

of explanation. Under each of the Geneva Agreements, the two parties, whether in Viet Nam, Laos or Cambodia, were made responsible for the execution of the Agreement, and a Joint Commission representing the two sides was set up in each country to work out details of such things as re-groupment of forces and the exchange of prisoners of war. Thus in Viet Nam there was a Joint Commission representing the high command of the forces of the French Union and the high command of the forces of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam—familarly known in International Commission circles as the DR and often referred to as the Viet Minh. To reach the headquarters of this Joint Commission, the International Commission had to use no fewer than three forms of transportation. First there was a trip by car to one of the Hanoi airports. Then there was a flight of about twenty minutes by light aircraft, flown by the French Air Force, Canadian Beavers, incidentally, to a pasture in a demilitarized zone. Finally came a ride in brand new Russian-built jeeps belonging to the Democratic Republic; in the days that followed the Canadians got to know every pot-hole in that five-mile jeep ride—got to know them well if not favourably.

In passing it might be observed that the headquarters of the Joint Commission displayed an interesting mingling of oriental and occidental influences. The huts in which business was conducted had half-walls of woven straw and roofs of corrugated iron. The combination did little to mitigate the effects of the tropical sun beating down on a shadeless patch of the Tonkin delta. Further, the conference tables were covered with a singularly abrasive type of army blanket; and there for several sweating hours on that first day the Canadians and their colleagues waded into the problems which the International Commission had to take up with the Joint Commission.

Help Arrives

On getting back to the hotel in Hanoi for a very late lunch, the Canadians found that welcome reinforcements had arrived. Mr. T. R. G. Fletcher, the Trade Commissioner in Hong Kong, had arrived from the north for briefing on his way to fill in as Commissioner in Cambodia for a month; and two more army officers had turned up from the south to make themselves useful. There was never any advance notice of arrivals in those days, because of the almost paralytic slowness of the local telegraph service. Instead of the rest after lunch which is almost obligatory in such climates if health is to be maintained, a daily delegation meeting was held at which reports were made by each member on what he had been able to achieve; and decisions were taken as to what was to be done next. This delegation meeting was followed by the International Commission's second meeting of the day and, when it concluded as the afternoon began to wane, a stream of callers descended—a group of Canadian Redemptorist fathers come to pay their respects, the British Consul, two press correspondents, one from the United States and one from France, and finally the head of the French liaison mission and a member of his staff.

The problems of getting organized,—finding offices, building up secretariats, arranging adequate communications, and so forth—were formidable. They were surmounted eventually—and in trying conditions of great heat. In the early days the Commissions got through their business with a minimum of organization and a maximum of improvisation—brilliant or otherwise—made possible by hard work and a co-operative attitude on the part of all national