settlement foreseen by the Cease Fire Agreement. A government of national unity was to be formed, including members of the Neo Lao Haksat, political successor to the Pathet Lao; the two northern provinces were to be brought under the jurisdiction of the central government; and the Pathet Lao forces were to be integrated into the National Army. After the holding of supplementary elections in May 1958, the International Commission decided to adjourn *sine die* and left the country in July 1958. Following a period of coalition Government, Mr. Phoui Sananikone came into power in August 1958 and the Neo Lao Haksat members of the Cabinet were dropped. Two months later the first border incident between Laos and North Vietnam was reported. In May 1959, difficulties arose in connection with the integration of the two Pathet Lao battalions into the National Army. One refused to accept the Government's terms and escaped in the direction of the North Vietnam border.

United Nations Informed

This situation in Laos entered a new phase at the beginning of last August when the Government of Laos, on receiving reports that fighting had broken out in northeastern Laos between the Pathet Lao and government forces, informed the Secretary-General of the situation and claimed that North Vietnam was giving active assistance to the rebels. In this communication, however, the Royal Government did not appeal for assistance. Later, on