

24. In reply, the Royal Government stated in a letter dated 8th April, 1955 that political talks were being impeded because the 'Pathet Lao' "consider themselves still under the authority of the Vietminh High Command, and as having conquered the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua." The Royal Government, therefore, suggested that:

- (a) Royal Administration be re-established effectively in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua in conformity with the Geneva Declaration;
- (b) The units of the 'Pathet Lao' in these provinces be collected in fixed assembly areas connected by a corridor as indicated in Article 13 of the Geneva Agreement;
- (c) Pending general elections marking their integration into the national community, these units could be represented in the Royal Administration of the two provinces.

25. The Royal Government further demanded that the Commission should, in consultation with both the Parties, organise general control of these units.

26. The 'Pathet Lao' reply was received on 22nd April, 1955. It accused the Royal Government of co-operating with the United States of America and repeated an earlier request that a Joint Political Council, consisting of three delegates from each of the two Parties, be set up immediately to solve all outstanding political problems. The task of this Council would be:

- (a) To settle amicably all disputes and to enforce a strict implementation of the Joint Declaration of 9th March, 1955, particularly in regard to the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly;
- (b) To define and guarantee democratic freedoms;
- (c) To prepare for free general elections, with such changes in the electoral laws, as would guarantee universal suffrage and provide for control of all abuses at the time of the elections;
- (d) To form a national coalition government with the 'Pathet Lao';
- (e) To settle the problem of integration of the two provinces.

27. The 'Pathet Lao' suggested the following broad procedure for the Joint Political Council:

- (a) The Council should have no President and should avoid decision by voting on any issue;
- (b) If the Parties failed to reach agreement they should refer to their headquarters for advice and guidance;