CHAPTER II

INDIA AND THE I.C.C.
The Geneva Conference on Indo-China brought to an end the seven year old war in Indo-China, and India played a crucial and fruitful role in the peace settlement. As stated in the earlier chapter, the Geneva Conference was a resounding success for India's policy makers as the Agreement in essence was based on the six-point proposal enunciated by Nehru. Above all, India was selected to head the truce team in spite of not being a direct participant in the Conference. It was regarded by observers as "the fruition of the policy of impartial and independent judgement in international relations". At the conclusion of the Geneva Agreement Nehru said: "This is a great step forward, but it is only a step and it has to be followed by persistent efforts at further settlements to assure peace for the future".

India had accepted the responsibility entrusted as the Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission for Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The two other members on the Commission were Canada and Poland. The governments of France, South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, North Vietnam, Canada and Poland were invited for a preliminary meeting in New Delhi from 1 to 6 August 1954 to discuss the procedures, technical details and functions of the commissions to be established. The meeting was a success and every participant promised to give their sincere help and cooperation in implementing the Geneva Agreements. Nearly every one expressed their appreciation.

1. The Hindu, 22 July 1954
2. Statesman, 22 July 1954
for the initiative taken by India. An advance party consisting of representatives from India, Canada and Poland were sent on 7 August 1954 to make an 'on the spot' study of the conditions in Hanoi, Phnom Penh and Vientiane. As stipulated in the Genova Agreements the International Supervisory Commission (I.S.C.) was established in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos on 11 August 1954.

THE FUNCTIONS OF THE I.S.C. AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION IN NORTH VIETNAM AND SOUTH VIETNAM:

From the military and political point of view the International Supervisory Commission had many functions to perform. They had to fulfill the task of control, observation, inspection and investigation connected with the application of the provisions of the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities, and, in particulars:-(a) control the movement of the armed forces of the two parties, effected within the framework of the regroupment plan, (b) supervise the demarcation lines between the regrouping areas, and also the demilitarized zones, (c) control the operations of releasing prisoners of war and civilian internees, and (d) supervise at ports and airfields as well as along all frontiers of Vietnam the execution of the provisions of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities, regulating the introduction into the country of armed forces, military personnel and of all kinds of armies,
ammunitions and war material. From the political angle the I.S.C. had to supervise the elections to be held in Vietnam in July 1956, in Cambodia in September 1955 and in Laos in December 1955.

Immediately after the Agreements were signed, President Ho Chi Minh called upon his people and Army in these unmistakable words: "From now on, we must struggle with all our strength for the consolidation of peace, achievement of unity, completion of independence and democracy throughout the country". The position taken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was to strictly abide by and cooperate in the implementation of the Geneva Agreements.

In the beginning, Hanoi was placed under the French and it was only by slow stages that it was to be transferred. As laid down in the Geneva Agreements the transfer was completed by 11 October 1954. M.J. Desai, Chairman of the I.C.C. in Vietnam, described the changeover as "smooth and orderly" in spite of occasional misunderstandings and difficult postures of the parties concerned.


5. The Hindu, 3 October 1954
In October 1954, Nehru visited Hanoi on his way to Peking. Placards carrying slogans like "Vietnamese and Indian people's friendship will be everlasting" and arches reading "we welcome the policy of co-existence" greeted him. A joint communiqué was issued, in which President Ho Chi Minh assured the Prime Minister that he was giving and would continue to give his full cooperation to the International Commission to implement the Agreements. As Jawaharlal Nehru stated:

He was anxious to solve all remaining problems peacefully and cooperatively so that the countries of Indo-China may live independently and prosper without any external interference. He believed fully in the five principles which had been agreed upon between the Prime Ministers of China and India and wished to apply them in the relations of Vietnam with Laos, and Cambodia as well as with other countries. President Ho Chi Minh referred to the ancient contacts of India with the people of Vietnam and hoped that in future these contacts would be renewed and strengthened.

South Vietnam which was not a signatory to the Geneva Agreements questioned its very validity. In Saigon, Premier Ngo Dinh Diem described the Geneva settlement as "an iniquity" against his people and ordered all flags to be flown at half mast for three days. At the same time, he cautioned that any attempt forcibly "to resist the settlement would

6. Ibid., 19 October 1954
only precipitate a catastrophe and destroy all chances of eventually recreating a free and united Vietnam*. Diem did understand that under the prevailing conditions, the agreement worked out was the most feasible one. Till the elections in July 1956 Saigon was placed under the French control due to the chaotic conditions existing in South Vietnam. Saigon's displeasure was apparent when Nehru visited the place on his return from Peking. Nehru was greeted on his arrival with "no compromise with communism" slogans by South Vietnamese. There were arches which read "welcome to India's Prime Minister - down with co-existence" and others that denounced India's foreign policy. The welcome made it clear that Vietnamese had greatest respect for Nehru as a person and as the leader of India's struggle for independence, but at the same time, they did not like India's peace initiative, in South Vietnam.

In the Bandung Conference held in April 1955 the State of Vietnam's representative Nguyen Van Thoai complained that the Geneva Agreements were signed without taking into consideration the recommendations and protestations made by his Government.


With regard to the military aspect of the Geneva Agreements, there were complaints and counter-complaints of breach of the Agreements. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was accused for importing war materials and Democratic Republic of Vietnam in turn complained against the activities of the American General Collins in South Vietnam. South Vietnam complained that Vietnam was getting arms from P.R.C. while North Vietnam charged South Vietnam of importing arms from West. Yet another complaint was that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam curtailed permit facilities to those who wanted to migrate to the South and vice versa. Saigon was accused of having violated the Geneva Agreement which stated that no person or organisation should be discriminated because of their activities during the hostilities. The findings of the International Control Commission held Hanoi responsible for hampering free movement of the refugees from one zone to the other and South Vietnam for discrimination of persons because of their activities before July 1954. In spite of these drawbacks, inadequate facilities and lack of cooperation the International Control Commission completed its military functions quite satisfactorily.

The political task of the International Control Commission was the crucial factor of the Geneva Agreements. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Pham Van Dong, who was in Delhi in April 1955 reaffirmed the full support of his Government to the Agreements reached in Geneva and their firm resolve to respect
and implement them both in their terms and spirit. He agreed on the importance of free elections and the achievement of unity of Vietnam as provided for by the Geneva Agreements. Pham Van Dong, who headed his country's delegation to the Asian-African Conference, reiterated his Government's support for the elections to be held in July 1956. He said,

A new period is opening, in which the problem of Vietnam's unity by free general elections must be settled. Vietnam is united country and no one can divide her.... The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam has declared its readiness to restore normal relations of all kinds between North and South in order to prepare the consultative Conference between the authorities in the North and South next July 1955, as a first step towards the achievement of Vietnam's unity, and it has also declared its readiness to enter into contact with the authorities in the south.

The Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam warned that the provisions relating to election must be observed:

The loyal implementation of the Geneva Agreements with a view to achieving the unity of Vietnam by means of free general elections is the profound desire and the iron-willed determination of the Vietnamese....


12. Asia-Africa Speaks from Bandung, n. 10, p. 144

but it is out of question for us to consider any proposal from the Vietminh, if proof is not given to that they put the superior interests of the national community above those of Communism... 16

South Vietnam was considering the possibility of United Nations' supervision of the election instead of the International Control Commission.

INDIA'S REACTION TO THE HOSTILE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS:

India which strongly believed that deviation from the Geneva Agreements would upset the 'balance of peace' in Indo-China was not in favour of the position taken by the South Vietnam. At a Press conference Nehru said:

It is true that the South Vietnam authorities did not sign the Geneva Agreements but they had no business to sign them either. France was the power controlling that part of Vietnam and France signed them on behalf, not only of itself, but of its successor Governments. The South Vietnam Government is a successor Government to the French Government in South Vietnam and they have to take the Agreements, responsibilities and liabilities, which every successor Government has to take.... it would be an impossible position if every successor Government denied the Agreements arrived at by its predecessor. That is the legal position. 17

17. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. 1, no. 7, July 1955, p. 150
It further stated that "the entire Vietnamese people were firmly resolved to unite closely and to fight determinedly for the realisation of that sacred right." India agreed with the Soviet Union, P.R.C. and North Vietnam that consultation between North Vietnam and South Vietnam should begin in July 1955 so as to hold the Conference to reunify Vietnam in July 1956. This elicited sharp criticism from the South Vietnam Government. Diem's propaganda machinery launched an intensive campaign against the communists, the Geneva Agreements and the Indian and Polish delegation in the International Control Commission. It was particularly critical of India's insistence on the implementation of the Geneva Agreements. India-South Vietnam relations reached its lowest ebb in the middle of 1955.

President Ngo Dinh Diem's declaration on the Geneva Agreements and free elections was completely contrary to the terms and spirit of the Geneva Accords. He said:

We are not bound in any way by those agreements, signed against the will of the Vietnamese people.... We do not reject the principle of free elections as peaceful and democratic means to achieve that unity. However, if elections constitute one of the bases of true democracy, they will be meaningful only on the condition that they are absolutely free.... We shall not miss any opportunity which would permit the unification of our home land in freedom.

14. Ibid., p. 209

15. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 89
The hostile attitude of South Vietnam to the Geneva Agreements was manifested in the riots that took place on 20 July 1955 the anniversary of the Geneva Agreements. It was declared as a "day of national shame" by the South Vietnam Government. A crowd of several hundred young men, armed with sticks, knives and hammers, appeared outside the hotels where the personnel of the International Control Commission were staying. The demonstrators went in groups from room to room on all floors of the two hotels, breaking open the rooms, cutting telephone connections and threatening the guests. Fortyfour members of the Commission, including the Chairman, lost their personal belongings. The Commission's cars were burnt. Policemen present did not take any step to control the rioters.18 A resolution adopted by the Government of South Vietnam a day or two before mob violence in Saigon mentioned "the elimination of Polish and Indian pro-Communist elements in the International Commission as one of the objectives of the South Vietnam Government."19 According to this report it appeared that the demonstration was planned with the consent of the Government.

Prime Minister Diem described the riots as a "clear proof of the determination of the people to combat communism". He added: "Among a hundred thousands demonstrators who have

18. Sardesai, n. 8, pp. 90-91
19. The Hindu, 23 July 1955
shown farsighted nationalism and also the most strict discipline, about hundred people have entered the two hotels, and that contrary to certain erroneous Press reports there are only some material damages which have occurred in an atmosphere of general over-excitement." The Minister for Tourism, Vu Van Mau, apologised and promised compensation for the damages. The International Control Commission passed a unanimous resolution condemning the Government of South Vietnam for the outrage. M.J. Desai, Chairman of the International Control Commission, had a meeting with Ngo Dinh Diem who blamed the extremists from North Vietnam for the incident. On Desai's refusal to accept the statement Diem expressed his regret and promised to issue a statement of apology. South Vietnamese Government published a statement which "warmly regretted the incident" adding that the Government had "taken the necessary precautions to prevent a recurrence."  

On 27 July 1955 Nehru stated in the Parliament:

As the administration of law and order in South Vietnam now appears to be under the control of the State of Vietnam, the Government of Vietnam were, in our view, as much responsible for giving the protection as the Commander-in-Chief of the French Union Forces.

20. Ibid., 22 July 1955
21. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 92
The Indian Press was also highly critical of South Vietnam's action. "The incident", wrote the Indian Express, "notwithstanding Diem's apology is inexcusable". 23 Hindustan Times characterised Ngo Dinh Diem's statement disclaiming responsibility for the incident as "an amazing piece of effrontery" and said it was "virtually a challenge to the Geneva Powers." 24 The Hindustan Standard blamed the Diem Government for the riots and warned that after the Saigon events "Nehru should make sure that Indian men were not exposed to unnecessary dangers in their international assignments". 25 The Times of India held Government of South Vietnam responsible for the "outrage" in which the headquarters of the International Control Commission was attacked. 26 The Government of India informed the Co-Chairman, Britain and Russia, about the Saigon riots and requested adequate security for the members without which they could not function in South Vietnam. Both Britain and Russia condemned the incident and promised to do the needful.


23. Indian Express, 22 July 1955
24. Hindustan Times, 23 July 1955
25. Hindustan Standard, 22 July 1955
26. Times of India, 22 July 1955
the opinion that the "political attitude of the state of Vietnam to the Geneva Accords, and its effects on the work of this Commission and the implementation of the Vietnam Agreement required very early consideration by the Co-Chairmen".27 The Commission reiterated its difficulties as a result of transfer of authority in the Zone of the French High Command to the South Vietnamese authorities and stated:

The French High Command, which is the Signatory to the Agreement, in most cases can only take action to fulfil its obligations with the specific concurrence of the authorities of the Republic of Vietnam who did not sign the Agreement and do not consider themselves bound by it. Such a divorce of power from responsibility in the matter of the fulfilment of the Geneva cease-fire Agreement is the main reason for the difficulties which have arisen in that area.28

The Indian and Polish delegations expressed serious concern about the implementation of the Geneva Agreement particularly in view of the "continued non-acceptance of the Geneva Agreement and the final declarations of the Geneva Conference by the Republic of Vietnam." The Commission expressed its fear that they "cannot work with any effectiveness unless the difficulties are resolved by the Co-Chairmen and the Geneva Powers without further delay".29 South Vietnam was not prepared to go to elections.

29. Ibid., p. 152
In the meantime the political developments in South Vietnam altered the situation completely. Ngo Dinh Diem was voted to power as Head of State in the referendum held on 23 October 1955 in place of ex Emperor Bao Dai. South Vietnam was proclaimed a Republic with Diem as President. His coming to power was expected to strengthen his refusal to negotiate with North Vietnam.

Yet another development was the transfer of not only civil but also military responsibilities to the Vietnamese by the French as requested by South Vietnam Government. In July 1955, the military command was transferred by French High Command to the Vietnamese High Command and by 29 April 1956 the French troops were to be withdrawn from South Vietnam.

With the French gone, one of the main props of the Geneva Accords was removed. The Government of Republic of Vietnam, the sole authority both civil and military in South Vietnam, did not sign the Geneva Agreement and did not recognise them. Hence the responsibility for the execution of the Geneva Agreement in South Vietnam rested with no one. The first body to feel its impact was the International Control Commission. 30

While South Vietnam never modified its basic position with regard to the elections, in a declaration issued on 6 April 1956 the Government clarified its responsibilities towards the Geneva Agreement. The Government of South Vietnam reiterated its refusal to recognise the Geneva Agreement, but affirmed, at the same time, its intention to respect the demarcation line and pursue a policy of unification by peaceful means. It also declared that it considered the International Commission as "an agency working for peace" and that, because of this "community of objectives", it would continue to give the Commission "effective co-operation", to ensure the security of its members and to facilitate the fulfilment of its "mission of peace". 31

The Chairman of the International Control Commission in Vietnam called on the South Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem and briefed him of the serious consequences that would occur if the French High Command were withdrawn before a decision was taken regarding its succession and its commitments under the Geneva Agreement. It was of no avail as the Government of South Vietnam went ahead with its plan and signed an agreement with the French delegates. Nehru explicitly stated that India would function only as the agency of the Geneva Conference. Speaking in Parliament he stated:

As the International Commission for Vietnam has been found under the Geneva Agreement, if the Geneva Agreement goes, then the Commission has no place or no function left. Broadly, the position is that the South Vietnam Government does not accept responsibility. But in a sense, it acknowledges a certain de facto position. That is very unsatisfactory. 32

**CO-CHAIRMEN'S MEETING IN LONDON: ATTITUDE OF NORTH VIETNAM, SOUTH VIETNAM, FRANCE AND THE I.C.C:**

At the suggestion of the Indian Government the two Co-Chairmen finally met in London. The meeting that began on 10 April 1956 between Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, A. Gromyoko, and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs in U.K., Lord Reading, concluded on 8 May 1956. It was decided to send three messages to the North and South Vietnam Governments, the French Government and the I.C.C. In their message to the North Vietnam and South Vietnam Governments the two Co-Chairmen expressed their concern about the situation due to the non-implementation of the Geneva Agreements, and stated that 'pending the holding of free general elections for the reunification of Vietnam' they attached 'great importance' to the maintenance of the cease-fire under the continued supervision of the International Commission for Vietnam. They strongly urged the two Vietnams to prevent any further violation of the military provisions of the agreement and also to ensure the implementation

32. *India, Lok Sabha Debates*, vol. 11, pt. I, 21 March 1956, col. 1271
of the political provisions and principles embodied in the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference. To this end, the authorities of both parts of Vietnam were invited to transmit to the Co-Chairmen 'as soon as possible, either jointly or separately, their views about the time required for the elections to reunify Vietnam'. The French Government was requested to give its good offices to the International Commission with the consent of South Vietnam. In their message to the International Commission, the Co-Chairmen recorded their appreciation of the valuable contribution made by the Commission and hoped that the Commission would preserve in their efforts to maintain and strengthen peace in Vietnam 'on the basis of the fulfilment of the Geneva Agreements on Vietnam'.

The South Vietnamese Government in its reply of 22 May 1956 undertook not to "have recourse to solutions of violence", and not to "seek to interfere with the demarcation line and demilitarised zone". The Diem Government further offered its continued cooperation with the International Commission. As to the proposed countrywide elections, the reply merely repeated the familiar argument that "the absence of all liberties in North Vietnam renders the problem of electoral and pre-electoral operations in practice inaccessible for the moment".

33. Ton That Thien, n. 30, pp. 385-6
The D.R.V's reply dispatched from Hanoi on 4 June 1956 also undertook to preserve the peace, but unlike Saigon linked this question with that of pre-electoral consultations, as follows: "The Governments of North and South Vietnam should continue to implement the provisions concerning the cease-fire agreement for the purpose of strengthening peace, and should begin consultative meetings to consider the question of the unification of the country by means of free general elections, as was laid down by the Geneva Agreements".

As for the future of the International Commission its Chairman's reply of 29 May 1956 gave an undertaking that its work would continue, while the French Government's reply of 14 May 1956 though pointing out that France since the withdrawal of the French Expeditionary Corps on 28 April 1956 no longer had any special responsibilities for the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, offered to continue to make its good offices available, subject to effective cooperation with the Government of South Vietnam.

New Delhi's reaction to the Anglo-Soviet communication on Indo-China was one of disappointment that the situation in Vietnam was being allowed to drift towards a stalemate. New Delhi was of the opinion that while the decision taken might represent

compromise between divergent views, real issues involved have been shelved for the time being. 35 The Commission was naturally anxious about the duration of their stay in Vietnam as it was conditioned by the political settlement. The Hindustan Times was doubtful if South Vietnam would respond to the Co-Chairmen’s appeal as it was responsible for the breakdown of the Geneva Accords. 36

INDIA-SOUTH VIETNAM RELATIONS

India finally fell in line with the Co-Chairmen’s decision and in the middle of 1956 recognised the de facto partition of Vietnam which was followed by de facto recognition of the Republic of Vietnam and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in October 1956. Consulates-General were opened in Delhi by both North Vietnam and South Vietnam. From 1956 till about 1959 India once again maintained a neutral position between the two Governments.

Beginning from this period one finds a relative improvement in India-South Vietnam relations. An official notification of the Republic of Vietnam acknowledged the advantage of being recognised by India. It noted:

35. Hindustan Times, 13 May 1956
36. The Hindu, 13 May 1956
Vietnam was not really admitted to the concert of Asian Nations as long as India was hostile to it. Prime Minister Nehru's preference for the Viet Minh, although never officially expressed, was a secret to no one.... But India has now modified its attitude towards Free Vietnam.... India did not press the election issue too strongly in recent months, which was a clear indication it was prepared to let Free Vietnam run its own chances. 37

A trade delegation from South Vietnam under Nguyen Huu Chau, Secretary of State to the Presidency of the Republic of Vietnam, visited India at the invitation of the Indian Government. The mission was received by Nehru and other dignitaries of the Government. As the Times of Vietnam commented, it was not an ordinary trade mission but one of "the several goodwill delegations to Asian countries as the prelude to regular diplomatic relations.... The delegations aim was to dissolve the misunderstanding of India about Vietnam and lay down the basis for a closer friendship between India and our country". 38

In September 1957, Vice President Radhakrishnan paid an official visit to Saigon. He was cheered by the National Assembly when he expressed wishes for strengthening of understanding, cooperation and friendship between the Indian


38. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 107
and Vietnamese people, "not only for their own welfare but for the good of all people of the world". At the invitation of Government of India, Ngo Dinh Diem, the President of the Republic of Vietnam, paid an official visit in November 1957. On arrival in Delhi Diem stated:

I was indeed extremely anxious to know this country firsthand, the country which has left an indelible imprint on Asian thought, and which has always attracted the imagination of other people by the greatness of its past, and by the decisive importance of its destiny in the future of Asia and of the entire world.... To the peace-loving people of India, I bring the fraternal greetings of the Vietnamese people. Like the Indian people, they are animated by the same ideals of peace and liberty, and the great heritage of Asian culture which binds them together.

President Rajendra Prasad held a State banquet in honour of President Diem. Speaking on the occasion, Rajendra Prasad said:

We welcome him as the Head of a State which, like us, has emerged as a free nation only recently after a long spell of foreign domination.

39. The Hindu, 15 September 1957


41. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. III, no. 11, November 1957 p. 220
Ngo Dinh Diem, clarifying South Vietnam's position with regard to S.E.A.T.O., stated:

Vietnam accepts, neither foreign military bases, nor foreign troops on its territory. It is not considering the adherence to any military alliance at present. It is not a member of S.E.A.T.O. but its territory is covered by this organisation. Vietnam needs internal security to recover from the ruins of war, and must struggle against the subversive manoeuvres of the Communists.... It considers that being covered by S.E.A.T.O. is a great advantage, for S.E.A.T.O. is purely defensive in nature, and is interested in economic development and the struggle against subversive measures.42

Ngo Dinh Diem's visit to India enhanced his prestige and that of South Vietnam which until then was constantly obscured. The conclusion reached was that "Ngo Dinh Diem as a creature of foreign powers was false in the extreme. He was a representative of an Asian people proud, passionate and convincing; a man in and of Asia's own heart".43

Thus India's relations with South Vietnam entered a new chapter. The joint communique announced the keen desire of the two countries to broaden the basis of such cooperation.44

42. Towards Better Mutual Understanding, n. 39, p. 27
43. Eastern Economist, vol. XXIX, no. 19, 8 November 1957, p. 685
44. Ibid., p. 686
INDIA-NORTH VIETNAM RELATIONS

Within a few months, Ho Chi Minh, President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, visited India. He was on a nine-day visit from February 5 to 13, 1958. Dr. Ho in a brief speech at the airport thanked the people of India for the "hearty and impressive welcome" given to him and paid a tribute to the "valuable contribution made by India to the cause of peace in Asia and the world stage". He expressed the hope that his visit would not only strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between the two countries, but also contribute to the strengthening of solidarity among Asian and African countries.

Welcoming Dr. Ho Chi Minh, Nehru paid a tribute to the great part played by the former for the achievement of independence of his country and said that they, in India, had a unique opportunity to receive a great revolutionary and an almost legendary figure.

At a Press Conference Ho Chi Minh stated:

My first impression was that the Indian people entertain deep sympathetic feelings towards the Vietnamese people. Everywhere we have been received like brothers by the Indian Government and people. This was the cause in the past our two people have gone through the same experience and at present are animated with the same determination to oppose colonialism, to preserve peace, and with the same zeal in building up our respective countries. Both

45. The Hindu, 6 February 1958
46. Ibid.
our countries are striving to put into practice
the five principles of peaceful co-existence in
keeping with the Bandung spirit, and share the
same views on important problems. 47

Speaking at the State banquet given in his honour
by the President, Rajendra Prasad, Ho Chi Minh said:

At present, in Vietnam, on account of colonialist
interference, national reunification by free general
elections as provided for in the Geneva Agreements
have not yet been realised.... We are determined
to struggle for the reunification of our country by
peaceful means and on the basis of independence and
democracy.... On behalf of the Government of the
Democratic Republic of Vietnam and of the Vietnamese
people, I wish to thank the International Commission
with India as its Chairman for the efforts in the
supervision and control of the implementation of the
Geneva Agreements in Vietnam. In its struggle for
the consolidation of peace and for national
reunification, the Government of Democratic Republic
of Vietnam and the people of Vietnam are always
grateful for the sympathy and support of the
Government and people of brotherly India. 48

The joint communique of the President and the Prime
Minister expressed their gratification at the opportunity
for personal discussion and exchange of views and confidence
that the personal contacts established would further strengthen
the friendly relations between the two countries and their people
and lead to closer cultural, economic and commercial relations
to their mutual advantage. 49

47. "President Ho Chi Minh's visit to the Republic of India
and Union of Burma", Official Documents (New Delhi, 1958),
p. 33


49. Ibid., p. 20
THE FUNCTIONING OF THE I.C.C.:

During the period from mid 1956 to 1959 the I.C.C. could not function effectively due to lack of cooperation by the parties concerned. In the Sixth Interim Report, the Commission informed the Co-Chairmen of its difficulties in the supervision of the implementation by the parties of the provisions of Article 14 (C) which deals with investigation, detention or discrimination against individuals in the territory. These difficulties persisted and increased as the Commission had not received the necessary assistance and cooperation from the Republic of Vietnam. As a result a large number of cases were pending. The Government of the Republic of Vietnam not only declined to give concurrence to the deployment of eight mobile teams decided upon by the Commission but also refused to permit the deployment of two mobile teams for which concurrence had already been given by them. The Co-Chairmen were informed of the position and advise on the future course of action sought. 50

As there was no response from the Co-Chairmen after having reported to them in 1957 and 1958, the I.C.C. once again in the Ninth Interim Report brought it to the notice of the Co-Chairmen.

The Report said:

The parties persisted in giving their own interpretations which differ from those of the Commission on some of the provisions of the Agreements and continued to refuse to accept and comply with some of the decisions.

of the Commission, maintaining their respective stands. The Commission cannot discharge with any effectiveness its functions specified in the Geneva Agreements which are the basis for the Commission's activities unless the Commission's interpretations and decisions are accepted as final by the parties and unless all the provisions of the Agreement are strictly observed by them. The Commission requests the Co-Chairmen and through them the members of the Geneva Conference to take such measures as they may consider appropriate to resolve the difficulties which hinder the Commission's activities in order to enable the Commission to discharge its duties in accordance with the Geneva Agreements. 51

In the Sixth Interim Report and in its message to the Co-Chairmen the Commission had referred to the situation which arose as a consequence of the withdrawal of the French High Command from Vietnam. While this major development had its origin during the period of the Sixth Interim Report, it was during the period under review that its effects on the work of the Commission were felt fully.

The Joint Commission which was an important part of the machinery for the implementation of the Geneva Agreements had not resumed its activities since May 1956. 52 The Commission had requested the Co-Chairmen to give urgent consideration to the situation but there was no progress towards a solution of those difficulties.


52. Seventh Interim Report, p. 20
It was a matter of great concern to the Commission that the Joint Commission had not resumed functioning. In their message dated 8 May 1956 to the Government of Republic of France, the Co-Chairmen invited the French authorities to discuss with South Vietnam with a view to reach an arrangement to facilitate the work of the International Commission and the Joint Commission to preserve the status quo until these new arrangements were 'put into effect'. 53 The absence of the Joint Commission and the consequent lack of arrangements for the resumption of its activities and the discharge of its functions especially in the demilitarised zone, hampered the implementation of the Geneva Agreement in this important area. 54 The Commission requested the Co-Chairmen to give the matter urgent consideration since the Commission was faced with a major difficulty which it could not resolve alone. 55 There was no response from the Co-Chairmen. The Republic of Vietnam informed the I.C.C. during 1959 that "the maintenance of peace in the demilitarised zone does not depend.... on the resumption of the central Joint Commission, an organisation which must be considered as definitely dissolved". Thus the Joint Commission lapsed after April 1958 for lack of representation from one of the two parties. 56

53. Ninth Interim Report, p. 18
55. Ninth Interim Report, p. 18
56. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 114
In spite of continued efforts by the I.C.C. no progress was made regarding the deadlock over reunification of Vietnam. The Commission which was engaged with the election issue, and once the French withdrew with alternative arrangements, took action against the complaints and counter-complaints received from the two Vietnam only from the end of 1959. North Vietnam's charges against South Vietnam were discrimination against former resistance members and increased military aid from America. The South Vietnam, on the other hand, held North Vietnam responsible for the deterioration of law and order in the country. North Vietnam was blamed for encouraging subversive activities in South Vietnam. The Commission in its Tenth Report referred to the "problem of subversion in South Vietnam". The Polish delegate objected to the mention of subversion and was of the opinion that it was beyond the scope of the Geneva Agreement. In 1960, the Commission referred the South Vietnamese complaints to its legal committee. In regard to the dissenting opinion of the Polish delegate, the Indian delegate, together with his Canadian colleague, held the view that:

though subversion is not mentioned in the Geneva Agreements, the Commission cannot divest itself of its responsibilities and duties to ascertain and to investigate any complaint concerning acts alleged to be abetted by one party against the other which may be detrimental to the peace and security in Vietnam.57

57. Ton That Thien, n. 31, pp. 145-6
North Vietnam brought to the notice of the I.C.C. two other complaints against South Vietnam. One was the Internal Security Law 10/59 that empowered them to punish subversions. North Vietnam alleged that the law was used against former resistance members. After investigation the I.C.C. came to the decision that the law was not to discriminate against the former resistance members but to maintain the law and order in the country and was not a breach of the Geneva Agreements. Poland did not accept the majority report of India and Canada. Second was the military personnel who came to South Vietnam under the Military Aid Advisory Group (MAAG). South Vietnam stated that MAAG was started in 1950 and there was no formal military alliance. The military personnel were to replace the French officers. The Commission, came to the conclusion that the MAAG was started well before the Geneva Agreement and warned South Vietnam Government that the number of personnel should not exceed the number at the time of the Geneva Agreement and it should be in accordance with the principles of the Agreement. Once again Poland dissented.

India's decision on the subversion, security law 10/59 and MAAG was favourable to South Vietnam. North Vietnam Premier Pham Van Dong stated:

India as Chairman of the International Control and Supervisory Commission for Vietnam had failed to take active steps in the implementation of the Geneva Agreement and his country was extremely displeased with the I.C.C..... While his country welcomed India as the International Control and
Supervisory Commission Chairman because of its policy of peace, in its above decision, International Control and Supervisory Commission had not respected the clauses of the Geneva Agreement and implemented them correctly.

Referring to North Vietnam's relations with India the Premier indicated that his country desired full diplomatic relations with New Delhi. With regard to Sino-Indian border conflict, he said, that Vietnam was an outsider and expressed the hope that they would find a good solution. Inter-government relationship was not ruptured due to the decision taken by India as Chairman of I.C.C.

Dr. Pham Ngoc Thach, Minister of Public Health, was sent by Ho Chi Minh to meet Nehru. He met Nehru and stressed India's role as Chairman of the I.C.C. in Vietnam in 'view of the serious situation in the southern part of his country as a result of foreign intervention'. He hoped that India would fulfil the noble mission entrusted to it by the Geneva Conference and thus contribute to the peaceful reunification of Vietnam.

Towards the end of 1960 the situation in Vietnam was deteriorating rapidly and heading towards a clash. There were charges and counter charges which the I.C.C. was looking into.

58. The Hindu, 26 October 1960
59. Ibid., 12 December 1961
South Vietnam accepted the fact that they were getting aid from America in order to keep off Communist subversion and gave evidence of the subversive activities. North Vietnam's charge was the increasing American aid - monetary, material as well as military personnel - was in contravention of the Geneva Agreement.

The Commission brought out a special report in June 1962. The Commission reported to the Chairmen that basic principles of the Geneva Agreement were violated and hence there was a threat of war. The report stated that:

the Republic of Vietnam had violated Articles 16 and 17 of the Geneva Agreement in receiving increased military aid.... (and) that, though there may not be any formal military alliance between the.... United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam, the establishment of a U.S. military Assistance Advisory Command in South Vietnam, as well as the introduction of large number of U.S. military personnel.... amounts to a factual military alliance which is prohibited under Article 19 of the Geneva Agreement.60

By a majority (India and Canada with Poland dissenting),

the Legal Committee of the Commission held that:

....in specific instance there is evidence to show that armed and unarmed personnel, arms, ammunitions, and other supplies have been sent from the zone in the North to the zone in the South with the object

60. R.L. Walli, Vietnam: Long Road to Freedom (New Delhi, 1976), pp. 137-8
of supporting, organising and carrying out hostile activities including armed attacks against the Armed Forces and the administration of the zone in the South... 61

North Vietnam accused India of failure to carry out the terms and sabotaging the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam and indirectly suggested that India was no longer competent to be the Chairman of the I.C.C. for Vietnam. This was the first time that North Vietnam had openly attacked India. The attack was in an editorial entitled "A shameful act" in Nhandam, an organ of the North Vietnam's LaoDong (Communist) party. The editorial said that India failed to reflect the foreign policy of the peaceful and neutral country which it represented. 62

Before the Co-Chairmen could publish the report the Consulate General of North Vietnam in India circulated a "DRV Government" declaration which inter alia made two ominous insinuations: (1) "It (the finding on subversion) constitutes a dangerous violation of the Geneva Agreements by those very persons (i.e., the Indians and Canadians in the I.C.C.) who have heavy responsibilities to ensure respect for the said Arrangements..." and (2) "It is... at a moment when the U.S. Government is openly sending its combat troops to Thailand that the Indian and

61. Ibid., p. 139
62. The Hindu, 21 May 1962
and Canadian delegates deliberately try to justify the U.S. Government's policy of military intervention in South Vietnam.... The Indian and Canadian delegation have.... in some way or another given a cover to the illegal and cruel acts of the U.S. imperialists and the Ngo Dinh Diem clique". 63

India-North Vietnam relations became very strained and when the Sino-Indian conflict took place North Vietnam supported China. In reply to members of Parliament regarding the disbanding of the Commission due to lack of cooperation from the two regimes Nehru replied that he had no intention to abandon his responsibility as Chairman of the I.C.C. He was of the opinion that it had done a great deal of good. It had prevented the situation from worsening. Nehru said that the work of the Commission "was an international responsibility that we have undertaken and we should continue to discharge it so long as it was possible for us to do so". 64

The situation in Vietnam was deteriorating day by day. In South Vietnam there was a conflict between the Buddhist elements and the government and many Buddhist Monks burnt themselves. People in other Buddhist countries were much agitated over what was happening in South Vietnam. An army coup toppled the Diem regime and took control of South Vietnam on 1 November 1963.


64. India, Lok Sabha Debates, vol. VII, 22 August 1962, cols. 3339-40
Yet another military coup took place in January 1964 and General Nguyen Khanh, Commander of the First Army Corps, took power. While South Vietnam was engaged in internal strife at home, North Vietnam continued its subversive activities with all vigour. U.S. continued to arm South Vietnam with both men and material. The U.S. was indeed looking for a pretext to invade the North so as to halt the "deteriorating situation" in the South. The excuse was provided by the incident in the Gulf of Tonkin. In July 1964, the U.S.S. Maddox was engaged in espionage in the Gulf of Tonkin, ten miles off the North Vietnamese coast. On 2 August 1964, the North Vietnamese torpedo boats attacked the Maddox. The U.S. aircraft had begun retaliation by bombing North Vietnamese strategic targets. 65

The I.C.C. issued two more special reports in 1965. In the first, the Indian and Polish delegations called the attention of the co-Chairmen to the grave situation resulting from the decision of the United States and the Republic of Vietnam to take military action against military installations in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in February 1965. The I.C.C. requested the co-Chairmen to issue an immediate appeal to "all concerned with a view to reducing tension". The second report noted that the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam had asked the I.C.C. to withdraw all its fixed teams.

and the Commission reluctantly complied. The British Government sought to reconvene the Geneva Conference in 1965, but the Soviet Union took the position that it would be inappropriate to call a Conference so long as the U.S. was committing aggression in Indo-China. The mission of the British Special representative, Patrick Gordon Walker, who sought to obtain the views of the Supervisory Powers and the members of the Geneva Conference on the situation in Vietnam, was similarly unsuccessful. 66

Sardar Swaran Singh, India's Minister for External Affairs, in a statement regarding international situation said:

In Vietnam, the situation, in some ways is much more complicated and dangerous from the point of view of world peace. It is not easy to make ex-cathedra pronouncements on how the situation in Vietnam should be resolved. The Government of India, however, are of the view that eventually political rather than military solution will have to be found for the problem of Vietnam. The incidents which took place in the Gulf of Tonkin some six weeks ago caused us great concern.... Fortunately they have not led to a wider conflict. We hope that all concerned will orient their thinking and actions towards the search for political solutions in Vietnam. 67

India was quite successful in supervising the implementation of the Geneva Agreements in Cambodia. The cease-fire Agreement made in the Geneva Conference on Cambodia

66. Randle, n. 3, pp. 480-1
67. India, Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. XLIX, no. 12, pt. 11, 22 September 1964, col. 2543
clearly revealed the influence of the Kingdom's officials not only in specific terms but also in the actual drafting. The final settlement was modified in their favour, Cambodia demanded the complete withdrawal of Viet Minh troops and was insistent that the kingdom should have no regroupment area for the Viet Minh led Cambodian dissidents and that it should have the right as a sovereign state to enter into alliances and get foreign aid if necessary. Cambodia was particular about the clause on Viet Minh as the latter had invaded Cambodia since 2 April 1954. The Cambodian declaration of 21 July stated as follows:

The Royal Government of Cambodia is resolved never to take part in an aggressive policy and never to permit the territory of Cambodia to be utilised in the service of such a policy.

The Royal Government of Cambodia will not join in any agreement with other states, if this agreement carries for Cambodia the obligation to enter into a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, or, as long as its security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian territory for the military forces of foreign powers.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is resolved to settle its international disputes by peaceful means, in such a manner as not to endanger peace, international security and justice.

During the period which will elapse between the date of the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam and that of the final settlement of political problems in this country, the Royal Government of Cambodia will not solicit foreign aid in war
material, personnel or instructors except for the purpose of the effective defence of the territory. 68

THE I.C.C. IN CAMBODIA

The I.C.C. commenced its work in Phnom Penh on 11 August 1954. With regard to the military phase of the Commission's work, the first important event was the achievement of a cease-fire throughout Cambodia by 7 August 1954, followed by demobilisation of Khmer Resistance Forces (K.R.F.) by 22 August 1954. Mine-clearing operations were carried out satisfactorily and prisoners of war and civilian internees were released by both sides. The International Commission and the Joint Commission (the latter made up of a delegation from each of the two parties to the Geneva Agreement) cooperated effectively in the conduct of these releases the first of which took place on 11 September 1954, and the last on 23 September 1954. The Vietnamese military units from Cambodia were withdrawn from 12 to 18 October 1954. This was an intricate and delicate operation and credit was due to the Cambodian government as well as the High Command of Khmer resistance forces and the Vietnamese military units. With each group of Vietnamese military units that boarded the French transports which conveyed them to the

Cambodian border was a team of Indian, Canadian and Polish officers. The military phase of the work was almost complete. Both sides - the Royal Government of Cambodia on the one hand and the K.R.F. and Vietnamese military units on the other - implemented the military clauses of the Geneva Agreement, and the Government was now free to deal according to the normal laws of the country with any bands masquerading as the K.R.F. It was also entitled to prosecute any one found in illegal possession of arms after 22 August 1954.

The tasks yet to be completed were re-integration of demobilised K.R.F. personnel and the released prisoners of war and civilian internees into the national community and control on the entry of war materials and military personnel into Cambodia to make sure that they did not go beyond the country's requirements for effective defence. At the instance of the Commission, the Cambodian Government proclaimed an amnesty and ordered identity cards to be issued to demobilised personnel to enable them to claim voting rights. As a result of discussions with the Commission, Government issued a special appeal to these persons to rejoin the national community and thereby enjoy full liberties under the Constitution. The application of the amnesty to over 800 people was carried out by the Ministry of Justice. Regarding the entry of war material into the country the Commission's mobile and fixed teams, maintained a constant
vigil on movement on land, sea and river routes. In addition, the Cambodian Government had undertaken to inform the Commission of any agreement it reached with foreign powers for military aid.  

The Cambodian Government was doubtful that not all K.R.F. were demobilised and their arms taken and some Vietnamese military units had emerged with the Vietnamese units in Cambodia. The Commission, on investigation, found it was not true.

On 24 January 1955 the Government of Penn Nouth resigned and was succeeded by an "elections Government", under Long Ngeth, which announced that general elections would be held on 17 April 1955. Preceding the election was to be a referendum on 7 February 1955 to seek the verdict of the Cambodian electorate on the 'Royal Mission' assumed by Sihanouk on 15 June 1952 with a promise to make Cambodia independent within three years. The voting resulted in an affirmative response. The I.C.C. decided that the referendum did not fall within its competence, because it was extra constitutional, and, in any case, had not been envisaged by the cease-fire agreement and the final declaration.  

69. The Hindu, 25 January 1955
70. Randle, n. 3, p. 493
On 19 February 1955 Norodom Sihanouk informed the I.C.C. members and the diplomatic corps his idea of political reforms, the main features being indirect elections and the elimination of political parties. Many could not exercise the franchise according to the residential qualification fixed for a voter.

The I.C.C. stated:

The Commission,... was not concerned with the merits of the reform project. It was bound only to examine the scheme for one aspect, namely, whether any of the changes proposed were or were not in conformity with the international obligations undertaken by the Cambodian Government at Geneva. 71

All of a sudden Norodom Sihanouk abdicated the throne on 2 March 1955 in favour of his parents. In a proclamation he said that he was handing over because the proposed constitutional reforms were being obstructed. Certain political parties, among them the Democrats, "have put themselves 'en rapport' with foreigners to attack me on the fallacious pretext that I was sabotaging certain articles of the Geneva Agreements". 72 On 15 March 1955 the Cambodian Government announced that elections would be held as scheduled on 11 September 1955.

72. Ibid., p. 37
There were allegations against the I.C.C. for having interfered in the internal affairs of Cambodia in the Saigon Press and elsewhere. I.C.C. was also blamed for the abdication of Sihanouk and opposing his constitutional reforms. Sihanouk abdicated the throne to take active part in politics. The I.C.C. had done only its duty in informing the Cambodian Government that the political reforms were to be consistent with its obligations under the Geneva Agreements. With a view to correcting false impressions the I.C.C. wrote to the Prime Minister, Leng Ngeth, drawing his attention to the complaints against the I.C.C.

In his reply Leng Ngeth pointed out that neither the Cambodian officials nor the Press and the Radio stated anything at all which might "cast slur on the reputation of the I.C.C." 73 The I.C.C. asserted that it had not received any complaint regarding its activities from the Royal Government. In fact they enjoyed good relations.

The next major task of the I.C.C. was the elections. The Commission's function was of "general observation and not of supervision". Its part in elections was regulated by the obligations entered into by the Cambodian Government at Geneva in July 1954.... relating to the rights of the former members of the K.R.F. 74 The Commission watched the elections closely.

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73. The Hindu, 16 March 1955

to safeguard secrecy of ballot, democratic freedom and non-discrimination against former members of the K.R.F.\textsuperscript{75}

The Commission intervened with the Cambodian Government once to allow the formation of the opposition party Pracheachum (People's Party) which comprised of former members of the K.R.F. I.C.S.C.'s intervention led to certain clarifications and the contest of the party in the elections. The various steps taken by the Commission to protect the former members of the K.R.F. led to charges that the Commission was exceeding its powers and interfering in the internal affairs of Cambodia by the Popular Socialist Community, (Norodom Sihanouk's Party) although, the steps taken by the Commission was to prevent Vietminh's intervention in Cambodia. The Cambodian Government which understood the position did not criticise the Commission's action.\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{itemize}
\item The Commission in its Fourth Interim Report stated:
\begin{itemize}
\item With the completion of general elections in Cambodia, a general political settlement may be said to have been achieved. The Commission's responsibility with regard to political matters concerning former resistance may, therefore, be regarded as having been concluded.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

The Commission considered its main task complete once the elections were over. Its personnel were reduced from 307

\begin{itemize}
\item 75. Randle, n. 3, p. 494
\item 76. Ton That Thien, n. 31, p. 200
\end{itemize}
to 186. Its future activity was to supervise "the entry of military personnel and war materials on the ground of foreign assistance" and also supervise "the implementation of Article 7 relating to foreign military bases and military alliances". 78

It was for not having conformed to certain provisions of Article 7 that U.S.-Cambodia Military Agreement of 16 May 1955 came under scrutiny and brought forth protests from public and political circles in Cambodia. The People's Army of Vietnam in its letter dated 21 June 1955 pointed out that the agreement was a breach of the Geneva Accords and a threat to peace in Indo-China. 79

On 23 May 1955, the Royal Government of Cambodia informed the I.C.C. that it had concluded an agreement with the United States of America for direct military aid. The Commission recognised Cambodia's right under the Geneva Agreement to receive foreign aid. At the same time, in its letter of 5 July 1955, the Commission pointed out that "doubts have.... been expressed as to the compatibility of certain specific provisions of the new military aid agreement with the Geneva Agreement" and that some of Cambodia's obligations under this agreement "are not in conformity with the Geneva Agreement" which go beyond the requirements of an agreement designed solely for the purpose of

securing foreign aid for the effective defense of the country. 80

In the clarification given the Government of Cambodia assured the Commission that it would not join any military blocs, that it would pursue a policy of neutrality and faithfully observe the Geneva Agreements. The resolution of the Commission, welcoming the clarifications, stated that, "it accepted the assurances given by the Cambodian Government" and was confident that in practice the receiving of aid under the new military aid agreement would be in conformity with the terms of the Geneva Accord. 81

The unstable conditions in South Vietnam and the legitimate fear of its falling under the control of the Vietminh compelled Norodom Sihanouk soon after the Geneva Conference to approach the United States for a bilateral guarantee of territorial integrity and independence whereby if Cambodia was attacked United States would come to its assistance. Cambodia even applied for American Military aid as well as membership in Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (S.E.A.T.O.). 82 Even as late as March 1955 when Sihanouk visited India he stated that while Cambodia "would like to follow the ideal of neutrality in

82. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 62
world affairs like India and Burma, lack of financial resources for the country's development had compelled them to seek American economic and military aid. 83 Cambodia did not get unwavering support from the West. For a time Cambodia was vacillating between non-alignment and alignment with the West. Consequently, with Nehru's visit to Phnom Penh in November 1954, and formal recognition of Cambodia on 31 December 1954, Prince Sihanouk's visit to India in March 1955 and participation in the Bandung Conference of April 1955 Cambodia opted for non-alignment in its foreign policy.

INDIA-CAMBODIA RELATIONS 1954-1956:

Nehru visited Phnom Penh on his way home from China in November 1954. Nehru told Indian soldiers, civil and military officers of the I.C.C. for Cambodia that they should bear in mind India's mission of peace in discharging their duties. 84 Authoritative sources told Pressmen that Nehru’s half an hour meeting with Cambodian Premier Penn-mouth covered mainly secular and cultural relations between India and Cambodia and the necessity for lasting peace in Asia. Nehru emphasised India's wish for the maintenance of peace in the world, particularly in Asia, and to see Cambodia thrive in peace. The King Norodom Sihanouk welcomed Nehru as a "symbol of legitimate aspirations

83. The Hindu, 17 March 1955
84. Ibid., 2 November 1954
of the people of Asia and their right to independence and peace. 85

Prince Norodom Sihanouk visited India at the invitation of the Government of India in March 1955. Nehru, in a welcome speech, said:

I feel very happy that we are picking up again the threads of friendship and cooperation... We shall cooperate in the big task ahead, the greatest of which is the preservation of peace, the preservation of our hard won freedom and independence, so that no one else should interfere, so that we might have the chance to grow as we wish to, and each country may fashion its own life according to its will. 86

In his reply, Norodom Sihanouk said:

I should like to say here that our final success in the achievement of national independence for our people was very largely due to the moral support of India for which no words can sufficiently express our gratitude and admiration... We in Cambodia seek also to uphold those great efforts towards world peace for which you, Prime Minister, have the initiative and which are, to my mind, the policies best calculated to safeguard the system and security of all nations in Asia as well as the peace of the world. 87

In a joint communiqué issued in New Delhi on 18 March 1955, the delegation of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Prime Minister of India agreed that,

85. Ibid., 4 November 1954
86. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. 1, no. 3, March 1955, p. 50
87. Ibid., pp. 51-52
the best guarantee for peace in the world, and for friendship between countries is to adhere to the principles of the recognition of each other's sovereignty, independence and integrity, of non-aggression, of equality and mutual respect and of non-interference in the domestic affairs of each other or of other countries and in the promotion of conditions for peaceful co-existence.

Sihanouk, who headed the Cambodian delegation to the Afro-Asian Conference, said,

I am proud of having had the privilege of leading my people in their struggle for independence and to have, after the Geneva Conference, determinedly steered our national policy towards the Pancha Shila, towards the community of neutral nations... among them: India and Burma.

It was at Bandung that Sihanouk met Pham Van Dong and Chou-En-lai. Informal discussions went a long way in creating a friendly atmosphere. Subsequently, in January 1956, Sihanouk reached an agreement with North Vietnam with the help of I.C.C. and in February 1956 visited Peking and signed a trade agreement. Cambodia's relations were placed on a formal footing with both North Vietnam and China in 1956. It was Nehru who was responsible for bringing all of them (North Vietnam, China and Cambodia) together. The meeting with Nehru

89. Asia-Africa speaks from Bandung, n. 10, p. 50
90. Crozier, n. 34, pp. 320-1
was a milestone in the Cambodian leader's intellectual and political development. As he was to state at a later date, since he (Nehru) expounded a few principles in international relation which were bearing fruit in lessening international tension I have been following them.\[91\]

After the end of elections in September 1955 to the end of 1956 all citizens were re-integrated into the national community without discrimination and guaranteed rights and freedom provided in the Constitution of the Kingdom. Various ex-Khmer Resistance Force members were pardoned on recommendation by the Commission. This helped to dispel the fear-complex of individuals who had participated in the resistance movement and contributed to the stability of the community as a whole. Cambodia became a member of the United Nations.\[92\]

CAMBODIA'S BORDER PROBLEM WITH SOUTH VIETNAM AND THAILAND:
I.C.C.'s STAND:

Cambodia's relations with its eastern and western neighbours, South Vietnam and Thailand, took a turn for the worse, in 1956. Memories of territorial encroachment and pressure by Vietnam and Thailand in the past, political divergences, border incidents and territorial claims, press attacks and

economic blockade of Cambodia by its neighbours led to frictions and constant tension on Cambodia's borders. Cambodia was of the opinion that its foreign policy was not to the liking of its neighbours and suspected United States involvement which was denied by United States Secretary of State, Dulles. India had expressed her deep sense of sympathy to Cambodia. Cambodia naturally sought protection and support from the I.C.C. and through personal contact from India.

On 11 August 1958 Sihanouk visited India to seek Nehru's advice regarding his country's problems with its neighbours. Later, speaking in Calcutta, he expressed profound admiration for Nehru and described Cambodia's foreign policy as the being very close to India in its acceptance of Panchsheel and antipathy to military alliances. He added,

Our small and peaceful nation, too often threatened, has found immeasurable comfort in the comprehension shown and encouragement given by India, by the contribution of her policy, which is a peace policy.

During 1956 and 1957, the Commission received a number of letters from the Royal Government of Cambodia that South Vietnam and Thailand were responsible for incursions into

93. Ton That Thien, n. 31, p. 205
Cambodian territory or were strengthening garrisons and building military posts in areas adjacent to the common frontier. The action that was taken was to forward copies of such reports to the Vietnam Commission for information and comments. In one case the Vietnam Commission was asked to take up the matter with the South Vietnam Government and inform the results to the Commission in Cambodia.  

In 1957 a major incident took place on the Cambodian-South Vietnam border and Cambodia appealed to the I.C.C. for help. The Commission sent a team for investigation and the report confirmed that the South Vietnamese had crossed the Cambodian border. Canada was not for any action being taken, since it held the view that the Commission was not competent to entertain complaints regarding border incidents. India and Poland differed with Canada. The Chairman said,

The International Commission is responsible for supervision and execution of that agreement and its functions include in particular (1) control in respect of withdrawal of foreign troops and (ii) seeing that the frontiers are respected.... In our view the second function is not limited to the period of withdrawal of foreign forces but is a continuing function which remains for the duration of the term of the International Commission.... the supervisory functions as the integrity of the frontiers extends to violations or threat of violation of Cambodian territory from whatever quarter it may come.... The intrusion into Cambodian territory by foreign armed forces is definitely a [95] India in World Affairs, 1957-1958, Select Documents, pt. 2, p. 3
violation of the Geneva Agreement. It is mandatory on the Commission that it should see that Cambodia's frontiers are respected. Failure on its part to take suitable action will tantamount to a failure in its duties.... The responsibility of the Commission should, therefore, be broadly interpreted in the context of the Geneva Agreement as a whole.96

A majority report was forwarded to the Co-Chairmen along with the minority report of Canada, but no reply was received.

A similar incident was reported in June 1958. Canada refused even to send a team to investigate. A team was sent and investigations proved that South Vietnam had crossed the frontier. Once again a majority and minority report was despatched to the Co-Chairmen.

With regard to Khmer-Thai border conflict the I.C.C. was further curbed from taking any action. The Cambodian Government had asked the help of the I.C.C. As far as this issue was concerned while the Polish delegation wanted to send a team for investigation both India and Canada were against it since Thailand was not covered by the Geneva Agreement.

From 1956 Cambodia developed political and economic relations with China, the reason being China's staunch support for the former in her trouble with South Vietnam and Thailand. India was not in a position to give much help due to certain limitations as the Chairman of the I.C.C. Though Cambodia was disappointed in not getting the expected support, its relations with India were still quite close.

96. Ibid., pp. 1-4
INDIA-CAMBODIA RELATIONS, 1957-1963:

In 1957 India's Vice President S. Ramakrishnan visited Cambodia. His visit was followed by that of President in 1958. Welcoming President Rajendra Prasad in 1958, the Prime Minister of Cambodia recalled the cultural ties between both the countries and said "at this critical time in the history of the world, the people of Cambodia look to India for inspiration and guidance". The King of Cambodia said, "we have no stronger support and no keener understanding than yours of the policy of neutrality which the Royal Government follows, and of its scrupulous respect of the principles of the Panch Sheela". On the conclusion of his visit President Prasad gave a banquet in honour of the King and Queen of Cambodia wherein he stated,

We know that the friendship of our two countries is based on a kinship of interests - interest in peace and in the Panch Sheela, interest in the permanence of freedom. We know too that friendship based on such kindred interests is bound to endure.

Sihanouk passed through Calcutta on his way to France. In an interview, commenting on his country's relations with Thailand, he said, "that Cambodian and Thai delegation at the United Nations would shortly meet in New York and discuss matters concerning the two countries".

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97. *The Hindu*, 17 March 1959
98. *Foreign Affairs Record*, vol. 5, no. 3, March 1959, p. 40
99. Ibid.
100. *Statesman*, 7 September 1960
Lakshmi Menon, Indian Deputy Foreign Minister, went on a day's visit to Phnom Penh to explain India's stand in her border dispute with China. Norodom Sihanouk, who came to India on a 15-day state visit in January 1963 told newsmen he would use the trip to discuss the Colombo proposals on the Sino-Indian border dispute. In a prepared statement Sihanouk said "his country was prepared to place its services at the disposal of India if it wished to employ them... in the context of Cambodia's good relations with China, its services might prove useful in any further attempt to reconcile in all honour and in an equitable fashion the present differences between the two Great Powers of Asia." In the joint communique Nehru thanked Sihanouk for his participation in the Colombo Conference in December 1962 and assured him of India's determination to follow the path of peace consistent with national honour and dignity and the territorial integrity of India. Sihanouk assured India of his affectionate sympathy. He expressed his satisfaction in India's acceptance of the Colombo Conference proposals and added that he had complete confidence in the ability of the Indian statesman to find a satisfactory solution to the distressing border dispute by peaceful means.

101. _Hindustan Times_, 25 January 1963

102. _Foreign Affairs Record_, vol. IX, no. 1, January 1963, p. 5
NORODOM SIHANOUK'S PROPOSAL FOR NEUTRALISATION OF CAMBODIA:

Prince Norodom Sihanouk proposed the neutralisation of Cambodia on 20 August 1962 in a message to the Heads of States, which had signed the neutralisation agreement on Laos on 15 July 1962. He requested the signatories to sign a similar agreement for Cambodia. The reason being frequent trouble with Thailand and South Vietnam. Taking the Conference on Laos as precedent, the Prince again made a similar request on 24 November 1962 to the Co-Chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Agreement. The Soviet Union gave prompt support to the Cambodian proposal, but it appears, the British Government took time to consult with other member nations of the Geneva Conference.

The Cambodian proposal at the initial stage, got into difficulties primarily because of its demand for a guarantee of the Kingdom's territorial integrity. Strongest objections came from Thailand and South Vietnam with which Cambodia had territorial disputes. At that stage India and some other nations had suggested that the ground for the Conference be prepared by prior consultation among Cambodia, Thailand and South Vietnam on the territorial issues. This proposal too did not make much headway.

103. The Hindu, 28 March 1964
India's initiative was dictated by the explosive developments in the three Indo-China States - Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam - during the past 1961-62. India had special responsibility for peace and stability in the areas as the Chairman of the International Commission for Supervision and Control. India urged Britain that the Conference be convened at an early date. India strongly backed the Cambodian Government's plea for a fresh guarantee of its "neutrality and territorial integrity" by a Conference of the fourteen Nations which signed the 1954 Geneva Agreement on the Indo-China States. 104

India gave consistent support for a Conference on Cambodian neutrality but it did not materialise. As late as April 1965 India's Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh, stated,

India had every sympathy towards Cambodia's aspiration and the Government of India will play its part and render every assistance in this regard. 105

104. Hindustan Times, 16 April 1964
105. The Hindu, 22 April 1965
As D.R. Sardesai puts it,

For most of the three years following the Geneva Settlement India believed that the Laotian problem was an internal matter capable of being solved by an understanding between the two principal parties to the dispute: the Royal Laotian Government (R.L.G) and the Pathet Lao (P.L). All that was needed was to keep external influences out of the land-locked Kingdom, which, according to India's interpretation of the Geneva Agreements, was already a neutralized state. 106

Most of the delegations too shared the same view. The events that followed were to prove it was a total misconception.

The Geneva Settlement on Laos reaffirmed Laos as a military, independent state with a single Government in Vietnam. The members of the forces of the Laos "resistance Government" were to regroup in the two northern provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly pending integration into the Lao army or demobilization. From then on, introduction of fresh troops and armaments in Laos was prohibited. All "Vietnamese People's Volunteers" were to leave the country within 120 days. With the withdrawal of French Union Forces except the 5000 men authorised under the agreement, no foreign powers were allowed to establish or maintain bases in Laos. 107

106. Sardesai, n. 8, p. 252

The Conference took note of two unilateral declarations by Phouvi Sananikone's delegation. The first pledged that Laos "will never join in any agreement with other states if this agreement includes the obligation for the Royal Government of Laos to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, or with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities". In the second declaration, Phouvi said his Government "resolved to take necessary measures to integrate all citizens, without discrimination, into the national community". Furthermore, the Royal Government would "promulgate measures to provide for special representation in the Royal Administration of the provinces of Phongsaly and Savannakhet, during the interval between the cessation of hostilities and the general elections".

THE FUNCTION OF THE I.C.C. IN LAOS:

The I.C.C. which was established in Vientiane on 11 August 1954 reported the practical difficulties faced by the I.C.C. particularly in respect of transport, which seriously hindered the progress of its work, especially in the early stages. But even more serious were the difficulties that arose out of "vagueness of some of the provisions of the Geneva Agreement". This accentuated the already existing divergence of opinion.

108. Ibid.
109. Ibid., p. 54
within the Joint Commission, made up of representatives from the Vietnamese People's Volunteer/Pathet Lao side and the Franco-Laotian side, which were responsible for the implementation of the agreement. Thus, notwithstanding early delays, withdrawals were carried out in time, and almost without incident. The most delicate, difficult and at the same time important problem that awaited solution was that of the two Northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. With the withdrawal of foreign forces, the only ex-antagonists left in the country were the troops of the Laotian National Army and the fighting units of "Pathet Lao". Already reports of some incidents were received. It was apprehended that unless the political settlement envisaged in the Geneva Agreement was reached at an early date, the provinces might become a source of constant friction and jeopardise the very objectives of the Agreement.110

The French troops had withdrawn by 19 November 1954 and the D.R.V.N. by 22 November 1954. The Royal Government wanted the Joint Commission to be dissolved. The Vietnamese People's Volunteer/Pathet opposed the move to end it but due to the insistence by the Franco-Laot delegation the Joint Commission was disbanded on 15 February 1955. Lao-Pathet Lao liaison mission

with the I.C.C. was to be set up. Both the parties claimed that there were no prisoners of war or civilian internees in their charge. Still there were complaints made against each other of forcible detention. Yet another charge by the Royal Government was that the Vietnamese and Pathet Lao had forcibly recruited citizens in areas controlled by them. The I.C.C. carried out investigations but no decision was reached due to the difficulties faced by the I.C.C. (inadequate transport facilities, bad weather etc.).

The most controversial issue with regard to the political settlement in Laos related to the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. The Pathet Lao and the Vietnamese People's Volunteers had insisted that under the cease-fire agreement, pending a political settlement, the Pathet Lao had received the right to have all the two northern provinces as a final assembly area with a corridor between them for travel purposes. The Pathet Lao claimed both military and administrative control. The Franco-Laotian side had asserted that Phong Saly and Sam Neua were a part of the Kingdom of Laos and that the Pathet Lao could regroup only in certain areas of the two provinces. The Pathet Lao wanted a political settlement in Laos before the establishment of the Royal Administration in the disputed provinces while the Royal Government insisted on establishing an administration in Phong Saly and Sam Neua. Moreover, the Pathet Lao maintained
there had been no Franco-Laotian troops in the two provinces since March 1953, while the Royal Government asserted that there were areas under the control of their own "special commandos" on or before 6 August 1954, the cease-fire date. The Pathet Lao asserted that the Franco-Laotian side had paradropped regular Laotian National Army Units after the cease-fire.\footnote{Russell H. Fifield, n. 67, pp. 348-9}

At a meeting of the I.C.C. and the Joint Commission in Vientiane, on 4 November 1954 the Pathet Lao representative acknowledged the supreme authority of R.L.G. over all Laos. In a resolution on 3 December 1954 the I.C.C. urged the representatives of the Royal Government and the Pathet Lao to come to an understanding on the political settlement and re-establishment of R.L.G.'s administration in Phong Saly and Sam Neua.

A 'Consultative Political Conference' was established when the two parties met at Plaine des Jarres in January. On 18 January 1955 they issued a declaration recognising the need to cooperate in implementing the Geneva Agreements and on 9 March 1955 consented to curtail hostile activities. Their cordiality was short-lived. There were occasional military clashes. In April 1955 the Royal Government asserted that their political talks were not progressing since the Pathet Lao still looked to the Vietminh High Command...
as their authority and Phong Saly and Sam Neua... provinces conquered by them. The Pathet Lao blamed the R.L.G. for conniving with the U.S. On 25 April 1955 the Pathet Lao withdrew from the Plaines des Jarres.

THE QUESTION OF GENERAL ELECTIONS:

The general elections were to be held on 28 August 1955. In early June the Pathet Lao denounced the elections as illegal and demanded that the Government return to a political conference to organise elections that conformed to the spirit of the Geneva Agreement and the final declaration. On 7 June the R.L.G. announced that it would not be possible to organise elections in the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua in accordance with the Laotian electoral law because the Royal Administration had not been re-established in these provinces. The elections were postponed by the joint session of the National Assembly to 25 December 1955. The I.C.C. in its letter to the R.L.G. expressed the hope that talks would be resumed and a political settlement reached without delay.

On 15 July 1955 both sides met to discuss about the elections. The Pathet Lao representative demanded that the electoral law be amended to conform to the post hostilities situation in Laos and be made more democratic, in conformity with
the Geneva Agreement. The Royal Government was of the opinion that the electoral law did not discriminate against the Pathet Lao and amendments could be made only by the National Assembly. Though the Government modified certain procedures it refused to accept mixed Lao-Pathet Lao election controls commissions and the proposal that full and effective restoration of the Royal Administration in Phong Saly and Sam Neua should be considered only after the elections. This particular issue prolonged till 5 September 1955 when an impasse was reached. 112

The I.C.C. was of the opinion that the Pathet Lao did not require the two provinces entirely and proposed an investigation of the position of both the L.N.A. troops and P.L. troops before the cease-fire. The Pathet Lao opposed the former proposal of the I.C.C. while Canada accepted both the proposals. Due to lack of personnel the I.C.C. requested the Joint Commission (which consisted of representatives of the two sides) to conduct the investigation and recommended to the two parties to come to an understanding at the earliest. By end October 1955 the Pathet Lao troops had assembled in the two provinces. The Pathet Lao maintained that till a political settlement was reached both provinces could be occupied by them according to Art. 14 of the Geneva Agreement. The Polish delegation's view too had hardened by this time. The Polish delegation who had accepted the

112. Randle, n. 3, pp. 513-16
investigation of both the forces in the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua were now of the opinion that both the provinces belonged completely to P.L. and investigation should be carried out only of L.N.A. troops. Canada differed sharply with Poland. It was India, under Chairman J.N. Khosla, who played a mediatory role in trying to prevent an open rift in the I.C.C. The I.C.C. met the Joint Commission between 24 October and 6 November 1955 and the P.L. formally accepted the authority of the R.L.C. over Phong Saly and Sam Neua. India and Canada wanted to carry out the decision of investigation of L.N.A. forces in the two provinces while Poland was against it. Laos at this time was facing a political crisis. Premier Souvanna Phouma resigned and on 23 November 1954 Katay O. Sasorith became Premier. In January 1955 a clash broke out between the two parties in Nong Khang. No positive action could be taken due to differences of opinion within the I.C.C. In this case a resolution condemning the P.L's action was put to vote though Poland justified the action of the P.L. Hostilities continued in few other places. India suggested demarcation of the L.N.A. and P.L. forces through I.C.C's mediation while Canada had worked out a political settlement. The Polish delegation objected to the proposal on the grounds that implementation of the agreement was the parties responsibilities and beyond the competence of the I.C.C.
I.C.C.'s initiative resulted in bringing the two sides together in Rangoon in October 1955. This Conference was intended to produce not merely a cease-fire, but also agreement on free elections. In Rangoon, however, only the first of these aims were fulfilled, and the Conference was reconvened in Vientiane in November 1955 for consultations on general elections and other matters. The Pathet Lao delegate wanted the date for the nomination of election candidates to be postponed to 12 November 1955 while the date had already been extended from 11 October to 31 October 1955. Further extension was refused. Few other changes that the Pathet Lao wanted was normalisation of the position of civil servants in the two provinces held by them, voting age to be reduced, candidates nominated by them would contest elections throughout the country, women to be allowed to vote and Joint Commission to be established to supervise the election. As the R.L.G. did not accept these stipulations the talks were deadlocked. The R.L.G. decided to hold the elections as scheduled on 25 December 1955 without the participation of the Pathet Lao. The Polish delegation did not accept the elections as it was not in accordance with the Geneva Agreements and the I.C.C. did not officiate the elections. Canada accepted the validity of the elections which was held according to schedule and only after the R.L.G. failed to come to an understanding with the P.L. in spite of its repeated efforts. As the election was
held before a political settlement was arrived at by both the parties India felt it was contrary to the Geneva Agreement. On 7 January 1956 the I.C.C. passed a resolution for the re-establishment of the authority of R.L.G. in Phong Saly and Sam Neua and integration of the Pathet Lao forces into the National community. The R.L.G. accepted the proposals while the P.L. rejected it. As Poland dissented a majority report signed by India and Canada was sent to the Co-Chairmen for future action. Great Britain informed Soviet Union and both the Co-Chairmen decided to discuss the issue when they meet in London for a discussion on Vietnam. The talks on Laos proved abortive.

In March 1956 Katay Saborith was replaced by Souvanna Phouma who came to power with a determination to solve the Pathet Lao problem. Talks between Prince Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong began on 1 August 1956 in Vientiane which resulted in joint declarations issued on 5 and 10 August 1956. The provisions were to end hostilities, the R.L.G. to take power in Phong Saly and Sam Neua, the Pathet Lao forces to be integrated with the Royal Army, legal recognition to the political organisations of the Pathet Lao, citizens to enjoy democratic rights without discrimination, elections to be held by "equal direct, free and secret ballot, with equal rights to both sexes,
and in circumstances guaranteeing justice and excluding fraud - this in accordance with the spirit of the constitution of the Kingdom, National Union Government to be formed with Pathet Lao participation, Joint Commission to be formed to help in the integration of the citizens into civil and military life of the nation and the transfer of Phong Saly and Sam Neua to R.L.G.'s control. In foreign policy, the Royal Government pledged resolutely to follow the path of peace and neutrality, to abide by the Five Principles of peaceful coexistence, establish good relations with all countries, especially neighbouring countries, abstain from participating in any military blocs and not to allow any country to set up military bases on Laotian territory, except as provided for by the Geneva Agreement.

From 7 November 1955 onwards the two Princes discussed various aspects of the problem several times, but because of certain unforeseen factors, their efforts did not reach any conclusion until 28 December 1956 when a Joint Declaration was issued. This declaration expressed satisfaction of both parties at the deepening cordiality and mutual understanding established between them. It underlined that on the remaining problems of democratic liberties, supplementary general elections, administration of the two northern provinces and military


114. "Negotiations on an internal settlement in Laos", International Affairs, (II), November 1955, p. 169
integration, agreement in principle had been reached and detailed discussion on their implementation had taken place between the two parties, who expected to reach agreement on the modalities of such implementation in the near future. The declaration provided that a Government of National Unity with adequate representation of the Pathet Lao would be formed before the supplementary elections. The Joint Declaration stated that immediately after the formation of the Government of National Unity, the administration of the two provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua, as well as fighting units of the Pathet Lao, would be placed under the authorities of this Government and would be reorganised in accordance with the national pattern, also the Pathet Lao movement would be transformed under the name of 'Neo Lao Haksat' as a political party working within the framework of the existing laws of the country. 115

When Souvanna Phouma came to power in March 1956 he had sent a delegation to Bangkok to request Prince Pathazarath to return as he was the head of the family of the Pathet Lao leader and might be helpful in restoring peace in the area. When he returned in March 1957 he criticised American aid and encouraged relations with the Communist countries. In early 1957 Pathet Lao was also for taking economic and technical aid from China. It was also reported that Communist forces in the

115. Third Interim Report, p. 9
Pathet Lao area were receiving aid from outside. These developments once again hindered progress in the talks between the two sides. As a result of political crisis Premier Souvanna Phouma resigned in May 1957 and it was after a long interval and failure of other cabinets he once again formed a new Government on 9 August 1957 with the approval of the National Assembly.

The I.C.C. had written to R.L.G. to come to a decision regarding the final settlement. Negotiations between the two parties began on 25 September 1957. A provisional National Union Government with Souvanna Phouma as Premier and Prince Souphanouvong and Phoumi Vongvichit holding the portfolio of Minister of Plans, Reconstruction and Urbanism and Minister of Culture and Fine Arts respectively, both former P.L. members, was formed in November 1957 with the concurrence of the National Assembly. Supplementary elections were to be on 4 May 1958. In December 1957 Phong Saly and Sam Neua were handed over to the R.L.G. and in February 1958 the Pathet Lao troops were integrated with the Royal Laotian Army. In the elections held on 4 May 1958 'Neo Lao Haksat', the Pathet Lao's party, won 13 seats out of the 20 supplementary seats. With the completion of elections the Geneva Agreements were implemented in Laos.
Once the R.L.G. and the P.L. came to an understanding, Premier Souvanna Phouma wrote to the Chairman of the I.C.C. requesting him to reduce its functions and its personnel to correspond to its new needs as the signature of the agreements with the fighting units of the Pathet Lao and the inclusion of two Ministers from the Pathet Lao in the Cabinet constituted "the preliminary political settlement as stipulated in Article 14 of the Geneva Agreement". After the elections, thanking the I.C.C. for the services rendered Souvanna Phouma requested the I.C.C. "to wind up with effect from the date of supplementary elections (4 May 1958)". The R.L.G. considered that the supplementary elections of 4 May 1958 constituted the last phase of the implementation of the Geneva Agreements of 20 July 1954 on the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

DISSOLUTION OF THE I.C.C.:  
On 8 May 1958 the Canadian delegation formally tabled a resolution calling for immediate dissolution of the Commission on the ground that, in its view, the tasks assigned to the Commission had been completed. The Polish delegation took the view that some tasks yet remained and what was needed was not the

117. Ibid., pp. 76-77
dissolution of the Commission but a reduction of its activities. The Indian delegation did not agree with the Canadian view and formally put forward for consideration two alternative proposals concerning the future of the Laos Commission: (i) the strength of Laos Commission to be reduced to a group of three delegates, one from each Supervisory country and only a limited staff of six more persons, and (ii) the Supervisory Government may be asked to nominate one of their personnel at present working in the Vietnam Commission as delegate for the Laos Commission, so that these delegates will work as International Commission for Laos. 118

By the end of June 1958 India decided to withdraw due to Canada's decision to withdraw, French liaison mission was discontinued and the R.L.G.'s determination that I.C.C. had completed its task in Laos and hence should leave. By a majority vote the I.C.C. in Laos "adjourned sine die on 19 July 1958 with a provision that it may be reconvened in accordance with normal procedure. 119

The office of the Commission in Laos was closed and India's alternate delegate in the International Commission in Saigon was appointed as India's representative on the Laos Commission.

118. Fourth Interim Report, India in World Affairs 1957-1958, Select Documents, pt. 2, pp. 1, 4 and 5
Voicing his opinion on the withdrawal of the I.C.C. in Laos, Nehru stated,

we have been of the opinion that they (the Commission) are connected in a sense by the agreement in Geneva and that they should continue till they are all wound up simultaneously having finished their work. They may continue at the lower scale, if you like, just formally, but they cannot be wound up.¹²⁰

Nehru further stated that though the Commission had closed its office owing to lack of functions "it can be summoned at any time and potentially it is in existence."¹²¹

INDIA'S RELATION WITH LAOS:

Laos' relations with India had been cordial since the Geneva cease-fire and Nehru's subsequent visit to the Kingdom. When Nehru visited Vientiane in October 1954 he said that "though Laos was a small country its problems remained important for peace in Southeast Asia."¹²² He made the statement while addressing the I.C.C. members. He emphasised the necessity for constant devotion to the cause of peace and peaceful settlement of issues. He added that he fully understood the concern of Laos about the critical political problems in the northern

¹²⁰ Foreign Affairs Record, vol. IV, no. 6, June 1958, p. 156
¹²¹ India, Lok Sabha Debates, vol. XVIII, 11 August 1958, col. 22
¹²² The Hindu, 19 October 1954
provinces of Laos. But he remained confident that if the Commission had solved the military problems in the spirit of the Geneva Agreement, political problems would become easier to solve. The Laos delegation which participated in the Bandung Conference stressed the importance of peace and said that "if the Five Principles were observed - and in particular the principles of non-aggression and non-interference - many difficulties which assail would disappear by themselves". At the invitation of the Government of India, Crown Prince of Laos, Prince Savang Vathana and Prime Minister of Laos, Katay D. Sasorith, came to India on a brief visit in September 1955. The principal object of the Laotian leaders' visit to Delhi was to bring to the notice of Nehru the difficulties confronting the R.L.G. in getting control of the territory occupied by the Pathet Lao resistance group. Sasorith said that "Laos had hoped that the relaxation of tension after the Geneva Conference would be reflected in Laos also. Instead the situation was worsened so far as Laos was concerned". Nehru said that it seemed to him obvious that "in Laos, as in the rest of the world if there has to be a solution, a stable solution, a solution which does not leave trails of bitterness and conflict behind, ..."

123. Ibid.
124. Asia-Afric Speaks from Bandung, n. 10, p. 94
125. The Hindu, 21 September 1955
it has to be through methods of peaceful negotiations".\textsuperscript{126}

In their joint statement the leaders agreed that the best guarantee for peace in the world and for friendship between countries was to "adhere to the principles of recognition of each other sovereignty, independence and integrity, of non-aggression of equality and mutual respect, and of non-interference in the domestic affairs of any country, and the promotion of conditions for peaceful coexistence". It was further agreed that "every effort should be made by all concerned to secure the implementation of this (Geneva) Agreement, which is essential for preserving the unity and independence of Laos".\textsuperscript{127}

CRISIS IN LAOS AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS:

Internal dissensions in Laos started soon after the adjournment of the I.C.C. developing into a crisis. Fighting broke out between Laotian dissidents supporting the Neo Lao Haksat Party and the troops of the R.L.C. Relations between Laos and the neighbouring D.R.V. became strained due to boundary disputes.\textsuperscript{128} Many members of the R.L.C. believed that Neo Lao Haksat was gaining an upper hand in decisions taken.

\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 22 September 1955

\textsuperscript{127} Nehru, n. 87, p. 334

\textsuperscript{128} India, Ministry of External Affairs, Report, 1959-1960 (New Delhi, 1960), p. 29
An anti-Communist group called the Committee for the Defence of National Interests, led by Phoumi Nosavan, was formed whose pressure led to the resignation of Premier Souvanna Phouma and Phoui Sananikone became the new Premier on 24 July 1958. He was a staunch anti-Communist with a strong leaning towards the West and to the United States. Prince Souphanouvong and other Neo Lao Haksat members were arrested.

In January 1959 Phoui Sananikone suspended the Assembly and assumed authoritarian powers for a year to settle the border dispute. He also appealed to Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjold, about the border dispute with the D.R.V. and requested him to send a fact-finding mission to Laos. India wanted the I.C.C. to be reconvened but the R.L.G. refused such a move in February 1959. In March and April 1959 the R.L.G. was engaged in conflict with the P.L. forces. Two battalions were to be integrated according to the terms put forth by the R.L.G. or be disarmed. Many P.L. leaders were arrested. The Pathet Lao complained that "the integration was not proceeding according to the agreement reached and that discrimination and persecution were being practised by the Government and Laotian Government aimed with special powers conferred on it by the National Assembly, have embarked on a programme of repression and persecution for political purposes". 129 One battalion

129. The Hindu, 26 May 1959
finally agreed for integration in May 1959 and the other escaped
to the jungles. Peking and Hanoi opposed the steps taken by
the R.L.G. that it was violation of the Geneva Agreements and
informed the Co-Chairmen that the I.C.C. for Laos should be
reconvened.

Nehru was reported to have written letters through
their Foreign Ministers to Russia and Britain, which were
Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954, requesting them to
reconvene the I.C.C. in Laos. In India's opinion, the trouble
with Laos had been,

the attempt of parties outside Laos to influence
and to help, with arms, the contesting parties
... But the very basis of the Geneva Agreement
concerning Indo-China was that these countries
should not be drawn into the cold war and should
be left to fashion themselves in some measure of
neutrality... So the very thing which the Geneva
Conference was meant to prevent has now come into
being. So long as the International Commission
was there, of which India was Chairman, there was
some check, and the situation, though bad, was
being controlled. But the Laos Commission was
withdrawn and the check was removed. Ever since
then, there has been a progressive deterioration
of the situation ... 130

While India felt that the presence of the I.C.C.
would lessen tension, Canada was of the view that the very
existence of the Commission as a court of appeal would encourage

130. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy: Selected
Speeches, September 1946-April 1951 (New Delhi, 1983),
Reprint, p. 405
the Pathet Lao rebels to maintain a recalcitrant attitude rather than lead to an adjustment of their differences. On the other hand, while Soviet Union agreed with India, Britain pleaded for respecting the views of the Laotian Government. The Government of Laos had, however, opposed its reconvening because, according to it, the Commission was not in a state of adjournment. It was finally wound up in July 1958.131

The R.L.C. referred the Laotian question to Dag Hammarskjold, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and appealed for an Emergency Force to be despatched which resulted in the formation of a small five-member fact-finding committee. India was opposed to U.N's intervention as both D.R.V. and China were not members and hence effective action could not be taken. As Nehru had stated in his letter to Dag Hammarskjold that "any reference to the Security Council would bring these questions into the region of Great Power conflicts and put an end to much of the good work that has resulted from the Geneva Agreements".132

There were reports that Hammarskjold suggested that India should send observers to Laos. Laos had also asked for an Indian military mission to be stationed in Vientiane.\textsuperscript{133} India was not prepared to serve in any other capacity than the Chairman of the I.C.C. and within the framework of the Geneva Agreement. As Lakshmi Menon, Deputy Minister for External Affairs, stated,

> The Government of India feel that any step taken in Laos should be in keeping with the Geneva Agreements. The machinery laid down by these Agreements was that of the two Co-Chairmen and the International Commission. Any variation of the procedures laid down should be within this framework of the Geneva Agreements and should have the approval of the parties concerned.\textsuperscript{134}

Nehru said that as the Laotian question came within the purview of the Geneva Agreements the I.C.C. must be reconvened. In his letter to Dag Hammarskjold he stated,

> We have consistently taken the view that the territorial integrity and unity of Laos is basic to the Geneva Agreements in respect of Laos. Any problem of a "territorial conflict" between the different political groups within Laos is not envisaged by the Geneva Agreements. If, however, the "conflict" relates to the dispute between North Vietnam and Laos, it will be in the nature of a border problem which can well form the subject of discussion and of mediation by and through the Commission.\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{The Hindu}, 14 August 1959

\textsuperscript{134} \textit{Foreign Affairs Records}, vol. V, no. 8, August 1959, p. 189

\textsuperscript{135} United Nations, General Assembly, Fourteenth Session, \textit{Official Records}, plen. mtg. 823, 6 October 1959, p. 419
The Security Council sent a sub-committee consisting of Japan, Italy, Argentina and Tunisia sponsored by Britain, France and the United States. The decision was taken over the opposition of Soviet Union. Nehru said that the Security Council's resolution on Laos to send a fact-finding mission amounted to "bypassing completely the Geneva Agreement".

So far as India is concerned, we are not sticklers of particular procedure. We should like to have peace in Indo-China and peace in Laos and it is for them to work out the destiny of their own people there. I cannot say that the consequences of this new step taken by the Security Council are likely to be. I do not know how it is going to function. But any real success is likely to come out only by agreements of the parties concerned.

Krishna Menon, in his speech in the United Nations General Assembly debate, pointed out that the appointment of a sub-committee was disparaging to the impartial character of the I.C.C. He said,

The action taken by the Security Council in its wisdom is a matter for the Security Council, but either the presence of an International Commission was not regarded as sufficiently objective or impartial or it was not considered competent after five years to be able to observe what was going on ....


137. The Hindu, 12 September 1959

138. Ibid.

139. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. V, no. 9, September 1959 p. 274
In November 1957 the Security Council sub-committee informed that the information submitted to it "did not clearly establish" whether there had been an invasion of the country by regular troops from communist North Vietnam.¹⁴⁰

Phoui Sananikone attempted to remove some members of the Committee for the Defence of National Interests (C.D.N.I.) the army's party, from the government which the army leaders resented and he was forced to resign. In December 1959 Phoui Nosavan took charge, for a very short time, when he was replaced in January 1960 by the King and Kou Abhay was made the Premier. Elections were held in April which was won by the C.D.N.I. and Laotian People's Rally and Tiao Somsanith was made the Prime Minister. In August 1960 in a coup d'état by Kong Lee, captain of the Laotian National Army's second battalion, Souvanna Phouma was declared the Premier though he did not take part in the coup.

New Delhi was satisfied that the situation in Laos was developing along lines which would contribute towards stability and peace. Expressing his support to the Souvanna Phouma's government, Nehru said in the Parliament,

¹⁴⁰ The Hindu, 7 November 1959
Prince Souvanna Phouma represents an attempt to keep Laos out of a cold war and in a more or less neutral position and to bring the warring parties together. We have been supporting him so far as verbal declarations are concerned. And we think that he would be the most suitable head of Government there.

Prince Souvanna Phouma outlined in the Laotian Assembly his Government's programme characterised by a home policy of "national reconciliation" and a foreign policy of "wise neutrality". A strong desire that the Government of India should help the strife-torn little Kingdom of Laos to steer clear of its present crisis and chaos and disorder was expressed by Prince Souvanna Phouma. The Premier further said it was "most gratifying" that relations between Laos and India were "cordial and amicable". He said that India had "encountered difficulties in its attempt to make its neutral policy understood". But now it appeared that this concept had been approved by a large number of countries. "Thus in this connection India could, I trust, help my country a great deal by clearing doubts and prejudices".


142. *The Hindu*, 18 August 1960

143. *Indian Express*, 19 October 1960

144. *The Hindu*, 17 October 1960
Prince Souphanouvong and many of his supporters, who were arrested during the Premiership of Phouvi Sannakone escaped on 24 May 1960. Souvanna Phouma wished to avoid an intensification of the conflict and called for another coalition government. General Phoumi Nosavan was brought into Phouma's Cabinet, but he continued to advocate ideas of his own. He was for a revolutionary committee which Prince Boun Oum agreed to head. Once Souvanna Phouma started consultations with the P.L. forces U.S. discontinued its support and aid to Souvanna Phouma. After Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong agreed to form a Government both Boun Oum and Nosavan were invited to join. The military officers that they represented, however, refused to accept such an arrangement. Prince Souvanna Phouma was forced to flee to Cambodia and General Nosavan again seized control of Vientiane in December 1960.

The new King, Savang Vatthana, was urged by the military to call upon Boun Oum to form a new Government. General Nosavan became Deputy Prime Minister as well as Minister of Defence. Kong Leo who believed in unifying the Royal Lao army and the Pathet Lao formed a leftist Government in the Plain of Jars with Souvanna Phouma's support. 145

Referring to the developing conflict in Laos Nehru said,

In Laos, broadly speaking, there were three groups, which are referred to... as rightists and leftists and somebody in between. The Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma was... there and he tried to follow a policy of having some kind of Government with representatives from each side. It is not for me to say whether his Government was a good Government or a bad Government. But the attempt was to resolve these conflicts there by... following a "middle-of-the-road policy"... On the other side there was the Pathet Lao, backed up to a large extent by the North Vietnam Government which is a Communist Government. Pathet Lao is not a Communist, but it has Communists in it.... On the other hand, there are the... rightists.... the Communist powers of the north are interested and would like Pathet Lao to be represented.... While the U.S. especially and may be other powers are anxious that the rightist group should prevail. That is the essential conflict. 146

Pointing out to the confused state of affairs in Laos, Nehru stated,

Now in Laos it has become a little difficult to know who is the Government and who is a rebel. It is a choice of any country we or the United Kingdom or the Soviet Union or the U.S.A. calling one set of people the Government and the other rebels. 147

It was to avoid such a conflict that Geneva Conference passed a resolution that Laos and Cambodia should follow a broadly neutral policy, said Nehru. He further added, there were pulls all the time, though the Commission could not do very much by itself, at least its mere presence was a check.

146. India, Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. XXXI, 21 December 1960, cols. 2949-50

147. India, Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. XXXI, 20 December 1960, col. 2704
Once the Commission adjourned these pulls became stronger. In India's opinion apart from internal pulls the main reason for the conflict was the flow of arms from outside. "It is difficult to say" said Nehru, "who started this business of giving arms, because it is easier for Pathet Lao to get arms without any fuss because it is an adjoining territory. Arms, coming from the other side, say from the U.S. have to come much more publicly, and they went on coming, there is no doubt about it ...." 148

INDIA'S APPEAL FOR RECONVENCING OF THE I.C.C.:

India had requested Britain to take the initiative to reconvene the I.C.C. Lord Home, the Foreign Secretary, who was in Paris for N.A.T.O. meetings was conferring with the United States and French Foreign Ministers on the Laos situation. The spokesman said a quick decision would be taken on Nehru's suggestion which involved Anglo-Soviet consultations as the Geneva Conference of 1954 made the Foreign Ministers of these two countries its Co-Chairmen. The U.S. Government virtually declined to accept India's plea for the revival of the I.C.C. in Laos which became evident after the ninety minute interview of the Indian Ambassador, M.C. Chagla with the Under Secretary of State, Livingstone Merchant. U.S. believed that in Laos, "what was needed was not a broad-based

148. India, Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. XXXI, 21 December 1960, cols. 2950-1
149. Hindustan Times, 17 December 1960
neutral Government but a pliable Government eager to mount an assault against the Left-wing forces in Laos.\textsuperscript{150}

While Britain had fallen in line with India's view the Russians had taken the extreme position that the Geneva Conference should be summoned again. Britain would have very much liked India to persuade the Soviet Union to agree to the reconvening of the I.C.C. for Laos. Informed circles gave the impression that India was determined "not to pull chestnuts out of fire for anyone". India had, therefore, told Britain that the two Co-Chairmen must first confer.\textsuperscript{151}

Nehru's meeting with the British Deputy High Commissioner, Maurice James, who flew to Bhavnagar where Nehru was attending a Conference of the Congress Party, was believed to be in the context of the Laotian developments. James had brought message from Lord Home. The information brought by James was the consent given by Boun Oum Government for the reconvening of the Commission. It was reported from Washington that Prince Boun Oum was not insisting on recognition of his regime by all eight of the parties to the 1954 Geneva Conference but it was likely that he would want the Chairman to accept his regime as the legal Government. Nehru made his stand clear that "the Commission can only meet if it can function as a

\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Times of India}, 31 December 1960

\textsuperscript{151} \textit{The Hindu}, 8 January 1961
Commission. It can do no good if it is the tool of other party as part of a local power campaign.\textsuperscript{152} The alternative suggestion put forth by Nehru was that the Commission could function without recognising either the right or the left wing regimes by accrediting itself to the King of Laos who had been accepted by all parties as the Head of State.\textsuperscript{153}

After the meeting with the British, in a speech to party followers, Nehru declared that "a dangerous situation existed. Do not imagine that danger of war there has ended. And when I talk of war, I don't mean a small war, but a big war."\textsuperscript{154} Commenting on the behaviour of the big powers, Nehru said,

\begin{quote}
First they (Big Powers) do things which create dangerous conditions .... then get worried and think of controlling them. This is to the good. But conditions have worsened .... and gone already too far.\textsuperscript{155}
\end{quote}

It appeared, in fact, that the Indian and British views on what needed to be done were essentially the same. Both Governments took the view that the first urgent step to be taken was to revive the 1954 Commission. The only point of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{152.} \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 9 January 1961
\item \textbf{153.} \textit{Hindustan Times}, 11 January 1961
\item \textbf{154.} \textit{The Hindu}, 9 January 1961
\item \textbf{155.} \textit{Daily Telegraph}, 9 January 1961
\end{itemize}
difference was Britain regarded the Boun Oum Government as the legal and constitutionally appointed Government while India considered that Souvanna Phouma was still the legal Premier.\textsuperscript{156} Canada came up with the proposal that members of the Commission should send individual representatives to Laos to which Nehru said, "we do not fancy going in an informal capacity just as somebody might go or a newspaper might go ..... It should have some connection with our official position as Chairman of the International Supervisory Commission for Laos".\textsuperscript{157} Cambodia announced a fourteen nation Conference on Laos. The Conference which would be held in a neutral country of Asia would bring together signatories of the 1954 Geneva Agreements (France, Britain, the Soviet Union, North Vietnam, China, Cambodia and Laos), the three members of the I.C.C. (India, Canada and Poland), United States and the three neighbouring countries (Thailand, South Vietnam and Burma).\textsuperscript{158} India agreed to the proposals of Cambodia but felt that the most urgent task was to induce the contending forces to cease-fire. Britain shared India's view but Soviet Union was for the revival of the Commission to be preceded by a meeting of the Co-Chairmen.\textsuperscript{159}

\textsuperscript{156} \textit{Guardian} (Manchester), 12 January 1961

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{The Hindu}, 19 January 1961

\textsuperscript{158} \textit{Hindustan Times}, 12 January 1961

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Times of India}, 13 January 1961
President Eisenhower wrote a letter to Nehru in January 1961 asking Nehru "to contribute to saving Laos from falling under Communist control and that he assured him that the U.S. was ready to cooperate with any reasonable solution proposed by other non-Communist countries". Both official and unofficial reports from Washington indicated continued divergence between New Delhi and Washington on the attitude to Prince Souvanna Phouma. The New York Times said that according to some diplomats there was only one solution to the Lao problem, namely, "inclusion of the former Premier in the new Government". Nehru in his reply to President Eisenhower said "India had not and will not accord formal recognition to the Boun Oum Government although it would have no hesitation in dealing with it if, as the Chairman of the International Commission, it has to do so". The loss of Plain of Jars in January to the P.L. forces, the continuation of the Soviet airlift and the reverses suffered by Phoumi's forces in March-April 1961 combined with the change in the administration in Washington brought about a drastic reappraisal. By 20 January 1961 the U.S. had accepted the return of the International Commission to Laos to restore peace there, and by the beginning of March 1961 the convening of a second Geneva Conference.

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160. Hindustan Times, 13 January 1961
161. Statesman, 13 January 1961
162. Times of India, 13 January 1961
Commenting on the fourteen nation Conference in Geneva, Nehru said in Parliament on 16 August 1961, that some progress had been made in regard to the Laotian situation but the progress had been very slow. Talks were going on for the formation of a national Government in Laos but no decision was taken by the three Princes who represented the three factions in Laos. With regard to the formation of a national Government it was admitted that Laos should be a neutral state. Procedures were being discussed. There was some argument about the role of the I.C.C. On the one side, it was said that the I.C.C. should be a powerful body while on the other side, it was felt that the powers should be reduced. Stating India's attitude, Nehru said,

the I.C.C. can perform a very important and useful service in Laos. But it can only do so with the goodwill of the Government and the people there. It cannot be some kind of supervisory Government coming over and functioning over the head of the Laotian Government. That would be a very definite diminution of the sovereignty of the Laotian Government and it will not create smooth relations. It must stand there on its own right, the right given by the fourteen nation conference being held there including the Government of Laos and it should have a fair measure of freedom to investigate into charges made and to go anywhere .... There should be no great difficulty about that if there is that goodwill.  

171. *India, Lok Sabha Debate*, vol. LVI, nos. 1-10, 16 August 1961, cols. 2410-11
In Geneva most of the work was coming to a successful end and the matter of grave concern was in Laos itself. The three Princes met at Zurich once and subsequently elsewhere. It was settled that Laos would definitely follow a neutral policy and not be tied up with any country, it should have a national Government that represented the various forces there and that Souvanna Phouma would be the Prime Minister. Though it was a clear enough decision and the rest would be easy, no decision was arrived at. The I.C.C. has been trying to bring the Princes together to meet but with no effect. Thus expressing his concern on the situation in Laos, Nehru said, "All I can say is, I hope it will come off".  

The fourteen power Geneva Conference which had since 12 May 1961 been negotiating on the Laotian question could conclude its work only after a unified Laotian delegation attended it. The two Co-Chairmen arranged for a meeting of the three Princes in Geneva in January 1962. The talks were not fruitful. The two Ambassadors went to Laos in February 1962 as the Laotian parties were to meet in Luang Prabang, the Royal Laotian Capital, but as fighting broke out the talks did not take place. Finally after much political wrangling


Speaking in a Press Conference in New Delhi Nehru said that India could not function as Chairman of the International Commission on Laos unless requested to do so by the two Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference. Nehru probably wished to safeguard against possibility of being pulled in two different directions by the two Co-Chairmen. In reply to Cambodian proposal India stated that it had no objection to the proposal but as convening a conference would take time cease-fire and the reactivation of the Commission should precede the Conference in order to put a halt to the rapidly deteriorating situation. Nehru called for the neutralisation of Laos.

FOURTEEN NATION CONFERENCE ON LAOS IN GENEVA: IT'S RESULTS:

After a long drawn out discussion between the British Ambassador and Soviet official about the implementation of the Laos peace plan a decision was reached in the first week of April 1961. The Co-Chairmen had called for a cease-fire, I.C.C. to meet in Delhi and fourteen Nation conference on Laos in Geneva on 21 May 1961. India promptly agreed to the Anglo-Soviet request to convene the I.C.C. for Laos. An invitation was extended to India to participate in the fourteen nation conference to be held in Geneva on 12 May 1961. A copy of the joint appeal for a cease-fire in Laos was also given to

164. The Hindu, 19 January 1961
165. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. VI, no. 4, April 1961, p. 136
the three Laotian Princes reached an agreement on the formation of a coalition Government in the Plain of Jars on 11 June 1962. Their immediate task was integration of all three Laotian armies, settling the question of war prisoners and preparing for new elections. 174

Prime Minister Nehru said that he welcomed the agreement on the formation of a coalition government in Laos. Nehru said,

It is very comforting to know after a year's tussle a settlement has been arrived at between the three Princes ..... They have agreed, it is a very good thing ..... If things go wrong in one place they are likely to go wrong in another. The only solution is neutrality. Any attempt to pull one way or the other brings conflict. 175

Nehru hoped that the Princes' agreement would be a turning point in Southeast Asia.

The statement of neutrality by the Royal Government of Laos presented on 9 July 1962 clearly portrayed India's influence. The text was as follows:

174. The Hindu, 12 June 1962
175. Guardian (Rangoon), 15 June 1962
Nehru. India immediately took steps to convene the I.C.C. on Laos. The Commission decided to meet on 28 April 1961.  

The I.C.C. came to a general agreement on the report to be sent to the Co-Chairmen. The report was to contain suggestion about the "tasks and functions" which the Commission wished to be assigned to it for the purpose of controlling and supervising cease-fire in Laos.  

The Co-Chairmen accepted the report on 6 May 1961 and the I.C.C. team left for Laos on 8 May 1961. On 11 May 1961 the I.C.C. affirmed that a cease-fire was in force in Laos. The three factions in Laos-neutralists, rightists, and leftists were holding discussions on formation of a coalition government, cease-fire details and other items like armistice and elections.  

The Geneva Conference on Laos which was convened in Geneva on 16 May 1961 completed its work on 23 June 1962 with the signing of the Declaration and Protocol on the neutrality of Laos. The three-men Indian delegation was led by Defence Minister, V.K. Krishna Menon. Krishna Menon presented a fifteen-point proposal on controls to guarantee the projected international pledge to respect the neutrality and independence of Laos. Presentation of the "working paper" on the role of the I.C.C. followed a two-day effort by the Indian Defence Minister to break the deadlock at the fourteen nation conference.  

166. The Hindu, 25 April 1961  
167. Ibid., 30 April 1961
The Royal Government of Laos will resolutely apply the five principles of peaceful co-existence in foreign relations, and will develop friendly relations and establish diplomatic relations with all countries .... on the basis of equality and of respect for the independence and sovereignty of Laos; protect and ensure respect for the sovereignty, independence, neutrality, unity and territorial integrity of Laos; will not resort to the use or threat of force in any way which might impair the peace of other countries, and will not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries;

It will not enter into any military alliance .... which is inconsistent with the neutrality of the Kingdom of Laos, it will not allow the establishment of any foreign military base on Laotian territory for military purposes or for the purposes of interference in the internal affairs of other countries nor recognise the protection of any alliance or military coalition, including S.E.A.T.O.; will not allow any foreign interference in the internal affairs of the Kingdom of Laos. ....

The protocol to the declaration on the neutrality of Laos was signed on 23 July 1962.

There was very uneasy peace in Laos and many agreements signed reached a critical stage when practically implemented. Economically Laos was not making much progress. Politically, the problem was to integrate the various services and regions controlled by three factions and bring them under the central authority of the coalition Government. Little was done in this regard. The most serious problem was the

in Laos. The points put forth in the declaration were to declare that they recognise and respect the independence and neutrality of Laos, in accordance with the will and desires of the Government of Laos. In particular, they undertake to refrain from all direct or indirect interference in the internal affairs of Laos, and will not be parties to any act to impair directly or indirectly the sovereignty, independence, neutrality and territorial integrity of that state. They undertake not to attach political conditions to any assistance that they may offer or which Laos may seek and not to involve Laos in any military alliances or other alliances incompatible with her neutrality. They undertake not to introduce any foreign troops or military personnel in any form or arms into Laos or to establish in Laos military bases or strong points, or in any way to violate or threaten the peace or neutrality of that country; in the event of a threat to Lao's sovereignty, independence or neutrality, to enter into consultations with the Government of Laos and amongst themselves for the purpose of maintaining the independence of Laos; appeal to all other states to recognize and respect unequivocally the independence and neutrality of Laos and state that in order to assist in insuring observance of these undertakings they are signing the protocol of the International conference on the settlement of the Laotian question, 1961.

The 'working paper' consisted of a fifteen point proposal. They were responsible for the execution of the cease-fire agreement shall rest with the parties to hostilities in Laos, and after the establishment of a national Government of Laos, with that Government; the I.C.C. consisting of Canada, India and Poland to supervise and control the execution of the cease-fire agreement; the Government of Laos should help the I.C.C. in the maintenance of cease-fire by giving complete protection and agreed privileges and immunities required for the performance of their duties; all troops of foreign forces should be withdrawn; the retention of French personnel for the purposes of military training of the Laotian security forces may be mutually agreed between the Governments of France and Laos; the Government of Laos having themselves declared their neutrality, it follows that its preservation and the consequent exclusion of outside interference in their internal affairs is their concern, interest and obligation. The I.C.C. would assist them in accordance with the powers given to them by the agreement, the introduction into Laos of arms and war material generally, except as required for the defence and security of Laos, is contrary to this agreement; unauthorised or illegitimate entry of arms would be supervised by the I.C.C.; the I.C.C. would decide major questions by agreement among its members; the I.C.C. would report to the Co-Chairmen as and when necessary besides which regular reports would be sent; the I.C.C. would
military situation which was very difficult to resolve. There was disagreement among the three groups on the reduction and integration of the armed forces. Souvanna Phouma was openly denounced when he appealed to the National Assembly and was granted full powers for a year to solve the most pressing problems facing Laos. Without cooperation from both the Right and Left, Souvanna Phouma could not make much progress. "What makes our task so heavy", Prince Souvanna Phouma said "was the fact that all of us entertain suspicions". He added,

It was very difficult to reconcile at once people who fought each other for several years ..... Indeed, the problems of Laos are almost insuperable. The only thing that makes the situation bearable is the realisation that the alternative would be worse, both for Laos and for the countries that have guaranteed her neutrality and independence. 177

Yet another problem was regarding the foreign troops. The foreign troops should have left Laos by 7 October 1962 and though most of them had left there were charges and counter charges about the continued presence of thousands of foreign troops. International peace keeping units in Laos tried but failed to establish the unlawful presence of foreign troops. This fact emerged from a report of the Indian-Canadian-Polish Commission supervising the 1962 Laotian peace settlement. 178

177. The Hindu, 17 January 1963
178. Ibid., 18 March 1963
function in close cooperation with the Government of Laos, which would extend to it the necessary facilities and assistance for the implementation of this agreement and consistent with it; the I.C.C. in Laos would act in cooperation with the I.C.C. in Cambodia and Vietnam; the Co-Chairmen would after the expiration of three years, or earlier if so requested by the Government of Laos, report to the members of this conference on the question of the termination or substantial modification of the operations of the I.C.C.; the personnel required by the I.C.C. would consist exclusively of the nationals of Canada, India and Poland or Laos as appropriate; the administrative control of personnel and equipment at the disposal of the I.C.C. for the purposes of the discharge of its functions in accordance with this agreement rests, to the extent necessary for such purposes, in the Commission; and the expenses of the Commission and its services would be borne by the members of the conference on the basis of the principles governing contributions towards the expenses of the United Nations.\footnote{170} Krishna Menon submitted the documents for the consideration of the participating nations in the hope that it would make some contribution to the solution of the problems which the fourteen nations conference was examining in Geneva. There was a broad agreement on the Laotian question in Geneva and since no decision was yet taken in Laos the Conference reached a standstill.\footnote{170. Ibid., pp. 197-203}
King Savang Vatthana of Laos arrived in Delhi on 27 March 1963 on what was officially described as a goodwill visit. But observers said it had political significance also. The political talks related to the problems facing his country despite the establishment of a coalition Government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma. The Government failed to function as an integrated unit. The three elements virtually administered three separate zones. There were sporadic clashes among the military forces. Prince Souvanna Phouma's efforts to integrate the military forces under a single command had not yielded the expected results. Speaking in a civic reception at the Red Fort the King acknowledging India's contribution said,

In ancient times this sacred land gave us our culture and religion, and in recent times our peace and unity. We can never be too grateful for what India has done for us. 179

Commenting on the Sino-Indian dispute while speaking at a banquet given in his honour by President, Dr. Radhakrishnan, King Vatthana said,

India today is in a very critical situation on account of the frontier dispute vis-a-vis another great country of Asia. By its limited dimensions, the Kingdom of Laos, has neither the right nor the claim to pass any judgement with regard to this matter. But peace is one and indivisible in Southeast Asia. Like any other small country of this region, Laos wishes ardently that this dispute

179. Hindustan Times, 29 March 1963
be peacefully solved .... It is, therefore, our
desire to renew our sincere wishes for peace and
tranquility to the Indian people. The people of
Laos cannot remain indifferent to the situation
in India to whom it is attached by the ties of
friendship and culture. 180

During the visit the King and the visitors had
cordial talks with the President and Prime Minister of India
and the latter expressed their goodwill for Laos and their
full support to His Majesty and the Royal Government in their
efforts to establish peace and national unity in Laos. The
King and the members of his government expressed their
appreciation of the constant friendship evinced by India
towards Laos, and for the help rendered by India as Chairman
of the I.C.C. Both parties expressed their conviction that
"respect by all countries for the neutrality, national
sovereignty and territorial integrity of Laos, was essential
for the preservation of peace and for strengthening of the
Government of National Union in Laos. 181

180. Foreign Affairs Record, vol. IX, no. 3, March 1963
p. 97

181. Nehru, n. 87, p. 335
RESUMPTION OF HOSTILITIES:

Fighting had broken out on the Plain of Jars between pro-Communist Pathet Lao forces and neutralist forces. Many prominent figures were assassinated. The most serious was the murder of Foreign Minister, Quinim Pholsena, in early April 1963. Within nine months of the formation of neutral coalition government, Laos was heading for another crisis. While Prince Souvanna Phouma had asked the I.C.C. on Laos to station a permanent delegation in the Plain of Jars, Premier Souphanouvong, Pathet Lao leader, opposed the move stating that it was an internal affair and the Control Commission had no right to intervene. 182

There was considerable diplomatic activity in Delhi to bring about an immediate cessation of the hostilities in Laos, where a grave threat to the whole concept of neutralism and non-alignment was rapidly developing. In its capacity as Chairman of the I.C.C. India had told the Co-Chairmen that there should be an immediate cessation of hostilities between the rival factions, the coalition government headed by Prince Souvanna Phouma should be supported and its neutral character preserved by all means and the I.C.C. should establish its presence on the Plain of Jars where the rival armies were entrenched. 183

182. The Hindu, 9 April 1963

183. Times of India, 10 April 1963
Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Premier of Laos, had announced an agreement between the three factions in his country, which, if implemented, would result in a permanent team of the I.C.C. being installed in the Plain of Jars. While India and Canada were in favour of sending permanent inspection team to the Plain of Jars to supervise the truce between the neutralist and Left-wing forces, Poland was opposed to sending the team to General Kong Lee's neutralist headquarters and hence the delay. The I.C.C. helicopters were shot at and set fire in the Plain of Jars. The Pathet Lao were willing to come to terms once the I.C.C. team was withdrawn and a mixed neutralist, Pathet Lao and Right-wing police force set up in Vientiane. Britain could not take any decision as the other Co-Chairman, Russia, was in concurrence with the Pathet Lao's idea that I.C.C. should withdraw. As the I.C.C. was not allowed to function the situation in Laos was steadily deteriorating.

Prince Souvanna Phouma had long discussions with Nehru in Delhi on 5 November 1963 on his way back from his trip to Washington, Paris and Moscow to discuss the proper implementation of the Geneva Agreement and the working of the I.C.C. In an interview when asked to comment on the oft-repeated Chinese attack on I.C.C.'s interference in the internal affairs in Laos, Souvanna Phouma said, "upto the present moment I do not

184. The Hindu, 25 April 1963
see where and when the I.C.C. had interfered in our internal affairs. When the Commission comes to help us that is not interference." He further said that certain signatories to the Geneva Agreement were hindering its smooth implementation referring to North Vietnam. He pointed out that there had been divergence of opinion between the Indian and Canadian members of the Commission on the one hand and the Polish member on the other. He felt that the Soviet Union could do more in solving the Laotian problem. Prince Souvanna Phouma said he was very happy to be in New Delhi for a discussion of the Laotian situation with Nehru. He hoped that "both as Chairman of the Commission and a signatory to the Geneva Agreement India could help Laos in solving its problem."  

The meeting of the three factions failed to reach an agreement on the means to solve the Laotian crisis. A right-wing army group seized power in Vientiane on 19 April 1964 and Souvanna Phouma handed over the Government to a seventy-six member "Revolutionary Committee of the National Army" headed by General Kouprasith Abhay. India was deeply concerned over the developments in Laos as it was profoundly interested in the maintenance of peace and stability in Laos. Nehru pledged full support to the Laotian neutralist Prime Minister Prince Souvanna Phouma.  

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185. *Times of India*, 6 November 1963

186. Ibid.

187. *Guardian*, 23 April 1964
Nehru expressing the hope that "the present difficulties" in Laos would disappear stated that,

you will continue to lead the Laotian Government and people to a full realisation of the objectives embodied in the Geneva declaration with the assistance of the International Commission. We have admired the way you as Prime Minister of the Government of National Union, have tried to carry out your difficult task of reconciliation and maintaining the unity of Laos. India was convinced that the declaration of neutrality of Laos at the Geneva Conference of 1954 and the other agreements reached offer the best guarantee for peace and preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of Laos. The maintenance of peace and stability in Laos was of paramount importance in the context of peace in Indo-China and indeed the whole of Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{188}

**INDIA'S EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT PEACE:**

India was giving urgent consideration to several moves on the Laotian crisis, including resumption of the fourteen nation Geneva Conference. New Delhi's immediate effort was on securing Polish support to the I.C.C. in Laos. The Prime Minister also revealed that India had despatched a medical unit to Laos on an urgent request received from Premier Souvanna Phouma.\textsuperscript{189}

On 26 May 1964 the British Charge d'affaires in Vientiane acting as representative of the British Co-Chairman, and in response to a request from the Prime Minister of Laos in a letter of 19 May 1964 invited representatives of each of the

\textsuperscript{188} Times of India, 23 April 1964

\textsuperscript{189} Christian Science Monitor (Delhi), 23 May 1964
signatory powers to attend consultations on the neutrality of Laos, signed at Geneva on 23 July 1962. The consultations opened in the British Embassy in Vientiane on 2 June 1964 and the final meeting was held on 29 June 1964. The Governments of Canada, Thailand, U.S.A. and Republic of Vietnam took part in the consultations. The Ambassador of India also participated in the consultations on the understanding that he regarded the consultations merely as informal consultations among Ambassadors of certain Geneva Powers in Vientiane. He did not regard the Ambassadors' meetings in Vientiane as a substitute for a fourteen power international Conference and participation would be aimed at, besides an exchange of views on the situation in Laos, the convocation of fourteen power consultations under the Geneva declaration and or an International Conference. In view of India's status as a Supervisory Power and Chairman of the I.C.C. he expressed the view that the Commission was the only body charged by the Geneva Conference to make investigations into violations of the cease-fire and to furnish appropriate reports to the Co-Chairmen. He also expressed the view that the Commission should be requested to make a speedy investigation into the prevailing military situation and to report urgently to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference if they had not already done so. The representative agreed to call on the Co-Chairmen to do everything in their power to urge the two parties concerned to bring about an immediate cease-fire.
throughout the Kingdom and withdraw all forces to the position
which they held before the fighting. The cease-fire and
withdrawal should be verified by the Co-Chairmen.

The representatives of Canada, Thailand, the United
Kingdom, the United States and the Republic of Vietnam condemned
the Pathet Lao attacks on the neutralist forces of General Kong
Lee and North Vietnam's assistance as being in flagrant violation
of the Geneva Agreements. They considered in particular
recommendations relating to the resumption of full participation
in the work of the Commission by the Polish Commissioner,
importance of the continued effective functioning of the
Commission, provision of all facilities to the Commission to
carry out investigations without hindrance and the according
of maximum cooperation by the Royal Laotian Government and all
political groups in Laos to the Commission to enable it to
perform its functions under the Geneva Agreements.

The representatives looked forward to a stabilization
of the political situation in Laos which would ensure the willing
cooperation of all the principal political group in the country
to enable the Government of National Union with Prince Souvanna
Phouma as Prime Minister to discharge its responsibility for the
execution of the cease-fire. They expressed the hope that an
early meeting would be held between the leaders of the political
parties and urged the Co-Chairmen to use their influence to bring it about. They also discussed, without commitment, the conditions necessary for holding a new international conference on the Laotian question.  

An urgent report on the military situation from the I.C.C. to the Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference would be very valuable provided its members could agree upon an assessment of the situation. Laos would be free if all foreign powers ceased to interfere in its affairs but the realities of power politics prevented this development with disastrous consequences to once-peaceful area. It is doubtful whether the Laotian problem could ever be settled except as part of an overall settlement among the Big Powers.  

Sardar Swaran Singh, Minister of External Affairs, speaking in the Parliament on 22 September 1964 said that the picture of large parts of Asia was not a happy one. The Geneva Agreements of 1954 in the case of Vietnam and of 1962 in the case of Laos was signed to create an atmosphere of freedom, peace and stability in Vietnam and an atmosphere of freedom from outside interference in Laos. These purposes had not been fulfilled and according to the I.C.C., of which India was the

190. Nehru, n. 87, p. 629-2
191. The Hindu, 1 July 1964
Chairman, there had been frequent violations of the Agreements. In any case, the spirit of the agreements had not been observed and Indo-China presented a grave danger spot menacing international peace. Commenting on India's stand, Swaran Singh stated,

We stand by the Geneva Agreement of 1962 in the case of Laos, to which we were a signatory. We also uphold the Geneva Agreement of 1954 in respect of Vietnam, although we were not participants in the Geneva Conference on Indo-China in 1954. We are the Chairman of the I.C.C. appointed under the Agreements for supervising them, and, as such, have an onerous responsibility. So far as Laos is concerned, we support the proposal for holding a fourteen nation conference which seems to us to afford the best hope of bringing peace and stability to Laos. We hope that agreements between the principal parties in Laos will be reached, so as to make it possible for a conference to be convened with the least possible delay. 192

At the end of Nehru era the position in Indo-China was in a state of chaos. Vietnam and Laos were in a state of war and Cambodia, which was facing border problems, wanted an international conference to declare her neutrality. A welcome feature of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri's first press conference was the confidence and assurance with which he spoke on external affairs, particularly on Laos. He observed that,

192. India, Rajya Sabha Debates, vol. XLIX, no. 12, pt. 11, 22 September 1964, col. 2542
India as Chairman of the I.C.C. had assumed special responsibilities and must come out with a bold policy ..... Laos might well provide a starting point for a renewed invigoration in our foreign policy for India shares with the other countries of Southeast Asia a desire to ensure peace and security throughout this sensitive region. It should, therefore, be among the first tasks of our new Government to give a positive and constructive lead in the vital sphere of international activity and affairs.*193

On the eve of the Geneva Conference on Far East

in 1954 America was planning for a collective defence system in Southeast Asia. With the conclusion of the Geneva Conference and half of Vietnam in the Communist hands U.S. went ahead with its plan and signed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation on 8 September 1954 along with United Kingdom, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines whose main aim was to contain communism. India sharply criticised this move. India emphasised the primacy of economic and social measures as they offered the Communists best opportunities for carrying out indirect aggression and subversion. At the same time India held that military measures not only add to economic and social burdens but also heighten the potential military threat because they force the countries against whom they are directed to take counter measures. The United States agreed to the seriousness of the social and economic dangers but held

*193. *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 4 June 1964
that the threat of aggression was also real and hence both military alliance and social and economic measures were necessary for the preservation of free Asia. Although the United States and India were working towards the same end, they were divided in their estimate of the threats that confront free Asia. 194

194. S.L. Poplai and Philip Talbot, India and America: A Study of their relations (New Delhi, 1958), p. 12