

NEGOTIATIONS : POLITICAL & MILITARYA : POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS

18. The Commission noted with satisfaction that following its own recommendation of 3rd December, 1954 (reproduced in full in the First Interim Report, 94-96 pp.), the Royal Laotian Government expressed a desire to enter into political talks with the representatives of the 'Pathet Lao'. The two Parties agreed, at the very beginning of the period under review, that a Consultative Political Conference be immediately convened in order to "consolidate peace and realise the unification of the Fatherland." It was further suggested by the 'Pathet Lao' that the two Delegations might examine the question of the cessation of all acts of hostilities and draw up a common declaration for publication throughout Laos.

19. This Joint Declaration, signed at the Consultative Political Conference at Plaine-des-Jarres on 18th January, 1955 stated:

"The two Parties gave proof of mutual sincerity and recognised the necessity to collaborate in order to implement together the Geneva Agreement, consolidate peace, grant democratic freedoms to the people, realise the unity of the country and complete the independence of the Fatherland. The two Parties have agreed that they will endeavour to settle by negotiations all questions concerning the independence of the country in order to obtain good results."

20. The 'Pathet Lao' wished to treat the Consultative Political Conference as a preliminary meeting which might lead to the creation of a Joint Political Council for the settlement of basic political problems and the holding of "free general elections by secret ballot, in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Final Declaration made at the Geneva Conference."

21. After protracted deliberations, the two Parties agreed to issue on 9th March, 1955 a joint statement the full text of which is given as Appendix 'A'.

22. The two Delegations further agreed that the Consultative Political Conference should henceforward meet at Vientiane where the 'Pathet Lao' was to maintain a separate Delegation.

23. The Commission took note of these political declarations but pointed out on 29th March that it had not received "any official communication as to these negotiations, the problems discussed and settled, progress made, and the difficulties the two Parties are encountering in respect of a political settlement." In the absence of this information, it was unable to evaluate the political situation and offer such advice and suggestions as might, in its opinion, help the Parties to come to a settlement. The Commission, therefore, requested that it be kept regularly informed of the progress of the work of the Conference.