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INDIA'S ROLE IN THE SETTLEMENT OF THE INDOCHINA CONFLICT,  
1947 to 1958

by

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## INTRODUCTION

The study is undertaken in the hope that it may throw light on the growth and development of Indian diplomacy. The Government of India, ever since the independence of its country in 1947, has played an increasingly active role in world affairs. Consequently, its foreign policy has become the subject matter of a number of books and articles. Most of the critics have attempted to interpret foreign policy of the Government of India primarily in terms of the cold war and conflicts between the two major blocs. Furthermore, they have rather unduly generalized the Government of India's foreign policy either to defend or to attack the role of the Indian Government in the cold war. This has been due to bipolarization of international politics. An attempt is made here, however, to analyze an aspect of the foreign policy of the Government of India from the point of view of India's national interests.

The states of Indochina have been selected for the purpose of this study because the Government of India has played a many-sided role in the states under consideration. It is, therefore, hoped that this study will enable us to understand various facets of foreign policy of the Government of India. This study will particularly attempt to throw light on the role of the Indian Government as a champion of people under imperial

domination, as a spokesman of Asia, as an uncommitted nation in the cold war, as a mediator between two power blocs, and as a defender of its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia.

Secondly, in this study an attempt will be made to find out whether or not the activities of the Government of India in the states of Indochina are in consonance with pronounced interests of India in the region of Southeast Asia as a whole. To state the purpose in terms of power politics the issue is: has the Government of India tried, and if so, how far has it succeeded in keeping the states of Indochina free from external influences inimical to its interests. The study is based on the assumption that the policies of the two neighbors of the area of Southeast Asia -- India and China -- will play decisive roles in the development of the Indochinese states. It is in the states of Indochina that the influence of both India and China meet face to face -- Vietnam being in China's sphere of influence and Cambodia and Laos in India's. In the language of a British diplomat, Vietnam is on the other side of Mr. Nehru's Rubicon, whereas Cambodia and Laos are on his side.<sup>1</sup>

This dissertation is divided into five chapters and a conclusion. In the first chapter the author has reviewed the

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<sup>1</sup>"Nehru on the Rubicon", TIME, October 3, 1955, p.18.

close ties that existed in the past (before 1947) between India and the countries of Southeast Asia, and has tried to show the influential role India played in the affairs of the area. The second chapter deals with the policy of government of independent India from 1947 till early 1954 which is labelled as that of 'studied aloofness'. During this entire period, the Government of India, in spite of ample opportunities to act, surprisingly abstained from taking any part in the Indochina crisis. The author in this chapter has tried to interpret the Government of India's policy of 'studied aloofness'. Although it maintained the policy of 'studied aloofness' throughout this entire period, the reasons which motivated this policy varied with the change in the nature of the conflict in Vietnam. The conflict till 1950 was predominantly a struggle for national independence in its purest and simplest form. But emergence of two rival governments in Vietnam, each backed by the participants of the cold war and of Communist government on the mainland of China turned the conflict in Vietnam from 1950 onwards into a cold war issue. Because the conflict in Vietnam during the period 1947-1954 had two distinct features, the study is divided in two parts. The author in the third chapter has analyzed the circumstances and reasons which led the Government of India to switch from

the policy of aloofness to that of active participation. Activities undertaken by the Indian Government in the direction of settlement of the Indochina crisis are narrated as well in this chapter. The Geneva Agreement, which formally brought an end to the Indochina crisis, provided for three international commissions, each consisting of three members (India, Poland and Canada) to implement the provisions of the agreement. India was selected as chairman of all the three commissions in recognition of her neutrality and interest in the area. Chapter IV evaluates the Geneva Agreement and the role of India on these commissions. In this chapter an attempt is made particularly to show how the Government of India interpreted the Geneva Agreement to promote its policy of the 'area of peace' in Southeast Asia. The last chapter takes into account all other activities the Government of India initiated towards the creation of the 'area of peace' in Southeast Asia.

The main source of data for this research has been documents published by the Government of India. The problem of non-availability of some of the documents in the Library of Congress has been solved by depending upon responsible newspapers of India. Similarly, the problem of lack of official information has been solved by resorting to reliable newspapers and magazines of mostly the English speaking countries. For

the proceedings of the Geneva Conference and for the activities of the Supervisory Commissions in the states of Indochina, reliance is placed on the British Command papers and the reports published by the International Commissions for Supervision and Control.

## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND OF INDIA'S ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The past leads to the present around which the future is woven. History is not a record of past events only; it analyzes the present and indicates the future. The main purpose of the study of history is, therefore, to be (correctly) informed of the past in order to understand the complexities of the present so that history may serve as the beacon light for the future. 'India's Role in the Settlement of the Indochina Conflict -- 1945-1958' is viewed in the context of this role of history.

Since history first began to be recorded, both India and China have played a decisive role in moulding the religion, culture, traditions and destiny of Southeast Asia. The influence of these two countries on Southeast Asia is seen in the names which have been given both to the area and to its parts by scholars, as for example, 'Nanyang' or 'Southern Ocean', and 'Little China', (a term sometimes used by Westerners for Annam) where Chinese influence is evidenced, whereas India's influence is obvious in the name 'l'Inde exterieure' or 'Further India' applied by the French archaeologists, philologists and epigraphists of the Ecole Francaise d'Extreme Orient in Hanoi. Commenting upon the implications of the



name 'Further India', K. M. Panikkar says:

The name is significant and embodies the idea which had been recognized from early days till quite recent times, that India and Southeast Asia were connected integrally in their political, social and economic life and have reacted on each other in their historical growth.<sup>1</sup>

Relations between India and Southeast Asia probably go back far into the prehistoric period. However, definite information comes from Greek and Chinese sources. The first recorded chronicle of a Hindu state in Southeast Asia is provided by Chinese historians. According to their accounts, Funan, the precursor of the Kingdom of Cambodia, was founded by a Hindu named Braham Kaundinya in the first century A.D. At Oc Eo, the principal part of Western Cochin China, a gold medal of the year 152 A.D. pertaining to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius has been found, together with Sanskrit seals of the same period. The Greek geographer Caludius Ptolemy, who published a geography and atlas of the known world at Alexandria about 150 A.D., provides the first real documentary evidence about Southeast Asia. His map shows a number of ports along the coast of the mainland and the islands of Southeast Asia. He calls the Malay Peninsula the 'Golden Chersonese', which corresponds to the Suvarna-dvipa of the Ramayana. He also mentions a place named Iabadiou (Island of

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<sup>1</sup>Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, The Future of Southeast Asia (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1943), p.1.

Barley) in Southeast Asia, which represents the Greek pronunciation of the Prakrit version of the Sanskrit 'Yavadvipa'. Against the vagueness of earlier writers, Ptolemy gives definite latitudes and longitudes for the place-names shown in his atlas. Commenting upon the Greek and Chinese sources of information, R. C. Majumdar states:

Some of the colonial kingdoms even in the eastern parts must have been founded not later than the second century A.D., and a few of them at any rate, prior to this date. Colonization as distinguished from the establishment of political authority, evidently took place much earlier and the beginnings of trade intercourse which must have preceded colonization may thus be placed centuries before the Christian era.<sup>2</sup>

In the absence of any certain knowledge of the causes of the spread of Indian influence in Southeast Asia, various hypotheses have been formulated by scholars, and that of the French scholar George Coedes seems the most cogent and convincing.<sup>3</sup> His opinion is that its origin is pre-eminently commercial. Contact between the Mediterranean world and India, followed by the foundation of the Maurya and Kushan Empires on the one hand and the rise of the Roman Empire on the other, led to an important trade in luxury articles between East and

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<sup>2</sup>Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Hindu Colonies in the Far East (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, Ltd., 1944), p.13.

<sup>3</sup>George Coedes, Les Etats Hindouises d'Indochine et d'Indonesie (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1948), pp. 41-45.

West. Several articles of Indian trade such as gold, spices, scented woods and perfumes came from Southeast Asia. This trade, according to George Coedes, was intensified in the first century A.D. with the introduction of large sea-going vessels with a rig which permitted them to sail close to the wind, and with a capacity of about 700 passengers. The names of the various places in Southeast Asia given in the old books are associated with minerals, metals or some industrial or agricultural product. Ancient Sanskrit texts for instance, speak of 'Suvarnabhumi' (Land of Gold), 'Suvarnadvipa' (Island of Gold), and 'Yavadvipa' (Island of Barley, or perhaps, Barley-Shaped Island). Majumdar points out that:

If literature can be regarded as a fair reflex of the popular mind, trade and commerce must have been a supreme passion in India and in the centuries immediately preceding and following the Christian era.<sup>4</sup>

Another hypothesis attributes it to the bloody conquest of Kalinga by the Maurya Emperor Asoka in the third century B.C., which, it is suggested, might have caused a large number of refugees to seek new homes in Southeast Asia. Still another attributes it to the pressures of Kushan invasions of northern India in the first century A.D. which caused an emigration of Indians overseas. Both these theories are discarded now. A

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<sup>4</sup>Majumdar, op. cit., p.4.

fourth hypothesis suggests that Buddhism may have played its part in overcoming the strong repugnance of many Indians against overseas travel, since its teachings undermined their ideas of racial purity and their fears of pollution by leaving their native shores. These are some of the conjectures. However, all these theories lead, in the language of Jawaharlal Nehru, to an inescapable conclusion that:

Settlements in widely scattered places from India were deliberately planned and colonies were started in these places almost simultaneously. These settlements were in Indochina, Malay Peninsula, Borneo, Sumatra, Java and other places.<sup>5</sup>

The period between the first Indianized state of Funan in the second century A.D. and the fall of the Majapahit Empire in the fifteenth century A.D. is filled by a succession of Hindu and Buddhist states, some of which grew to considerable importance and overshadowed the whole of Southeast Asia. Though great and varied are the achievements and history of these states, we are interested here only in evaluating the nature and impact of Indian influence in Southeast Asia. With the exception of the Chola conquests of the 11th century, when a powerful South Indian kingdom ventured on a policy of imperial expansion in the Malay Peninsula, Indian traders and missionaries were agents of peaceful cultural colonization

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<sup>5</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, Glimpses of World History (New York: The John Day Company, 1942), p.102.

rather than imperialism, and the kingdoms they founded were not politically controlled from India. This aspect of Indian colonization is well presented by George Coedes who compares it with that of China:

La raison en est dans la difference radicale des methodes de colonisation employees par les Chinois et par les Hindous. Les Chinois procederent par conquete et par annexion; les militaires occupaient le pays et les fonctionnaires repandaient la civilisation Chinoise. La penetration, l'infiltration hindouses semblent avoir presque toujours ete pacifiques et ne s'etre accompanees nulle part de ces destructions qui deshonnent la chevauchee mongole ou la conquete espagnole de l'Amerique.<sup>6</sup>

An Indian scholar emphasizing the pacific nature of Indian colonization in Southeast Asia observes:

A unique empire was built up -- an empire sharing not in a common political life under a suzerain, but in a common cultural and spiritual life in a commonwealth of free peoples. The empire that India built overseas and overland was conquered by the peity and the spiritual energy of her sages and monks and it was a dharmarajya -- a glorious empire of which the guiding principle was dhrama or religious culture and righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

But it is, of course, naive to assume that the sole purpose of Indian penetration in this area was spiritual. Material motives most surely were at work; the process, however, was effected essentially in a peaceful way, and spiritual ideals

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<sup>6</sup>Coedes, op. cit., p.64.

<sup>7</sup>Suniti Kumar Chatterji, "Hindu Culture and Greater India", The Heritage of India (Calcutta: Ramkrishna Centenary Memorial Committee, 1936), p.91.

undoubtedly played a considerable role.

During this period Indian civilization took root and left an indelible impress on various aspects of life, evidence of which can be found everywhere in Southeast Asia. The most important and lasting contribution of India is in the field of religion. All the countries of Southeast Asia except the Philippines are indebted to India for their present religion. India gave not only Buddhism the religion of her soil, but also was responsible for introducing a foreign religion to Indonesia and Malaya. Islam was introduced to these countries by traders from India where that religion had been brought centuries earlier.<sup>8</sup>

Indian influence in Southeast Asia, though primarily of religious nature, touched upon other fields of life, such as architecture, paintings and fine arts, language, legends and customs. This was due to all-pervasive nature of Buddhism and Hinduism which permeated all aspects of life. This nature of Indian religions has led writers to use the terms Indian civilization and Indian religion interchangeably without any error. Sir Charles Eliot brings out the point under consideration succinctly in his following remark:

Few works of art or literature are purely secular, the intellectual and aesthetic efforts of India, long continuous

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<sup>8</sup>Brian Harrison, Southeast Asia (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1954), pp.50-51.

and distinguished as they are, are monotonous inasmuch as they are almost all the expression of some religious phase.<sup>9</sup>

Another field in which Indian influence during the existence of the Indianized states in Southeast Asia is most marked is architecture. The monuments and wonderful temples of Angkor in Cambodia and Borobudur in Java bear witness in our time to Indian influence in architecture. The beautiful bas-reliefs in these temples and monuments depict scenes either from Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, or life story of Buddha. Books analyzing various facets of Southeast Asian architecture such as, decorative motif, rich and gracious forms of bas-reliefs, sculpture, sanctuary towers and types of galleries, have been written by scholars<sup>10</sup> of comparative architecture of India and Southeast Asia. These scholars have arrived at the conclusion that the origin of Southeast Asian architecture was Indian although it was modified by the artists who developed it. Of Angkor, for instance,

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<sup>9</sup>Charles Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1954), I, p.xiv.

<sup>10</sup>Rene Grousset discusses this point in his Les Civilisations de l'Orient, trans. Catherine Allison Phillips (New York: A.A. Knopf, The Heritage of India (London: Allen and Unwin, 1954). See also George Coedes, op.cit, pp.64-70.

Dr. Quartich Wales says:

When the guiding hand of India was removed, her inspiration was not forgotten but the Khmer genius was released to mould from it vast new conceptions of amazing vitality different from, and hence not properly to be compared with anything matured in a purely Indian environment . . . . It is true that Khmer culture is essentially based on the inspiration of India without which the Khmers at best might have produced nothing greater than the barbaric splendour of the Central American Mayas; but at the same time it must be admitted that here more than anywhere else in Greater India, this inspiration fell on fertile soil.<sup>11</sup>

Language and literature of India influenced those of Southeast Asia not only in the days when Hinduized states flourished but their influence is evident even now. Alphabets of Southern India type were introduced into the area of the states of Indochina during the early centuries of the Christian era and have survived to the present day in the Cham and Khmer scripts.<sup>12</sup> Numerous Sanskrit words and names have been taken over with minor variations in the languages of Southeast Asian countries. Sukarno, Norodom, Shivosong, Luang Prabang, Singapore, Ayuthia and Kalimantan are some of the names of persons and places in Southeast Asia, the origin of which can be easily traced to Sanskrit language or to ancient Indian literature.

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<sup>11</sup>Horace Geoffrey Quartich Wales, Towards Angkor: In the Footsteps of the Indian Invaders (London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd., 1937), pp. 227-228.

<sup>12</sup>Paul K. Benedict, "Languages and Literatures of Indochina", The Far Eastern Quarterly, VI. No. 4 (1947), p.387.



All over Hinduized Indochina, Malaya and Java the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and legendary literature of India provided inspiration for the classical theater, the dance, the shadow play and the marionettes. The Dutch scholar Stutterheim went so far as to believe that these books and manuals were more effective than the Hindus themselves in Hinduizing Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup> The Indian literature was so popular that even today writing in Southeast Asia is largely cast in an Indian mould although modified by a distinctive native tradition. In Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Burma and Siam) Buddhist works comprise a large part of the literature. Though the scriptural Tripitaka have lost their vitality, the popular Jataka or tales relating to the various lives of the Buddha have persisted as the living core of the current popular literature.<sup>14</sup> Further, the present civil and criminal laws of Cambodia are based on the Laws of Manu, the ancient law-giver of India, and these have been codified with the variations due to Buddhist influence in Cambodian legislation. Furthermore, Brahminism survives even now in the court ceremonial of some of the countries of Southeast Asia though the rulers are devout Buddhists. The Buddhist priests wear a top-knot and the sacred thread after the Brahmanic fashion of India.

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<sup>13</sup>Kenneth Perry London, Southeast Asia: Crossroad of Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p.69.

<sup>14</sup>Benedict, op. cit., p.388.

Since the history of Southeast Asia was initially based on Chinese and Sanskrit writings it tends to over-emphasize the influence of Chinese and Indian cultures on the area. Indian influence was strongest on rulers, courts and temples but the great mass of the people was for long either untouched by Indian culture or in absorbing it, changed it by bringing it into line with indigenous ideas and practices. Thus, the structure of society was largely unaffected.

Before the Europeans appeared on the political scene of Southeast Asia, Indian civilization had been implanted deep in the soil and it continued to blossom in its new surroundings. After the advent of the Europeans in Asia, Indian civilization receded to the background, although India under the Europeans continued to play decisive role in the affairs of Southeast Asia. But the influence of Indian civilization was so great and far reaching in this area that even today after the severance of direct ties for centuries, its influence is visible in the activities of the people of this area. Reviewing the results of Indian colonization in Southeast Asia Nehru writes:

Empires and kingdoms came and went in Malaysia. But the real result of these colonizing enterprises of Southern India was to introduce Indo-Aryan civilisation in this part of the world and to a certain extent the people of Malaysia today are the children of the same civilisation as we are.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Nehru, op. cit., p.102.

Trade and commerce have attracted foreigners ever since the recorded history of Southeast Asia is known. As indicated before, the trade in gold and spices was the prime factor that led Indians to Southeast Asia. Similarly, the spice trade of the Indies was the potent attraction to the Europeans. The Dutch and British East India Companies had been commercial concerns in the beginning and remained so for a long time after they had begun to take interest in the politics of the countries they traded with. As a matter of fact, till the nineteenth century the Asian trade was a one-way traffic. There was no large demand for European goods in any Asian country. The Europeans found the solution of their problem of foreign exchange in Southeast Asia with the help of Indian textiles. They bartered Indian textiles with the spices of the Indies. Brian Harrison commenting about the importance of Indian textiles in the trade of Southeast Asia points out that:

Both companies (Dutch and British East India Companies) had already realized the essential part played by Indian cloth in the exchange economy of Southeast Asia. They had set up buying agencies at points on the Indian coasts where textiles could be purchased for silver and thence distributed to their factories further east for barter exchange in the pepper and spice markets.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Harrison, op. cit., p.103

This arrangement did not make any difference in the economy of Southeast Asia but it deprived Indians of the trade with Southeast Asia and the attendant profit.

With the conquest of Malacca in 1512, Albuquerque, the Portuguese general, completed the structure of European maritime empire in Asia. At the very outset the Portuguese realized that their commercial empire rested upon an unchallengeable position in the Indian Ocean. With this view in mind they established their domination of major ports on the west coast of Africa and other pivotal points like Socotra and Ormuz falling on their route to India. Before Albuquerque's time there were no strong points anywhere in India from which Portuguese naval authority could be enforced. To overcome this limitation the Portuguese conquered and developed Goa as their territorial base in India. From here they pursued their commercial and political interests in Southeast Asia. The permanent problem of the Portuguese authorities in Malacca, however, was to balance the demand for profitable commodities in Lisbon against the requirements of security in the Straits of Malacca. On this problem of maintaining the balance in the straits and the pivotal position of Goa in solving the same Harrison observes:

The insistent demands of the home government for the largest possible annual shipments of spices and other

products meant that the limited shipping resources of the Portuguese in Asia were strained to the utmost, especially during the period of northeast monsoon, the favourable season for homeward voyages . . . . She had, therefore, to work on an extremely narrow margin of safety and often to take grave risks in an endeavour to strike a balance between commercial policy and strategic requirements -- most liable to attack and seige by Achinese and other hostile forces in the straits. Time and time again the besieged fortress was saved only by the eleventh hour arrival of a relief squadron from Goa.<sup>17</sup>

A significant change came when Britain from the second half of the eighteenth century began to think in terms of an empire in India. By a strange course of history when the company of the British traders gradually became the political masters of India, the British Government stepped in. They were quick to realize the importance of India, not only for expansion in Asia, but also for playing the role of the principal actor in the fierce game of power politics in Europe. India became the focal point of British foreign policy in Asia, and thus it was primarily through India under the British that Asia got involved in the intrigues of European diplomacy. It was their domination of India that enabled the British to maintain their supremacy in Asia and perhaps Europe. Again, it was for the security of their position in India that the British conquered and fortified far off places in Asia and Africa. The following remark of Lord Curzon well illustrates India's

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid. , p 82.

central position in British foreign policy:

Our Indian dominions more directly touch those of Turkey and in many parts of the Arabian Peninsula, those of Russia on the Pamirs, those of China along the borders of Turkestan and Yunan, those of France on the upper Mekong. In our dealings with them the Foreign Department in India is becoming the Asiatic branch of the foreign office in England. The geographical position of India will more and more push her into the forefront of international politics, she will more and more become the strategic frontier of the British Empire.<sup>18</sup>

Under the British, the central position of India in relation to the affairs of Southeast Asia became more evident. The creation, consolidation and exploitation of the British Empire in Southeast Asia was made possible due to the India-based strength of Britain. Guy Wint is, therefore, led to designate it as the Indo-British Empire. The evidence of this strength came first during Napoleonic Wars when the Dutch Republic had been forced into alliance with the French. The British, in turn, with their consolidated power in India, asserted their authority on Java and gave it back to the Dutch in 1818 after the Treaty of Vienna. Because the power of Britain could not be easily challenged once Britain had firmly established its rule on the land mass of India by 1818, the other Western imperialist powers, France and Holland, came to terms with Britain. Independence of Siam as a buffer state,

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<sup>18</sup>George Nathaniel Curzon, Problems of Far East: Japan, Korea and China (New York: Logmans Green & Co., 1894), quoted by Taraknath Das, India in World Politics (New York: B. W. Hubsch, Inc., 1923), p.10.

the Dutch and the French rule over Indonesia and Indochina respectively were due to a great extent to the overwhelming position of the British in India.<sup>19</sup> Until 1867 Malaya was the sphere of the Government of India, not directly of the Colonial Office in London. This speaks of India's role in making Malaya a part of the British Empire. As regards Burma, it was made an integral part of India after its final conquest by the British in 1885, and that status was maintained till 1935. Of India's participation in the British activities in other parts of Asia the same story can be narrated, but it is outside the scope of this study.

The contribution of India towards the creation of the British Empire in Southeast Asia was threefold. Firstly, the British after having established a strong and unified government in India began to think of security of their empire in India. Initially this was the prime consideration that led them to take interests in the affairs of Southeast Asia. In other words, with the conquest of India, Britain became an Asian power and dictates of geopolitics subsequently guided its policies in Southeast Asia. Secondly, in this adventure the Indian army backed by the British Navy played a very

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<sup>19</sup>Guy Wint analyzes at length the bearing of British position in India on the political status of the countries of Southeast Asia in The British in Asia (New York: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp.15-20.

important role. Having realized the smallness of the army at their disposal in India, the British from the very beginning had mastered the art of utilizing their Indian army officered by the English. As a matter of fact, in the conquest of India, they had greatly relied upon the well-trained Indian Army, and the imposition of the British rule over the whole of India released this army (otherwise occupied to meet internal challenges) to pursue expansionist activities outside. The important role of the Indian Army in Southeast Asia became evident during the second World War when it fought for the British against the Japanese in that region. Finally, with Indian resources the British strengthened not only their economy and overall position in world diplomacy but also financed their activities in Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the expenses incurred on the maintenance of both the army and the civilian staff needed in this area were borne by the Indian treasury. Though their superior leadership, organization and naval strength played a very important role, the British could not have succeeded in establishing such an empire without the aforesaid threefold contributions of India. Justifying the use of the term 'Indo-British Empire' Wint observes:

It (the Indo-British Empire) was a joint creation of Britain and India, of the emigrants from the British middle class and of Indian manpower and resources which



they had organized. India could not have established the empire without Great Britain nor could Great Britain without India. All the principal actors who conceived the expansion policies were Englishmen, but the empire which they built was based on Indian not British needs . . . . Indian emigrants not British swarmed into the new provinces and while British capital built the railways, mines, plantations, and new industries, Indian money-lenders acquired the land. The fact that in their activities in Asia the British were in part doing India's business and acting as servants of the Emperor of India rather than of the King of England explains much about the history of the Empire which is otherwise obscure.<sup>20</sup>

The national leaders of India have been fully aware of the pivotal position of India in shaping the political destiny of Southeast Asia. They also know that British derived from India the required strength to play an influential role in the area. The Indian leaders, therefore, are of the opinion that they could play an equally influential role in the area. However, objectives towards which this pivotal position is to be directed by the Indian leaders differ from those of the British. In sharp contrast to the utilization of their position in India by the British for the exploitation of the countries in Southeast Asia, the avowed purpose of independent India has been to make her position instrumental in the achievement of freedom, security and prosperity by these oppressed countries. Gandhi brought out this aspect of foreign policy of independent India in the following remark:

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.20.

Indeed, India is the key to the exploitation of the Asiatic and other non-European races of the earth. She is held under bondage not merely for the sake of her own exploitation but that of her neighbours near and distant. India's freedom thus would be the first death blow to the insolent exploitation of Asia and Africa . . . . Through the deliverance of India I seek to deliver the so-called weaker races of the earth from the crushing heels of Western exploitation.<sup>21</sup>

Prime Minister Nehru conveyed the same idea in a statesman-like fashion as against the moralistic interpretation by Gandhi. He declared in a speech to the Southeast Asian Regional Meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization as early as 1948 that:

You represent the Southeast Asia region. Now, India is curiously situated from the geographical view as well as from many other points of view. It belongs to Southeast Asia, it also belongs to West Asia. It just depends on which way you look at it, because it happens to be the centre of all these. And whether you think in terms of East-Asian travel or South-Asian travel, India is there in the middle of the picture. All international routes or routes round the world have almost inevitably to pass over India. Again, when you look at it from other points of view like trade and commerce, or when you think of it in terms of defence, India becomes the pivotal centre of South, Southeast and Western Asia. Geography has given her that position, and because geography gave India that position, and also no doubt because of other factors, the course of history has shown India has influenced all the countries around her and has been influenced by them.<sup>22</sup>

It will be seen from the above comments that most of

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<sup>21</sup>Young India, February 3, 1927, p.36. Quoted by Werner Levi, Free India in Asia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952), p.33.

<sup>22</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Conquest of the Air", Independence and After: A collection of speeches 1946-1949 (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), p.329.

the national leaders of India consider their country as one of the great powers in Asia. This has led them to take active interests in the affairs of Asia. However, they take more active interests in the affairs of Southeast Asia than those of the rest of Asia. This, in turn, poses the question as to why this is so.

One of the reasons is that of her geographical location.<sup>23</sup> India has commanding position in the Indian Ocean which neither the countries bordering on the Atlantic nor those of the Pacific enjoy. It may be kept in mind that in the last World War, India under the British, played a very prominent role towards maintenance and defence of the Empire's communications. In the war against Japan, India was one of the main spring-boards from which the reconquest of Burma, the East Indies, the Philippines, and the defence of Australia was accomplished. The combination of her geographical proximity to Southeast Asia, and her relatively vast resources and well equipped army offers India better opportunities to exercise influence over the area than many strong powers far away. K. M. Panikkar in his book, The Future of

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<sup>23</sup> Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru brings this point out with great clarity and force in his speech at the Overseas Press Club in New York on October 18, 1949, see, e.g., (Visit to America (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), Chapter IV.

Southeast Asia, expounding this idea goes to the extent of saying that the power which controls India can at all times control Southeast Asia and supports his thesis with the history of two thousand years. Commenting upon the role of free India in Southeast Asia he further adds that:

A free and stable government in India conscious of its responsibilities and capable of playing its part in Southeast Asia is the essential prerequisite of the success of any such (regional collective security) scheme that in the absence of such a government in India 'Further India' will remain the cockpit of colonial ambitions incapable of defending itself and a prey to the predatory urge of any power which is strong enough to attack it.<sup>24</sup>

The existing and potential wealth of the area is the second reason for India's active interest in Southeast Asia. The area is extremely rich in agricultural products and raw materials. It is blessed with tin, oil, tungsten, manganese, rubber, hemp and sugar. These resources if developed fully could turn the area into an industrially rich one. The control of these resources by a power hostile to India may increase the strength of the former and may endanger to that extent the position of the latter. Apart from this negative consideration India has positive interest in this area's resources or their products. India needs some of these

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<sup>24</sup> Panikkar, loc. cit., p.12.

resources very badly. Since the countries of Southeast Asia after their independence think in terms of industrialization, trade between India and these countries when industrialized will mainly consist of industrial products. Growing industrialization, both in India and the countries of Southeast Asia, presents bright prospects of developing mutually profitable trade. Moreover, the countries of Southeast Asia as a whole have surplus food with which India can solve her fundamental problem of food shortages. Finally, India's comparatively advanced stage of industrialization will enable her to assist the countries of the area in their development programs. These considerations led Panikkar to conclude that the economy of India and Southeast Asia should be considered as being complementary and the economic development plan should be worked out on a 'co-prosperity sphere' based on their interdependence.<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, India's active interest in the developments of the area is due to cultural affinity. The spirit of nationalism has led the leaders of both India and Southeast Asia to find out something unique to be proud of their countries. Having nothing but misery, ignorance and subjugation, these countries began to look back to their hitherto forgotten past,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

the glories and achievements of which were revealed to them by the discoveries of the Western archaeologists, epigraphists and philologists. As shown earlier, the Southeast Asian countries owe to India much for their past and the recognition of this fact by both the giver and taker has brought them closer to each other. The role of cultural affinity on India's foreign relations with the countries of Southeast Asia is well presented by Norman Brown by comparing it with that of Pakistan with the countries of the Middle East. He writes:

Though each has a concern with all of Asia, India looks more toward Southeast Asia and the Far East, while Pakistan looks prevailingly toward the Near and Middle East. From India's indigenous traditional culture, much of religion, literature, drama, language folklore, script, architecture, sculpture, dance, family, personal and place names and law has gone out by sea to Burma, Siam, Malaya, Cambodia and Indonesia even to Vietnam. By land it has gone to Central Asia. It was carried by colonizers and merchants and occasionally by conquerors . . . . India has been one of the great contributors to civilisation in Southeast Asia and the Far East and is well aware of her contributions. Those regions on their side are aware of their borrowing, and ties have therefore been created and are recognized. The new nation of India where nationality has had the indigenous Indian culture as its matrix, stands now as friend and kin to them, somewhat as Europe does to the Americas.<sup>26</sup>

The above account of India's contact of two thousand years with Southeast Asia may perhaps give the impression that

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<sup>26</sup>Norman Brown, U.S.A., India and Pakistan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), pp.248-249.

it was either India or the India-based position of foreigners that alone played the key role in Southeast Asia. This, however, is not wholly correct because the area frequently came under the influence of its other big neighbor -- China. The Chinese in the past penetrated the region through force for the purpose of conquest and annexation. They looked down upon the region as an uncivilized area on their border destined to recognize by periodic subjugation the superiority of Chinese civilization.<sup>27</sup> Because of this aggressive attitude, China's influence in the area waxed and waned according to its own internal strength and weakness and did not leave any lasting effect on the region except in North Vietnam which was under its direct rule for almost a thousand years.

The reasons that motivate China to look toward Southeast Asia are almost the same as those in the case of India. From the strategic point of view the area is important to the mainland of China. The occupation of the area at the fringe of the Chinese territory by any hostile power is a danger to the security of the former. The French penetration in Southwest China at the turn of the nineteenth century justify this fear on the part of the Chinese.<sup>28</sup> Industrially the area

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<sup>27</sup>D.G.E. Hall, A History of Southeast Asia (London: Macmillan Company, 1955), pp.44-60.

<sup>28</sup>For details see, e.g. Harold M. Vinacke, A History of the Far East in Modern Times (New York: Appleton-Century, Inc., 1959), pp.175-188.

could play in Chinese development the same role as in the case of India. Finally the region as a whole is sparsely populated and the government of the mainland China faced with the problem of population pressure may find it tempting.

Today, the whole region has been freed from the political domination of the West. At the same time two big nations between which the area is sandwiched are rising again under strong unified governments. Today when the mainland China is unified under strong and aggressive communist leadership, the land and naval expeditions of Kublai Khan and the Mings, which ranged over the whole region in the 13th and 15th centuries, come as reminders of China's vitality.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, the area has become a part of the global cold war and, hence, the involvement of the Western powers and particularly of the United States. Japan being deprived of all its colonies, the sources of raw materials, has begun to look afresh towards this area. This new look of Japan is called economic diplomacy.

Thus, it will be seen that the competing interests are at work in Southeast Asia at present as it was the case in the past. This tendency of the great powers to extend their influence in the inherently weak area of Southeast Asia is

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<sup>29</sup>Francis G. Carnell, "Southeast Asia in the Modern World" India Quarterly, XIII, No. 2 (1957), p.103.



compared by Professor Du Bois with the nature of the heavy air to move in the direction of either low pressure or vacuum. She has, therefore, aptly termed the region as 'low pressure area.'<sup>30</sup> It is in the background of these circumstances that the Government of India has to promote its interests in the area under consideration. We shall examine in the next chapter the activities of the Indian Government during the period 1947-1954.

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<sup>30</sup>Cora Du Bois, Social Forces in Southeast Asia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p.28.

## CHAPTER II

### DIPLOMACY OF STUDIED ALOOFNESS 1947-1954

#### Part I

##### Attitude Towards The Freedom Movement (1947-1950)

Having three decades of history of active fight against British imperialism within and Western colonialism outside, it was but natural and expected that the Indian National Government, after independence, would make the end of colonialism in Asia and Africa their foremost principle of foreign policy.<sup>1</sup> However, the application of this principle in the states of Indochina till 1953, when the Indochinese conflict almost reached the state of global war, makes the study revealing and worthwhile. Before independence, the ceaseless opposition to colonialism outside India by the Indian National leaders was mainly confined to resolutions and statements, and it was more of an idealistic and abstract nature.

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<sup>1</sup>N. V. Rajkumar has compiled resolutions on foreign policy passed by the Indian National Congress in a book The Background of India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi: Indian National Congress Publications, 1952). This book throws light on intensity of bitterness toward the Western imperialism in Asia and Africa.

After three years of imprisonment, the leaders of the Indian National Congress met at Bombay in September, 1945, where they condemned, in the form of a resolution, the attempts of the erstwhile colonial powers to reassert their domination in Indochina and Indonesia. They also took serious objection to the use of Indian troops in re-establishing imperialist domination there.<sup>2</sup> In this connection, it may be pointed out that disarming the Japanese in Southeast Asia was carried out by the Indian Army under the British command. Three months later, the Working Committee of the Congress (i.e., the Executive Body) expressed heartfelt sympathy with the Indochinese nationalists for the enormous loss and suffering inflicted upon them by the imperialist powers and deep indignations to find the units of the Indian Army arrayed against Indochinese nationalists.<sup>3</sup> These seemingly formal resolutions did not indicate the full measure of Indian nationalists' concern regarding the developments in Indochina. The bitterness and vehemence with which India viewed the British intervention with the aid of the Indian troops in Indochina and Indonesia was voiced by Jawaharlal Nehru in a public rally at Jaipur. He

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p.89.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p.90.

declared:

There was a perilous resemblance between these wars of intervention carried on by Britain, and that Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany waged in Spain which was the prelude to World War II. We have watched British intervention there with growing anger, shame and helplessness that Indian troops thus be used for doing Britain's ditry work against our friends who are fighting the same fight as we.<sup>4</sup>

The employment of Indian troops against which Indian leaders raised their indignant protest had ended before the interim government was formed by the Indian National leaders in September, 1946. The formation of the interim government, in which Nehru held the portfolio of Minister of External Affairs, brought to an end the stage of their helplessness and opened a new era of opportunities to translate their academic ideas into policies with respect to the states of Indochina. Even then, however, official India's assistance to them remained rather moral and abstract.

On the other hand, Indian public opinion was vociferous in support of the Vietnamese struggle against the French domination. January 22, 1947 was observed by the leftist student organizations as Vietnam Day and expressions of sympathy were quite noticeable.<sup>5</sup> The leftists under the leadership of

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<sup>4</sup>The New York Times, January 1, 1946, p. 11. (Reference is made to the Late City Edition, throughout this study.)

<sup>5</sup>Subrata Banerjee, Vietnam Fights for Freedom (Bombay: People's Publishing House, 1947), pp. 58-59.

Sarat Chandra Bose (brother of Subhas Chandra Bose) attempted to recruit and send volunteers to Vietnam to drive out the French from there. To this idea the government gave a cold reception on the ground that India was at peace with France.<sup>6</sup> At Vietnam's Independence Day dinner in New York, Vijyalakshmi Pandit identified the people of India with the struggle of the people of Vietnam and greeted the "brave sons and daughters of Vietnam." She further assured them of India's full support in their fight for liberty.<sup>7</sup> In spite of this, the Government of India restricted its activities to expression of sympathy and moral support for Vietnam. Nehru declared that the fighting in Indochina would adversely affect Indo-French relations since public opinion in India supported the Vietnamese cause. He further stated that if the fighting continued, it would have a serious effect on French prestige in Asia.<sup>8</sup> The policy of brave words and no actions continued at the international level.

The first Asian Relations Conference of 1947, which met at New Delhi, offered Nehru and his government a ready international platform to enunciate their views and a line of

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<sup>6</sup>The Statesman (Calcutta) February 7, 1947, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., September 25, 1947, p.5.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., January 8, 1947, p.1.

action to be pursued with regard to the developments in the Indochinese conflict. Though the Conference had met for the consideration of non-political subjects, the question of national movements for freedom was discussed at both the plenary sessions, Mai The Chau, the delegate of the Government of Ho Chi Minh (to be referred now onwards as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, i.e., the DRV) implored the delegates in general, and India in particular, to give concrete aid toward their fight against the French colonialists. Emphasizing the necessity and importance of material aid as against moral support he declared:

When the very existence of my country is threatened it is not good words which can save my country, but action. We are gathering here not just by curiosity of knowing one another because if we would know one another without being able to help one another this mutual knowledge will not prevent us from perishing one after the other under the pressure of the enemy of justice and liberty. We have used enough words about Asian unity. Now let us act.<sup>9</sup>

Nehru's reply to this suggestion of strong action, was that "the Government of India could not give more than moral support."

He stressed the dangers involved in giving material and concrete aid instead of moral support to Vietnam. He declared

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<sup>9</sup>Asian Relations: Report on the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference March-April 1947 (New Delhi: Asian Relations Organization, 1948), p.63.

that:

He did not see how the Indian Government could be expected -- or for that matter other Asian countries -- to declare war on France. That was not the way to proceed and by such precipitate action they were likely to lose in the long run. Any wise government would try to limit the area of conflict. It would, however, bring sufficient pressure to bear, but that could not obviously be done by governments in public meeting.<sup>10</sup>

From the aforesaid remark of Nehru, it appears that he failed to see means short of declaration of war in helping the freedom movement in Vietnam. This statement of Nehru, however, did not pass unchallenged by the delegates of Vietnam and Indonesia. At the end of the Conference they issued a joint statement suggesting ways in which Asian countries could help them without inviting the risks of war. In their joint statement they had put up a five-point program for joint actions by the Asian people. This program included the following suggestions:

- I. Asian nations who are members of U.N.O. should raise the question of colonial peoples in general and of Vietnam in particular before the Security Council.
- II. Asian governments must recognize the Governments of Indonesia and Vietnam.
- III. Asian nations must enforce the withdrawal of foreign troops, the cause of many miseries and troubles in Asia.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p.78.

- IV. Asian nations and peoples must not allow reinforcement of imperialist powers in Vietnam, Indonesia, etc.
- V. Asian nations and peoples must send medical aid missions and volunteers to every battlefield where struggle against imperialism is actually waging as in Indonesia and Vietnam.<sup>11</sup>

This program, except for the provision of sending "volunteers to every battlefield where struggle against imperialism is actually waging, as in Indonesia and Vietnam", was a moderate and realistic one and its application by the Indian Government to the conflict in Vietnam might have made considerable contribution toward the independence of Vietnam without extending the area of war as feared by Nehru. The inconsistency of Nehru's stand was proved by his own action later when, contrary to the declaration made by him in the conference, he applied almost all the provisions of the aforesaid five-point program in the case of Indonesia.<sup>12</sup>

Until India took the case of Indonesia before the Security Council of the United Nations after the Dutch had launched the first Police Action in Indonesia in July 1947, the problems of Indochina and Indonesia had been considered together, on the ground that freedom like peace is indivisible. Now India began to examine separately the problems of

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<sup>11</sup>"Joint Statement by Indonesian and Indochinese Delegates" Amerasia, May 1947, p.146.

<sup>12</sup>See, Chapter II, p.27.



colonialism in Southeast Asia instead of sweeping them under the rug of moral generalization.

When the negotiations between the Dutch and the Indonesian Republic broke down, India took up the case of Indonesia to the Security Council invoking Article 34 as against Article 39 by Australia. Article 34 came within Chapter VI of the Charter, which dealt with the specific settlement of disputes whereas Article 39 was part of the more far-reaching Chapter VII, which concerned action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression.<sup>13</sup> More practical tokens of Indian support at this time were a ban on Dutch aircraft flying over India and the dispatch to Republican territory of an Indian Red Cross medical mission.<sup>14</sup> Nehru also gave asylum in India to political refugees like Sjahrir at this time and expounded a 'Monroe Doctrine' for Asia, stating that "no European country whatever has any business to use its army in Asia. The functioning of foreign armies on Asian soil is in itself an outrage to Asian sentiment."<sup>15</sup> At the time of the second Police Action in December 1948, India once again denied its airfields to Dutch aircraft and a ban was imposed on Dutch

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<sup>13</sup>Peter Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1947-1948 (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 397.

<sup>14</sup>The New York Times, December 24, 1948, p. 24.

<sup>15</sup>The Statesman (Calcutta), July 26, 1947, p. 1.

shipping. Furthermore, India through her state broadcasting system, All India Radio, organized special programs in the Indonesian language which were broadcasted on several wave-lengths and functioned as 'Freedom Radio' for the Indonesian Republic.<sup>16</sup> At the Conferences of the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East at Ootacamund in India and Lapstone in Australia, India along with other friendly nations pressed for admission of the Indonesian Republic to associate membership.<sup>17</sup> Nehru invited the Republic to set up a government-in-exile in India if the Dutch Police Action made it imperative.<sup>18</sup> However, the climax of India's support to the Indonesian Republic reached its height when in 1949 the Government of India convened Asian governments conference for the first time to supplement the attempts of the United Nations in solving the Indonesian conflict.<sup>19</sup>

As against the varied and vigorous role of India in the cause of Indonesian Republic, let us examine her attitude towards

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<sup>16</sup>The Times (London), February 26, 1949, p.5.

<sup>17</sup>Lawrence Kaelter Rosinger, India and the United States: Political and Economic Relations (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p.89.

<sup>18</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Economic Freedom for Asia", Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches 1946-1949 (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), p.311.

<sup>19</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, The Conference on Indonesia: January 20-23, 1949 (Delhi: The United Press, 1949), discusses the activities of the conference in full details.

the Indochina crisis. When the fighting broke out between the forces of the DRV and of France in December, 1946, India did not do more than expressing sympathy for the former. And for a long time after its outbreak, she permitted French aircraft to fly over her territory. She also accorded facilities to fuel and other requirements necessary for their onward passage out of India. Moreover, a French Purchasing Mission continued to buy food, clothes and other materials for Vietnam which indirectly aided the French in their fight against the DRV.<sup>20</sup> The above report was confirmed indirectly by Nehru himself, when he made a statement in response to a query in the Constituent Assembly. He declared that the government intended to exercise stricter control in the future over the French aircrafts and other activities.<sup>21</sup> The membership of the first Asian Relations Conference of 1947 provided further evidence of the Government of India's lack of enthusiasm for the independence of Vietnam. At this conference, Vietnam was represented by two sets of delegates; one sponsored by the French and the other by the DRV. The acceptance of the French sponsored delegation by the conference's reception committee composed of Indians, did not go unnoticed by the other delegations, and the delegations of the DRV challenged the decision of the committee. The presence of the French sponsored delegation at the conference table was

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<sup>20</sup>Banerjee, op. cit., p.54.

<sup>21</sup>Statesman (Calcutta), February 20, 1947.

considered damaging to the cause of Vietnam's independence.<sup>22</sup> The slow and casual way in which India reacted to the French behavior in Vietnam and the speed and spontaniety with which she moved in the Indonesian crisis, clearly indicated that she was more concerned about the independence of Indonesia than that of Vietnam.

Repeated requests to India were made by the leaders of the DRV to help them in solving their problem through peaceful means. A Vietnamese underground resistance leader who contacted Reuter's special correspondent said to him that Vietnam would welcome Indian mediation as Ho Chi Minh had greater affinity to Nehru than to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek. Supporting this suggestion the correspondent mentioned that Nehru would be well advised to approach the British Foreign Office. However, this did not bring any response from the Government of India.<sup>23</sup>

Presumably keeping in mind Vijaya Lakshami Pandit's assurance to Vietnam on its Independence Day in New York of India's full support, Ho Chi Minh sent a message to Nehru requesting him to raise the Vietnamese question in the Security Council. He also invited a mission of outstanding Indian leaders to see and study actual conditions in Vietnam.<sup>24</sup> Here too the Government of India maintained silence.

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<sup>22</sup>Ellen J. Hammer, *The Struggle for Indo-China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954) p. 201.

<sup>23</sup>The Statesman, February 26, 1947, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., October 13, 1947, p. 1.

Apparently, one of the reasons which kept the Government of India away from taking any initiative in the settlement of the Vietnamese conflict, was its view that Vietnam, unlike Indonesia, was outside its sphere of influence. The first Asian Relations Conference of 1947, it seems, made the Indian Government take this consideration into account. India convened the Conference in an attempt to secure implicitly, if not explicitly, some recognition of her leadership in Asia. China, which also aspired to play this role, was opposed to India's desire to assert her leadership in Asia.<sup>25</sup> The uncooperative attitude of China at the Conference doubtlessly convinced the Indian Government of the existence of another leader in South-east Asia with its own sphere of influence.

According to Panikkar and the 'Greater India Society' Vietnam falls geographically and culturally within the Chinese rather than the Indian sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup> However, Panikkar uses the term 'Indochina' instead of Vietnam as the Chinese sphere of influence. The use of the term 'Indochina' could be attributed to his strong tendency to use Vietnam and Indochina interchangeably because of the preponderant position

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<sup>25</sup>Nicholas Mansergh, 'The Asian Relations Conference', International Affairs, Vol. XXIII, No.3, p.303.

<sup>26</sup>Kavalam Madhava Panikkar, The Principles and Practice of Diplomacy (New Delhi: Delhi University Press, 1954), p.22.

of Vietnam within French Indochina. This, however, is incorrect because the French Indochina, besides Vietnam, consisted of Cambodia and Laos, which are culturally more related to India than China. The affinity of Vietnam to China is so close that the former is known as 'Little China'. Because of one thousand years of Chinese domination and geographical propinquity, Vietnam has been greatly influenced by China. The writings of the European political philosophers filtered through Chinese translations to the Vietnamese intellectuals. Furthermore, it has been the traditional Chinese secret societies that have served as models for Vietnamese clandestine organizations. It was also China that gave shelter to Vietnamese political leaders and aided their activities directed at getting rid of the French rule.<sup>27</sup> The acceptance of Japanese surrender in North Vietnam by China is meaningful when viewed in this light. Under this situation, active leadership of India for the independence of Vietnam might have been interpreted as encroachment upon the Chinese sphere of influence. This interpretation gains added strength if the frantic efforts of the Chinese to regain Vietnam through Vietnamese organizations sponsored by them are recalled. In this connection, Hammer's following

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<sup>27</sup>Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, The Left Wing in Southeast Asia (New York: Sloane, 1950), p.41.

comment is worth studying. She writes:

Hanoi, so far as the French population was concerned, was in the grip of terror in January 1946 as pro-Chinese nationalist elements launched a campaign of violence against the Viet-Minh and the French indiscriminately. The Chinese apparently expected to benefit from this situation, to discredit the Viet-Minh in French eyes so as to prevent any Franco-Vietnamese agreement which might lead to loss of Vietnam by China, and to put forward their own candidates for power through whom they hoped to gain control of the country. At the same time, the Chinese seemed to regard the insecurity of the French residents as strengthening the bargaining position of China, in the negotiations with France, which had just begun in Chung-king.<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, India's bold action in the cause of the DRV might have created unfavorable impressions in Laos and Cambodia, her potential friends. Any support to the DRV might have been considered by them as building up their enemy since they were afraid of Vietnam more than France. This fear was partly based on old memories of Vietnamese expansion to the West and partly due to the presence of many Vietnamese as administrators in their countries. Typical expression of this fear was voiced by the King of Cambodia when he observed:

No one is more desirous of complete independence than I, but we must look facts in the face. We are too poor to support or defend ourselves. We are dependent upon some major power to give us technicians and troops. If not France, it would be some other great nation. We are a small power sandwiched between 20 million Annamese and 12 million Siamese.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Hammer, loc. cit., p.138.

<sup>29</sup>New York Times, February 13, 1947, p.3.

The Asian Conference gives us another probable reason for India's passive attitude in respect of Vietnam. To the appeal of the delegates of the DRV at the Conference for material aid against the colonial powers, Nehru replied that "to do so would tantamount to declaration of war on France." This cautious attitude of non-intervention in the affairs of France could be well explained in terms of its position in the world affairs and India's relationship with the West during the period under consideration. France, unlike the Netherlands, was considered at the end of World War II as one of the Big Five and its being the permanent member on the Security Council was the expression of that high esteem. Besides, it also was one of the Big Four in Europe, and as such, played an important role in its post-war settlement. Because of this, it was in a better position to get its view carried more forcefully before its allies in the West than the Netherlands. Uncertain internal political situation in France as well prevented the United States and the United Kingdom from making any move in favor of Vietnam's independence. After the war, the Communist Party in France had emerged as the biggest party and had formed government in coalition with the Socialists and other leftist groups. The neutralist foreign policies of this government in the East-West struggle led the Western allies to back up the



rightists groups whose policies with regard to colonies were not at all liberal. With regard to the impact of the French domestic situation on the American policy toward Indochina, it was remarked that:

The French had already suffered the loss of Syria and Lebanon. Overt action in the case of Indo-China might seriously alienate the new French Government (of Ramadier). In France the charge of imperialism was raised against the United States pictured as desirous of divesting France of her colonial empire. In the face of this situation the choice seems to have been made in favour of France as opposed to Indo-Chinese nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

The place of France in the Western world is discussed at length because the foreign policy of India was greatly influenced by that of the West in general, and the United Kingdom in particular. The manner in which the British withdrew from India played a key role in the maintenance of close relationship between them. The friendly approach of the British enabled India to see her needs and policies in proper perspective. From the very beginning there was clear realization in India that without the cooperation of Britain, it would be rather difficult to solve the problems of defence and economic development. In this connection accumulated sterling balances

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<sup>30</sup>Robert Laurel, "The Indo-China Dilemma: An American Responsibility", American Perspective (published by Foundation for Foreign Affairs, Washington, D.C.), June 1948, p.123. See also, Alexander Werth, France: 1940-1955 (London: Robert Hale Ltd., 1956), pp.436-444 and Francois Goguel, France: Under The Fourth Republic (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), pp. 20-47.

rightly loomed large. Administrative and military services, as well as political set-up, created additional bonds of closeness. The Commonwealth Conferences which are based upon the principle of give and take were instrumental in giving to India's foreign policy a Western orientation. Nehru acknowledged this close relationship in the Constituent Assembly when he justified India remaining within the Commonwealth of Nations.<sup>31</sup>

Prime Minister Nehru provided at the Conference of the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in May 1949 additional evidence of his government's inclination towards the West during the period under consideration. At this Conference, he endorsed the association of Britain with other European nations under the Brussels Treaty and the view that it was in accordance with the interests of other members of the Commonwealth.<sup>32</sup> Here it may be pointed out that the Government of India was an outcast in the Soviet eyes during the formative period of its foreign policy. And the fear of isolation in international politics made it imperative on the Government of India to have close relations with the West even though it had professed policy of

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<sup>31</sup>Nehru, loc. cit., pp.268-291.

<sup>32</sup>K. P. Karunakaran, India in World Affairs: August 1947-January 1950 (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1952), p.39.

non-alignment in the cold war.<sup>33</sup> The attitude of the Government of India in the Indonesian crisis presented still another evidence of its inclination towards the West. It took pains at all the levels of the Indonesian crisis to see that its consideration did not endanger the position of the West in the cold war.<sup>34</sup> On the contrary there was some support of the West to India's active fight on behalf of Indonesia because it was incomparably richer in raw materials than Indochina and its recovery, therefore, was a matter of general concern.<sup>35</sup> From the above observations it could safely be inferred that close relations of both India and France within the general framework of the West might have put a brake on the former's activities on behalf of Vietnam.

It was believed in the British press that India's interest in regaining control of the French possessions on the sub-continent of India through peaceful negotiations was responsible for her studied aloofness from the conflict in Vietnam.<sup>36</sup> India's fight in favor of Indonesia was carried out primarily

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<sup>33</sup>J. C. Kundra, Indian Foreign Policy: 1947-1954 (Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1955), p.56.

<sup>34</sup>Rosinger, op. cit., p.94.

<sup>35</sup>Andrew Roth, "Vietnam-Orphan Up For Adoption", The China Weekly Review, January 22, 1949, p.190.

<sup>36</sup>New York Times, December 25, 1948, p.2.

within the United Nations, but the threat of a French veto in the Security Council meetings might have discouraged her to do the same in the case of Vietnam.<sup>37</sup>

Each of the above-mentioned considerations put forward to explain India's attitude of inaction towards Vietnam appears to be partially cogent and convincing. But the often repeated argument that the Communist leadership of the freedom movement in Vietnam made India cool toward it, does not appear to be logically sound. We do not find any indications whatsoever from Indian sources that the Communist leadership of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam influenced India's approach to the problem of that area. On the other hand we find remarks both official and non-official to the effect that Ho's government was primarily and essentially a nationalist one and his being a Communist was mere incidental. For instance, the Amrit Bazar Patrika of Calcutta, as late as on April 28, 1950, in its editorial stated that:

Ho Chi Minh despite his earlier communist schooling had practically denounced Communism in favour of Nationalism. Today he is thrown back into the Communist lap not because of his own volition, but under compelling circumstances.<sup>38</sup>

The above view of the DRV was held not by the leftist press favorably inclined toward Communist bloc, but by the pro-Western and independent press in India. Nehru's speech at the

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<sup>37</sup> Calvocoressi, op. cit., p.399.

<sup>38</sup> Amrit Bazar Patrika, April 28, 1950, p.5.

Eleventh Conference of the Institute of Pacific Relations is illuminating and suggestive of his choice between Communism and Nationalism. Minimizing the issue of Communism in Asia, he stated:

I am often asked: How has Communism affected your country? How do you deal with it? These are trivial questions and have perhaps a momentary importance. If you seek to understand a country by putting such trivial questions, then you are bound to get lost in its superficial aspects. One has to think of the problems which are fundamental to the life of a country, before one can presume to understand its people.<sup>39</sup>

In the context of the aforesaid remark of Nehru, it could be argued that even if the Communist leadership in Vietnam was an established fact, he would not have hesitated to make his choice in its favor against the French domination. Furthermore, the high esteem and reverence with which Ho Chi Minh was upheld by Nehru and many other leaders, lead to the conclusion that the issue of Communist leadership in Vietnam did not loom large in the formation of Indian foreign policy during this period. With reference to Ho Chi Minh, it might be mentioned that Indian leaders called him Gandhi of Vietnam.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. "Ferment in Asia", Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-53 (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press Ltd., 1954), p.159.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with the officer of the Information Service, Embassy of India, Washington, D. C., March 9, 1959, who had been posted in South Vietnam from 1955-1958.

The thesis of the Indian Government that the Government of the DRV was preeminently a national one under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh and that the conflict in Vietnam was a struggle for national independence in its purest form until the end of 1949 when it became a cold war issue, finds support even in the writings of Western observers. They based their opinion on three considerations. In the first instance, they found that the Government of the DRV enjoyed wide popular support throughout Vietnam. Expression of this fact was seen in various ways. The attitude of most of the two million Vietnamese Catholics, including bishops, towards the Government of the DRV was most impressive indeed. Most of them openly declared their support to the Government of the DRV which, in turn, prevented the Vatican from taking a stand against it in spite of the French attempts to the contrary.<sup>41</sup> The elections of January 1946 which were a fair standard of recording popular sentiment also confirmed the overwhelming popularity of the Government of the DRV.<sup>42</sup> It was estimated that the resistant movement in Vietnam consisted of eighty percent

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<sup>41</sup> Ellen J. Hammer, "The Bao Dai Experiment", Pacific Affairs, (March 1950), p.48.

<sup>42</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "Parties and Politics in Vietnam", Foreign Affairs Reports (December 1953), p.151.

nationalists and twenty percent Communists.<sup>43</sup>

Communist affiliations of the Viet Minh, as well as of Ho Chi Minh were emphasized to discredit the national character of the Government of the DRV. The Western observers, however, concluded from the activities of the Viet Minh that it placed the interests of Vietnam ahead of the aims of international Communists. At home the Viet Minh in sharp contrast to the Communists of the other Southeast Asian countries had adopted during this period the policy of cooperation and coalition with other nationalist groups.<sup>44</sup> At international level it had followed an independent policy. At the Communist Youth Conference at Calcutta in 1948, the Communist delegates tried to push through a number of resolutions attacking the Burmese Government as puppet of the West and the Siamese one as military fascists and advocating immediate partition of land for the peasants and expropriation of the foreign owned property. To this, the Vietnamese delegate replied that he would have to dissociate himself from these resolutions because his government had friendly relations with the governments of both Burma and Siam. He also refused to vote for the resolutions outlining

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<sup>43</sup>"Report from Saigon", The U. S. News and World Report, August 13, 1948, p.32.

<sup>44</sup>"Viet Minh Nationalism", Eastern World, (November 1949), pp.3-4.

the domestic program on the ground that he did not consider them expedient.<sup>45</sup>

The attitude of the Viet Minh during the early part of negotiations between the governments of France and the DRV was equally reassuring of its national character. In Vietnam, the Viet Minh was more moderate and more inclined towards France than the other groups that formed the resistance movement. The manner in which the Agreement of March 6, 1946 was received by the Viet Minh in contrast to other groups in Vietnam confirmed the above view of the Viet Minh. Under the provisions of this Agreement, Vietnam agreed to remain within the Indochinese Federation and the French Union. It also accepted the French Army and gave preferential treatment to France in cultural and economic matters. The Agreement was acceptable to the Viet Minh but the other national groups who were a part of the Government of the DRV found its terms too favorable to France and therefore opposed it. Among the groups that opposed the Agreement were the Nationalist Party, the Revolutionary League and Vietnam Restoration League. The first two were inclined towards China and the last one towards Japan for aid and closer associations.<sup>46</sup> Sainteny and Paul

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<sup>45</sup>Roth, op. cit., p.193.

<sup>46</sup>Alexander Werth, France: 1940-1955 (London: Robert Hale, Ltd., 1956), pp.333-336.



Mus, who represented France in negotiations with the DRV, were of the opinion that Ho Chi Minh and Viet Minh were favorably disposed towards France and had desired sincerely to arrive at a settlement with France.<sup>47</sup> The Western observers further concluded that the French policy of 'too little and too late' forced the moderates and nationalists of Vietnam into Communists hands and made France responsible for the conflict of Vietnam.<sup>48</sup>

Thus, it could be argued that the Vietnamese conflict, until the end of 1949, was as much a struggle for national independence as the Indonesian one. But the different treatment which the Government of India accorded to the two conflicts of similar nature, throws light on its attitude towards the problem of imperialism. Its policy of studied aloofness towards the Vietnamese conflict seems to indicate that the ending of imperialism was not as strong a motivating factor in the shaping of India's foreign policy as it was generally believed. The Government of India, like other governments of the world, was more concerned to protect and promote its national interests. For the sake of independence

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<sup>47</sup>Ellen J. Hammer, "The Bao Dai Experiment", Pacific Affairs, (March 1950), p.48.

<sup>48</sup>Kenneth Young, "Western Policy in Asia", Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXV, p.127.

of Vietnam, it did not want to risk at a time, its friendly relations with China, Laos, Cambodia or France, and other countries in the West, which together had much to offer to India.

## Part II

### Attitude Towards A Cold War Conflict

The Vietnamese conflict underwent a great transformation toward the end of 1949. Upto that time France and the DRV were the main parties in the conflict, but thereafter the contenders of the cold war began to align themselves with one party or the other. Moreover, the conflict which had been preeminently a struggle for national independence until then became a focal point in the world struggle for power between East and West, that is to say, the Vietnamese conflict became a cold war issue.

Developments both within and outside Indochina contributed towards this change in the nature of the Vietnamese conflict. Early 1950 witnessed French policy of almost last three years towards Indochina taking tangible shape. From the time the first contingent of French troops landed at Saigon in September 1945 till the French Government decided not to reopen negotiations with the DRV in the first half of 1947

attempts were made by the parties concerned to arrive at a negotiated settlement. But the attempts were fruitless and the conflict began to deepen. The Preliminary Agreement of Hanoi, the two conferences at Dalat and the Modus Vivendi of Fontainebleau were some of the major attempts directed at resolving Franco-Vietnamese differences during this period.<sup>49</sup> Their differences on the union of Cochin-China with Annam and Tonkin into the State of Vietnam and the degree of independence for the Government of Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh were the two major issues that made the settlement impossible.

After the negotiations had failed the French Government tried for a while to settle the conflict by force of arms. However, lack of military strength to undertake a large scale offensive against the DRV made the French Government realize very soon the necessity of negotiated political settlement and to that end it began to look for an amenable Vietnamese nationalist who might rally non-Communists nationalists as an alternative to Ho Chi Minh. The most available and attractive candidate for this purpose was Emperor Bao Dai, who, as a

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<sup>49</sup>For text of communiques and agreements see, e.g. Cole, op.cit., pp.4-48.

result of self-imposed exile, had retired to Hong Kong.

Negotiations between the French and the Emperor were a long drawn-out process, the details of which are not pertinent to this study. The negotiations, however, reached the climax about after two years when the Elysee Agreement was signed on March 8, 1949.<sup>50</sup> In this Agreement, France recognized in principle the union of Cochin-China along with Tonkin and Annam into the State of Vietnam. This was a concession by France in view of the fact that it had refused to do so and had jeopardized the settlement of the Vietnamese conflict in 1946. France was compelled to make this concession to secure the support of the non-communist nationalists of Vietnam upon whom the success of its Bao Dai experiment had rested. Here, it may be pointed out that integration of Cochin-China in the State of Vietnam was considered a prerequisite of their support to Bao Dai even by the nationalists who were favorably disposed towards France. In this Agreement, France also recognized Vietnam's right to be sovereign in internal affairs and provided for its implementation through conventions to be signed between France and the Government of Bao Dai. Accordingly, numerous conventions transferring to the Government of Bao Dai sovereignty in internal affairs of Vietnam, were signed subsequently. However, because of the French obsession with

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<sup>50</sup>For text of the Agreement see, e.g., Ibid., pp.72-80.

protecting their interests at any cost and the prevailing hostilities in Vietnam, the Government of Bao Dai was granted very little of internal sovereignty. In short, France continued to remain in command of internal affairs of Vietnam after the Elysee Agreement had been signed.<sup>51</sup>

The Agreement granted associated statehood to Vietnam which was far removed from independence. According to the French Constitution, control over the foreign affairs and the armies of the associated states was to remain in the hands of the French Republic. Under this set-up, Vietnam could exercise its rights in foreign affairs through its delegates in the High Council of the French Union and the Assembly of the French Union. Both of these bodies, however, were advisory only, and the former did not come into existence at all. In short, foreign affairs of Vietnam were to be associated with those of France and to be coordinated under the direction of the French Republic. The Agreement even spelled out details with regard to execution of foreign relations. It prescribed that the heads of the foreign diplomatic missions to Vietnam would be accredited to the President of the French Union and to the

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<sup>51</sup>Ellen J. Hammer, "Indo-China," The State of Asia: A Contemporary Survey, ed., Lawrence K. Rosinger and Associates, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), p.250.

Emperor of Vietnam. The Vietnamese heads of diplomatic missions were to receive credentials granted by the President of the French Union and initialed by the Emperor. Vietnam could open missions only after the French Government had given its consent.

This Agreement has been discussed in detail because after it was ratified by the French Assembly in January 1950, it figured prominently both at home and abroad in the consideration of the Vietnamese conflict. Ratification of the Agreement by the French Government formally ended its rule over the states of Indochina and brought in Vietnam the existence of Bao Dai Government, claiming the right to speak for the whole country in opposition to that of Ho Chi Minh. The creation of the Bao Dai Government seemed to be a French device to give the colonial war in Vietnam the appearance of a civil war. France might have taken recourse to this device to ensure non-intervention of the foreign powers on the ground that international law did not permit their intervention in the internal affairs of Vietnam.

The emergence of Communist Government in China in the fall of 1949 was another outstanding development which contributed towards turning the Vietnamese conflict into a cold war issue. The change-over of government in China brought the

cold war to the border of Vietnam, which in turn made the big powers change their attitudes towards the Vietnamese conflict. Disturbed at the success of Communism in China, the United States began to show open sympathy for the Bao Dai experiment. The British and the other Western bloc countries followed the United States' lead, and all of them began to give recognition to the Government of Bao Dai as the true and only government in Vietnam in January 1950.<sup>52</sup>

On the other hand, long and bitter struggle against the French in Vietnam discredited moderate and nationalist groups in the Government of the DRV. Consequently, the Government of the DRV gradually came under the strong influence of the Vietnamese Communists. The emergence of Communist government on the mainland of China further strengthened the position of Vietnamese Communists. Open and unequivocal support of the Bao Dai experiment by the western powers did not leave for the Government of the DRV any alternative but to seek help from the Communist and neutral countries. Internationally, the failure of the Communist Party in France to win over control of the Government, made it possible for both the Russian Government and the French Communists to move from a policy of words to one of actions in support of the cause of the DRV. This, in

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<sup>52</sup>Calvocoressi, op. cit., pp.426-429.

other words, cleared the way for the Russian Government to recognize the Government of the DRV. In this context it may be pointed out that the Communists, in the earlier stages of the Vietnamese conflict (when they had a hope of forming a government in France) were determined not to offend the nationalist sensibilities of the French electorate by giving the cause of the Vietnamese independence more than verbal support. By the end of February 1950 all the Communist bloc countries had recognized the Government of the DRV.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, by the end of 1949, there existed in Vietnam two rival governments; each claimed the right to represent and speak for the whole country. Recognition of the Governments of Bao Dai and Ho Chi Minh by the countries of the Western bloc and the Soviet bloc respectively in early 1950 brought the Vietnamese conflict in the context of the cold war which until then had been a colonial and a regional one. During this new phase of the conflict, the Bao Dai side sought India's support as earnestly and overtly as the DRV had done during its first phase. The DRV presumably having found friends in the Soviet camp, did not make any outstanding attempt to seek for itself India's recognition. The Bao Dai experiment, as pointed out earlier, was an attempt by France and its allies to find

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<sup>53</sup>Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle for Indo-China, op. cit., p.254.



political settlement of the Vietnamese conflict. They considered India's role to this end very crucial and consequently made numerous efforts to win her recognition of the Bao Dai Government.

The Bao Dai Government was granted the right to have the diplomatic missions in China, Siam and the Vatican in accordance with the provisions of the Elysee Agreement. Because of the establishment of Communist regime in China, India was later substituted for China.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, informal approaches were made to India to seek her recognition of the Bao Dai Government. Emperor Bao Dai, emphasizing the centuries old ties between India and Vietnam and former's key position on the political chess board of Asia, pleaded for his government's recognition. He stated that the recognition of his government by India would prove more than a priceless encouragement to his government's efforts toward the setting up of an independent nation.<sup>55</sup> To strengthen his case further, he

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<sup>54</sup>The Elysee Agreement does not specify the names of the countries with which Vietnam could have diplomatic relations. It only says that "the countries in which Vietnam will be represented by a diplomatic mission, will be determined after an agreement with the French Government." The candidate has failed to find an agreement permitting Vietnam to have diplomatic relations with three countries mentioned above. For further details see, e.g., Colvocoressi, *op. cit.*, p.418.

<sup>55</sup>Statesman (Calcutta), April 25, 1950, p.5.

sent to India in September 1950, a good will mission headed by Nguyen Duy Thanh who was formerly a colleague of Ho Chi Minh. The delegation addressed meetings in a number of cities in India pleading for their country's recognition. Prime Minister Nehru, however, refused to receive it.<sup>56</sup>

Letourneau, then Minister for Associated States in the French Government harping on the same theme, commented:

Indian recognition of Indo-China was of fundamental importance to the Associated States besides being an event of great significance to the free world. Recognition by a great Republic like India with her influence in Asia and elsewhere, can mean a big difference to Indo-China. It would have been valuable to her internationally two years ago.<sup>57</sup>

As late as July 1953, Van Hoach, a Vietnamese official, said that diplomatic recognition of the Associated States could have been of very great importance three years ago. 'Even now, it would amount to a further credit to our nationalist cause in the eyes of the world.'<sup>58</sup> This issue was raised at the British Commonwealth Conference in Colombo in January 1950. At the Conference, Malcolm MacDonald attempted to dispel the belief that Bao Dai was a French puppet. He argued that Bao Dai started with a heavy handicap, but had made progress,

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., August 28, 1950, p.5.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., July 14, 1952, p.1.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., July 20, 1953, p.8.

that the French had made substantial concessions and were prepared to go further as the Bao Dai regime proved its competence, and that the new regime, far from being subservient was staunchly nationalist.<sup>59</sup>

Voices favoring recognition of the Bao Dai Government were raised guardingly and gradually even in India after 1949 where the people and the press had unanimously supported the Government of the DRV. A segment of anti-Communist press in India viewed the Vietnamese conflict in terms of Communist menace in Southeast Asia and requested the Government of India to take steps which might bolster up the cause of Emperor Bao Dai. For instance, Eastern Economist pointed out:

If the case against according recognition to Bao Dai is, as it ought to be, only the extent of his subordination to French authority it deserves to be explicitly stated to dispel all the misunderstandings it has caused. Such a firm stand cannot but strengthen Bao Dai who is now bargaining in France more powers without appreciable success and it would also help the efforts of the U.S.A. to persuade France to shed her colonialism in a more demonstrable manner in the interests of stability in Asia. . . . It is only by making Indian recognition of the nationalistic and pre-democratic government of Bao Dai -- who is also otherwise qualified to be a legal sovereign in Vietnam -- conditional on this transfer that the progress towards Southeast Asian stability can be assisted. But in any case, there should be no hesitation in repudiating any motive to wait for a settlement of the internal situation by civil war.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., January 14, 1950, p.5.

<sup>60</sup> "Envoy from Bao Dai," Eastern Economist, October 6, 1950, p.514.

The Government of India turned down all the pleadings for the recognition of Bao Dai Government as it had done in the first phase when India's support was sought by the Government of the DRV. A couple of months after the Elysee Agreement was signed, Prime Minister Nehru, in a reply to a query on Indochina, declared that he categorically opposed any foreign intervention there and supported the Government of the DRV.<sup>61</sup> Later in the year, the Indian Consulate General in Saigon prepared a confidential report on the Indochina situation which subsequently was forwarded to the British Government. The report was pessimistic of Bao Dai's prospects and advised against the recognition of his regime. The Consulate General further argued that France could not solve the conflict by military decisions. He also argued that France had lost both political and economic struggle there. At the same time, the report was favorably inclined towards the DRV, and also was of the opinion that the revolutionary movement headed by Dr. Ho Chi Minh was a coalition of tough communists said to be in minority and fervent nationalists all of whom were sceptical of the French promises of ultimate independence to them. It estimated that the DRV ruled 80 per

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<sup>61</sup>The Statesman (Calcutta), May 7, 1949, p. 1. This was an expression of moral support only since it was not followed up officially by the Government of India.

cent of the country.<sup>62</sup> Even in April 1954, when the war in Indochina had begun to assume its most ominous aspect, Nehru did not have the slightest doubt with respect to the nationalist and anti-colonial character of the Indochina conflict.

He said that:

The conflict originally and essentially was a movement of resistance to colonialism and it was being dealt with by traditional methods of suppression, and divide and rule. Foreign intervention has made the issue more complex but basically it remains anti-colonial and nationalist in character. Recognition of this fact was the only basis of a settlement.<sup>63</sup>

It will, therefore, be seen that if in the opinion of the Government of India one of the two rival governments in Vietnam deserved its support during the second phase of the conflict, it was the Government of the DRV. But the Indian Government failed to support it as it had failed to do so in the first phase of the conflict. Whereas the Government of India had not given any reasons for not supporting the cause of the DRV in the first phase of the conflict, it did adduce reasons in explanation of its policy towards the DRV in the

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<sup>62</sup> The Hindu, November 2, 1949, p.1. The text of the report of the Indian Consulate General of India in Saigon is not available since it was confidential. The report had leaked out in London and was carried by Reuter's News Agency.

<sup>63</sup> India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions And Answers (House of the People), IV, No. 52, April 24, 1954.

second phase. However, most of the reasons advanced by it seem to evade the issue.

Refusing to endorse MacDonald's views on recognition of the Bao Dai Government, Nehru argued that political stability could be attained only through satisfying the nationalist sentiments of the people and that recognition of the Bao Dai regime would be a mistake until events in Vietnam proved where lay the will of the people.<sup>64</sup> This argument may well justify non-recognition of the Bao Dai Government, but it does not explain the Government of India's non-recognition of the Government of the DRV. A couple of months later when questioned in the Indian Parliament about this subject, Nehru observed that the Government of India was not prepared to recognize either of the two governments in Vietnam on the ground that it would be tantamount to taking sides in the internal dispute of Vietnam.<sup>65</sup> This reasoning is neither cogent nor convincing when it is examined in the background of the Government of India's views of the Vietnamese conflict. The Vietnamese conflict from its point of view had never been an internal dispute but it was essentially a colonial war in which the contestants were not Ho Chi Minh and Bao Dai but the DRV and

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<sup>64</sup>Statesman (Calcutta), January 14, 1950, p.5.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., June 18, 1950, p.9.

France. For Bao Dai at best was a puppet figure in the eyes of the Vietnamese and Asian (including Indian) public imagination.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, internal conflicts did not prevent the Indian Government from taking sides in the past. Convening of a Council of the Commonwealth of Nations in the Spring of 1949 by India, to help out the Burmese Government which was torn asunder by internal strifes, may be cited as an example of her taking active interest in the internal affairs of a country.<sup>67</sup> Replying in the Indian Parliament to a query on recognition of either of the two governments in Vietnam in 1952, Nehru stated that none of them satisfied 'certain tests well-known to International Law.'<sup>68</sup> We, however, do not know what well-known tests the Prime Minister had in mind.

The reasons cited above do not explain non-recognition of the Government of the DRV by India. Some of the reasons which made the Government of India adopt the policy of 'studied aloofness' during the first phase of the conflict might have influenced its policy during the second phase of

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<sup>66</sup>Christian Science Monitor, January 30, 1950, p.28.

<sup>67</sup>"Doctors By The Burmese Bedside," Economist, March 5, 1949, p.412.

<sup>68</sup>The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), December 18, 1952.

the conflict. However, from the comments and statements of Prime Minister Nehru it appears that the Government of India had two additional reasons for continuing the policy of studied aloofness during the second phase of the conflict. One of them was that the Government of India, which believed in keeping out of the power blocs, found the joining with the Soviet bloc of the Government of the DRV rather unpleasant. Prime Minister Nehru's following remark about Vietnam becomes significant when interpreted in this light:

Generally speaking, our outlook is to keep out of other people's troubles. We have troubles of our own. We have no desire at all to pose as a people who are guardians or want to do something elsewhere in the world. Naturally, we are interested in the world, but we have enough work of our own country, and so we try not to interfere outside our country, except when we have to express an opinion in the United Nations and elsewhere.<sup>69</sup>

The phrases, 'other people's troubles' and 'people who are guardians' when studied in the light of India's behavior in other Southeast Asian countries like Burma and Indonesia, lead to an inescapable conclusion that she did not want to get involved in the cold war over the issue of recognition of the government in Vietnam which was geographically and culturally outside her sphere of influence. The Government

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<sup>69</sup>India, India Information Services, Jawaharlal Nehru: Press Conference 1950, May 22, 1950, p.92.



of the DRV was therefore disqualified to earn India's recognition.

Lastly, the Government of India did not give recognition to the Government of the DRV on the ground that since the conflict in Vietnam had become a cold war issue, its recognition would not have contributed anything towards the solution of the problem.<sup>70</sup> At the same time recognition of the Government of the DRV would have made the Government of India a party to a conflict and thereby would have forfeited its role as a mediator. Elaborating this point in the Indian Parliament on March 17, 1950, Nehru remarked:

The policy we have pursued in regard to Indo-China has been one of absolute non-interference. Our interference could at best be a theoretical one. I don't think that either a theoretical or any other kind of interference in the affairs of a country struggling for freedom can do any good, because the countries which have been under colonial domination invariably resent foreign interference. Their nationalism cannot tolerate it, and even if interference comes with the best possible motives it is often regarded as a kind of weapon in the

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<sup>70</sup>Mr. Nehru correlating foreign policy with the means to carry it out, observed in the Constituent Assembly on March 8, 1948 that "I have come more and more to the conclusion that the less we interfere in international conflicts, the better, unless, of course, our own interest is involved, for the simple reason that it is not in consonance with our dignity just to interfere without producing any effect. We should either be strong enough to produce some effect or we should not interfere at all." See Nehru, Independence and After, op. cit., p.215.

hands of those who are opposed to nationalism. Besides, interference exposes them to the possible slur that their nationalism is not a free independent nationalism but that it is controlled by others. That is why we have sought deliberately not to interfere with Indo-China and we intend to continue this policy.<sup>71</sup>

In the following chapter we shall examine the reasons which made the Government of India change in early 1954 its seven year old policy of studied aloofness and participate actively in the affairs of Indochina. We shall also study the various steps it took towards the fulfillment of its new policy in the states of Indochina.

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<sup>71</sup> India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-1953 (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1954), pp.148-149.

## CHAPTER III

### IN DEFENCE OF THE 'AREA OF PEACE'

#### Part I

##### Farewell To The Policy Of Studied Aloofness

Early 1954 witnessed the beginning of a new phase of Indian diplomacy in the Indochina conflict. As against the studied aloofness in the conflict till 1954, this new phase of diplomacy was marked by active participation in its settlement. This change in the policy can be understood in proper perspective only when studied and scrutinized in the context of developments in the states of Indochina and the reactions of the contestants of the cold war thereto.

The conflict in Vietnam had been a cruel, exhausting and fruitless war. It has drained the strength of France without any compensatory gain on the battlefield. It had caused great destruction and suffering in Vietnam without ensuring a full victory to Viet Minh. The result at the end had been a military and political stalemate where neither side appeared able to force a decision on the battlefield. There was increasing awareness among the parties concerned of the implications of the military stalemates which could not continue indefinitely and the incalculable dangers attendant to attempts in breaking the stalemate through outside military aid and

intervention. If at all there were any doubts on this issue, the announcement of February 6, 1954 from the American Department of Defence regarding sending of 400 technicians to Indochina to service some American B-26 bombers used by the French in Vietnam, cleared the air.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, conditions for negotiated settlement of the conflict had been ripening. The seven year old conflict had brought immeasurable hardships to both the parties as a result of which the desire for settlement was getting receptive. In November 1953 'Expressen', a Swedish newspaper, published a cable over the signature of Ho Chi Minh, expressing his government's readiness to have an armistice and settle the conflict by negotiations. Ten days later the Viet Minh radio repeated that Ho Chi Minh was ready to negotiate if France would respect Vietnamese independence. On December 17, 1953 on the eve of the seventh anniversary of the establishment of the DRV he again affirmed his government's wishes to have a peaceful settlement of the dispute.<sup>2</sup> Similarly powerful forces in France were clamouring for negotiated settlement. Mendes-France declared in the Assembly in June, 1953 that if he became Prime Minister, he would end

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<sup>1</sup>For details of the last phase of the Indochina conflict and negotiations on intervention thereto see, e.g., Cora Bell, Survey of International Affairs 1954, ed. F. C. Benham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp. 21-42.

<sup>2</sup>"Viet Minh and Geneva", New Statesman and Nation, March 27, 1954, p.390.

fighting in Vietnam by negotiations. Albert Sarraut, a former Governor-General of Indochina, and the President of the Assembly of the French Union, urged that France should be ready to listen to any honorable peace proposals, even from Ho Chi Minh. In the latter part of 1953, it was possible even for people in official positions to speak of a negotiated settlement rather than military victory. The debate in the French Assembly which opened on October 23, 1953, almost unanimously expressed the necessity of seeking an end to the long-drawn conflict by employing some honorable means other than military victory.<sup>3</sup> The Berlin Conference of Big Four foreign ministers which met in January 1954 gave added support to the idea of peaceful settlement of the Indochina conflict by agreeing to meet in Geneva in April 1954 for making peace in Korea and Indochina.

Prime Minister Nehru, therefore, found the time propitious to add the weight of his government to the aforesaid developments leading towards the peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese conflict by making an appeal to both the sides for a ~~cease~~-fire. On February 22, 1954 he observed in the Indian

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Calvocoressi, Survey of International Affairs 1953 (London: Oxford University Press 1956), p.299.

Parliament:

It seems a tremendous pity that this war should continue when a serious attempt is going to be made to find a way out. Certainly we have no desire to intervene in any way or intrude or involve ourselves. But I venture to suggest to all the parties and the Powers concerned that in view of the fact that this matter of Indochina is going to be discussed at the Geneva Conference two months later, it might be desirable to have some kind of cease-fire. The parties need not give up their positions, whatever they might consider their rights.<sup>4</sup>

This rather moderate and non-committal statement reflected much of the policy of studied aloofness. The Government of India at this stage was neither ready to pass judgements on the rights and wrongs of the contending parties nor was it ready to undertake any responsibilities. The cease-fire appeal, however, evoked responsive echoes both in France and Viet Minh. Ho Chi Minh endorsed the cease-fire proposal and the French National Assembly went into a special session to discuss it. The reaction of the French Government was guarded if not negative, and it took no steps to pursue the proposal. Among the Western statesmen, only the Canadian Premier, Mr. St. Laurent, expressed his support for Nehru's appeal for a cease-fire.<sup>5</sup> In final analysis, no immediate result came out of the appeal.

In the two months between his cautious cease-fire appeal

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<sup>4</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, Vol. III (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1958), pp.345-46.

<sup>5</sup>The Hindu, February 25, 1954, p. 5.

on February 22 and April 24, when Nehru outlined a six point program for the settlement of the conflict, there were radical changes both in Vietnam and the United States. The conflict in Vietnam took a sharp turn, shattering the optimistic hopes of the West based on the Navarre Plan. The success of the first wave of Viet Minh attacks on March 12-15, 1954 at Dien Bien Phu had already put the fate of defenders in doubt, and other aspects of the military situation came under review immediately afterwards. The deteriorating situation in Vietnam created a diplomatic stir in the U.S.A. and called for reconsideration of its policies towards the former. American opinion was suspicious of the Geneva Conference from the first, and when the American administration realized that the Western powers would not be negotiating from strength, it began to think in terms of American intervention. Thinking on this line reached its height on March 29, 1954 when Dulles announced the principles of massive retaliation with an extension of the Monroe Doctrine to Indochina and united action by the Western powers in cooperation with friendly Asian nations to oppose the Communist forces there.<sup>6</sup> This was

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<sup>6</sup>John F. Dulles, "The Threat of Red Asia", The U. S. Department of State Bulletin, April 12, 1954, pp.539-540. See also a column by James Reston, "Dulles' Talk Reflects Basic Policy on Asia", The New York Times, March 30, 1954, pp. 1 and 5.

followed by Dulles' visits to London and Paris in mid-April and the announcement that the three countries would explore the possibility of establishing a collective defence arrangement for Southeast Asia. These aggressive gestures of the American Government, in total disregard to the meeting of the Geneva Conference, were indeed radical when examined with reference to earlier pronouncements of its leaders. In early February, when the American Department of Defence announced that 400 mechanics and 12 B-26 aircrafts were being dispatched to Indochina, several influential senators voiced their opposition to any intervention and demanded guarantees of non-involvement. President Eisenhower said at the Press Conference on February 10, 1954 that he could conceive of no greater tragedy than the U.S.A. getting involved in war in Indochina.<sup>7</sup>

The Government of India was alarmed over the mounting military and diplomatic tension and concluded that outside intervention in Indochina would turn the Vietnamese conflict, so far localized, into an international war in which the whole of Southeast Asia would become a battleground. It was this trend of events which made Prime Minister Nehru to abandon on April 24, 1954 his government's seven year old policy of watch and wait by outlining before the Indian Parliament the six

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<sup>7</sup>Bell, op. cit., pp.21-23.



point program for the settlement of the Indochina conflict.<sup>8</sup> The announcement of the peace plan might be taken as a dividing line ending the Government of India's policy of studied aloofness and the beginning of its diplomacy of active participation in the states of Indochina. This new phase of its diplomacy would not be understood in proper perspective if examined simply in general terms of war and peace. It is revealing when studied in the framework of probable consequences of outside intervention in Indochina on the position of India in Southeast Asia as a whole.

Peace is the fundamental basis of India's foreign policy because it is an absolute necessity. The outbreak of war would endanger the great adventure the Government of India is engaged in, of raising the standard of living of hundreds of millions of people and making them full sharers in freedom and prosperity. This view of peace has been expressed by the Government of India on innumerable occasions.<sup>9</sup> However, in the enlargement of war in Indochina through outside intervention, the Government of India foresaw additional three-fold danger to its foreign policy. In the first instance it was impelled

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<sup>8</sup>For the text of the peace plan of Nehru, see Appendix 1, pp. 291-293.

<sup>9</sup>For instance, see, e.g., India Information Services, Jawaharlal Nehru Press Conferences 1954, (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1955), p.1.

to break its silence because of the decision of the Western powers to settle the future of Southeast Asia without taking into considerations the views of some of the countries of the area. In this connection it may be pointed out that during the period of negotiations on intervention in Indochina no attempt was made to seek the views of the uncommitted nations of Asia. Moreover, none of these nations was invited as a participant at the Geneva Conference. Objection to this attitude of the West was voiced by Nehru as early as 1947. Replying to criticism labelled against the convening of the first Asian Conference as some kind of Asian movement directed at Europe or America, he observed:

We have no designs against anybody, ours is the great design of promoting peace and progress all over the world. For too long, we of Asia, have been petitioners in western courts and chancelleries. That story must belong to the past. We propose to stand on our own feet and to cooperate with all others who are prepared to cooperate with us. We do not intend to be playthings of others.<sup>10</sup>

If the Government of India was resentful at the stepchild treatment of Asia by the Western powers in 1947, it had good reasons to be more so now. All the Colombo powers except Pakistan followed the policy of non-alignment and the distinct features of this policy made it imperative that their

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<sup>10</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "Asia Finds Herself Again," Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches 1946-1949 (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), p. 298. Colombo Powers include India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon and Indonesia, whose Prime Ministers gathered in a conference at Colombo in May 1954.

views received due consideration. Besides, the Western powers were to decide not only the fate of Vietnam but also of the other countries of Southeast Asia, most of which were geographically and culturally within the sphere of influence of India. Giving vent to his feelings on the presumptuous attitude of the Western powers in the settlement of the Indochina crisis, Nehru declared:

I do feel it is totally unrealistic in this as in any other matter, to try and solve any problem of Asia by distant countries whose relations with Asia were either colonial, economic or some other. While the great powers could not be ignored and it was essential to get their agreement, it was essentially realistic to take into consideration what the countries of Asia think. Perhaps one of the difficulties in the past has been the tendency not to take the opinion of Asia into consideration.<sup>11</sup>

Under the prevailing circumstances, this kind of statement in the Indian Parliament was one of the many ways through which India made her voice heard to the participants of the Geneva Conference. To keep quiet at this crucial time, when the whole world was to debate and decide whether there would be peace or war in the area of vital interests to India would have been detrimental to her status and position. What Lattimore observed below about American policy in Asia in 1945 would have been applicable to India had she not announced the six point

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<sup>11</sup>The Hindu, May 14, 1954, p. 5.

peace plan:

The most dangerous blind spot in our whole concept of international relations is the fact that we do not realize that by doing nothing whatever, we still create circumstances for action by others.<sup>12</sup>

Secondly, in the attempts of the Western powers for collective intervention in Indochina, the Government of India sensed danger to its policy towards the problems of imperialism. After the independence of India, it has continually expressed its opposition to Western imperialism in Asia and Africa. However, as pointed out earlier, it had been cautious in championing the cause of the victims of imperialism. It also favored a gradual and peaceful withdrawal of imperial powers, and the issue of imperial domination to be settled by the parties concerned without outside interference. It was in strict adherence to this policy that it had refrained from giving any material help to the victims of imperialism and likewise wanted the allies of imperial powers to follow suit in their relationship with them. But in the negotiations for united intervention in Indochina the Government of India saw a setback to this moderate approach to the settlement of the problems of imperialism which the West had followed since the end of World War II.

Those who favored foreign intervention found in the Indochina conflict a disguised form of Chinese Communist aggression,

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<sup>12</sup>Owen Lattimore, Solution in Asia (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1945), p.200.

whereas most of the Asian felt that the French attempted to cover up their real motives by presenting it as a fight against Communism. The Elysee Agreement, as pointed out elsewhere, was far from a charter for independence. However, France was partially successful in convincing its allies that the Boa Dai Government in Vietnam was an independent one. Commenting on this aspect of French diplomacy, Mr. Isaacs wrote in 1950 that:

The French finally succeeded in playing upon American anti-communist fears and European considerations to the point of winning Anglo-American endorsement of Boa Dai. This was a victory for the French but a defeat for hopes of an improved American position in Southeast Asia.<sup>13</sup>

Whatever may have been declared officially, either in the form of agreements or announcements, the war in Indochina had been treated by the French as a struggle to preserve the French Empire and they did not brook any interference in the affairs of Indochina even from the United States notwithstanding their acceptance of substantial military assistance from that country. On the contrary, they looked at the U.S.A. with suspicion and misgivings. In the liberal policy of the United States towards Indochina, they saw an onslaught on their empire. Various facets of the French policy in Indochina, such as their refusal to take the issue to the United Nations, their hesitancy to internationalize the war, and branding ECA Chief Robert Blum as the

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<sup>13</sup> Harold R. Isaacs, "A New Disaster in Asia", The Reporter, Vol. II (April 11, 1950), p.25.

most dangerous man in Indochina.<sup>14</sup> make sense only when analyzed and understood with reference to their real motives in Indochina. Again, it was argued that if it was fought as a fight simply to hold a sector in the containment of Communism in Asia, the French public might have asked why French soldiers alone should defend the interests of the free world on the most exposed and deadly front.<sup>15</sup>

The following comment, made in the course of analyzing the causes of failures of negotiated intervention by the west in Indochina, by Miss Vera Micheles Dean, a close student of Asian affairs, brings out clearly the colonial nature of the conflict:

The British Government replied to the French Government that they declined to take any military action in advance of the results of the Geneva Conference scheduled to start on April 26, 1954, the U. S. Government declined to intervene without British support. Actually the reason was that public opinion in neither country would have countenanced involvement in Indo-China where inspite of several declarations of intention to give full freedom to the three Associated States of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, the French had not, in fact, transferred full power to these states. The war in Indo-China was, therefore, still a colonial war.<sup>16</sup>

Under this situation, it was no wonder that Nehru in his six

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<sup>14</sup>Robert Shaplen, "Indo-China: The Eleventh Hour", The Reporter, Vol. V (October 2, 1951), p.10.

<sup>15</sup>"Eighth Year in Indo-China", The Economist (London), January 2, 1954, pp.29-30.

<sup>16</sup>S. L. Poplai, "The Colombo Conference of Southeast Asian Prime Ministers", Foreign Affairs Reports (Delhi), III (July 1954), p.82.

point peace plan for the settlement of the conflict included French withdrawal from the states of Indochina as one of the conditions.

On the other hand, the Government of India and other Asian countries took a very realistic view of the Chinese aid to the DRV. As indicated earlier, Nationalist China was sympathetic to the DRV even though the former had fought communism at home. The knowledge of sympathetic attitude of Nationalist China was fresh in the minds of Asian leaders. The evidence of this fact was provided by Nehru when he stated in the Indian Parliament that the DRV was accorded recognition by the predecessor of the People's Republic of China.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the Government of India concluded that the Chinese, irrespective of their political thinking, have been against the idea of any other foreign power exerting influence in Vietnam. It further argued that if the People's Republic of China was at all to be considered aggressive for its aid to the DRV, so was perhaps the United States for its aid to the other camp. Besides, there was no evidence to prove that the Communist Chinese personnel were directly involved in the conflict as they had been in Korea. A spokesman of the French High Command

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<sup>17</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions and Answers (House of the People), IV. No. 52, April 24, 1954.

said that up to April 1954, the French had never come into contact with the Chinese troops.<sup>18</sup> Thus putting the Chinese aid in proper perspective and minimizing its importance in the Indochina conflict, Asian leaders concluded in 1954 that it was in its essential character as nationalistic as it was in its origin and the Chinese aid was considered incidental.<sup>19</sup> This so-called Asian view of the conflict was shared by many in the West whose opposition to Communism was beyond any shade of doubt. For instance, the Manchester Guardian, voicing the incidental nature of the Chinese involvement observed:

The close links with China have meant increasing ascendancy of the uncompromising communists among the Viet Minh leaders and intensified indoctrination of the rank and file in a communistic world outlook. But the mainspring of the emotion which causes many young Vietnamese to fight so bravely in the Viet Minh still seems to be the thirst for independence and nationhood. 'La Patrie' is a word which is always on men's lips in both Ho Chi Minh's and Bao Dai's Vietnam. And it is still -- in spite of misgivings and reservations -- Ho Chi Minh and not Bao Dai who is the embodiment of the idea.<sup>20</sup>

Intervention by the Western powers in Indochina, in these circumstances, would have been taken by the Government of India as an attack on freedom movement in Asia and Africa, and

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<sup>18</sup>Bell. op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>"The Indo-China Story", New Statesman and Nation, April 17, 1954, p.493.

<sup>20</sup>Derrick Sington, "Motives in Indo-China", Manchester Guardian Weekly, Vol. 70, April 22, 1954, p.2.



subordination of their interests to those of the West. To the people of Asia, colonialism was as great a threat as communism was to the West. This, however, did not mean that the free nations of Asia were unaware of communist threat. To them both communism and colonialism were menaces to their independence and development. However, in this case it was French colonialism that was responsible for the conflict and the Government of India did not want French colonialism to be underwritten by the West under the cloak of the menace of communist aggression. The following comment on Nehru in the Indian Parliament is to be studied in this light:

To us in India these developments are of grave concern and of grievous significance. Their implications impinge on the newly-won and cherished independence of Asian countries.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, the U.S.A. intervention in the Indochina conflict would have been a great blow to India's foreign policy in Southeast Asia. From various considerations, Indian leaders have expressed their country's close ties with the area. They have claimed the area as India's sphere of influence and the Government of India has reacted strongly to the events there. If, however, outsiders find in India's policy in the area some

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<sup>21</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions and Answers (House of the People), IV, No. 52, April 24, 1954.

aloofness, it was not to be attributed to her disinterestedness, but to her preoccupations with domestic affairs and the xenophobia of the people of Southeast Asia. After independence she was busy putting her house in order. The resulting chaos, as aftermath of partition, occupied the minds of the Indian leaders. Integration of the princely states with the union and the Kashmir conflict were additional problems that did not leave much time or spare energies to think of foreign policy. Being the victims of imperialism, the people of Southeast Asia disliked foreigners, including Indians. India was associated in the mind of the ordinary inhabitants of the area with the Chettiar or money lenders who had first entered the country in the wake of Western imperialism, and who remitted to India wealth obtained from the local community.<sup>22</sup> This fear was evident at the time of the first Asian Relations Conference of 1947. The restraining effect of this fact was evidenced in Nehru's speech as early as December 1947. He said:

It is also true that India is a country, which inspite of everything, has abounding vitality and spreads abroad. It rather frightens our neighbour countries. We tend to overwhelm others by virtue of our numbers, and sometimes by virtue of the economic position we might develop there.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Victor Purcell, "The Influence of Racial Minorities", Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia, ed. Philip W. Thayer (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1956), p.245.

<sup>23</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Foreign Policy", Independence and After: A Collection of Speeches 1946-1949 (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), pp.206-207.

This did not make India withdraw within herself. On the contrary she followed a cautious policy towards the area and waited for an opportune time to act.

From the very beginning of her independence, India has followed the policy of non-alignment in the context of the cold war. This policy has its roots in the past traditions and history of India. Having just won their independence, she ruled out any supra-national alliance which might have possibly curtailed her sovereignty and independence. Being militarily weak she would have been a junior partner in the alliance which might have been dominated by the big powers. She also believed that she could contribute more to world peace by staying out of power blocs. However, Nehru mentioned that India was not a great power from the economic and military standpoint to make a vital difference to world affairs, but in terms of crisis even small things counted and it was her hope that in such times she might be instrumental in averting a world war by throwing her weight on the side of peace.<sup>24</sup> This policy, in essence, was one of negative aloofness from military blocs. But with the passing of time she evolved a more positive policy. Now she was not contented with keeping herself out of military blocs but wanted

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<sup>24</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches 1949-1953 (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1954), p.144.

to create and extend an 'area of peace' which would keep itself detached from a cold war or a hot war if it came. Enunciating this policy in 1952, Nehru said:

I should like an ever increasing number of countries in the world to decide that they will not have another war, whatever happens. I should like the countries in Asia -- I speak about our neighbours -- and other countries also to make it clear to those warring factions and those great countries that are so explosively bitter against each other that they themselves will remain cold and not enter the arena of warfare whatever happens and that they will try at least to restrict the area of conflict, save their own regions, and try to save the rest as best they can.<sup>25</sup>

This call for the creation of an 'area of peace' was interpreted as building up of a 'third force' or a third bloc. The idea was deprecated by the Government of India on the ground that it was neither desirable nor feasible. The biggest countries were small compared to the two giants, and hence it was considered absurd for a number of small countries to form a third bloc in a military sense. Secondly, creation of a power bloc would have been inconsistent with declared objectives of the Government of India. However, Nehru called it a third area composed of those who did not believe in war, to put it negatively, and worked for peace in a positive way and believed in cooperation.<sup>26</sup> These principles were the basis of India's policy ever since she became independent, and now she wanted her neighbors in Asia

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p.215.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p.231.

to follow suit. Thus, behind this movement of the 'area of peace', we see her assuming the leadership of the uncommitted nations of Asia. Thus intervention by the Western powers would have been a blow to her leadership in Southeast Asia. Commenting on this aspect of India's policy, Nehru observed:

We only seek for ourselves and the adherence of others, particularly our neighbours, to a peace area and to a policy of non-alignment and non-commitment to world tensions and wars. This, we believe, is essential to us for our own sake and can alone enable us to make our contributions to lowering world tensions, to furthering disarmament and to world peace.

The present developments, however, cast a deep shadow on our hopes, they impinge on our basic policies and they seek to contain us in alignments.<sup>27</sup>

## Part II

### Towards Fulfillment Of Policy

After having decided to take active interests in the Indochina conflict, the Government of India moved with vigor and vision to see that it was settled somewhere on the lines proposed by her. Towards this end, Indian diplomacy began to operate in

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<sup>27</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions And Answers (House of the People), IV. No. 52, April 24, 1954. This statement was interpreted by an Indian writer as "A Nehru Doctrine for Asia", see A. K. Shrinavasmurthy, "A Nehru Doctrine for Asia", The Indian Year Book of International Affairs, Vol. III, ed. (Madras: The Diocesan Press, 1954), p.126.

various ways. In the first instance, the Government of India took advantage of the forum of the Colombo Conference where the representatives of the five uncommitted nations of Asia met at the same time the Geneva Conference began to discuss the Asian problems. The agenda of the Colombo Conference was fixed more by the compulsion of events than by the design of its sponsors. In December, 1953, when Sir John Kotelawala, then the Prime Minister of Ceylon, made a call for the conference to discuss matters of common concern, it was not possible to visualize the significance of such a meeting. As the conflict in Indochina reached a critical stage in the meantime, it figured prominently at the conference. The Government of India attempted successfully to get its peace plan endorsed by the conference and thereby get it reinforced by the voice of the uncommitted nations of Asia. It was expected that the Indian peace plan would be modified after it had been debated by the Colombo powers. However, the plan which emerged from the deliberations of the Colombo powers, was in essence the same as proposed by India.<sup>28</sup> The final communique of the Colombo Conference, like the Nehru peace plan, considered that the solution of the conflict in Indochina required that an agreement on a cease-fire should be reached

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<sup>28</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions And Answers (House of the People), V. No. 70, May 15, 1954.

without delay.<sup>29</sup> It also proposed that France should declare at the Geneva Conference that she was irrevocably committed to the complete independence of the states of Indochina. The communique, in place of item numbers I and V of the Nehru peace plan mentioned that the success of negotiations would be greatly helped by an agreement on the part of all countries concerned, particularly China, U.K., U.S.A., and U.S.S.R. on the steps necessary to prevent a recurrence and resumption of hostilities. The Nehru peace plan in item numbers I and V had appealed the combatants of the conflict to refrain from stepping up the tempo of war and had urged the great powers to enter into a solemn agreement on non-intervention respectively. The omission of the word non-intervention in the final communique of the Colombo Conference was regarded by many as a substantial modification of the Indian peace plan, and it was said that Nehru failed to carry with him the majority of the Colombo powers on this issue.<sup>30</sup> Those who considered omission of the word non-intervention in the Colombo communique in the above light concluded that the Government of India endorsed in principle the idea of foreign intervention under the pressures of Pakistan and Ceylon who had entered into military aid agreement with the

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<sup>29</sup>For text of the Communique see Appendix II, pp.294-296.

<sup>30</sup>Vidya Prakash Dutt and Vishal Singh, Indian Policy and Attitudes Towards Indo-China and SEATO (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954), p.12.

U.S.A. and the U.K. respectively.<sup>31</sup> This interpretation, however, was refuted by Nehru later on. He stated that there was no difference in the substance of his peace plan and the communique on the issue of non-intervention. He explained that if the Great Powers came to an agreement on the steps necessary to prevent a recurrence and resumption of hostilities, it inevitably meant non-intervention or non-aid. He further added that non-intervention as such was in a sense negative. The communique was a positive approach to the problem of intervention. He, therefore, concluded that the communique on the problem of foreign intervention had got not only the same meaning as that of his peace plan, but also presented it in a much better way.<sup>32</sup>

The most far reaching modification was in the conduct of negotiations. The Indian peace plan had suggested that direct negotiations between parties immediately and principally concerned should be initiated by the Geneva Conference. On the other hand, the Colombo Conference felt that the inclusion of other parties invited by agreement would contribute much towards the solution of the conflict. The reason for this change was alleged to have been that Ceylon, Burma and Pakistan had pointed

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<sup>31</sup>The Hindu, May 16, 1954, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: Proceedings Other Than Questions and Answers (House of the People), V. No. 70, May 15, 1954.



out the resultant danger of the vacuum that would be created if the major powers were to suddenly withdraw from Indochina. It was believed that if these powers were associated with the negotiations leading to settlement they would be committed to the settlement. The reason for the earlier Indian suggestion that negotiations should be limited to the parties directly concerned was the Indian apprehension that the association of major powers with negotiations would introduce extraneous considerations of global strategy and bloc-interests, and thereby might reduce the chances of settlement.<sup>33</sup> The Colombo Conference made another amendment to the Nehru peace plan. The Colombo Conference suggested that the negotiating group should report progress to the United Nations through the Geneva Conference, whereas the Nehru peace plan favored direct reporting to the United Nations. The overlooking of the Geneva Conference in the Nehru peace plan was due to the absence of the uncommitted nations of Asia therein. But once the contact with the Geneva Conference was established through the agency of the Commonwealth, its intermediary role was gladly accepted.

The Commonwealth machinery was first put to use by Eden, then the Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom when he sent to the three Commonwealth Prime Ministers at Colombo a communication on the Indochina conflict. The contents of this message

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<sup>33</sup>Poplai, loc. cit., p.83.

were not revealed but it was rumored that it consisted mainly of an inquiry as to how far the Colombo Conference members would like to go in associating themselves with a settlement in Indochina, if one were achieved at Geneva. It also assured that they would be kept informed of the progress of the talks at Geneva.<sup>34</sup> The implications of consultations among the Asian members of the Commonwealth on one side and Great Britain on the other, become clear only when they are considered in the light of importance attached to India in the British diplomatic thinking. As pointed out earlier, India was the center around which the British erected their Afro-Asian Empire. The crucial position of India in Asia, however, has not been forgotten by the British even after they relinquished their Asian Empire. They consider India the heir to the Asian Empire of Britain and thereby the responsibility of keeping the peace in the Indian Ocean.<sup>35</sup> The London Economist brought out this point forcefully just at the time the Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth were to consider India's continued membership therein as a sovereign Republic. It warned:

In such a company, India is the natural linchpin. With wise policy and in cooperation with Pakistan, its size and

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<sup>34</sup>The Hindu, April 30, 1954.

<sup>35</sup>"Consultation on Southeast Asia" The Economist (London) July 19, 1952, p.480.

solidity enable it to create an Asiatic balance of power. It is to these fundamental but as yet barely perceived political, economic and geographical facts that minds must be adjusted before the great constitutional debate of the Commonwealth is begun -- not least in India itself.<sup>36</sup>

The crucial position of India in British thinking loomed large at the time of the Geneva Conference. It was this consideration, according to Sir Roger Makins, then the British Ambassador that India was included as one of the participants of the Geneva Conference. He also believed that India had an interest in the conflict which justified her inclusion.<sup>37</sup> Once India was debarred from the Geneva Conference, the British Labour Party in the Parliament insisted repeatedly that the Conservative Government should have an exchange of views between the Governments of India and the United Kingdom. In reply to these queries in the Parliament, Prime Minister Churchill announced that both the governments were in constant touch.<sup>38</sup>

Since the nature of consultations between the two governments was confidential, it is impossible to evaluate

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<sup>36</sup>"India -- A New Great Power," The Economist (London) October 23, 1948, p. 652.

<sup>37</sup>The Hindu, November 4, 1953, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup>The Times (London), April 25, 1954, p. 5.

in specific terms the influence India exerted on the British Government during this phase of the Indochina conflict. However, it is evident that the Government of India impressed upon the British Government its point of view with regard to the settlement of the Indochina crisis. Commenting on the Government of India making use of the Commonwealth associations during the period of the Geneva Conference, the Times of India observed:

It is no exaggeration to claim that since the Geneva Conference was convened, India's close cooperation with Britain enabled New Delhi basically to influence the Anglo-French attitude towards the Indo-China problem and the larger question of future relations with Communist powers.<sup>39</sup>

Again, Mr. Crawley, then officer of the British Embassy in the United States, discussing at Norman Wait Harris Memorial Foundation at Chicago, the impact of India on the British policy on the Indochina conflict, acknowledged that the former influenced the latter to a large extent.<sup>40</sup> The impact of the United Kingdom on India through their common membership in the Commonwealth of Nations was pointed out in the last chapter. Now the Indochina crisis underlined the impact of India on Britain and thereby proved interdependence of both.

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<sup>39</sup>The Times of India (Bombay), July 22, 1954.

<sup>40</sup>Robert I. Crane (ed.), India's Role in Asia (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1956), p.53.

Against the wishes of the United Kingdom, the U.S.S.R. and China, India was excluded from the Geneva Conference which was to shape the future of the area vital to her interests. The Government of India overcame this inhibition by sending there V. K. Krishna Menon, the personal emissary of Nehru. He was there from the middle of May till the end of the Conference on July 21, 1954, with a few intervals. When asked by the reporters about his mission in Geneva, he evaded the reply by saying that he was an old fool and he was there only as a tourist, just a bystander.<sup>41</sup> However, his function at the Conference was officially described as confined to taking soundings.<sup>42</sup> Not being an official participant, the only way he could bring the weight of his government's views upon the Conference members was through private meetings. The atmosphere at Geneva was also congenial for such private meetings because the main issues were discussed privately rather than in plenary sessions. From an analysis of Menon's itinerary at Geneva, it was evident that Chou En Lai, Molotov, Eden and Bedell Smith had repeatedly seen him and had been closeted with him for hours. His frequent meetings with the leading delegates for prolonged periods led a French journalist to note that there was no ante-chamber where one did not find oneself face to face with

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<sup>41</sup>Daily Telegraph (London), July 19, 1954, p.5.

<sup>42</sup>The Times (London), May 31, 1954, p.4.

Menon.<sup>43</sup> Another journalist on the scene commenting on Menon's meetings observed that the real center of gravity of the Conference for the moment might lie in these talks rather than in its so-called restricted sessions. This journalist found in leading articles on Indian diplomacy in numerous dailies throughout Europe during this period a reflection of Menon's vigorous and varied activities at Geneva.<sup>44</sup> The recognition of his activities came also from Mendes-France, then the French Premier when he humorously remarked that the Geneva Conference was a ten nation conference -- nine nations at the table and India.<sup>45</sup>

Since the nature of Menon's negotiations with the participants of the Geneva Conference was of confidential nature, it is rather difficult to assess his role either in the solution of the Indochina crisis or in terms of substantive gain for his country. But the circumstantial evidence throws light on the nature of his activities and accomplishments. While the negotiations were in progress it was hoped that Indian diplomacy

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<sup>43</sup>Combat (Paris), June 3, 1954, p.1.

<sup>44</sup>The Hindu, May 27, 1954, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>The New York Times, July 23, 1954, p.11.

would prove to be the deus ex machina reconciling Europe and Asia without at the same time giving offense to the United States.<sup>46</sup> His role as a successful intermediary was acknowledged by a French spokesman who at the end of the Conference observed that Menon played the useful part of a connecting link among various delegations holding conflicting positions.<sup>47</sup> A Viet Minh spokesman said that Menon played a very important part in bringing about a cease-fire and thus helped to put out the fire in Asia which was likely to spread.<sup>48</sup> Appreciation of Menon's activities came from Prime Ministers of France and the People's Republic of China at the conclusion of the Conference. Mendes France, in recognition of his behind-the-scene activities presented him the French peace medal.<sup>49</sup> Chou En Lai declared at a news conference that Menon's activities had been helpful to the progress of the Conference.<sup>50</sup> It was also reported that Menon's friendly advice played an important role in the modification of the Communist stand on Laos and Cambodia. It may be pointed out here that the Communist side in the earlier

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<sup>46</sup>Combat (Paris), June 3, 1954, p.3.

<sup>47</sup>The Hindustan Times (Delhi), July 23, 1954, p.1.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p.6.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

stage of the Conference had insisted upon representation of Viet Minh backed resistance movements in Laos and Cambodia at the conference table.<sup>51</sup> This was one of the two issues; the other being the composition and functions of the supervisory commissions, which had deadlocked the conference in its initial stage. Later on Chou En Lai gave in and recognized the royal governments of these two countries and agreed to withdraw the Viet Minh troops from there.<sup>52</sup> It was further believed that Menon tried to fashion settlement of the Indochina crisis on the lines expounded by Nehru in his peace plan. The Geneva Agreement confirms this observation because its provisions, as shown in the following chapter, were in accordance with the spirit of non-alignment policy of India.<sup>53</sup>

The final stroke of diplomacy of the Government of India in the fulfillment of its policy lay in inviting to India the Chinese Prime Minister Chou En Lai on his way back to Peking during the interval between two phases of the Geneva Conference. Activities of Chou En Lai at Geneva had clearly demonstrated

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<sup>51</sup>Great Britain, Foreign Office, Documents Relating to the Discussion of Korea and Indo-China, April 29-June 15, 1954, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954), pp.111-112.

<sup>52</sup>The Times (London), June 23, 1954, p.5.

<sup>53</sup>See Chapter IV, pp.



that it was the People's Republic of China, and not the Soviet Union nor the DRV, which was the spokesman of the Communist bloc. The Government of India, therefore, concluded that settlement of the Indochina crisis in particular and the fate of Southeast Asia in general rested to a great extent upon understanding and cooperation of the People's Republic of China. Consequently, it felt the necessity of having first hand views of the Chinese Republic. It had maintained diplomatic relations with the Chinese Republic since its emergence in 1949. Nevertheless, until the Geneva Conference in 1954 the Governments of both India and China had not exchanged views and ideas at the top level. During the first phase of the Geneva Conference Krishna Menon had frequently met the Chinese Prime Minister but most of these meetings were confined to specific issues which demanded immediate attention to the settlement of the Indochina crisis. The visit of the Chinese Prime Minister assumes significance when examined in this light.

The visit of the Chinese Prime Minister was directed at clarification of three points. At the time of his visit to New Delhi, composition and functions of the supervisory commissions to be established in the three states of Indochina to implement the decisions of the Geneva Conference were disputed issues. Whereas the outlines submitted by the Western

powers argued for commissions composed of the Colombo powers the Communist side favored commissions similar to one provided for in the Korean Armistice Agreement. The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission in Korea was composed of Poland, India, Czechoslovakia, Sweden and Switzerland. In short, the Communist side was opposed to commissions on which it did not have any representation. Both sides of the conference had proposed the name of India as one of the members of these commissions but they had failed to arrive at an agreement as to the other members and functions of these commissions.<sup>54</sup> The Government of India had announced that it would not be possible for it to serve on these commissions if the two sides of the conference did not reach agreement on the problems pertaining to the commissions.<sup>55</sup> The Communist opposition to commissions composed of the Colombo powers made it imperative to have its firsthand views on this subject, and the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister provided an opportunity for the same.

Secondly, the Government of India, which aimed at extending the area of peace in Southeast Asia, tried successfully to impress upon the distinguished visitor from China the fact of

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<sup>54</sup>For details on different views with regard to composition and functions of the Supervisory Commissions, see, e.g. Chapter IV, pp. 116-120.

<sup>55</sup>The Times (London), June 28, 1954, p.5.

its independent approach to the problems of foreign affairs notwithstanding its association with the Commonwealth. The distinguished visitor by approving India's continued membership in the Commonwealth acknowledged India's independence in foreign relations.<sup>56</sup>

Lastly, the Government of India wanted to make the visit of the Chinese Prime Minister an occasion to dispel fears of some of the Colombo Powers with respect to aggressive intentions of the Chinese Communists. These fears found expressions at the Colombo Conference when it considered resolutions on colonialism and communism. While India and Indonesia felt very strongly about the attempts of some colonial powers to stage a come-back, Ceylon, Burma and Pakistan felt that the expanding and aggressive Communism constituted an even greater threat to the region.<sup>57</sup> The joint communique issued by the Prime Ministers of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India at the end of their talks in which the five principles cited in the Preamble to the Indo-Tibetan Trade Treaty of April 1954 were made the basis of their foreign policy toward their neighbors becomes meaningful

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<sup>56</sup> The Hindu (Madras), June 30, 1954, p.6.

<sup>57</sup> For the text of the speeches by the Prime Ministers of the Colombo Powers, see, e.g., S. L. Poplai, "The Colombo Conference of South-East Asian Prime Ministers", Foreign Affairs Reports (Delhi), III (July 1954), pp.86-90.

when examined in the light of the fears of some of the Colombo Powers. The five principles are as follows:<sup>58</sup>

- 1) Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- ii) Non-aggression.
- iii) Non-interference.
- iv) Equality and mutual benefit.
- v) Peaceful coexistence.

With particular reference to Indochina, it was hoped that political settlement in Indochina should aim at the creation of free, democratic, unified and independent states which should not be used for aggressive purposes or be subjected to foreign intervention.<sup>59</sup> This provision was interpreted by the press in India to mean that India had agreed that American military bases must not be established in Indochina. If this was considered favorable to the Chinese security it was equally favorable to India's policy of expanding the 'area of peace'.

The Government of India, as shown in the last chapter, had followed till 1954 the policy of 'studied aloofness' because it was in the national interests of India. Developments both within and outside Indochina in early 1954 took such a turn that it could not continue to follow this policy without endangering

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<sup>58</sup>India, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Foreign Policy of India: Texts of Documents 1947-1958 (New Delhi, 1958), p. 97.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

its position and influence in Southeast Asia. Positively speaking, again, it was the dictates of national interests that made the Government of India bid farewell to its seven year old policy of 'studied aloofness' and participate in the settlement of the Indochina conflict. Moreover, stabilization of its position within India enabled it to be assertive of its position in international affairs. The Government of India was excluded from the Geneva Conference which after almost three months of deliberations settled the conflict in July 1954. In spite of its exclusion from the conference table, it tried in various ways to make its views on the settlement of the conflict known to the participants of the conference. After having applied vigorous, realistic and constructive diplomacy towards the settlement of the conflict, the Government of India had to wait for the Geneva Conference to arrive at a final decision. The outcome of the Geneva Conference and responsibilities assigned to the Government of India by it, will be examined in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOGNITION OF INDIA'S ROLE IN INDOCHINA

#### Part I

#### The Geneva Agreement -- 'A Great Step Forward, But Only A Step'

At the end of approximately two and a half months of deliberations, the Geneva Conference arrived at agreements on the question of restoring peace in the states of Indochina. What is generally known as the Geneva Agreement consists of a series of eleven documents.<sup>1</sup> First there are three bilateral agreements which contain the detailed provisions for the cessation of hostilities in each of the three states of Indochina. These were signed by the representatives of the military commands of the two sides. In this connection it may be pointed out that the representative of the Vietnamese People's Army signed all the three instruments since the resistance forces in Cambodia and Laos were not represented at the Conference. The French military command signed for the governments of Vietnam and Laos and the Khmer national command signed for that of Cambodia. Besides these bilateral agreements, there are seven

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<sup>1</sup>For text of all the documents on the Geneva Agreement, see Great Britain, Foreign Office, Further Documents Relating to the Discussion on Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, June 16-July 21, 1954 (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954).

unilateral declarations concerning political settlement in the states of Indochina -- one by the Government of the United States of America and two each by those of France, Cambodia and Laos. Lastly, there is the Final Declaration of the Conference. This takes note of the above-mentioned military agreements and unilateral declarations. All the participants of the Conference except the United States and the State of Vietnam concurred in the Final Declaration but none of them signed it. The failure of the participants of the Conference to sign the Joint Declaration created uncertainty as to its juridical validity. It was precisely on the ground that the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, almost a year after the Conference, declared that it did not consider itself bound by the provisions of the Declaration.<sup>2</sup>

This was the framework of the Geneva Agreement within which the terms and conditions for the settlement of Indochina conflict were specified. Without going into the technical details pertaining to effective cease-fire in the states of Indochina we will consider here only those provisions of the Geneva Agreement which entailed responsibilities on the three International Commissions for Supervision and Control composed

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<sup>2</sup>The New York Times, July 7, 1955, p.3.

of India, Poland and Canada with India as Chairman of each of them. Let us examine now in brief the terms of the Geneva Agreement applicable to each of the Indochinese states separately.

Under the terms of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia,'<sup>3</sup> the foreign armed forces and foreign military personnel were to be withdrawn from the country within 90 days reckoning from the coming into force of the Agreement. The term foreign in this case meant the French and the Viet Minh. The Khmer Resistance Forces were to be demobilized on the spot with the understanding that no discriminatory action would be taken against them or their families by the Royal Cambodian Government. The standard of fair treatment to the demobilized members of the resistance forces was to be decided in the light of the unilateral declaration made by the Cambodian delegation at Geneva. This declaration was adopted as part of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities.' In the Royal Cambodian Government guaranteed to the members of the resistance forces enjoyment of equal rights and freedoms. It also foresaw general elections in which they

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<sup>3</sup>For text of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia,' see, e.g. Further Documents Relating to the Discussion on Indo-China at the Geneva Conference, June 16-July 21, 1954, op. cit., pp.11-18.



were to participate as electors and candidates without any limitations whatsoever.<sup>4</sup> The Agreement further banned introduction of fresh troops, military personnel, armaments and munitions, and the establishment of military bases. This provision of the Agreement, however, could be modified if the security of the state is threatened or the upholding of the principles of the U. N. necessitated such a course. In other words, Cambodia was debarred from joining any military alliances in normal circumstances. Finally, Cambodia was obligated not to solicit foreign aid in war material, personnel or instructors, except for the purpose of the effective defence of the territory, until the final settlement of the political problems in Vietnam was arrived at. It may, however, be pointed out that the last two conditions were the subject matter of the second declaration of the Cambodian Government at Geneva. As a matter of fact, the declaration in verbatim was incorporated in the Agreement under consideration.

The 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos'<sup>5</sup> is almost on the same pattern as that of Cambodia with a few

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p.40.

<sup>5</sup>For the text of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos,' see, e.g., Ibid., pp.18-26.

exceptions arising out of the prevailing political and military situation of the country. As in Cambodia, the French and the Viet Minh armed forces were to be withdrawn from Laos with the proviso that the French High Command could leave in the territory of Laos a specified number of French military personnel not exceeding one thousand five hundred commissioned and non-commissioned officers required for the training of the Laotian National Army. The foreign forces were to withdraw within 120 days as against 90 days in Cambodia. The local resistance forces known as the Pathet Lao were given 12 provisional assembly areas (sites and boundaries of which were to be fixed by the representatives of the two belligerent groups in Laos), one in each province, whereas the forces of the Laotian National Army were to remain wherever they were (in situ) at the time of the cease-fire during the entire period of the operations of disengagement and transfer of foreign forces and fighting units of Pathet Lao. Pending a political settlement, the Pathet Lao forces, concentrated in the twelve provisional assembly areas, were to move into the provinces of Phongsaly and Sam Neua except for any military personnel who wished to be demobilized where they were. It also provided for free movements of Pathet Lao forces between these provinces through a corridor.

The political settlement as envisaged at Geneva was indicated in the declaration by the Royal Government of Laos in which it resolved to take necessary measures to integrate all citizens, without discrimination, into the national community and guaranteed enjoyment of equal rights and freedoms.<sup>6</sup> It also foresaw general elections in which all citizens were to participate as electors or candidates. Finally the Agreement prohibited the introduction into the territory of Laos of fresh troops, military personnel, armaments and munitions, and the establishment of military bases. There were, however, two important exceptions to the aforesaid restrictive measures with respect to France. Firstly, the French High Command was allowed to maintain two military bases, one at Seno and the other somewhere in Mekong Valley provided the effectives maintained there did not exceed a total of three thousand five hundred. Secondly, it was also permitted to import a specified quantity of armaments in categories specified as necessary for the defence of Laos.

The 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam'<sup>7</sup> fixed a provisional military demarcation line, on either

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.41.

<sup>7</sup>For the text of the 'Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam', see e.g., Ibid., pp.27-40.

side of which the forces of the two parties were to be regrouped after their withdrawal, the forces of the DRV to the north of the line and the forces of the French Union to the south. The 17th parallel was the military demarcation line. The period for the completion of movement of all forces of either party into its regrouping zone on either side of the provisional military demarcation line was not to exceed three hundred days from the day the present Agreement came into force. Civil Administration on either side of the demarcation line was the responsibility of the Commanders-in-Chief of the two parties in their respective zones. In short, the DRV was to receive full control of the whole of North Vietnam and the French Union forces were to control South Vietnam. The Agreement moreover put a stop on the introduction of fresh troops, military personnel, arms and munitions, and the establishment of military bases. However, the replacement of personnel and arms and ammunition was permitted on a rotation basis. Finally it provided for free movement of the Vietnamese civilians until the movement of troops was completed so as to enable them to choose the zone in which they wished to reside. The Final Declaration of the Geneva Agreement took note of a vital issue concerning the future of Vietnam. It outlined a plan for general elections to be held in July 1956 in order to

secure political settlement in Vietnam and thereby to end ultimately the division of the country.

As pointed out by Nehru, the Geneva Agreement was indeed a great step forward, but it was only a step towards the settlement of the eight year old Indochina crisis. It was just a step forward because much was at stake in the manner the Geneva Agreement -- both in spirit and substance -- was implemented by the parties concerned. The implementation of the Geneva Accord in each of the states depended mainly on the parties directly involved. Its execution, however, was not solely entrusted to them. The International Commissions with the help of their fixed and mobile inspecting teams and the Joint Commissions composed of military representatives of two opposing sides in each state were to ensure the execution of the Geneva Agreement. The Joint Commissions were to carry out only the technical conditions of the cease-fire while the International Commissions were to supervise the military points of entry and the proper execution of the Geneva Agreement as a whole. To this end the International Commissions were to undertake the functions of control, observation, inspection and investigation. Each of the 'Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities' stipulated other details concerning composition, powers, responsibilities and terms of duration of

the International Commissions and the Joint Commissions. Before we examine the role of India as member and chairman of the International Commissions, evaluation of the Geneva Agreement in terms of the foreign policy of India would not be out of place.

The most outstanding achievement of the Geneva Conference lays in the fact that it brought cease-fire in the states of Indochina and thus avoided the outbreak of the third world war. But the question of Indochinese independence which was at the root of the war did not find much place in the Geneva Agreement except in the French declaration. The French Government declared that it would proceed on the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, the unity and territorial integrity of Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam in the settlement of all the problems connected with the re-establishment and consolidation of peace in these states.

This French declaration was in no way novel because there had been, in fact, no less than seventeen such declarations between 1949 and 1954 with regard to Vietnam only.<sup>8</sup> Similar declarations were also made in connection with Laos

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<sup>8</sup>Bernard B. Fall, "The Cease-fire in Indo-China, Appraisal II," Far Eastern Survey, October 1954, p.137.

and Cambodia. Under these circumstances, the question arises as to why the Government of India, so avowed to the cause of Indochinese independence was apparently satisfied at the outcome of the Geneva Conference even though the vital issue of independence was left to future negotiations between the parties concerned. The answer lies in the understanding of the changed situation in the states of Indochina.

From the point of view of the Western powers, the states of Indochina had become independent in 1950 when the French National Assembly ratified the Elysee Agreement. They tried to emphasize their independent status by giving them recognition. However, these states continued to remain under the domination of France, a fact demonstrated by the resurgent nationalism of their governments. They protested peacefully, but strikingly, against their French domination, the expressions of which varied in forms in the three states of Indochina. In Cambodia, the expression of protest against the French domination was dramatized by King Norodom Sihanouk. In the early Spring of 1953 he visited Paris to plead for real independence of Cambodia. Gaining no satisfaction he paid a visit to the United States where he attempted to seek support for his cause by explaining the colonial character of the French rule and its ominous consequences on Cambodia in

particular, and the cold war in general.<sup>9</sup> After his return to Cambodia he went to Thailand in self-imposed exile until he achieved real independence for his country. The expression of anti-French movement in Laos took the form of direct appeal to the United Nations to intervene in order to turn back the Viet Minh aggression in early 1953. This was the expression of revolt because it struck against the firm French policy of non-internationalizing the Indochina crisis.<sup>10</sup> In Vietnam the official Congress of Bao Dai spotlighted the discontent of the people against French colonialism. The official Congress, though composed of members selected by Bao Dai, refused to appoint delegates to carry out negotiations with France for increased independence as desired by him. On the contrary, they demanded complete independence and declared that Vietnam, when independent, would not participate in the French Union in any form. At the domestic level they asked for a democratic government with all its attributes such as a constitution guaranteeing bill of rights, national assembly elected by universal suffrage and ratification of treaties by

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<sup>9</sup>The New York Times, April 19, 1953, p.8.

<sup>10</sup>Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle in Indo-China (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), p.293.



the assembly.<sup>11</sup> This anti-French attitude of the Congress, supposed to be the least rebellious of all the Vietnamese, had sharp repercussions in France and compelled it to have a second look at its policies. Furthermore, even if France desired to assert its position in disregard of mounting opposition, the Geneva Agreement made it next to impossible by imposing restrictions on the stationing and movements of the French Union forces in Indochina. As a matter of fact, France resorted to the Geneva Conference as an honorable alternative to military solution, the limitations of which were clearly demonstrated by the fall of Dien Bien Phu. Under these circumstances, everyone including Nehru knew that France had no other alternative but to abide by the spirit and substance of the declaration made by it at Geneva, and hence the satisfaction of Nehru at the outcome of the Conference was justifiable.

Furthermore, in accordance with the Geneva Agreement, none of the states of Indochina was to allow the establishment of foreign military bases on its territory or to become a member of any military alliance.<sup>12</sup> The obligation to follow

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.305.

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Eden, "A Real Gain for Peace", The U.S. World and News Report, July 30, 1954, p.88.

the policy of neutrality enlarged the so-called 'area of peace' which had been the declared policy of India. Obviously India was satisfied at the outcome.

Finally, the Geneva Agreement was not only favorable to India's foreign policy but also gave her opportunities to play an important role in shaping the future developments in the states of Indochina by awarding her chairmanship of the International Commissions for Supervision and Control (I.C.S.C.). India held a key position on these Commissions because she as Chairman exercised a decisive vote. Under the provisions of the three 'Agreements on Cessation of Hostilities', recommendations of the I.C.S.C. on all issues except those concerning violations or threats of violations which might lead to resumption of hostilities where unanimity was required, were by a majority vote. Since Canada and Poland were on the opposite sides in the cold war, India's vote on the issues before these Commissions became crucial. Even in respect to the important decisions which required unanimity, India's vote appeared significant because members of the I.C.S.C. had been given the right to issue majority and minority reports and thereby acquaint the world of their views on controversial issues. In this respect her role was graded very high. It may also be pointed out that attempts from both the sides of

the Geneva Conference had been made to woo the uncommitted nations of Asia.<sup>13</sup> Because of her influential position among the uncommitted nations, India's opinion carried additional weight and thus was provided with opportunities to play some part as a balancing neutral force in the prevailing cold war.

A critical analysis of the highly controversial discussions that took place at Geneva with regard to formation of the I.C.S.C. is worthwhile in order to understand India's role in proper perspective. The principle of international supervision and control was recognized at the very beginning of the Indochina phase of the Geneva Conference by the then Foreign Minister, Bidault, in his opening speech. He stated that the implementation of any settlement in the states of Indochina should be entrusted to some international commissions on the ground that without solid guarantees agreements of this kind were essentially fragile. Instead of consolidating peace they represented brief interludes or ill-respected armistices.<sup>14</sup> The Communist bloc countries on the other hand

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<sup>13</sup>For full details on the subject under consideration refer to speeches made and documents tabled in the Indochina plenary sessions of the Geneva Conference, see, Great Britain, Foreign Office, Documents Relating to the Discussions of Korea and Indo-China, April 29-June 15, 1954, Cmd. 9080, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1954), pp.105-162.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p.111.

wanted to entrust the task of execution of agreements to the joint committees composed of representatives of the belligerent parties in each of the three states.<sup>15</sup> Later on, they modified their position and agreed to the principle of international supervision and control on the condition that the machinery of international supervision and control would exist side by side with the joint committees. They further argued that the relationship between the international commissions on the one hand and the joint committees on the other should be a parallel one instead of one being subordinate to the other.<sup>16</sup> At this crucial stage of discussions, the members of the Geneva Conference decided to conduct further negotiations either in restricted sessions at the proceedings, which were of a confidential character, or by informal contacts between the delegations, and hence it is impossible to know the later developments in this matter. However, on the basis of the Geneva Agreement it may be deducted that the Western conception of international supervision and control was finally accepted by the Communist bloc countries.

Selection of members for the international commissions

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p.117.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p.140.

was as controversial as the recognition of the principle of international supervision and control. Eden proposed that the Asian powers represented at the Colombo Conference in April 1954 were admirably qualified to assume the responsibilities of supervision and control as they met the essential requirement of impartiality by recognizing neither the DRV nor the Associated States. These countries, he added, had a particular concern in the restoration of peace in Indochina and possessed first-hand knowledge of the kind of problems confronting the Conference. Moreover, he observed that they were probably close enough to be able to provide and organize, without undue difficulty, the large staff of qualified observers that would be needed. Finally, he remarked that if the international commissions were the political counterparts of the joint committees they would be superfluous.<sup>17</sup> In reply, the Soviet Union proposed for the membership of these commissions the names of India, Pakistan, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Molotov, elaborating on this point, suggested that the commissions composed of these four countries could ensure that there was no one-sidedness or partiality to either side, with the reasoning that the first two countries had diplomatic relations with France and the other two with the

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p.152.

DRV. Refuting objections to participation in the commissions of countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia on the ground that ideological considerations would prevent them from taking a neutral attitude, he stated that such allegations were completely unfounded. He regarded the objections as denoting Western desire to prevent agreement from being reached on the important question.<sup>18</sup> The Soviet argument was not logical for the obvious reason that whereas Poland and Czechoslovakia had outright recognized the DRV, India and Pakistan had recognized neither the Associated States nor the DRV. The communist bloc opposition to the creation of international commissions composed of the five Asian countries could be attributed either to lack of confidence in the neutrality of the latter or to the former's desire to hinder and stall the execution of the Agreement. Ultimately the Conference at the restricted sessions agreed to the creation of the commissions composed of Canada, India and Poland.

From what has been discussed above, it would be seen that the Communist bloc countries accepted the creation of the International Commissions grudgingly and hesitatingly. The discussions also threw light on the important functions the International Commissions were to perform. Their important

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p.145.

function, according to the West, was to insure that the vacuum created by the withdrawal of France from the states of Indochina was not filled in by Communist China. From the point of view of the Communists, their main function was to see that the states of Indochina did not come under the influence of any foreign power hostile and unfriendly to China. It was in this background that India had to carry out her responsibilities as chairman of the I.C.S.C.

## Part II

### "Cannot Shed Responsibilities That Go With A Great Country"

In the last chapter it was shown that India, because of her geographical proximity to Southeast Asia, took active part to bring upon the members of the Geneva Conference the impact of her points of view. The natural corollary of her activities at Geneva was the assumption of her responsibilities. Even before the Geneva Conference began to consider the problem of Indochina, Nehru exhorted the Southeast Asian leaders to be willing and ready to assume responsibilities that might devolve upon their countries as a result of some agreement that might be reached at Geneva. In a broadcast from Colombo, he declared:

It was not enough for us merely to express an opinion or pass resolutions. The new turn in history is casting new responsibilities upon the countries of Asia and, therefore, whatever we may say or do must take into consideration this responsibility from which we cannot escape.

Freedom has come to us, but the counterpart of freedom is responsibility and obligation.<sup>19</sup>

Repeating the same theme, though expressing it more as foreign minister of a country whose interests dictated the policy of active participation in the affairs of small neighbors rather than as an Asian leader, Nehru announced in the Indian Parliament:

We cannot say we wash our hands of this business. Therefore, being intimately concerned, we cannot get away from the fact that if a situation arises which might require some kind of association on our part in any particular decision we cannot just run away and say, no, let us drift. Inevitably, we cannot shed responsibilities that go with a great country.<sup>20</sup>

India took up the responsibilities of chairmanship of the I.C.S.C., which were entrusted to her, as earnestly and vigorously as she had done in negotiating the settlement of the Indochina crisis. A week after the Conference was over, Nehru invited to New Delhi the representatives of the other two countries on the I.C.S.C. to discuss their points of view on truce agreements and the Commissions' functions.<sup>21</sup> The

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<sup>19</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Colombo Powers' Peace Efforts," Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches March 1953-August 1957, Vol. III, (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1958), p.251.

<sup>20</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates: House of the People, Part II, 6th Session, May 15, 1954, Col.1776.

<sup>21</sup>The New York Times, August 5, 1954, p.3.



Indian delegation was conspicuous by the presence of her top-most diplomats and policy makers which in turn spoke of importance she attached to her role on the Commissions. The presence of K. M. Panikkar may particularly be noted. His presence was unusual in view of the fact that he held no position in the Government of India which had anything to do with the issue under consideration. His presence was considered suggestive of the role India would play on the three Commissions. Panikkar is a foremost geo-politician and holds the view that the fate of India is interwoven with developments in the countries of Southeast Asia, and therefore, the Government of India should actively try to shape the developments of the area.<sup>22</sup> Nehru also invited the representatives of the four governments of the states of Indochina and of France to meet the members of the I.C.S.C. During the course of these preliminary meetings, which were of exploratory nature, it was agreed to send an advance party to Indochina to survey the situation prevailing then and to make preparations for the establishment of the Commissions.<sup>23</sup> The advance mission was headed by a person no less important than S. Dutt, the Secretary General of the Ministry of External

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<sup>22</sup>The Hindu, August 3, 1954, p.6. Also see, e.g. K. M. Panikkar, The Future of Southeast Asia. (London: G. Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1943).

<sup>23</sup>The New York Times, August 7, 1954, p.7.

Affairs.

The meetings at New Delhi gave an insight into India's role on these Commissions as well. The membership of these Commissions reflected the cold war in microcosm. From the comments of Krishna Menon on these meetings it appears that the Government of India considered its role in terms of maintaining harmony among the other members of the Commissions by evolving a common solution to the problems of the states of Indochina.<sup>24</sup> The Government of India, in other words, desired to detach the problems of the states of Indochina from the cold war consideration. The Government of India, in its relationship with the host countries of these Commissions, thought of its role as that of a mediator rather than as a prosecutor. Its task in each of the three states was to unite the warring groups in common loyalty to their country. In the words of M. J. Desai, the Chairman of the I.C.S.C. in Vietnam:

Their task was primarily one of reconciliation. Their purpose was not to point the accusing finger but to investigate and lead both the parties to fulfill assurances they had given at Geneva.<sup>25</sup>

In this historical background, the I.C.S.C. started functioning on August 11, 1954 in all the three states. Now

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>The London Times, September 27, 1954, p18.

let us examine separately India's role on these commissions and see to what ends she directed her power and position.

(A) Cambodia

Cambodia had come off best of the three Indochinese states at Geneva because the situation there was not so tangled as it was in the other two states. Whereas Laos had become the victim of the Viet Minh invasion from 1953 onwards, Cambodia had been spared from it until two weeks prior to the Geneva Conference and even when it took place in April 1954, it was more a matter of accident rather than a premeditated attack.<sup>26</sup> Unlike Vietnam, local resistance forces in Cambodia were smaller in number and poorly organized. In this connection, it might be stated that under the astute leadership of King Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia had extracted from France by the time of the Geneva Conference, many concessions with regard to formation of the Khmer National Forces, the official army units, and withdrawal of the French troops. Thus it was no wonder that the 'Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities' in Cambodia was signed by its own General Nhiek Tioulong whereas France signed for the other two. Lastly, there was no regroupment plan for the rebel forces. The Khmer Resistance Forces, as pointed out earlier,

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., April 19, 1954, p.5.

were to be demobilized on the spot within thirty days. Consequently, the problems the I.C.S.C. had to face in Cambodia were not exacting. Since the Geneva Agreement was the outcome of military stalemate, the military problems occupied the immediate attention of the I.C.S.C. As outlined in the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities' the two parties in Cambodia, namely the Royal Government on the one hand, and the Khmer Resistance Forces and the military units of the DRV on the other, achieved a cease-fire throughout the country by August 7, 1954. Under the supervision of the I.C.S.C. problems connected with the cease-fire had been solved satisfactorily by the end of the first report which covered the period from August 11 to December 1954.<sup>27</sup> During this period both sides released the prisoners of war and civilian internees. Mine clearing operations had been carried out satisfactorily. By August 22, the Resistance Forces had been demobilized and by October 20, the foreign forces -- the French and the Viet Minh -- had been withdrawn from the country. With the settlement of these problems, the I.C.S.C. in its own words was left with the

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<sup>27</sup> International Commission for Supervision and Control (henceforth to be referred to as I.C.S.C.) in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (First Interim Report) No. 55/3, (Phnom Penh), p.1.

following ones:

(a) The complete reintegration of demobilized persons into the National Community in such a way that they will be guaranteed immunity from reprisals and the enjoyment of all the rights of citizenship.

(b) The continuous control of the entry of war material and military personnel into Cambodia to make sure that nothing is brought into the country which goes beyond the country's requirements for effective defence.

(c) Reporting on the observance or non-observance by the Cambodian Government of its declaration concerning the establishment of foreign military bases and the conclusion of military alliances.

(d) Keeping a watchful eye on the implementation by the Cambodian Government of its declaration regarding democratic rights and the participation of all citizens in the forthcoming elections.<sup>28</sup>

In the conclusion, it also observed that the three delegates worked in close harmony in discharging their joint responsibilities.

In the period under review, of its second report (January 1-March 30, 1955), the I.C.S.C. considered the issues arising chiefly out of implementation of points (a) and (d) mentioned above. These issues were much of a political nature and in normal circumstances would have been treated as internal problems of a country in which intervention of any kind by a foreign power would have been seriously objected to. The problem of reintegrating the former resistance forces into the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

national community in terms of Article 6 of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia' presented difficulties as there were deep-rooted suspicions and a good many hesitations on both sides. The I.C.S.C., in cooperation and consultation with the Cambodian Government, prepared and presented to the latter a plan to reintegrate the resistance forces. The Government accepted it. However, both parties continued to file complaints against each other with the I.C.S.C. for not complying with the plan for reintegration. The resistance forces had two-fold complaints against the Government. They were dissatisfied with the amnesty proclaimed by the Government because many of their collaborators were not released. Secondly, they charged the government with maltreatment of the former resistors or their relatives. On the other hand, the government alleged that the former resistors were reluctant to integrate themselves into the national community and carried on acts and activities hostile to it. It also reported to the I.C.S.C. that they had not surrendered to government arms as foreseen in the Geneva Agreement. As a result of its investigations, intervention and good offices, the I.C.S.C. was in a position to state that the overall picture regarding integration of the former resistors was more encouraging and that the number of complaints had

begun to diminish.<sup>29</sup>

The question of democratic rights and the participation of all citizens in the general elections scheduled to be held originally in April 1955 was the second issue which occupied much of its energies and attention during this period. The task of the I.C.S.C. in this respect would not have become complicated if internal developments of political nature had not taken place. On February 19, 1955 King Norodom Sihanouk gave the members of the I.C.S.C. and the diplomatic corps an outline of his decision to revise the nation's electoral system and to postpone the pending elections scheduled for April 1955. The King justified these changes on the ground that the Constitution of 1947 under which his country was governed did not suit the conditions that prevailed in 1955. The proposed changes, if carried out, would have substantially revised Cambodia's Constitution of 1947. It would have changed its parliamentary form of government to the presidential form, like the one in the United States. It also suggested important changes in the electoral law of Cambodia. Requirement of residential qualifications for both the voters and the candidates for public office was the most important change in the electoral law. This change would have excluded former members

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<sup>29</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Second Interim Report), No. 55/5 (Phnom Penh), p.16.

of the Khmer Resistance Forces from voting as well as from contesting elections.<sup>30</sup>

The proposed changes on the whole were of far-reaching consequences, The I.C.S.C., however, was not concerned with their merits or otherwise. It examined them from one aspect, namely, whether any of the proposed changes were or were not in conformity with the international obligations the Cambodian Government had undertaken at Geneva. The I.C.S.C. found the proposed changes in the electoral law incompatible with the international commitments of the Cambodian Government because they discriminated against the Khmer Resistance Forces. In spite of this, the I.C.S.C. had not officially expressed its views as a commission to the Cambodian Government.<sup>31</sup> The hesitancy and delay on the part of the I.C.S.C. was attributed to the absence of an authorized text of the proposed changes which had been orally expounded by King Norodom Sihanouk at the meeting on February 19, 1955. When the members of the I.C.S.C. had an audience with the Cambodian Prime Minister on February 24, 1955, they declined to express any views on the proposed changes even when invited to do so by the latter.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.11-16.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.13.



After this meeting when the I.C.S.C. began to consider the proposed changes officially, the Cambodian Government on February 27, 1955 announced the postponement of the reform project and continuation of the Constitution which was to be amended by it.

The abandonment of the reform project, however, did not bring an end to its consideration. The abdication of the throne by King Norodom Sihanouk on March 2, 1955 kept the issue alive. His decision to renounce the throne came as a complete surprise even to his closest advisers. Naturally, there was a great deal of speculation as to the reasons for his abdication. Since no authorized version of his abdication broadcast was available, there were all kinds of rumors as to what he had said and whom he had criticized.<sup>32</sup> Some French and the South Vietnamese press reports concluded from the King's broadcast that the opposition of the I.C.S.C. to the reform project and its intervention in the internal affairs of Cambodia were the main reasons for the King's abdication.<sup>33</sup> These press reports circulated so widely that the Commission was compelled to take notice of them. It wrote and brought to the attention of the Cambodian Government these press reports with a view to correcting the false

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p.14.

<sup>33</sup>The New York Times, March 3, 1955, p.2.

impressions created by them. The Cambodian Government in its reply repudiated all these press reports.<sup>34</sup>

In spite of the repudiation of the press reports by the Cambodian Government, they could not be brushed aside as baseless. On the contrary, some evidences weigh favorably in establishing their validity. From an unofficial version of the King's broadcast of March 2, 1955, it appears that opposition of the I.C.S.C. to the proposed changes caused him to abdicate the throne.<sup>35</sup> Though the King had specifically objected in his broadcast to the opposition of the Democratic Party under the leadership of Son Ngoc Than (the leader of the Khmer Resistance Forces), it could be inferred that he indirectly protested against the Commission, the most influential voice in opposing his proposed changes to the Constitution. After the Geneva Conference in 1954, the only protector of the rights of the former members of the Khmer Resistance Forces was the I.C.S.C., and if it would not have been considerate of their interests, the opposition of the Commission to the proposed changes would not have assumed the proportions of such a consequence so as to make the King abdicate. As a matter of fact, the Commission, as shown

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<sup>34</sup>External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Second Interim Report), No. 55/5, op. cit., p.15.

<sup>35</sup>Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report, for Radio Broadcast, No.44, March 4, 1955, pp.EEE 1-3.

earlier, had found the proposed changes objectionable to the extent it discriminated the former members of the Resistance Forces. It may also be pointed out here that while the I.C.S.C., as a group, had refrained from expressing any opinions on the project, the commissioners in their individual capacity had submitted informal suggestions to the Cambodian Government with a view to persuade it to make the proposed changes compatible with its obligations undertaken at the Geneva Conference.<sup>36</sup> In the background of India's concern for the implementation for the Geneva Agreement, it would not be wrong to conclude that her representative received with greater alarm than the other two members, King Norodom's attempt to violate the terms of the agreement and might have approached the Cambodian Government with a request to modify the proposed changes to the Constitution.

At the end of the second report, the I.C.S.C. had looked forward to a reduction in its activities since most of the provisions of the Geneva Agreement had been implemented satisfactorily. But in the meantime, the Cambodian Government entered into a Military Aid Agreement with the United States on May 16, 1955 which caused the I.C.S.C. to issue a

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<sup>36</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Second Interim Report), No. 55/5, op. cit., p.15.

third interim report giving the results of an investigation of the same. The Commission examined the terms of the Military Aid Agreement to determine its compatibility or otherwise with the Geneva Accord. On examination<sup>37</sup> it found that some of the provisions of the Aid Agreement were not in harmony with Article 7 of the 'Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities in Cambodia.' Article 7 imposed on Cambodia restrictions as to military alliances and soliciting of foreign aid in war materials. The I.C.S.C. argued that it could accept military aid only for effective defence of the territory but under the Military Aid Agreement Cambodia would apparently be obliged to get involved in the global commitments of the U.S.A. The Military Aid Agreement was signed in accordance with the 1954 Mutual Security Act under which the aid was to be given in order to promote the interests of the United States foreign policy.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, Cambodia was obliged in return for the aid, to make full contribution of its resources for the defensive strength of the Free World. Hence, the I.C.S.C. observed that the utilization of its resources would not be for the sole purpose of effective defence of the country. The aid agreement also anticipated

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., Annexure A.

increase in the duties of the I.C.S.C.'s fixed and mobile teams with regard to supervision of incoming military personnel and war materials at ports, air fields and the frontiers of Cambodia which had nothing to do with its defence. Granting of facilities for the transit through the Cambodian territory of war materials and equipments destined for other countries receiving aid from the United States was one of the conditions of the Aid Agreement which in turn brought forth additional work for the I.C.S.C. The Geneva Agreement nowhere provided for supervision of this nature. Finally, it pointed out that the reference to 'free world' for the defence of which the Aid Agreement was concluded, suggested an affiliation to a particular bloc of nations which was not in consonance with the Cambodian declaration of neutrality.

In spite of the numerous objections, the Commission unanimously approved of the Military Aid Agreement on July 23, 1955. Its approval by India and Poland was indeed surprising in view of the former's opposition to any kind of military aid agreement between two nations in which one of them happened to be a weak Asian country and the latter's anti-Western attitude. Poland's approval, in the face of strong opposition of the DRV and Communist China to the Agreement, appeared baffling. The Commission had unanimously approved it after the assurance by

the Cambodian Government that it would scrupulously and always respect the terms of the Geneva Agreement and the receiving of aid in practice under the Agreement would be in conformity with the terms of the Geneva Agreement.<sup>39</sup> India's approval of the Agreement, it seems, could be explained in terms of her growing understanding and intimacy with Cambodia after the ex-King Norodom Sihanouk's visit to India in early 1955. Growing tendencies towards neutralism in Cambodia<sup>40</sup> might have led Poland to put faith in the assurances given by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

During the period of the fourth report of the I.C.S.C., (April 1 to September 30, 1955) the Cambodian Government held general elections on September 11, 1955 and thereby fulfilled its obligation under Article 6 of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities.' The elections were considered as a point of culmination in the process of reintegrating the resisters in the national community. The I.C.S.C. had no authority to supervise the elections as a whole. The only function it had to perform in this connection was to insure that the resisters were not deprived of any privileges on

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp.1-2.

<sup>40</sup>Zoltan M. Szaz, "Cambodia's Foreign Policy", Far Eastern Survey, October 1955, p.156.

account of their past record. With this view in mind, the I.C.S.C. studied various facets of the Electoral Laws and prepared a memorandum for guidance for its mobile and fixed teams spread out in 14 provinces. The I.C.S.C. received a good many complaints from the resisters to the effect that the government authorities put all sorts of hinderances which worked against them. The I.C.S.C., with the help of its teams, investigated these complaints and interceded, where necessary, with the government so as to have fair and impartial elections. At the end of the elections the I.C.S.C. reported that:

In spite of the fact that conditions of war and civil strife prevailed in Cambodia until a year ago and that sharp differences had arisen between the Government and opposition, which alleged that it did not have full freedom, the election passed off peacefully.

. . . It considers, however, that the settlement foreseen under Article 6 of the Geneva Agreement has been completed.<sup>41</sup>

With the conclusion of the elections, the major part of the work of the I.C.S.C. in Cambodia came to an end. From October 1955 to December 1957 it issued its last two reports indicating details of its activities which with the solution of the problems and the passage of time, had begun to assume routine character. However, the issues of border incidents and the winding up of the Commission, injected chords of

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<sup>41</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fourth Interim Report), No. 55/1 (Phnom Penh), Chapter II.

differences among the members of the I.C.S.C. otherwise marked with apparent harmony and cooperation.

The Commission had considered earlier requests of the Cambodian Government, cases of border violations by the DRV. As a matter of fact, the Commission from the very beginning had been occupied with the problems arising out of mutual distrust and hostility between Cambodia and the DRV. The Cambodian Government filed complaints with the I.C.S.C. to the effect that the Government of the DRV harassed and attacked the border region of its country.<sup>42</sup> It also charged the Viet Minh Government with relaying unfriendly and hostile broadcasts from its Hanoi Radio directed against Cambodia. The I.C.S.C. through its good offices contributed in stopping the border attacks and hostile propaganda from both sides against each other, and in establishing friendly relations between the two governments.<sup>43</sup> In its sixth and the final report covering the period from January 1 to December 31, 1957, the I.C.S.C. reported that it had received no complaints against the DRV and further observed that the trend in the direction of improved and friendly relations between these two countries had continued.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Chapters IV and V.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Sixth Interim Report), No. 58 (Phnom Penh), p.3.



However, when the relations between Cambodia and the DRV were becoming normal, the I.C.S.C. received from the former Government letters informing it of reported violations or threats of violations of its territory from South Vietnam and Thailand.<sup>45</sup> The I.C.S.C. disposed of all the letters of complaints with only one exception, either by acknowledging receipts of the same to the Cambodian Government, or by referring the cases to its counterpart in Vietnam. This exceptional case is important not for its substance but it reveals a great deal about the Cambodian Government's attitude toward the I.C.S.C. and the conception of the role held by the members of the Commission. The case was simple. The Cambodian Government brought to the attention of the I.C.S.C. a case of alleged violation of its border on May 4 1957 by the armed personnel of the Republic of Vietnam. It provided the I.C.S.C. with details pertaining to the case. In conclusion, it requested the I.C.S.C. to send its representatives to verify the facts on the spot and to interrogate the prisoners it held in custody. The I.C.S.C. responded to the request by sending the Ad Hoc Team to the scene of the incident the next day. The team submitted to its parent organization a report which it had arrived at unanimously. The team found,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

among other things, the armed personnel of the Republic of Vietnam responsible for the violation of the Cambodian territory. Though the Canadian delegation in the team concurred in its report, its counterpart on the I.C.S.C. refused to sign it on the ground that the latter was not competent to deal with such border incidents involving the Government of the Republic of Vietnam.<sup>46</sup>

The Canadian delegation cited Articles 7, 11 and 13(a) of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities' in Cambodia in justification of its stand. It argued that under Article 11, the I.C.S.C. was responsible for control and supervision of the application of the Agreement. Hence, whatever issue it considered must be related to the implementation of the Agreement which was designed to bring about peace between two opposing forces. There were two parties to the Agreement -- corresponding to the two opposing forces during the period of hostilities. Since the Republic of Vietnam was not a party to the Agreement, the I.C.S.C. had no jurisdiction to consider the case. Secondly, the Canadian delegation pointed out that Article 7 entailed responsibility on the I.C.S.C. only in the case when Cambodia joined a military alliance carrying with it

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Annexure, p.XVIII

the obligation to let foreign powers establish bases on its territory. As the incident under consideration did not force Cambodia to join any military pact, the I.C.S.C. had no powers to consider the case. Thirdly, the delegation stipulated Article 13(a) in support of its stand, in terms of which Cambodia was empowered to control the withdrawal of foreign forces in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement and to see that frontiers were respected. This Article was intended to mean that the I.C.S.C. was obliged to see that the Cambodian frontiers were respected only in connection with the withdrawal of foreign armed forces involved in the conflict at the time of the Geneva Conference. From the point of view of the Canadian delegation, it was unlikely that Article 13(a) referred to a general supervision of the frontiers while setting forth the particular task of supervising the withdrawal of foreign forces. The delegation concluded that since the Republic of Vietnam was not a party to the Cease-fire Agreement in Cambodia, the latter should refer independently through diplomatic channels cases of its border violations by the former.<sup>47</sup>

The Polish and the Indian delegations, however, found the case under consideration within the jurisdiction of the

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., Annexure, p.XXXVIII

I.C.S.C.. Refuting the Canadian thesis, the Indian Chairman suggested that the I.C.S.C. was entrusted with two functions under Article 13(a) -- withdrawal of foreign forces and respect for frontiers -- which were separate and independent of one another. It further stated that this view found support from the procedural provision of Article 21, where these two functions were specified in two separate clauses. Article 21 says that the I.C.S.C. should arrive at unanimous decisions on questions concerning these two functions. The Indian delegate also referred to Paragraph 12 of the Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference, in which all the participants of the Conference (including the Republic of Vietnam) agreed to respect the territorial integrity of the states of Indochina. The Indian delegate, therefore, concluded that the case of border violation by the Republic of Vietnam was within the competence of the I.C.S.C.. Secondly, it pointed out that the I.C.S.C. was competent to consider the case under Article 7. The Indian delegation was of the opinion that the function of the I.C.S.C. was not only to see that Cambodia did not enter into a military pact contrary to Article 7, but also to investigate and supervise incidents which ultimately might lead Cambodia to signing such a pact. As regards the Canadian Commissioner's suggestion about the Peace Observation Commission

under the auspices of the United Nations, the Indian delegation observed that it would be somewhat out of proportion to have another Commission set up in Cambodia.<sup>48</sup>

The Chairman then proposed the resolution to the effect that the I.C.S.C. was competent to entertain and deal with reports and complaints of aggression or threat of aggression of Cambodian territory and incidents of violation of Cambodian frontiers. The Canadian delegation voted against this resolution on the ground that the I.C.S.C. could deal with the issues enumerated in the above resolution if they had their origin in the DRV only. On the same ground Canadian delegation voted against the adoption of the Ad Hoc Team's Report. The Polish delegation then moved the resolution that in view of the Canadian disagreement, a unanimous decision as envisaged under Article 21 was not possible and action, therefore, might be taken under Article 22 of the Cease-fire Agreement. The I.C.S.C., against the protest of the Canadian delegation, considered the Ad Hoc Team's Report under Article 22 and forwarded to the Co-chairmen of the Geneva Powers' Conference -- the U.S.S.R. and the U.K. -- the majority report signed by the Indian and Polish delegations and the minority report signed

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., Annexure, pp.XXXI-XXXVI.

by the Canadian delegation.<sup>49</sup>

The other issue that broke the apparent unanimity among the three members of the I.C.S.C., was that of winding up of the Commission itself. Consideration was given to a progressive reduction of the activities of the I.C.S.C. as envisaged in Article 25 just after the general elections were completed in September 1955.<sup>50</sup> Gradual reduction in its activities had been effected since then, but in the Spring of 1956, the Canadian delegation proposed the dissolution of the Commission with the reasoning that the evolution of the Geneva Agreement in Cambodia had been entirely along the lines foreseen in the settlement reached at the Geneva Conference of 1954.<sup>51</sup> Elaborating his argument, the Canadian Commissioner cited numerous reasons. The withdrawal of the Commission would give official international recognition to the fact that both the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the DRV have satisfactorily performed the obligations undertaken at the Geneva

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., Annexure, p.XIII.

<sup>50</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fourth Interim Report), op. cit., Chapter VII.

<sup>51</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fifth Interim Report), op. cit., Annexure II, p.2.

Conference. The Commission having no functions to perform would be a victim of inertia. It also argued that its continuance on the ground that agreed solutions had not been found in Laos and Vietnam was unfair to Cambodia and it did not benefit the Commissions in those two countries. However, the most important reason adduced by Canada in this respect was that the presence of the Commission imposed a check on Cambodia's exercise of sovereignty.

The Indian and Polish delegations argued that in terms of Article 25 of the Cease-fire Agreement, the Commission in Cambodia could not be dissolved without having regard to the progress made in the implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Laos and Vietnam. They further argued that since the developments both in Laos and Vietnam were not satisfactory, the Commission in Cambodia could not be wound up. Consideration of this question was therefore postponed indefinitely by unanimous decision.<sup>52</sup>

It will be seen from the activities of the I.C.S.C. that it was successful in discharging its responsibilities in Cambodia. It was successful because it worked together in the spirit of cooperation and cordiality towards which the Indian delegation from the vantage position of Chairman made a

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Annexure II, p.2.

substantial contribution. The presence of Poland and Canada, the representatives of the two sides of the cold war, made the Indian Government believe that the cold war considerations might be extended to the problems of Cambodia. The reports on the activities of the I.C.S.C. give little indication of the extent to which the cold war considerations entered into its deliberations. However, in view of the different background and orientation of its members, it could be argued that without the help of a mediator, it would not have found possible to evolve a common approach and agreed solutions to the problems of Cambodia. India being an uncommitted nation in the cold war, her representative was in a position to play the role of a mediator. The following comment of the Canadian Ambassador Smith substantiates the above analysis. Paying tribute to Parthasarathi, the leader of the Indian delegation, he observed:

You have ably discharged not only the task of representing your country, but also that of chairing our deliberations. Driving a troika, while a good sport, is not always easy, and I should like to pay tribute to the skill, patience, and understanding with which you have accomplished this sometimes tricky task. Your ability in suggesting solutions ultimately acceptable to those holding views which were sometimes widely divergent has served this Commission well, and you should feel justly proud of our record of continuous unanimity. Indeed, it is because of this very ability that the International Commission in Cambodia has never been obliged to vote on any issue and that a spirit of friendliness and understanding has



persisted both in our formal deliberations and our personal contacts.<sup>53</sup>

The above comment was made on the occasion of Parthasarathi's departure for India in October 1955. However, the truth of the comment was not to be tarnished with the passage of time because most of the provisions of the Geneva Agreement had been fulfilled by that time. On that occasion the Polish delegation was equally appreciative of India's role of a rapporteur.

The Indian delegation was successful to a great extent in playing the role of a mediator. The fact that the I.C.S.C. arrived at all the decisions unanimously except the two mentioned above, was a testimony of India's success in this respect. Since the two issues that divided the Commission were of procedural rather than of substantive nature, they did not reflect upon India's role of reconciliation.

Secondly, the I.C.S.C. was successful in Cambodia because it won the confidence of the host country. This indeed was an achievement which without India's help would not have been possible. Initially, Cambodia looked upon the I.C.S.C. with mistrust and fear and considered it a hostile foreign agent imposed upon it by the Geneva Conference. Its unfriendly

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<sup>53</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Sixth Interim Report), op. cit., Annexure, p.XLV.

attitude towards the I.C.S.C. had its origin in the circumstances of Cambodia. Being faced with the communist threat both internally and internationally, Cambodia, with the French withdrawal in 1954, considered the United States as the only protection against this two-fold threat. The United States was equally anxious to face, in cooperation with other friendly countries interested in Southeast Asia, the threat of the Chinese Communists.<sup>54</sup> Cambodia feared that the I.C.S.C. of which the majority of members (Poland and India) were in her estimation pro-Communist, might act as a brake on its attempts to fight Communist menace in cooperation with the United States. Here it may be pointed out that India, according to officials of Cambodia, constantly advocated Red Chinese aims.<sup>55</sup>

It was against this background that the I.C.S.C., under the Chairmanship of India, assumed responsibilities. The unfriendly attitude of Cambodia towards the Commission was further intensified just after that body began to function. This was mainly due to India's anxiety to reconcile the two

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<sup>54</sup>Zoltan M. Szaz, *op. cit.*, p.157.

<sup>55</sup>"Sihanouk and Dulles," The New Statesman and Nation, April 21, 1956, p.403.

warring groups in Cambodia. The Cambodian Government, being one of the two groups, did not look with favor on any consideration given by India to the viewpoints and complaints of its rival -- the Khmer Resistance Forces. The gradual settlement of the problem of reintegration removed the irritant that came in the way of development of friendly and cordial relations between the two countries. Conditions in Indochina, moreover, became stabilized and Cambodia began to consider its problems more in terms of normal international relations. Consequently, India and Cambodia, because of geographical closeness and cultural, religious, and historical ties, came closer and began to understand and appreciate each other's views and policies. The visit of Prince Norodom Sihanouk to India in May 1955, during which he subscribed to the Pancha Sheela principles and reaffirmed his Government's decision to implement the Geneva Agreement, might be taken as a turning point in the relationship of the two countries.<sup>56</sup>

Obviously, the improvement in the relationship of India and Cambodia was reflected in the activities of the Commission. The first outstanding case indicating the change in the relationship of the Commission and Cambodia is that of the

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<sup>56</sup>For the text of speeches of Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the joint communique issued by the Prime Minister of India and the Prince, see, e.g., Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Foreign Affairs Record, April 1955, pp.49-52.

Military Aid Agreement the latter signed with the United States in May 1955. Its approval by the Commission, and its implementation by Cambodia in strict accordance with Articles 7 and 13(a) of the Cease-fire Agreement when it could have been easily violated, is a testimony to growing mutual confidence between the two parties.

Cambodia not only began to cooperate with the I.C.S.C., but also made it one of the most important instruments of its domestic and foreign policy. The two instances in which the Commission failed to arrive at unanimous decision amply justified the validity of the above statement. In the case of frontier violations by the forces of South Vietnam and Thailand, it was Cambodia which wanted the I.C.S.C., against the wishes of Canada, to take necessary action. Here it may be pointed out that Canada wanted Cambodia to take resort to diplomatic channels other than the I.C.S.C. The Cambodian Government again expressed its confidence in the Commission by stating at a farewell luncheon on December 9, 1957 to Major General D. S. Brar, the outgoing Chairman of the Commission, that the presence of the Commission in his country was necessary.<sup>57</sup> This statement of confidence becomes still

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<sup>57</sup>I.C.S.C. in Cambodia, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Sixth Interim Report), op. cit., p.XXVI.

more impressive when it is considered in the light of Cambodia's disregard to the British Government's (one of the two Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference) approaches in October 1959 to the Cambodian Government to get the Commission dissolved.<sup>58</sup>

The Cambodian Government's statement of October 1959, announcing its decision to hold national referendum, was indicative of the importance it attached to the I.C.S.C. in its domestic affairs.<sup>59</sup> It declared that a national referendum would be held to give the people of Cambodia an opportunity to choose between the Government and the Free Cambodia Movement composed of rebels under the leadership of the exile leaders Son Ngoc Thanh and Sam Sary. It further added that if the Government lost, Prince Norodom Sihanouk would resign as Premier and go into exile or submit to trial by the 'highest court.' If the government won, the leaders of the Free Cambodia Movement would be declared outlaws. The most important part of this statement, so far as this study is concerned, was that the I.C.S.C. was entrusted with the task of conducting such a momentous referendum. Irrespective of the merits or demerits

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<sup>58</sup>The Washington Post, October 4, 1959, p.6.

<sup>59</sup>"Cambodia Plans to Vote to Decide Issues," The Asian Student, October 10, 1959, p.3.

of this announcement, it was a testimony to the cordial relationship that existed between the I.C.S.C. and the Cambodian Government.

It is needless to point out that the Cambodian Government's confidence in the Commission was an expression of faith in view of the fact that India as Chairman held decisive vote on the Commission. Now we shall examine the activities of the Commission in Laos where the situation was complicated.

(B) Laos

The main burden of executing the technical conditions of the cease-fire in all the three states of Indochina rested with the Joint Commissions composed of military commanders of the two belligerent sides in each state. In its first report for the period August 11 to December 13, 1954, the I.C.S.C. stated that despite differences, the two sides in Laos made a real effort and succeeded in fulfilling their major obligations of a military nature under the Cease-fire Agreement. It also pointed out that at its insistence the two sides had remedied occasional and minor lapses in their execution of military obligations. However, a most difficult and delicate, as well as important problem, that of integrating the two northern provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua with the territory of the Royal Laotian Government, did not come any nearer to solution

during this period.<sup>60</sup>

The problem of the two northern provinces was important for various reasons. Firstly, the current trouble in Laos could be easily traced to issues arising out of its unsatisfactory settlement. Secondly, this problem dominated the activities of the Commission from January 1955 onwards until its adjournment sine die in July, 1958. Thirdly, it caused dissensions and disagreements among the three members of the Commission and shattered the unanimity which it had maintained during the period of its first report. The absence of unanimity among the members of the Commissions provided opportunities to examine their individual viewpoints.

From the first report of the Commission it became evident that the problem of the two northern provinces had a military as well as a political aspect. Militarily, the Pathet Lao side contended that the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua in totality constituted provisional assembly areas and final regroupment areas for their forces. They further asserted their own complete military control over the two provinces and accused the Franco-Laotian side of having paraded some regular Laotian National Army units after August 6, 1954 in contravention of the provision of Article 19. They

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<sup>60</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (First Interim Report), No. 55/2, (Vientiane: August 1955), p.29.

backed up their claim to authority throughout the two provinces by stating that the term 'provinces' in Article 14 implied the whole area of the provinces; if it had been otherwise the wording would have been that the fighting units of the Pathet Lao would move into a zone within each of the two provinces.<sup>61</sup> The Franco-Laotian side rejected the Pathet Lao sides claim to the whole area of the two provinces on various grounds. They argued that Article 12 provided for the Pathet Lao forces twelve provisional assembly areas, i.e., one area per province. This indirectly suggested that there was also an area in each of the provinces of Phong Saly and Sam Neua. Secondly, Article 14 stipulated that the Pathet Lao forces would assemble in the two provinces but it did not specify that each of these provinces constituted in its entirety a final assembly area. Thirdly, the Royal Government claimed at least administrative capitals of the two provinces as zones assigned to its army as a logical conclusion to acceptance of its sovereignty throughout the country by the Geneva Powers. Lastly, the Laotian Government justified the presence of its forces in the two provinces on the ground that its army units were entitled to remain in situ.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp.48-52.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid.



Politically also, the sides held equally contradictory viewpoints. The Franco-Laotian side gave first priority to effective re-establishment of Royal administration in the two provinces irrespective of any other considerations. The Pathet Lao side was of the opinion that the question of effective re-establishment of the Royal administration should be considered only after the Royal Laotian Government had fulfilled its political obligations towards the Pathet Lao. In this category of obligations it emphasized four points: general elections, democratic freedom, overall foreign policy of the Kingdom and reintegration of its fighting units of the Pathet Lao into Royal Laotian Army.<sup>63</sup>

The uncompromising and conflicting attitudes of the two sides on this fundamental problem gave rise to complaints and counter-complaints against each other. This state of affairs inevitably involved the I.C.S.C. in the conflict. With a view to vindicate their positions and to seek support, both sides submitted their disputes and disagreements to the I.C.S.C.. The Commission itself was divided on this issue. Broadly speaking, the Pathet Lao and the Royal Laotian Government viewpoints in this matter were shared by the Polish and the

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

Canadian delegations respectively.<sup>64</sup> The Indian delegation was of the opinion that the Commission should not take any committal stand on this issue on the ground that it would not serve any purpose as long as its decision was not acceptable to both the sides in Laos.<sup>65</sup> With this consideration in mind, the I.C.S.C. encouraged both sides to settle, in the spirit of reconciliation, their differences among themselves, and impressed upon them the importance of a political settlement of the problem of the two provinces as envisaged in Article 14. In response to its suggestion the parties met at Plaine des Jares for the first time in January 1955. The negotiations which had thus begun came to an end after three years of protracted negotiations on November 12, 1957 when Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong, the leader of the Pathet Lao signed a Military Agreement on the integration of the Pathet Lao forces. Even when they were directly engaged in negotiations for the political settlement of the problem, they kept the I.C.S.C. busy by submitting their complaints, mainly of military nature. Before we evaluate the terms of the settlement and India's contribution

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<sup>64</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Second Interim Report), No. 55/9, (Vientiane), Chapter III, p.1.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

thereto, let us examine a few cases brought to the attention of the I.C.S.C. which shed some light on the distinct role of India thereon.

The presence of two forces -- the Royal Laotian units and the Pathet Lao units -- in the two northern provinces was a matter of fact in October 1954. The Pathet Lao lodged a complaint with the I.C.S.C. against the Laotian Government to the effect that the latter's army had been expelled from the two northern provinces in March 1953 and that the existing units of the army in that area had been paradropped after August 6, 1954 in violation of Article 19.<sup>66</sup> The Commission ordered an inquiry with a view to determine the strength and position of the Royal Laotian Army in the two provinces at the time of the cease-fire. While these investigations were going on, the I.C.S.C. directed a sub-committee of its Military Committee to examine the validity of documents, maps, nominal rolls, load manifests and personal diaries submitted by the Royal Laotian Government in justification of the presence of its forces in the two northern provinces prior to the cease-fire. The sub-committee failed to arrive at a unanimous decision on its investigations. The Polish delegate refused to accept

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p.2.

the authenticity of the documents on the ground that they did not seem to be original. He, however, felt that the documents might be taken into consideration after having checked the actual facts on the spot by the team of the Commission. The Canadian and Indian delegates found the documents valid and sound, and thereby repudiated the Pathet Lao complaint of paradropping of troops in the two northern provinces by the Royal Laotian Government.<sup>67</sup>

Pursuant to this decision, the Canadian delegate introduced a resolution urging the Pathet Lao to respect (under the provision of Article 19) the authority of the Royal Laotian Government in the area controlled by it in the two northern provinces.<sup>68</sup> The Indian delegate was of the opinion that the right of the Royal Laotian Army to remain in the two northern provinces depended upon the interpretation of Article 14 and should be kept separate from the immediate aim of removing chances of conflict between the two forces actually in position in the two provinces. It, therefore, proposed a demarcation of the area under the military control of the troops of both the parties with the proviso that their positions

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., Chapter 3, pp.2-3.

<sup>68</sup>For views of the three members of the Commission on this resolution, see, e.g., Ibid.

would not be strengthened. The Polish delegate objected to the Indian proposal on the ground that it would either give legal recognition to the presence of Laotian National Army troops or divide the provinces between the opposing forces. He further argued that the Indian proposal was contrary to the provision of Article 19 which in the original French version referred to mutual respect of territory placed under military control of the two parties. Since the two provinces had been placed under the Pathet Lao under Article 14, the Royal Laotian troops had no legal right to be there. The Indian proposal was finally adopted by a majority of two to one -- India and Canada concurring, and Poland opposing. The Commission emphasized that the adoption of the proposal was without prejudice to the rights of the parties under Article 14 which then remained to be interpreted. Later on the Canadian resolution which caused the introduction of the Indian proposal was adopted with the affirmative votes of India and Canada.

An incident involving interpretation of Articles 14 and 19 was reported by the Laotian Government to the Mobile Team at Xieng Khouang in the province of Sam Neua on January 14, 1955.<sup>69</sup> The Laotian Government in its complaint stated

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., Appendix C.

that the Pathet Lao forces had encircled the post of Nong Khang forcing its army to withdraw. On the basis of the report submitted by the Mobile Team, the Canadian and Indian members of the I.C.S.C. concluded that the Pathet Lao forces failed to ensure the implementation of Article 19 under which the armed forces of each party was to respect the territory under the military control of the other party. The Polish delegate was of the opinion that the presence of the Royal Laotian Government troops in the northern provinces was in violation of Article 14 under which the Pathet Lao had been given the provinces under consideration in their entirety as a regroupment area.

The adoption of the report of the Mobile Team invited a debate on procedural matter.<sup>70</sup> The Polish delegate refrained from voting on the adoption of the Team's report on the ground that Article 34 (paragraph 2) required a unanimous vote as it attempted to amend the Geneva Agreement. The Indian Chairman overruled this objection and held that no unanimity was necessary as the resolution was merely designed to find a solution to a particular incident. The Polish delegate then asked that the Co-chairman of the Geneva Conference be informed

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<sup>70</sup> For views of the three members of the I.C.S.C. on the adoption of the report of the Mobile Team, see, e.g., Ibid., Chapter IV, pp.2-3.

of the difference of opinion on this issue. The Canadian and Indian delegates decided that there was no need to follow this course. The recommendation of the majority was formally sent to both sides in accordance with the provision of Article 32. The Polish delegate suggested that the two sides be furnished with the minority report also. In this connection the Indian Chairman observed that no provision was made in the Agreement to inform the parties of a minority opinion and hence refused to accept the Polish suggestion. Thereupon the Polish delegate declared that the resolution was not binding on anybody and directly informed both of the sides of its point of view.

Even while the two sides were engaged in negotiations for political settlement, the I.C.S.C. discussed two issues of a political nature. On May 24, 1955 the Canadian delegation submitted a resolution regarding re-establishment of Royal administration in the two provinces.<sup>71</sup> The Indian delegation was prepared to treat the resolution as a basis for discussion. However, in view of the military control which the Pathet Lao exercised over the northern provinces it considered the Canadian resolution impracticable. The

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., Appendix D.

Canadian delegation, therefore, agreed to postpone consideration of its resolution. Nearly seven months thereafter the Canadian delegation again moved a similar resolution taking the view that such a resolution was of primary importance and would stabilize the situation.<sup>72</sup> In this connection it may be mentioned that in the intervening period between the two Canadian resolutions political negotiations had broken down and the tension between the two parties was mounting. The Canadian delegation in its second resolution also insisted upon re-establishment of Royal administration in the two provinces irrespective of any other considerations. As a result of intense discussion the Indian delegation tabled an alternative draft resolution which was eventually adopted on January 7, 1956 with Canadian support.<sup>73</sup> The Indian resolution recommended re-establishment without delay of Royal Laotian administration in the two provinces concurrently with the necessary measures for integration of the Pathet Lao without discrimination and requested both the parties to open negotiations to achieve these ends, and thus, a political settlement. The Polish delegation, dissociating itself from the

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<sup>72</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Third Interim Report), No. 57/10, (Vientiane), p.6.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., Annexure C.



resolution, pointed out that the primary concern of the Commission was the maintenance of the cessation of hostilities and since the military situation was far from satisfactory (presumably referring to the Houei Thao incident in the province of Sam Neua),<sup>74</sup> the Commission should attend to it and solve it. It further asserted that the Geneva Agreement did not vest the Commission with any powers with regard to political settlement. In the Indian view, both the fields -- military and political -- were supplementary to each other and the necessity of lasting peace demanded action at both of the levels. Moreover, it stated that the resolution did not give any political award -- which indeed would have been beyond the competence of the Commission -- but was merely an extension of the various attempts, informal or otherwise, made by the I.C.S.C. to induce the parties to negotiate.<sup>75</sup> The Canadian delegation regretted that its resolution did not find favor with other delegations. But it supported the Indian resolution in the hope that it would lead both parties to re-undertake negotiations which had broken down because of military flare-up at Houei Thao.

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<sup>74</sup>For the seriousness of this incident, see, e.g. Ibid., p.13.

<sup>75</sup>For full discussion on the alternative draft resolution by India see Ibid., pp.6-7.

The second issue of political nature had its origin in the general elections the Royal Government held in December 1955. The Pathet Lao did not participate in these elections and complained in the I.C.S.C. that they were illegal and invalid.<sup>76</sup> In course of the discussion on this subject the Canadian delegation observed that the elections were not contrary to the Geneva Agreement and that the Laotian Government had tried to reach a political settlement with the Pathet Lao beforehand and was bound by its constitution to hold elections sometime in 1955. The Polish delegation was of the opinion that the elections were not held in conformity with the Geneva Agreement and refused to comment upon them as the Commission had taken no part in them. The Indian delegation took the view that the Royal Laotian Government had freedom to hold elections whenever it wished under its own law but as no political settlement had been reached with the Pathet Lao, the elections were not of the type contemplated in the Geneva Agreement.<sup>77</sup>

The study of the instances cited above throws considerable light on the working of the Indian delegation on the I.C.S.C. for Laos. The most striking feature of its role is that it

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<sup>76</sup>For views of the Commission on this issue, see, e.g. Ibid., pp.5-6.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., pp.5-6.

attempted to reconcile differences within the I.C.S.C. The task of reconciliation was rather difficult in the face of contradictory and conflicting views held by the other two members of the Commission who, in turn, supported openly either of the two parties in Laos. However, when it failed to find a way acceptable to all of the three members of the Commission, the Indian delegation found itself aligned with its Canadian counterpart. Voting with the Canadian delegation indirectly meant that the Indian delegation tried to uphold the point of view of the Laotian Government. Secondly, the Indian delegation in its approach to the problems brought before the I.C.S.C. was realistic rather than theoretical. It had felt from the very beginning that most of the troubles in Laos had their origin in political discord. It had also realized that the political settlement could be reached only by the two parties directly involved. It, therefore, attempted to restrict the Commission's activities to prevention of outbreak of new hostilities, maintenance of the status quo and encouragement to both the parties to reach a political accord. The restrictive role which the Indian delegation prescribed for the Commission becomes striking when it is examined in the light of the repeated attempts of each of the other two delegations to make the Commission adopt its interpretation, irrespective of the acceptance of the same by

the two sides in Laos, of those Articles of the Geneva Agreement which dealt with the problem of the two northern provinces.

The main burden of negotiations for a political settlement, as shown earlier, rested upon the two parties directly involved. They, at the insistence of the Commission, met for the first time at Plaine de Jares in January 1955 to negotiate a political settlement. But their conflicting and uncompromising attitudes in April brought an end to the negotiations without any significant achievement. The two sides in the course of negotiations, however, had agreed to end hostilities between their forces and to maintain the status quo. It may be recalled here that the aforesaid agreement reflected the approach of the Indian delegation to the prevailing hostilities in Laos in the absence of a political settlement. The second phase of the negotiations began with the resumption of talks at Rangoon in October 1955. The selection of Rangoon in Burma -- one of India's most trusted friends -- as a meeting place was not an accident. Rangoon was proposed by the Indian Chairman after the attempt to get the talks started at Vientiane in September 1955 had failed because of the refusal of the Pathet Lao leader to go there for lack of insufficient security measures. On the morning of October 9, 1955, before the commencement of the conference at Rangoon, the Chairman presented to the parties a personal

and confidential letter outlining a settlement in the hope that it might be used as a working document.<sup>78</sup> From the report on the activities of the Commission, it appears that the two parties encountered at Rangoon difficulties of fundamental nature and hence they failed to make any progress. It meant that the settlement outlined by the Chairman did not bear any results.

The direct negotiations once again had come to a standstill after the Rangoon Conference and continued in that state upto August 1, 1956, when the leaders of the two sides resumed negotiations at Vientiane. The suspension of negotiations was due mainly to general elections which the Royal Laotian Government held in December 1955 in the provinces under its control against the strong opposition of the Pathet Lao. During the period of suspension of negotiations, the Commission made to both sides formal, as well as informal, approaches to reopen negotiations.<sup>79</sup> Its resolution of January 7, 1956 was an outstanding example of its formal approach.<sup>80</sup> The Government of Prince Souvanna Phouma which had emerged as a result of the general elections of December 1955 responded favorably to the

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<sup>78</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Third Interim Report), op. cit., Annexure I.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p.7.

<sup>80</sup>Supra. p. 161.

Commission's approaches. The new government pledged itself to the settlement of the problem of the Pathet Lao in the spirit of reconciliation. He also declared to abide by the provisions of the Geneva Agreement and the recommendations of the Commission's resolutions of January 7, 1956.<sup>81</sup> The response of Prince Souphanouvong, the leader of the Pathet Lao was equally encouraging and hopeful. In the spirit of cordiality and cooperation the two Princes met for negotiating a political settlement of the problem of the two northern provinces at Vientiane from August 1-10, 1956. At the end of their talks they issued two joint declarations giving in broad terms a program for a final settlement in respect of all the problems which concerned them.<sup>82</sup>

The two joint declarations enunciated general policy with respect to all their problems which could be grouped under five heads and provided for joint military and political commissions to seek means to implement the same. In the field of foreign affairs they agreed to adopt a policy of peace and neutrality, maintain friendly relations with all states, especially neighbors, apply Pandit Nehru's five principles of

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<sup>81</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Third Interim Report), op. cit., Annexure V.

<sup>82</sup>For the text of the two joint declarations, see, Ibid., Annexures VII and VIII.

peaceful co-existence, make no military alliances and allow no military bases on Laotian soil apart from those provided for in the Geneva Agreement. With regard to re-establishment of the Royal authority in the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly, they agreed to reorganize the administrative system identical with that of the other ten provinces of the Kingdom after they were formally brought under its jurisdiction. In military matters, they acknowledged the necessity of proceeding with the cessation of all hostile acts in the two provinces. With regard to integration the Pathet Lao troops it was decided that they would be placed under the command of the Royal Government and reorganized on the basis identical with its own. In respect to political rights and freedoms it was agreed that all the organizations of the Pathet Lao such as the Front (Neo Lao Haksat), the youth, women, peasants and others could undertake their activities in the legal forms as the other political parties did. It also assured the followers of the Pathet Lao equal rights in every respect. Lastly it guaranteed to all the Laotian citizens, including the followers of the Pathet Lao, the democratic rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech, press, publication, movement, and association. As a symbol of political settlement it was decided to organize supplementary elections in the two

provinces on the basis of secret ballot and adult suffrage and to increase the number of deputies from 39 to 60. Provision was made for representation of the Pathet Lao in the National Union Government.

The political and military commissions, as envisaged in the two joint declarations referred above, commenced in September 1956 their activities with a view to work out details implementing the broad principles of overall settlement in Laos. It took almost fifteen months for these commissions to conclude the necessary agreements, the last one being on November 3, 1957.<sup>83</sup> The next stage in the process of settlement of the problem of the two provinces was the execution of these agreements. In this connection four steps may particularly be mentioned. On November 19, 1957 the National Assembly approved unanimously a National Union Government under the premiership of Prince Souvanna Phouma which included two members of the Pathet Lao. Following that the Pathet Lao officially transferred the administration of the provinces of Sam Neua and Phong Saly to the Royal authority on December 8 and 12, 1957 respectively. By February 10, 1958 the fighting

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<sup>83</sup> For full details of agreements see, e.g., Ibid., Annexures 10, 11, 12, 15 and I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fourth Interim Report), No. 58/9, op. cit., Annexures 15 and 16.



units of the Pathet Lao were assimilated as an integral part of the Royal Army. On May 4, 1958 the supplementary elections were held in the two provinces marking the completion of political settlement as envisaged in Article 14 of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos.'

From the above account it would be seen that though the Commission did not participate directly in the three years of checkered negotiations leading to the political settlement, it, as a bystander, closely followed their course and offered its good offices on various occasions. At times it also took initiative for resolving the impasse between them. However, the Canadian and Polish delegations had forfeited much of their usefulness as mediators by supporting openly the viewpoints of the contending parties on this problem. On the contrary, the Indian delegation, in the name of Commission, was in a position to play informally the role of a peace-maker by not having committed itself on any issue related to this problem. There are ample evidences to conclude that she was instrumental in the settlement of the problem. On two occasions the representatives of the two groups directly and unequivocally acknowledged the helpful role of the Indian Chairman (Mr. Samar Sen) in solving the problem under consideration in conformity with the spirit of the Geneva

Agreement. Moreover, in their joint declaration they expressed hope that his help would be extended until all disputes were solved.<sup>84</sup> Recognition of India's contribution towards unification of the country came from authorities no less than the Foreign Ministers of Soviet Russia and the United Kingdom. In a joint message, they, as Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference, expressed gratitude to India for her contribution to the successful activities of the Commission in Laos. In another message they specifically conveyed appreciation of her noteworthy role in carrying out the arrangements made at the Geneva Conference.<sup>85</sup> It would not perhaps be out of place to mention here that the Government of India also expressed appreciation for the brilliant role played by its representative, Mr. Samar Sen, the Indian Chairman in Laos during most of the time of negotiations (May 1955 to July 1957) by awarding him the title of "Padma Shri" in 1958.<sup>86</sup> It is one of the official titles awarded every year by the President of India in recognition of distinguished

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<sup>84</sup>I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Third Interim Report), No. 57/10, op. cit., Annexures 7 and 14.

<sup>85</sup>Great Britain, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), No.447, (February 20-26, 1959) Column 140.

<sup>86</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India 1957, (Delhi: National Printing Works, 1957), p.482.

services rendered by Indians in different fields.

As to the nature of contribution of the Indian delegation in Laos, our knowledge is limited. However, from the nature and substance of the various agreements signed between the two sides, it could easily be inferred that the help it might have extended to them consisted of bringing home to them the advantages of national reconciliation at home and of policy of peace and non-alignment in international relations. This interpretation seems reasonable if the substance of the various agreements mentioned above is viewed in the background of the uncompromising and conflicting stands of the two sides on the issues of national reconciliation and their tendency to consider the disputes in terms of the cold war.

As a consequence of gradual progress in the settlement of the problem of the two northern provinces, the Royal Laotian Government and the Canadian delegation requested the Commission to reduce its activities and ultimately its dissolution. In his letter dated November 26, 1957 to the Chairman of the Commission, Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma observed that the formation of the National Union Government on November 19, 1957, which included two ministers of the Pathet Lao, constituted the preliminary political settlement

as stipulated in Article 14 of the Cease-fire Agreement and that the activities of the Commission were, therefore, nearing their end.<sup>87</sup> Four months later, when the Pathet Lao military units were absorbed in the regular army of the Laotian Kingdom, the Prime Minister in his letter dated March 20, 1958, informed the Chairman of the Commission of his cabinet's decision of March 13, 1958, requesting the Commission to conclude its activities on May 4, 1958, the date of the supplementary elections.<sup>88</sup> The Prime Minister requested him once again on May 26, 1958 to conclude the activities of the I.C.S.C. on the ground that the supplementary elections of May 4, 1958 constituted the last phase of the implementation of the 'Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos.'<sup>89</sup>

The Commission was as much occupied with the problem of its own future as was the Laotian Government. From the time the provisional political settlement had been reached in November 1957, the Commissioners, on a number of occasions,

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<sup>87</sup> I.C.S.C. in Laos, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fourth Interim Report), No. 58/9, op. cit., Annexure 20.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., Annexure 25.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., Annexure 45.

discussed the question of gradually reducing the Commission's activities in conformity with Article 39. As a result of these discussions, a number of fixed, mobile and temporary teams were withdrawn before the supplementary elections, and it was agreed that all the remaining teams would be liquidated shortly thereafter. At the Commission meeting of May 8, 1958, the question of immediate withdrawal of all the remaining teams was formally discussed at the instance of the Canadian delegation.<sup>90</sup> It observed that the teams should be immediately withdrawn in accordance with the previous understanding among the Commissioners. At subsequent meetings it further stated that according to Laotian law, litigious questions arising out of the supplementary elections were within the sole competence of the National Assembly and that the statements of the Prime Minister, Souvanna Phouma and Prince Souphanouvong constituted ample notification that the elections, the last phase of the Commission's work, had been held. The other two delegations were of the opinion that the teams should be withdrawn only after the supplementary elections had been officially announced as valid. The Commission finally agreed to bring withdrawal of the remaining teams into

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<sup>90</sup>For the views of three delegations on the issue of withdrawal of teams, see, Ibid., pp.14-15.

effect after the official validation of the elections.

At the May 8 meeting of the Commission the Canadian delegation asked for immediate dissolution of the Commission also, and tabled a resolution to that effect.<sup>91</sup> Endorsing the views of the Laotian Government it argued that with the completion of supplementary elections, a political settlement as envisaged in Article 14 was achieved and the task of the Commission therefore came to an end. It further pointed out that in terms of Article 39, it was within the competence of the Commission to dissolve itself. It observed that the words 'progressively reduce its activities' in Article 39 was wide enough to include an eventual reduction of activities to nil. A reduction of activities to nothing logically involved the Commission's disappearance. Anticipating the argument that the Commission could not dissolve itself in advance of the other two Commissions because of the provision for prior consultation (Article 39) the Canadian delegation stated that it would be stretching the imagination too far to believe that the framers of the Geneva Agreement envisaged that the political settlement would be reached simultaneously in all the three states of Indochina. It was equally difficult for it to believe that they intended that a Commission

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., Annexure 41.

should exist indefinitely with the sole function of waiting to be consulted under the terms of Article 39. Finally it argued that the continued presence of the Commission in a sovereign and independent state of Laos, inspite of repeated requests of its government to withdraw it, constituted a derogation of complete sovereignty.

The Indian and Polish delegations vehemently opposed the contention of the Canadian delegation. The Polish delegation opposed the resolution mainly on the ground that implementation of political settlement foreseen in Article 14 did not bring an end to the responsibilities of the Commission. On the contrary there were numerous regulations and obligations of Royal Laotian Government undertaken at the Geneva Conference which equally constituted the integral part of the Commission's responsibilities and validity of which did not expire along with the achievement of political settlement. To illustrate its argument more cogently the Polish delegation pointed out responsibilities of the I.C.S.C. in Laos resulting from the provisions of the Geneva Agreement pertaining to acceptance of foreign aid and military alliances. It further observed that many of these responsibilities, on the basis of declaration made by the Laotian Government at Geneva, were to be borne by the Commission until the final settlement

of Vietnam's political problems.<sup>92</sup> In other words, Poland, unlike Canada, argued that all the Commissions should be dissolved simultaneously.

The Indian delegation was in complete agreement with the Polish views expressed above. It, however, put forward additional reasons to justify its opposition to the Canadian resolution. It felt that since the activities of the I.C.S.C. in Laos were co-related with the developments in the other two countries of Indochina, the three Commissions were inter-dependent and hence any one of them could not be dissolved till political settlement was completed in all of the three states of Indochina. Furthermore, the Indian delegation contended that the continued presence of the Commission in no way curtailed the Laotian sovereignty because it was there as an integral part of the Geneva Agreement which was accepted freely by the Laotian Government, and which could not be declared null and void unilaterally. Finally, disagreeing with the Canadian interpretation of the words 'progressively reduce its activities' in Article 39, the Indian delegation stated that if the framers of the Geneva Agreement had the Canadian interpretation in view, they would have undoubtedly and specifically used the word 'dissolution' instead of 'reduction' of activities.

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p.16.



After having explained the reasons for its opposition to the Canadian resolution, the Indian delegation proposed two alternate suggestions to the Co-chairmen. In one of its suggestions, it recommended that the strength of the I.C.S.C. in Laos be reduced to a group of three delegates, one from each of the supervisory countries, and only a limited staff of six more persons be allowed to these three delegations. In its second suggestion, it said that the Supervisory Governments might be asked to nominate one of their personnel working at present on the Vietnam Commission as delegate for the Laos Commission. The functions of these delegates would be to visit Laos as and when necessary, and to deal with any items of work that might have required disposal by the I.C.S.C. for Laos.<sup>93</sup> In short, the Indian delegation was not prepared to dispense with altogether the idea of supervision and control in Laos. It also desired that this task should be entrusted to some form of international machinery established under the Geneva Agreement of 1954.

In the face of differences among themselves, the three Commissioners submitted to the Co-chairmen of the Geneva

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<sup>93</sup> For the views of the Indian delegation on the winding up of the Commission, see, Ibid.

Conference their conflicting views for further guidance. While this issue was being considered by them, the Indian and the Canadian delegations by a majority vote, adopted a resolution to adjourn the Commission sine die on July 19, 1958.<sup>94</sup> The Indian delegation also pointed out in clarification of its position that the resolution on adjournment was a procedural one and had no connection with the question of dissolution of the Commission. Though adjournment could be differentiated from dissolution from the legalistic point of view, it was tantamount to dissolution for all practical purposes. The question then arises as to why the Government of India, after having strongly opposed the Canadian resolution of May 8, changed its mind and voted for the Commission's adjournment. This question becomes still more puzzling when viewed in the light of its stand on the similar issue in Cambodia. It may be recalled here that the Government of India favored prolongation of the I.C.S.C. in Cambodia where the provisions of the Geneva Agreement had been implemented smoothly and where the political situation was comparatively steady and settled.

The published material, both official and non-official, does not provide us with any reasons for the Government of

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<sup>94</sup>U. S. Department of State, The Situation in Laos, September 1959, p.13.

India's decision to vote for the adjournment of the Commission in Laos. It, however, seems that the switch in the attitude of the Indian Government towards the problem of dissolution of the Commission was a concession to reality. The lack of understanding and cooperation among the parties directly concerned with the implementation of the Geneva Agreement was a matter of fact after the supplementary elections of May 1958, the last phase of the political settlement in Laos. As pointed out earlier, the three Commissioners having failed to arrive at a unanimous decision had referred the matter for further guidance to the two Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference who as well had failed to see eye to eye.<sup>95</sup> In the absence of agreement among the Co-chairmen and the Commissioners, and in the face of unwillingness of the Laotian Government to recognize the Commission after the supplementary elections of May 1958, the Government of India might have concluded that the Commission in Laos could not function effectively. Therefore, the Indian Government, in its traditional role of a mediator, might have tried to evolve a compromise formula and the outcome was the adjournment of the Commission. By adjournment rather than outright dissolution of the Commission, as desired by the Canadian Commissioner, the Commission was legally kept alive, so that

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<sup>95</sup>The New York Times, May 20, 1958, p.8.

the obligations undertaken by the participants of the Geneva Conference were prolonged. The dissolution of the Commission would have brought the provisions of the Geneva Agreement pertaining to Laos to an end. Thus, the adjournment might have partially met the Communist bloc's demand for the continuation of the Commission. Since adjournment of the Commission was tantamount in effect of its dissolution, the Laotian Government and the Western bloc countries might have found the adjournment formula acceptable.

The change in the attitude of the Indian delegation towards the problem of withdrawal of the Commission in Laos could partly be explained in terms of the political situation of Laos. Laos, unlike Cambodia, lacked a strong leader backed by a well-knit majority party, which could lead the country steadfastly. On the contrary, it was beset with multiplicity of parties and leaders. A study of the short history of the Laotian National Assembly from January 1956 onwards well illustrates this point. After the general elections of December 1955, a tussle for power among the leaders of the Assembly delayed the formation of a government for almost three months.<sup>96</sup> Again in April 1957, it was the opposition of his own party's pro-American members of the

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<sup>96</sup>Laos, I.C.S.C., Third Interim Report, Ibid., p.6.

Assembly, under the leadership of Katay Don Sasorith, that made Prince Souvanna Phouma resign, and invited a deadlock in the Assembly for a month and a half.<sup>97</sup> Ultimately, Prince Souvanna Phouma was reinvested as Prime Minister. Thus it would be seen that there was a wide scope for manipulation and maneuvering in and out of the Assembly with respect to formation and maintenance of a government in Laos.

Ever since the end of the Geneva Conference of 1954, the problem of the two northern provinces had pre-occupied the attention and the energy of all the Laotian politicians as well as the I.C.S.C.. The basis -- integration of military forces and civil personnel of the Pathet Lao with the Royal Laotian Government, and the promise to follow the policy of peace and neutrality in foreign relations -- on which the political settlement was negotiated by the Government of Prince Souvanna Phouma in cooperation with the I.C.S.C., was viewed by the pro-American Laotian delegates to the Assembly, and by the American Government, with grave doubts and scepticism.<sup>98</sup> The spectacular and unexpected success of

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<sup>97</sup> Laos, I.C.S.C., Fourth Interim Report, Ibid., p.20.

<sup>98</sup>The New York Times, March 31, 1957, p.10.

the Neo Lao Haksat Party (legal successor of the Pathet Lao) in the supplementary elections of May 1958, alarmed them about the prospects of the Pathet Lao taking over the whole country.<sup>99</sup> In these circumstances, Prince Souvanna Phouma, the architect of the political settlement, might have come under their pressure to take steps to meet the Pathet Lao challenge.

Developments in Laos immediately following the adjournment of the Commission lead to the conclusion that the pro-American Laotian politicians wanted to get rid of the Commission, the guarantor of fair treatment to the Pathet Lao. In their eyes, the continued presence of the Commission, after the political settlement in Laos, constituted a derogation of complete sovereignty. Some of them even branded the Commission as pro-Communist in its leanings. Their views of the Commission were shared by some quarters in the United States as well.<sup>100</sup> In these circumstances, continuation of the Commission, with which Prince Souvanna Phouma was closely associated, might have driven away some nationalists from the

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<sup>99</sup>U.S.A., Department of State, The Situation in Laos, September 1959, p.13.

<sup>100</sup>Joseph Alsop, "The American Commitment," The Washington Post and Times Herald, October 26, 1959, p.15.

side of Prince Souvanna Phouma, which in turn might have endangered his already shaky position in his party and the Laotian Assembly. Prince Souvanna Phouma's request for the withdrawal of the Commission, with whose policy he was in full agreement, is to be understood in this light. The Government of India, with a view of strengthening the position of Prince Souvanna Phouma in the political struggle in Laos, might have reconsidered its stand and decided to adjourn the Commission sine die.

If the developments in Laos, after the adjournment of the Commission would have taken shape in accordance with the provisions of the Geneva Agreement, the existence of the Commission would have become a matter of history. But since then Laos has become a cold war issue which in turn has raised the issue of reactivation of the Commission. It may be pointed out here that when the resolution to adjourn the Commission was adopted, it was agreed that the adjournment of the Commission had no connection with its dissolution. This interpretation was later confirmed by the two Co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference in one of their two joint messages of January 31, 1959 to the Indian Government expressing appreciation of its noteworthy role.<sup>101</sup> The Commission, in other

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<sup>101</sup>The Statesman, February 25, 1959, p.1.

words, is legally alive today and it is precisely on this ground that the Government of India has continued to take active interests in the developments of Laos since July 1958.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, a short account of the developments regarding Laos since then may not be out of order.

The supplementary elections of May 1958 were validated by the Assembly on July 22, 1958. On the same day, in accordance with Laos constitutional processes, the Cabinet of Prince Souvanna Phouma tendered its resignation with a view to seeking a fresh mandate. After almost four weeks of manipulating and maneuvering, Phoui Sananikone, the pro-American leader of the newly formed party, the Rally of the Lao People, succeeded in forming a new government on August 18, 1958. The omission from the new Cabinet of two members of the Neo Lao Haksat Party and Prince Souvanna Phouma was conspicuous. It should be noted here that Prince Souvanna Phouma was one of the outstanding leaders of the Rally of the Lao People. In his speech before the Assembly soliciting its investiture, Sananikone outlined in broad terms the nature of his government. In the first place he unequivocally declared that he would oppose the threat of Communist ideology which was

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<sup>102</sup>The Hindu, August 8, 1959, p.7.



contrary to Laotian custom and tradition and which was expanding in Laos then. In external affairs he stated that Laos remained faithful to its friendship with the 'free world' and that was where he would look for friends. In the same breath he pledged his country's loyalty to policy of peaceful existence and neutrality which, according to him, was forced upon Laos by the Geneva Conference.<sup>103</sup> His adherence to neutrality when viewed in the context of his full speech seems rather ritualistic. The opening in Vientiane of a Nationalist Chinese consulate was considered as an indication of a definite shift in policy of Laos towards the West. At home the leading Communists were placed under arrest and some of them in the provinces were summarily executed. The Neo Lao Haksat Party was virtually proscribed. Finally, the Laotian Government announced on February 11, 1959 that it considered that all the provisions of the Geneva Agreement had been fulfilled, and henceforth would recognize arbitration originating from the United Nations only.<sup>104</sup> Indirectly, it declared itself free from all of the restrictions which the Geneva Agreement had imposed upon its internal and international activities. In its increasingly strong action against

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<sup>103</sup>Laos Information Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 3 (July-August 1958), pp. 3-6.

<sup>104</sup>The London Times, January 5, 1959, p. 9.

the Communists, the Laotian Government had the moral and material support of the United States. The story of American involvement in Laos is such an obvious fact that it hardly needs any elaboration.<sup>105</sup>

The members of the Pathet Lao retaliated with the material and moral help of the DRV, and plunged the country in the throes of civil war. Consequently, the Laotian Government on August 4, 1959 brought before the United Nations the complaint of massive intervention by troops of the DRV in the internal affairs of its country.<sup>106</sup> The United Nations in reply appointed a fact finding commission which failed to find much evidence to support the Laotian claim.<sup>107</sup>

On the other hand, the Communist bloc countries, because of the Sananikone Government's anti-Communist campaign at home, and pro-Western policy in foreign affairs asked for

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<sup>105</sup>For American involvement in Laos, see "Report on Laos" The Atlantic, December 1959, p.26, and "The American Commitment," The Washington Post and Times Herald, October 26, 1959, p.15, and "Middle Path to Peace in Laos," The Statesman, November 9, 1959, p.6.

<sup>106</sup>Royal Embassy of Laos (Washington, D.C.) Press and Information Service, "Laos Brings Question of Invasion Before U.N.," Press Release, August 6, 1959.

<sup>107</sup>The Statesman, November 9, 1959, p.6.

reconvention of the Commission,<sup>108</sup> the view with which the Government of India was in full agreement. However, being aware of the source of the problems of Laos, Nehru approached this subject more on a practical basis. He was of the opinion that the Commission would succeed only if the spirit which made the Geneva Agreement possible was applied again to the problems of Laos. Expanding this point he observed that the understanding to keep Laos and the other two Indo-chinese states as far as possible out of the purview of the cold war, enabled the Geneva Powers to arrive at the Geneva Agreement. Similarly, if the outside pressures were kept at a distance and if Laos was left alone, the climate there would be much more favorable to peace. This was an indirect appeal to the Governments of the United States on the one hand, and the DRV and the Communist China on the other, to abide by the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreement in their relationship with Laos. In this connection he emphasized that since the basis of the Geneva Agreement was not wholly embodied in their text, due respect should also be paid to tacit understanding. The Commission, he argued, would succeed in solving the present conflict in Laos if the big powers based their relationship with Laos in accordance

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<sup>108</sup>The New York Times, June 1, 1959, p.6.

with the letter and spirit of the Geneva Agreement and used their influence in Laos in persuading the Laotian Government to receive the Commission.<sup>109</sup>

During the intervening period between the United Nations Fact Finding Commission's report in the fall of 1959, and the overthrow of the Laotian Government by Captain Kong Le in August 1960, the Laotian crisis had subsided and had receded in the background of world politics. However, the civil war and subsequent involvement of foreign countries in it that has followed Captain Kong Le's coup have brought the Laotian crisis once again to the forefront of world diplomacy.

The governments of the countries actively interested in the lasting settlement of the recurring crisis of Laos are faced with three alternative proposals. One of them is put forward by King Savang Vathanan of Laos. It calls for a three nation neutral commission composed of Malaya, Cambodia and Burma.<sup>110</sup> The second one is advanced by Cambodia and is endorsed by the Communist bloc nations. The Cambodian proposal seeks a 14 nation conference whose membership will include nine participants of the Geneva Conference of 1954,

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<sup>109</sup>Embassy of India (Washington, D.C.) Information Service, Indiagram, No. 109, June 12, 1959, p.6.

<sup>110</sup>The New York Times, February 20, 1961, p.1.

three countries forming the I.C.S.C. and two neighbors of Laos, Burma and Thailand.<sup>111</sup> The third proposal, championed by Britain and India, advocates revival of the I.C.S.C., which had adjourned in July 1958.<sup>112</sup>

The first two proposals are of a questionable value. The prospects of the proposal advanced by King Savang Vathana are not bright. It is doubtful that the three nations' neutral commission, which does not include any communist nation, would be in a position to operate in the area controlled by Laos' left-wing rebels. This proposal has been rejected by the Communist-bloc countries, and Cambodia and Burma.<sup>113</sup> The Cambodian proposal, which is backed by the Communist-bloc countries, and France and Canada, is rather cumbersome and would delay the settlement of the Laotian crisis. It would take a lot of time and planning before the time and venue of a meeting convenient to all could be fixed. Decision will have to be made as to which of the two competing groups would represent Laos at the meeting. In this connection it may be pointed out that whereas the

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<sup>111</sup> The New York Times, January 12, 1961, p.3.

<sup>112</sup> The New York Times, January 3, 1961, p.4.

<sup>113</sup> The New York Times, February 24, 1961, p.1.

Communist-bloc countries and India recognize Prince Souvanna Phouma's government, the Western bloc countries recognize the Boun Oum Government. It is also possible that the conference, after it meets, might develop into a battleground of the cold war and might put aside the main issue for which it was called. The Laotian crisis, because of its seriousness could not be allowed to drift until the conference assembles and concludes its deliberations. The revived I.C.S.C., on the other hand, would be well qualified to meet the Laotian crisis. In the first instance, it is a tested machinery with a successful record at its credit. Secondly, the reconstitution of the I.C.S.C. would bring international peace machinery immediately into operation. Because of its familiarity with the Laotian situation, it would be in a position now to act promptly and smoothly. The existence of two competing governments in Laos raises the question as to whom the I.C.S.C. would be accredited. To overcome this difficulty, the supporters of this plan have declared that the I.C.S.C. would be accredited to King Savang Vathana, the head of the State, and not to any of the two governments.

The prospects of the I.C.S.C. being reactivated now are very bright indeed. It is acceptable to the majority of the pro-Western Laotian politicians and the United States

Government which together opposed its revival in the summer of 1959. The main obstacle to reviving the Commission now comes from the Communist bloc countries which want the fourteen nation conference to precede it. In this situation a compromise of the last two proposals may not be impossible. Those who oppose the idea of the conference should agree to meet in a conference after the I.C.S.C. starts functioning under the terms of reference agreed upon at the Geneva Conference in 1954. The fourteen nation conference may modify the terms of reference of the Commission in the light of new developments in Laos.

The chances of the I.C.S.C.'s securing political settlement in Laos are equally encouraging. In the past, it was the American Government and the pro-American Laotian politicians' fears that the Communists would take over Laos through internal subversion which caused them not to let the political settlement of 1958 in Laos have a chance. It appears from their recent utterances that they have come to realize that Laos can have peace only if it follows the policy of reconciliation at home and of neutrality in foreign affairs. They are also willing to give the I.C.S.C. a chance to work out the political settlement in Laos.<sup>114</sup> Those who

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<sup>114</sup>The New York Times, February 20, 1961, p.1., and January 6, 1961, p.1.

have any doubts about the Commission's role, will do good to remember that India, which holds an influential position thereon, is as much interested in keeping Laos free from the outside pressures and influences as the participants of the cold war.

(C) Vietnam

Broadly speaking, the functions of the Commission in Vietnam may be grouped under seven heads. They are as follows:

- i. The control of the movement of the armed forces of the two parties effected within the framework of regroupment plan. (Articles 12 and 13 of the Cease-fire Agreement.)
- ii. The supervision of the demarcation lines between the regroupment areas and demilitarized zones on either side thereof. (Article 1 of the Cease-fire Agreement.)
- iii. The control of the operations of releasing prisoners of war and civilians. (Article 21 of the Cease-fire Agreement.)
- iv. The supervision of airfields and ports as well as along the frontiers of Vietnam of the execution of the provisions regulating the introduction into the country of armed forces, military



personnel and of all kinds of arms, munitions and war material. (Articles 16-20 of the Cease-fire Agreement.)

- v. To ensure through supervision that the two parties refrain from reprisals or discrimination against persons or organizations on account of their activities during the hostilities. (Article 14(c) of the Cease-fire Agreement.)
- vi. To ensure through supervision and control civilians of the freedom of movement to reside in the zone of their choice. (Article 14(d) of the Cease-fire Agreement.)
- vii. Responsibilities emanating from the provision pertaining to general elections in Vietnam to be held in July 1956. (Article 7 of the Final Declaration.)

The details of the activities of the Commission with respect to the topics mentioned above are available in its nine reports covering the period August 11, 1954 to January 31, 1959. The striking feature of these reports is the degree of unanimity with which the three Commissioners submitted them to the Co-chairmen. There have been, however, five occasions on which the Commissioners differed. These differences, as we shall see shortly, are minor and of

little consequence because most of them were motivated with the idea simply to emphasize or de-emphasize the gravity of the issue under consideration.

The first instance of difference of opinion in the Commission appeared in its third report. The Polish and Indian Commissioners expressed therein doubt as to the possibility of Article 14(d) being implemented in full within the time limit of the 300-day period. The Canadian Commissioner while agreeing with his other two colleagues on the analysis of the refugee problem further requested the Co-chairman to refer it to the members of the Geneva Conference, in accordance with Article 13 of the Final Declaration.<sup>115</sup> During the period of the fourth report (April 11 to August 10, 1955) the refugee problem continued to divide the Commission. The Polish and Indian Commissioners contended that despite obstructive, narrow and complicated administrative procedures in North Vietnam, the bulk of the persons who wanted to move down to the Southern Zone had succeeded in doing so. The Canadian Commissioner on the other hand argued that implementation of Article 14(d), in the Northern Zone was unsatisfactory and attributed it to

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<sup>115</sup> I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Third Interim Report) No. 55/6, p.11.

limitations imposed by the Viet Minh regime.<sup>116</sup>

The transfer of civil and military administration in the Southern Zone into the hands of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam caused differences among the members of the I.C.S.C. on three occasions. In the face of declared opposition of the Republic of Vietnam to the Geneva Agreement there was uncertainty regarding the sanction for the working of the Commission and further continuance of its activities, and the effective discharge of its responsibilities was in serious jeopardy. Here it should, however, be pointed out that the Government of the Republic of Vietnam had assured the I.C.S.C. of full protection and practical cooperation, but had refused to make public or formal declaration to that effect. All the members of the I.C.S.C. agreed that this ad-hoc arrangement was not satisfactory but they differed as to the next step. The Polish and the Indian Commissioners wanted the Co-chairmen and the Geneva Powers at a very early date to settle satisfactorily the difficulties arising out of unacceptance of the Geneva Agreement by the Republic of Vietnam. The Canadian Commissioner on the other hand favored the parties directly concerned -- France and the Republic of Vietnam -- working out a more durable and dependable

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<sup>116</sup> I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fourth Interim Report), No. 55/12, pp.6-11.

arrangement which would place the I.C.S.C. in a more favorable position to carry out its functions.<sup>117</sup>

With the French withdrawal from South Vietnam in April 1956, the Joint Commission composed of military commands of France and the DRV came to an end. It was the function of this machinery to observe the demarcation line and to face the day to day problems in the demilitarized zones. The I.C.S.C. in Vietnam brought this fact to the attention of the Co-chairmen on May 2, 1956 and emphasized the importance it placed on the work of the Joint Commission. The Canadian Commissioner in a separate note dated May 3, 1956, to the Co-chairmen, did not fully agree with the emphasis placed by his other two colleagues on the importance of the work of the Joint Commission. Nonetheless, he was of the opinion that as a matter of urgency, steps should be taken to ensure that the tasks of the Joint Commission continued to be performed.<sup>118</sup>

There was a minor disagreement in the I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, on the issue of the Joint Commission in the eighth

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<sup>117</sup> I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Fifth Interim Report), No. 55/18, Chapter VII, p.1.

<sup>118</sup> I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Sixth Interim Report), No. 56/5, p.15.

report covering the period May 1, 1957 to April 30, 1958. In the conclusion of this report, the Commission observed that its efforts to revive the Joint Commission proved unsuccessful and would bring the matter to the notice of the Co-chairmen for such action as they might consider necessary. The Polish Commissioner was indeed in agreement with the above observation but wanted to specify the reasons for the failure of the I.C.S.C. to revive the Joint Commission. With this view in mind, the Polish Commissioner added a footnote to the effect "the Commissioners efforts in this regard did not bring yet any result as the Government of the Republic of Vietnam refused to take part in the Joint Commission."<sup>119</sup>

Since the I.C.S.C. in Vietnam discharged its responsibilities without having any major disagreements within itself, it is rather difficult to trace any distinct role of the Indian delegation in contrast with that of the other two members. The Government of the Republic of Vietnam therefore, also, had no reasons to view the presence of three delegations differently. However, the presence of Indian and Polish delegations on the I.C.S.C. was disagreeable to the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and it made its

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<sup>119</sup>I.C.S.C. in Vietnam, External Affairs Supplementary Paper (Eighth Interim Report), No. 58/6, p.20.

unfavorable attitude towards them expressed in the form of violent attacks on their residential quarters in Saigon on July 20, 1955.<sup>120</sup> In the Republic of Vietnam where every aspect of public activity was controlled by the government, it was evident that without the approval of the Government, these violent attacks would not have taken place.

The antagonism of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam could be attributed to the Government of India's attitude towards implementation in Vietnam of the Geneva Agreement, of which elections leading to unification of Vietnam by July 1956 was one of the outstanding features. The Indian Government, by public and persistent pleading for full implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam, committed itself to unification of Vietnam.<sup>121</sup> This was not to the liking of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. It was the general consensus of the informed opinion that the Republic of Vietnam, because of various reasons, was doomed and elections held within the time limit set under the Geneva Agreement would give the DRV a big majority. The

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<sup>120</sup> The New York Times, July 23, 1955, p.6.

<sup>121</sup> India, Ministry of External Affairs, "Communique on Nehru-Dong Talks," Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. I., No. 4, p.92.

opposition of the Governments of the Republic of Vietnam and the United States to the elections in Vietnam, leading to its eventual unification, is to be understood in this light.<sup>122</sup>

It is, therefore, no wonder that the Republic of Vietnam took serious exception to the Government of India's policy of full implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam and considered the Indian delegation an agent of the DRV.<sup>123</sup>

The question arises as to what considerations led the Indian Government to open and public pleading for the full observance of the Geneva Agreement at the risk of being identified with the DRV, one of the two sides to the Vietnamese conflict. This question is important because the approach of the Indian Government to the problem of political settlement in Vietnam ran counter to its avowed policy of reconciliation. It is possible that the Government of India

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<sup>122</sup>For details on this aspect of the Geneva Agreement, see, e.g. the account of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' Press Conference on August 31, 1955; The New York Times, September 1, 1955, p.4. This issue was also discussed at length at a symposium on America's stake in Vietnam which was sponsored by American Friends of Vietnam. At this symposium distinguished Americans were participants and they all expressed the hope that the U.S.A. and the Republic of Vietnam would not endorse the idea of holding elections in Vietnam. For details see, e.g. America's Stake in Vietnam, (ed) American Friends of Vietnam, (New York: Carnegie Press, Inc., 1956), p.110. Also see, e.g. Ton That Thien, "The Geneva Agreement and Peace Prospects in Vietnam," India Quarterly, Vol. XII, No. 4, p.378.

<sup>123</sup>The New York Times, July 23, 1955, p.5.

course of action to secure the support of the DRV in the political settlement in Laos which the Indian Government considered to be within its sphere of influence. The main problem in the settlement of the Laotian crisis was that of the Pathet Lao which enjoyed moral and material support of the DRV. In this connection, it may be recalled here that Prime Minister Nehru convened the representatives of Laos, the Republic of China and the DRV to a private meeting at the time of the Bandung Conference, where he sought a pledge from the DRV that it would not intervene in any way in the matters pertaining to the Pathet Lao which was declared an internal issue of Laos.<sup>124</sup> The DRV might have made this pledge in return for the Government of India's policy of full observance of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam.

The apparently great popularity and widespread organization of the DRV on both sides of the military demarcation line might have led the Government of India to conclude that ultimately the DRV would dominate the whole of Vietnam. This realization taken together with the notion that Vietnam falls within the sphere of influence of China might have been partly responsible for the pro-DRV attitude of India.

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<sup>124</sup>George McTurnan Kahin, The Asian-African Conference Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.27.



Finally, from the speeches and statements of the Indian leaders, it appears that the issue of war and peace had dominated their thinking in this respect. For instance, Nehru said:

Not to act up to the Geneva Agreements in any particular place means breach of them which might lead to the upsetting of the whole Geneva structure and that might very well have serious consequences. . . . The peace that came in Indo-China was a result of the Geneva Agreement and it is a dangerous thing to upset this structure which had brought about that peace. Therefore, it is our opinion that the Geneva Agreement should be given effect to by all the parties concerned.<sup>125</sup>

The Government of India's repeated calls for full observance of the Geneva Agreement for all or any of the above reasons seemed to reflect lack of understanding of realities of international politics. It was unrealistic on the part of the Government of India to believe that partition of Vietnam was temporary and that it was the task of the Commission to unify the country. If it had considered the partition of Vietnam in terms of historical developments in Germany and Korea after 1945, it would have realized that the line of military demarcation was very likely to be a line of political divisions as well. In a way, it was another manifestation of the same

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<sup>125</sup>India, Parliamentary Debates (Rajaya Sabha), Vol. 10, No. 15, September 6, 1955, Col. 2081.

stalemate which transcended the local problems with which those lines of demarcation were supposed to deal.<sup>126</sup> The Geneva Agreement becomes explicable only in this light. If we review the circumstances that prevailed in Vietnam at the time of the Geneva Conference, it was evident that the DRV had strength and power enough to have demanded a dividing line farther down the peninsula and failing agreement could have won the whole of it by force of arms. Despite the position of strength the Communists conducted the negotiations in the spirit of compromise and the political agreement to which they agreed to in Vietnam was much more advantageous to the West than was suggested by the actual military situation.<sup>127</sup> This leads us to the inescapable conclusion that the forces that worked outside of Vietnam played a very influential role in shaping of the Geneva Agreement.

The main purpose of the Chinese Communists at Geneva

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<sup>126</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Geneva Conference: An Assessment" America's Stake in Vietnam, (ed) American Friends of Vietnam (New York: Carnegie Press, Inc., 1956), p.69.

<sup>127</sup>For comment of Premier Mendes-France in the French National Assembly on this aspect of the Geneva Conference, see, e.g., The Times, July 25, 1954, p.7. See, e.g., The New York Times, July 23, 1954, p.3, for Senator Mike Mansfield's remarks. Also see Morgenthau, op. cit., pp.66-67. For Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' views, see, e.g. James Shepley, "How Dulles Averted War," Life, January 16, 1956, pp.58-70.

was not to secure for the DRV domination at any cost over the whole of Vietnam. As a matter of fact, the situation in Vietnam was cast and considered in the terms of overall political and military objective of theirs. They feared that if the settlement was not arrived at, the Americans might intervene and consequently they would be faced with another set of American bases on the continent of Asia. This would have been very much against their overall political and military objective in Asia which parallels the objective of the Soviet Union in Europe. After the Korean crisis one of their objectives has been to prevent the Americans from establishing bases in Asia.<sup>128</sup> Thus it appears that if the Government of India had understood the Geneva Agreement in this context, it would have been much more realistic in its approach to the problem of unification in Vietnam and would not have been unduly obsessed with the idea of outbreak of war, in the event it was not implemented. It could have also avoided being one of the parties responsible for deepening the gulf instead of reconciling the two sides in Vietnam.

The talks that took place between the two representatives of the two Co-chairmen in London during April and May

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<sup>128</sup>Coral Bell, "The Indo-China Crisis and the Geneva Conference," Survey of International Affairs 1954, (ed.) F.C. Benham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 74.

1956 opened a new chapter in the history of the I.C.S.C. The London talks and the discussions that preceded them revealed once more that both the Co-chairmen were primarily interested in preserving peace between the two zones in the political settlement in Vietnam.<sup>129</sup> This formula in short suggested that Vietnam, like Germany and Korea, would remain partitioned with the implied consent of the Co-chairmen. Subsequently this formula was indirectly accepted by the two sides in Vietnam as well.<sup>130</sup> The Commission also was informed accordingly.

Once the issue of unification of Vietnam was relegated to the background, the Republic of Vietnam found it convenient to cooperate with the Commission. It was this changed situation that made it possible for the Commission to move its headquarters from Hanoi to Saigon in April 1958 after two years of delay. This too made it possible for India and the Republic of Vietnam to develop cordial and close relations which culminated in the state visits by their

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<sup>129</sup> For the details of talks between the two Co-chairmen, see British White Paper No. 2 (1956), Vietnam and the Geneva Agreements, (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1956.)

<sup>130</sup> Brian Crozier, "The International Situation in Indo-China," Pacific Affairs, Vol. XXIX, No. 4, (December 1956), pp.309-315.

presidents, Diem and Prasad, in November 1957 and March 1958 respectively. In the meantime, the Commission supervised nominally the maintenance of the cease-fire and had no fixed date for its dissolution.

Conclusions on the Activities of the Three Commissions in the States of Indochina

If we recall the discussions that took place at Geneva in 1954, it will be remembered that it was the Western Powers which favored some kind of genuine and impartial international commission for the purpose of supervision and control in the states of Indochina. The Communist bloc countries accepted the idea hesitatingly and grudgingly. The Commissions, in the course of their activities, witnessed reversal in the attitudes of the two power blocs in the cold war. The account of the Commissions' activities shows that the opposition to their continued presence and to enlargement of their activities came from the Western bloc. In Cambodia, it was Canada which sought restricted role for the Commission, and opposed its continuation after the Spring of 1956. In Laos, it was the combined opposition of Great Britain, Canada and the Laotian Government which compelled the Commission to adjourn sine die prematurely in July 1958. And, in Vietnam, it was the pro-Western government of the Republic of Vietnam that had adopted the attitude of

non-cooperation with the Commission till 1956.

The reversal in the attitudes of the two blocs could be attributed to the impact of the Commissions on the developments of the states of Indochina. From the analysis of the activities of the Commissions, it is evident that the developments in each of the three states of Indochina followed varied courses. The developments in Cambodia took place very much in accordance with the spirit of the Geneva Agreement. In Laos, political settlement was achieved after four years of prolonged negotiations in May 1958 under the terms and conditions prescribed in the Geneva Agreement. Implementation of the Geneva Agreement in both Cambodia and Laos meant success of the policy of non-alignment and enlargement of the 'area of peace' in Southeast Asia.<sup>131</sup>

Confronted by the threat presented by a Soviet bloc, the United States Government felt the need for a more tightly organized defensive association out of a number of widely scattered nation states. The formation of the SEATO Pact was the outward expression of this policy in Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the policy of non-alignment, which the Commissions in Laos and Cambodia under the Chairmanship of India promoted, tended "to disperse resources, to diffuse power, and to fragment action; in short, by denying the need

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<sup>131</sup> See, e.g. Supra, pp. 114-115.

to handicap the whole principle of organizing the free world."<sup>132</sup> Thus the American attempts in Southeast Asia to construct defensive alliances geared to the requirements of its security policy ran counter to the activities of the Commissions in Laos and Cambodia. As a matter of fact, the United States Government tried to sway Cambodia and Laos from the path of non-alignment. In Cambodia, King Norodom Sihanouk was under American pressure to take advantage of the clause of the Geneva Agreement which authorized Cambodia to accept military aid if it considered its security threatened. It was the result of this pressure that King Norodom Sihanouk, against his better judgement, signed the Military Aid Agreement with the United States in 1955. In short, the American Government wanted Cambodia to accept the American idea of security through military build-up in Southeast Asia.<sup>133</sup> King Sihanouk also complained on numerous

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<sup>132</sup>William Reitzel, M. A. Kaplan, and C. G. Coblenz, United States Foreign Policy 1945-1955 (Washington: The Brookings Institution 1956), p.453.

<sup>133</sup>For American pressure on Cambodia to accept military aid, see, e.g. "Sihanouk and Dulles" The New Statesman and Nation, Vol. LI, April 21, 1956. Also see, e.g. "The Atlantic Report on Cambodia," The Atlantic Monthly, October 1955, pp.20-26. Also see, e.g. "Indo-China: The Unfinished Struggle," The World Today (Royal Institute of International Affairs), January 1956, p.18, and also see, e.g. Ellen J. Hammer, The Struggle in Indo-China Continues: Geneva to Bandung (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), p.39.

occasions against American pressure to change his country's policy of non-alignment.<sup>134</sup> In Laos, the majority of the Laotian politicians, as well as the American Government, as shown earlier in this chapter, were not favorably disposed towards the Commission and the policy it promoted there. This policy of the American Government witnessed a marked change only in January 1960 when its Department of State publicly stated that Laos and Cambodia should follow the policy of peace and neutrality in internal affairs.<sup>135</sup> In Vietnam too, the Commission came into direct conflict with the Government of the United States. Whereas the I.C.S.C. insisted upon full implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam, the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, with full support of the United States, refused to take any steps toward its implementation.<sup>136</sup> Insistence upon implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam in the circumstances, narrated earlier meant favoring of the Communist bloc.

In short, the neutral nations Commissions, which were

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<sup>134</sup> Nation (Rangoon), July 14, 1955; The Hindustan Times, April 12, 1956, p.6.; and The Hindu, August 11, 1958.

<sup>135</sup> Warren Unna, op. cit., p.9.; also see, e.g. Supra,

<sup>136</sup> See, e.g. Supra, pp. 199-200.



constituted primarily at the instance of the Western powers to check against any possible Communist aggressions in the states of Indochina, began to act as a brake on the activities of the leader of the Western bloc, the United States. On the other hand, the Chinese Communists, who were interested in eliminating the Western influence from Southeast Asia, found the activities of the Commissions congenial and favorable.

The reversal in the attitude of the two power blocs towards the Commissions emphasized lack of understanding and cooperation between the Governments of the United States of America and India. This was most unfortunate in view of the fact that both of the governments had common objective in Southeast Asia. The objective of the American Government in Southeast Asia was to check through collective security any Chinese encroachment either by subversion or by direct aggression. The Indian Government was anxious to extend the 'area of peace' in Southeast Asia by securing acceptance and application of the Pancha Sheela principles by the countries concerned with the developments of the area. The Government of India, in other words, wanted to keep the area under consideration free from any foreign influence, including that of Communist China. In view of the fact that both India and the United States had a common objective, and since the

former was entrusted with implementing the Geneva Agreement, the latter, in the interest of closer cooperation and mutual understanding, should have used its influence in support of the activities of the Indian Chairman in Laos and Cambodia. At the same time, if the Indian Government had understood the situation in Vietnam more realistically and had not emphasized publicly and persistently the full implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam, it could have avoided head-on conflict with the Republic of Vietnam and the United States, and would not have been a party in widening and deepening the gulf between the two sides in Vietnam.

Finally, it may be pointed out that the role of the Indian Chairman on the International Commissions was appreciated and approved not only by the Communist bloc countries, but also by the Government of the United Kingdom, the pro-Western Co-chairman of the Geneva Conference. This should have provided the American Government with an additional reason to support India at least in Cambodia and Laos.

## CHAPTER V

### PANCHA SHEELA IN PLACE OF POWER VACUUM IN INDOCHINA

As pointed out in the third chapter, the objective of the Government of India's Southeast Asian policy since 1952 has been to consolidate, extend and protect the 'area of peace.' The activities of Indian Chairmen in the three states of Indochina were examined at length in the last chapter, with a view to finding out the extent to which they succeeded in implementing the Geneva Agreement, which, as shown there, was in accordance with the aforementioned objective of the Government of India's Southeast Asian policy. In the present chapter, an attempt is made to show how the Indian Government has tried to promote its policy in the states under consideration through normal diplomatic channels.

At the very outset, it may be explained that since the future of the states of Indochina is closely linked up with the developments in the region of Southeast Asia as a whole, Indian diplomacy toward the former should be examined in the wider context.

The concept of the 'area of peace,' as pointed out in Chapter III, was interpreted to the effect that the Government of India considered its neighboring countries of Southeast Asia within its sphere of influence. But the contestants

in the cold war, who shaped their foreign policies in accordance with the prevailing concept of power vacuum, posed a great threat to the Government of India's interests in South-east Asia. They considered any country having insufficient armaments to be in a power vacuum which should be filled by them through pacts and alliances.<sup>1</sup> The term 'insufficient' is a relative one but in the context of the cold war in Asia between Communist China and the United States of America, the whole region of Southeast Asia was a vacuum. The successful Communist offensive in the states of Indochina and the prospects of American involvement to meet this challenge led the Government of India to conclude in 1954 that they would draw the Southeast Asian countries in the cold war. Being militarily and industrially weak, the Government of India was neither in a position to fill the vacuum in Southeast Asia nor to undertake any measures to withstand the two-sided probable encroachment on its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia. Under those circumstances, it limited its objective in Southeast Asia to keeping the area free from any foreign influence which was a prerequisite to effective extension of its sphere of influence in future when it developed its military might and industrial

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<sup>1</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, Vol. III, (Calcutta: Sree Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1958), pp.342-344.

capabilities. It was to this end that the Government of India got the five principles of international conduct, first laid down in the Preamble to the Indo-Tibetian Trade Treaty of April 1954, reaffirmed in a joint statement issued by Prime Ministers of India and China on June 28, 1954, and urged the other countries of the world to do likewise.<sup>2</sup> These five principles are popularly known as Pancha Sheela.

Since these principles were reaffirmed in June 1954, the Government of India has invoked them as a standard of international conduct between states in general. It has done so because it found them useful in promoting at large the aim of its policy of non-alignment. The Pancha Sheela principles in this wider context are in no way novel and on the contrary they sound rather rhetorical. However, their proper role should be understood in the immediate background of Southeast Asia in which they were reaffirmed. As a matter of fact the joint statement of Prime Ministers of India and Communist China of June 28, 1954 emphasized the importance of these principles in their application to the countries of Southeast Asia in particular.<sup>3</sup>

The first principle of Pancha Sheela upholds territorial

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<sup>2</sup>S. L. Poplai (ed.), The Temper of Peace: Select Documents 1954-1955 (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1955), pp. 18-20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

integrity and sovereignty of nations. Its second and third principles prohibit nations from undertaking military aggression and interference in internal affairs of other countries respectively. The importance of these three principles becomes evident when considered together in the light of much feared Communist Chinese aggression in the form of subversion through local Communist parties in the countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>4</sup> The fifth principle of Pancha Sheela, i.e., peaceful co-existence, was mainly directed at the West which was thought to be preparing for some kind of collective security plan for Southeast Asia. It was indirectly informed that a military pact in Southeast Asia would be in contravention with the spirit of the principle of co-existence.<sup>5</sup>

The Pancha Sheela approach, besides this negative role, conceived of cooperation and collaboration in fields other than military. Though this positive aspect of Pancha Sheela has not been spelled out as elaborately as the negative one, its fourth and fifth principles (equality and mutual benefit,

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<sup>4</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., p.272.

<sup>5</sup>Prime Minister Nehru gave this interpretation to this principle in a public meeting at Calcutta, see, e.g., The Statesman (Calcutta), December 1, 1955, p.1.

and peaceful co-existence) do emphasize the former. This aspect of Pancha Sheela is well presented in one of the publications of the Indian Government. It says:

Panchsheel just seeks to give the principles of co-existence physical context so that the underlying idea of international peace and cooperation can be cannalized into the cultural and economic enterprizes of nations which seek the fulfillment of their aspirations in the spirit of give and take. Panchsheel can work as a guarantee against outside interference in the internal affairs of a country and thereby eventually end the frittering away of resources on defence. It will assuredly provide the climate within which every race and every country can develop itself on its own individual pattern and thus add to gaiety and richness of human civilization.<sup>6</sup>

From this point of view of the traditional power politics in relation to a power vacuum, the Pancha Sheela approach might appear passive and negative but to the Indian Government whose objective of Southeast Asian policy was to create the 'area of peace,' it was, as we shall see in this chapter, both active and positive.

From the very beginning, the Government of India had realized that the success of its Southeast Asian policy required acceptance of the Pancha Sheela principles by the countries of Southeast Asia. Since most of these countries were fearful and apprehensive about Communist China's intentions in the area,

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<sup>6</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Panchsheel (Faridabad: Government of India Press, 1957), p. 9.

it was evident that the Government of India had to take initiative in persuading them to accept the Pancha Sheela principles in their relation with Communist China. The main task of the Indian Government in this connection was to dispel their fears of Communist China in the hope that they did not seek protection from the Western powers. Endorsement of the Pancha Sheela principles by Burma and China provided an early indication as to the future course of Indian diplomacy towards the Southeast Asian countries. It was not insignificant that Burma and China reaffirmed these principles only a day after they were reaffirmed by India and China. It was also not a mere coincidence that N. R. Pillai, the Secretary General of the Ministry of External Affairs of India and the Chief Political Adviser of Nehru, was present at the talks between Prime Ministers U Nu and Chou En Lai at the conclusion of which the Pancha Sheela principles were reaffirmed. These two considerations led many observers to conclude that the Indian Government with full force of its prestige and influence would actively prevail upon the countries of Southeast Asia to make them endorse Pancha Sheela principles in their relationship with other countries of the world.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian Government had also realized that success of

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<sup>7</sup>The Statesman (Calcutta), June 29, 1954, p.5.



its Southeast Asian policy rested greatly upon the implementation of Pancha Sheela principles by the contestants in the cold war in Asia. From its point of view the Chinese pledge to adhere to Pancha Sheela principles was a step in the right direction. However, it was only a step because the real test lay in how China implemented the Pancha Sheela principles in its relationship with Southeast Asian countries. As a matter of fact, the Chinese endorsement of Pancha Sheela principles was accepted by the Indian Government with reservations. These doubts were acknowledged by Nehru in an unpublished circular letter to Congress Party leaders written just after Chou En Lai's visit to New Delhi in June 1954. Therein he observed:

It is said: how can we put faith in such declarations? In international affairs, one can never be dead certain and the friends of today might be enemies of tomorrow. That may be so. Are we then to begin with enmity and suspicion and not give any other approach a chance? Surely it is better, with nations as with individuals, to hope for and expect the best, but at the same time be prepared for any eventuality. But, we must honestly and sincerely have faith in the best. That itself generates an atmosphere which helps and makes possible a further step in the right direction. Not to do so again is to accept defeat right from the beginning.<sup>8</sup>

From the above observation, it follows that the function of Indian diplomacy was to see that Peking's disposition to honor the pledge of adherence to Pancha Sheela principles

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<sup>8</sup> The Hindustan Times, July 5, 1954, p.10.

increased by creating favorable environments which in turn would make it difficult or at least awkward for China to flout the five principles.

The principles of the American Government, basing its foreign relations with the countries of Southeast Asia in accordance with the Pancha Sheela principles in 1954 were very dim. On the contrary, the American policy, which considered China an aggressor in Southeast Asia and neutrality, the very basis of Pancha Sheela, both immoral and shortsighted, was moving in the opposite direction. Under these circumstances the function of Indian diplomacy was to frustrate American attempts to get the countries of Southeast Asia aligned with the Western bloc.

The formation of the SEATO Pact was a major event effecting the developments in Southeast Asia. Having followed the policy of non-alignment and non-involvement since her independence, it was natural that India refused to join the SEATO Pact and objected to its formation as she had done in other cases of military pacts. However, in this case the opposition of the Indian Government was much more vehement and vociferous. This was mainly due to the fact that the area it covered was one which India considered vital to her national interests.

The Indian Government objected to the formation of the SEATO Pact because this was tantamount to repudiation of the Pancha Sheela approach to the problems of the very area which it wanted to become the 'area of peace.' This approach of the Indian Government was too passive in the eyes of those who considered Communist China an aggressor in the Indochina conflict and viewed the situation in Southeast Asia after the Geneva Conference in terms of imminent overt aggression from the same quarter. The Indian Government, however, unlike the American Government, was of the opinion that Communist China would continue to follow the policy of peace, non-interference and cooperation with the uncommitted nations of Asia on the basis of equality.<sup>9</sup>

The faith in the present did not make the Indian Government overlook the possibility of unfriendly behavior of Communist China in the future or the fears of the small countries of Southeast Asia. Acknowledging these fears, Nehru observed:

It would be unrealistic for me to suggest that any country in Southeast Asia or India should live in a sense of false security or tell themselves, 'Let us sing the song of peace and nothing will happen.' I realize that responsible governments and countries cannot behave in that manner. They have to take precautions against any eventuality. But they should also, I suggest, fashion

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<sup>9</sup> India, Information Services, Jawaharlal Nehru: Press Conferences 1954, (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1955), pp.4-5.

their policy in such a manner that they will go in the direction of peace.<sup>10</sup>

The Indian Government took recourse to Pancha Sheela principles which, from its point of view, were commensurate with the gravity of the situation. In other words, the Pancha Sheela approach was the Indian way of ensuring the peace and security of Southeast Asia without making India join either of the two blocs in the cold war in Asia. It was hoped that Communist China would allay the fears and apprehensions of the Southeast Asian countries by entering into Pancha Sheela agreements and by implementing the same in its relationship with them. The SEATO Pact in principle, then was a rival of the Pancha Sheela approach to the extent that the latter aimed in common with the former at ensuring peace and security against Communist China. Moreover, the Pancha Sheela was a yard stick both for India and the world to judge the Chinese intentions. In other words, the Government of India considered Communist China to be on trial, and, therefore, objected to any moves which would provide the latter with any excuses, which, it feared, the SEATO Pact might do, to intervene in the affairs of Southeast Asian countries.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., pp.266-267.

<sup>11</sup> "Chou En Lai's Talks with Nehru," Thought, July 4, 1954, p.3.

The Indian Government further opposed the Pact on the ground of practical considerations. It argued that since the vital issues of peace and security of Southeast Asia were the concern of the whole world including India, they should not be left to the signatories of the SEATO Pact whose membership was restricted. In this connection, the absence of India from the Pact may be underlined.<sup>12</sup>

With this consideration in view, the Indian Government recommended the forum of the United Nations Organization in the place of SEATO. Even this preferred forum looked defective to India due to the absence of Communist China therein and hence India pleaded for the representation of China in the United Nations. The representation of Communist China was advocated not to advance its prestige and power, though these were doubtless the incidental results. It was pleaded for the sake of promoting peace and security of Southeast Asia and elsewhere in accordance with the principles of Pancha Sheela. Commenting on this aspect of the representation of Communist China, Nehru said:

If China comes in, apart from the fact that you deal with China face to face in the United Nations and elsewhere, China assumes certain responsibilities in the United Nations. The position today is very odd. Sometimes the United Nations passes resolutions giving

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<sup>12</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., pp.269-270.

directions to the People's Government of China. The response from China is: "You do not recognize us, we are not in the United Nations, how can we recognize your directions?" This is an understandable response. Instead of adding to the responsibility and laying down ways of cooperation, you thus shut the door of cooperation and add to the irresponsible behaviour of nations in this way, and call it security. The result inevitably is that the influence of the United Nations lessens. I do not want it to lessen, because it is one of our biggest hopes of peace in the world.<sup>13</sup>

Another practical consideration which compelled India to oppose the Pact was based on the logic that its formation did not add to the strength of its signatories in their preparation against Communist aggression for which it was created. The SEATO Pact which in the initial stages of its drafting had N.A.T.O. as its ideal, ended with setting comparatively modest aims for itself the reasons of which are beyond the scope of our study.<sup>14</sup> The aims it set forth were so modest that the Indian Government failed to see any utility of the Pact. Elaborating on this point of the Pact at the Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955, Nehru stated:

It seemed to be an angry reaction to what had happened in Geneva. It had made no difference to anybody, it had

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p.271.

<sup>14</sup> For amplification of this point, see, e.g., Coral Bell, Survey of International Affairs 1954, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp.44-70.

not strengthened even the military potential or the economic potential of Southeast Asia; it had not added to the security even in a military sense. It added rather to the insecurity of the region because it has put others on guard that here is an organization which is a military pact.<sup>15</sup>

The Indian Government further objected to the formation of the SEATO Pact for the reason that it was an embryonic infringement upon the 'area of peace.' It dragged into military alliance some of the countries of Southeast Asia which, from the Indian point of view, were the prospective members of the 'area of peace.' Moreover, the Indian Government feared that China would be forced to resort to similar measures since the Pact was a military alliance directed primarily against it. In other words, the SEATO Pact set in motion a two fold attack on the 'area of peace.' In this connection Nehru remarked:

We in India have ventured to talk about an area of peace. We have thought that one of the major areas of peace might be Southeast Asia. The Manila Treaty rather comes in the way of that area of peace. It takes up that very area which might be an area of peace and converts it almost into an area of potential war. I find this development disturbing.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Collection of Speeches of Prime Minister Nehru in the closed sessions of the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, April, 1955. (In the files of Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs), p.40.

<sup>16</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., p.268.

In the formation of the SEATO Pact the Indian Government experienced not only a set back for the creation of the 'area of peace' but also foresaw a revival of colonialism in Southeast Asia which for obvious reasons was of more serious consequences.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation of the Pact was due to its indeterminate character and coverage. Normally an alliance deals with the territories of signatory countries but the SEATO Pact, however, provided for bringing 'the treaty area' as a whole under its purview.<sup>18</sup> Without going into details of the implications of the term 'the treaty area' it may here be pointed out that it encompassed in addition to the territories of the Asian partners, the general area of Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific. The territories of non-signatory countries in 'the treaty area' which were unanimously brought under the jurisdiction of Article 4 of the Pact were known as designated states. Under Article 4 the signatories to the Pact were empowered to resist armed aggression or internal subversion in any designated state. This article, however, debarred the signatories to the Pact from taking any

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp.269-270

<sup>18</sup> For the full text of the SEATO Pact see, i.e., Great Britain, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, The Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty: With Protocol and Pacific Charter (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, October 1957), Command Paper 265.



action on the territory of any designated states without the prior permission of the state concerned. From the point of view of the Indian Government this provision of the Pact, enabling the members to widen their scope of activities beyond their territories was an indirect way of imposing upon the non-signatories the mantle of the SEATO Pact. It was so concluded because if the governments of the non-signatory countries in the 'treaty area' excluding the states of Indochina needed the protection of the Pact they would have joined it on their own initiative.

The indeterminate character and coverage of the Pact became doubly offensive when the states of Indochina, in contravention with the Geneva Agreement, were brought under the protection of the SEATO Pact. The Geneva Agreement of 1954 had specifically stated that the states of Indochina should not be aligned with any of the power blocs. In spite of this condition of the Geneva Agreement, the signatories to the SEATO Pact by signing a protocol gave these countries the status of designated states and brought them under the protection of the SEATO Pact.

When the indeterminate character and coverage of the Pact is examined in the background of the preponderance of the Western States, both in terms of membership and of military

strength, the fear of the Indian Government as to the threat of Western imperialism in Southeast Asia finds some justification. Explaining this interpretation of the Pact to the Indian Parliament, Nehru observed:

Honorable Members may remember the old days when the Great Powers had spheres of influence in Asia and elsewhere. The countries of Asia were then too weak to do anything about it. The quarrel was between two Big Powers and they sometimes came to an agreement about dividing the countries in spheres of influence. It seems to me that this particular Manila Treaty is inclined dangerously in the direction of spheres of influence to be exercised by powerful countries. After all, it is the big and powerful countries that will decide matters and not the two or three weak and small Asian countries that may be allied to them.<sup>19</sup>

The provisions of the SEATO Pact, relating to the problems of Communist subversion, further heightened the fear of Western imperialism. The Indian Government, like the signatories of the Pact, had realized the threat of Communist subversion, but it failed to endorse the measures proposed in the SEATO Pact to face the problem of internal subversion. Articles 2 and 4 of the Pact provided for common defence against subversion directed from without and within. To the Indian Government these measures which empowered the signatories of the Pact to intervene in internal affairs of the territories of the 'treaty area' affected the whole

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<sup>19</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., p.267.

conception of integrity, sovereignty and independence of the area.<sup>20</sup>

The significance of the above observation of the Indian Government becomes clearer when it is examined in the light of the political situation of Southeast Asia. It should be remembered that many of the governments of the Southeast Asian countries were undemocratic and unrepresentative. In these countries the only way to bring about a change in government was through palace revolutions and army coups. The Indian Government feared that the measures designed at countering Communist subversion might be invoked to suppress genuine national movements against an unpopular government in any of the Southeast Asian countries friendly to the SEATO powers by technically associating them with the Communist threat. The apparent license to intervene in the internal affairs provided the signatories of the Pact with opportunities in deciding the kind of government the Southeast Asian countries would have. The numerical majority and influential position the Western powers held in the SEATO Pact, gave them power to play an important role in this respect. The Government of India, therefore, concluded that to the extent that the fate of the Governments of the Southeast Asian countries was decided by the Western

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p.268.

powers, to that extent the Southeast Asian countries lost their sovereignty and independence to the West.

The critical appraisal of the various reasons cited against the formation of the SEATO Pact indicates that the Indian Government was vitally interested in peace and security of the region of Southeast Asia and desired its establishment in accordance with Pancha Sheela. It also warned the Western powers that it took very serious view of any policy which was contrary to its approach.

The next step in the process of implementation of Pancha Sheela was the visit of Prime Minister Nehru to China in October 1954. This visit was undertaken at a time when the atmosphere in Southeast Asia was charged with fear and hostility towards China. The formation of the SEATO Pact was the outward expression of this dominant mood of tension and fear. The Indian Government, which considered acceptance of Pancha Sheela to be the solution to this fear complex, felt that these principles could be endorsed and applied by both China and the countries of Southeast Asia in their mutual relations, only if an atmosphere of friendliness and trust based on understanding was created. It was apparently to this end that Nehru made his trip to China.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>For details on this point, see, e.g., Margaret W. Fisher and Joan V. Bondurant (ed.), "Prime Minister Nehru's Visit to Peking," Indian Views of Sino-Indian Relations ("Indian Press Digests-Monograph Series" No. 1, Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1956), pp.99-119.

Nehru and the Chinese leaders, therefore, availed themselves of this opportunity to demonstrate their friendship and cooperation to the world and more particularly to the countries of Southeast Asia, and in this way tried to impress upon them the importance of Pancha Sheela as a basis of relations between nations. They pointed out the fact that the acceptance of these principles had made it possible to establish ties of friendship and peace between their countries even though they differed in their outlook of life and social and political systems. It was believed that if China and India, the two great powers of Asia, worked in friendship and cooperation, the other countries of Asia would find these principles irresistible and other nations of the world would find them difficult to disregard. Commenting on this aspect of his trip Nehru remarked:

Once again we have come to face each other and meet each other. History has now taken a turn. It is, therefore, necessary to understand each other. . . . To the extent we develop our relations to that extent they will affect not only ourselves but the whole of Asia and the rest of the world.

In the present day world there is need for peace and it should be our effort that we should strengthen peace through our cooperation and friendship.

It is my hope that as a result of my visit our relations would be strengthened and we two countries will help to establish peace.<sup>22</sup>

Nehru took the opportunity of his visit also to interpret the fears and apprehensions of the Southeast Asian

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<sup>22</sup>The Amrit Bazar Patrika, October 19, 1954, p.1.

countries. In his speech dated September 29, 1954 before the Indian Parliament he had analyzed the reasons which caused tensions in these countries. Therein he had pointed out that this state of affairs was due partly to the presence of large Chinese communities and the internationalism of the Communist countries of Southeast Asian countries. It was therefore concluded that Nehru, in the cause of co-existence, would take this opportunity to explain the attitudes of these countries to his hosts. A section of the Indian press went to the extent of suggesting that Nehru should obtain guarantees and assurances from China to dissipate their misgivings.<sup>23</sup> Nehru repudiated the approach of securing assurances and guarantees of good behavior, but he did admit that he tried to impress in a friendly way upon his hosts the seriousness of these problems. A couple of weeks later he not only acknowledged his role as an interpreter but also claimed the success of his role when he evaluated in the Indian Parliament the consequences of his trip to China. He remarked:

India, as she is situated geographically and politically, can be of some service in interpreting some countries to others and helping to remove misunderstandings. Probably my visit also helped a little in easing the existing tensions in Indo-China and in Southeast Asia. As such,

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<sup>23</sup>For details on this point see, e.g., Margaret W. Fisher and Joan V. Bondurant, op. cit., pp.109-112.

it helped in the larger and vital problems of world peace.<sup>24</sup>

The Asian-African Conference at Bandung in April 1955 was another step forward towards the application of Pancha Sheela in the region of Southeast Asia. This aspect of the conference will not be grasped easily through analysis of the agreements listed in the Final Communique of the Conference and the debates and negotiations which led up to them. For this we must know the background of the conference and the motivations and expectation of its five sponsors, particularly of India.

The idea of holding this conference was first introduced by Prime Minister Ali Sastramidjojo of Indonesia at the Colombo Conference of Asian Prime Ministers in April-May 1954 which in turn requested the former to explore the possibility of such a conference.<sup>25</sup> His proposal limited the membership of the proposed conference to the Afro-Asian group within the United Nations. The calling of the conference was symptomatic of the protest against the failure of the Western powers to consult the Asian powers in decisions affecting them. In this connection exclusion of the uncommitted nations

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<sup>24</sup>The Amrit Bazar Patrika, November 23, 1954, p.1.

<sup>25</sup>Indonesia, Ministry of External Affairs, Asia-Africa Speaks from Bandung, pp.11-13.

of Asia from the Geneva Conference of 1954 may be pointed out.<sup>26</sup>

The idea in principle was acceptable to the other four Prime Ministers at the Colombo Conference but the Prime Ministers of Burma and India were skeptical of the feasibility and value of holding such a conference. Not until his trip to New Delhi and Rangoon in late September 1954 did Sastromidjojo win Nu's and Nehru's full support of his proposal.<sup>27</sup>

It could be inferred from the joint statement issued by the Prime Ministers of India and Indonesia on September 25, 1954 that the developments in Southeast Asia played a decisive role in making India then endorse the idea of holding the Asian-African Conference at Bandung.<sup>28</sup> The formation of the SEATO Pact was the major development in Southeast Asia during the intervening period between the Colombo Conference of April 1954 and the joint statement of September 1954.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.268.

<sup>27</sup> India, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Pancha Shila: Its Meaning and History, A Documentary Study (New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1955), p.46.

<sup>28</sup> George McTuran Kahin, The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955 (New York: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.4.



Formation of pacts and alliances in Asia under the leadership of the United States after the Colombo Conference of 1954, reflected continued disregard by the West for the views of some Asian powers on the issues affecting them. It seems unnecessary to point out that from the point of view of the Indian Government, it was India and the mainland of China which represented Asia. The creation of the SEATO Pact just after the conclusion of the Geneva Agreement and in the face of combined opposition of four of the Colombo powers and China made it imperative to hold the Asian-African Conference from where the views of Asian countries on international problems could be presented and propagated. Commenting on this aspect of the Bandung Conference Nehru observed:

The House (Indian Parliament) will remember that it had become a regular practice for the affairs of Asia to be determined by certain great powers in Europe or sometimes in America, and the fact that people in Asia might have any views about other subjects was not considered a matter of very great importance. It is true that some importance is attached to those views now because they cannot be ignored; nevertheless, it seems to be the high privilege of countries outside Asia to carry the burden of Asia on their shoulders and repeatedly things happen and decisions are made affecting Asia in which Asia has little to say. But it is obvious that things have changed in Asia. . . .and this kind of other people deciding the fate of Asian countries is not approved of by the countries of Asia. I cannot presume to speak for other people but I think I am correct in

saying so. So this Asian-African Conference is a gathering, I think, of very great importance.<sup>29</sup>

From the above quotation of Nehru, it appears that there existed an Asian-African approach to the world problems in direct contrast with the military approach of the West and the Bandung Conference was directed to advance it. Speaking before the Indian Parliament just two weeks in advance of the opening of the Bandung Conference, Nehru remarked:

Pancha Sheela is the challenge of Asia to the rest of the world and each country will have to give a direct answer to it. I hope that this question will be posed by the Asian-African Conference in all its straightness and boldness.<sup>30</sup>

Since the Asian-African gathering consisted of twenty-nine countries having varied ideologies and background, the Indian Government, it seems, had hoped to promise the Pancha Sheela approach not by seeking formal resolutions endorsing it, but by creating environments favorable for its implementation. Analysis of the objectives of the Asian-African Conference as outlined at the Bogor Meeting of the five sponsoring five Prime Ministers in December 1954 throws

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<sup>29</sup> India, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Lok Sabha Debates: Pt. II Proceedings Other Than Questions And Answers, Vol. II, No. 30, March 31, 1955, Columns 3888-3889.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., Column 3901.

light on the manner in which the required circumstances were to be created at the Bandung Conference.

The objectives of the Bandung Conference were four-fold in terms of the Bogor Communique. The first objective of the conference was to promote goodwill and cooperation among the Asian-African countries. These two qualities were the prerequisites for the implementation and expansion of the Pancha Sheela approach. The newly independent countries of the two continents because of their colonial status in the immediate past lacked mutual understanding and cooperation. Here it may be pointed out that the colonial powers had tied their colonial possessions exclusively with the metropolitan areas in every respect. The pull of the cold war pressures further contributed towards keeping the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa from getting together in friendship and cooperation. In this connection, diplomatic isolation of Communist China may particularly be underlined.

In the opinion of the Indian Government, the tensions in Southeast Asia as symbolized in the formation of the SEATO Pact were due to misunderstandings and misgivings about Communist China by the smaller countries of Southeast Asia. The Indian Government, therefore, viewed this conference as an opportunity to get Communist China and its peripheral

neighbors together with the purpose to create greater understanding and friendship among them.<sup>31</sup> It appears from the events preceding the Bandung Conference that consideration of Communist China played a decisive role in changing the original list of invitees to the conference as proposed by the Prime Minister of Indonesia at the Colombo Conference in April 1954. It may be recalled that his proposal limited the membership of the conference to only those countries which were represented at the United Nations.

The heads of the delegations of the Southeast Asian countries in their opening speeches at the Conference expressed fears about aggressive intentions of Communist China and voiced doubts as to the soundness of Pancha Sheela principles as guarantor of their independence.<sup>32</sup> Chou En Lai, the leader of the Chinese delegation, in return, attempted to dispel these fears in all possible ways. His overall approach was both conciliatory and friendly. He also attempted to reassure the Southeast Asian countries on the specific issues raised by them in the opening speeches.

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<sup>31</sup>For the text of the opening speeches of the delegates to the Conference, see, e.g., Indonesia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Asia-Africa Speaks From Bandung.

<sup>32</sup>Kahin, op. cit., p.6.

The problem of dual nationality of the overseas Chinese was one of the top issues on which the Southeast Asian countries sought clarification from Communist China. Chou En Lai reassured them by saying that the problem of dual nationality was something left behind by old China and expressed his government's readiness to solve it in cooperation with the countries concerned. Negotiation of a treaty with Indonesia providing for the ending of dual nationality of the overseas Chinese during the course of the Conference provided substance to Chou's promise. With respect to the creation of autonomous region of Thai people in China as a threat to Thailand, Chou En Lai remarked that it was no different from other autonomous minority areas and China had no intentions of using such regions as a means of subverting the governments of the neighboring countries.<sup>33</sup> He followed up his remarks by extending an invitation to a delegation from Thailand to visit his country's province of Yunan to see whether his country had any aggressive designs against Thailand. He also told Prince Wan, Foreign Minister of Thailand in a between-sessions conversation that Pridi Banomyong was not in Yunan organizing local Thai but remained in Peking as a political refugee.<sup>34</sup> Chou En Lai's treatment

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p.65.

<sup>34</sup>Kahin, op. cit., p.15.

of Carlos Romulo of the Philippines was equally courteous and reassuring of his country's peaceful intentions. With a view to dispel the fears and doubts of Cambodia having neutralistic inclinations, Chou En Lai invited Prince Norodom Sihanouk to lunch at his residence. There he promised the prince that Communist China would faithfully adhere to the principles of Pancha Sheela in its relationship with the countries of Southeast Asia.<sup>35</sup> This pledge was repeated when Chou En Lai, at the urging of Prime Minister Nehru, joined him in a private meeting with the delegates of Cambodia, Laos and North Vietnam. Here a written agreement was concluded between Foreign Minister of North Vietnam and the Laotian Government and the dissident Communist-led Pathet Laos forces in North Laos was an internal question to be solved by the Laotians themselves.<sup>36</sup> The conciliatory, friendly and reasonable approach of the Chinese delegation made a favorable impression on most of the delegates, supporters of the Western bloc as well as members of uncommitted group. Summing up the results of the Bandung Conference in the field of cooperation and goodwill, Nehru said:

Any estimate of this historic week at Bandung would be incomplete and its picture would be inadequate if we

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., pp.26-27.

did not take into account the many contacts established, the relations that have emerged, the prejudices that have been removed and the friendship that have been formed. More particularly, reference should be made to the conversations and, happily, the difficulties that had arisen in relation to the implementation of parties concerned and the good offices of others, including ourselves, have been able to help in resolving these difficulties and have created greater understanding and friendship. This is the position in regard to Cambodia, Laos and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.<sup>37</sup>

The second objective of the Bandung Conference was to consider the social, economic and cultural problems of Asia and Africa. It is evident from the final communique of the Conference that these problems were examined in order to promote mutual cooperation among the countries which participated in it. This is significant when it is realized that Asia and Africa relied exclusively on the Western powers in matters of technical, financial and cultural cooperation. Mutual cooperation among the Asian-African countries, it was believed, would reduce their dependence on non-Asian-African world and the resulting contacts and exchanges between them would bring about a better knowledge of each other's country. For obvious reasons, activities resulting from inter-Asian-African cooperation were to work in favor of India in Asia and Africa in general, and Southeast Asia in particular.

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<sup>37</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., pp.298-299.

The factors which favored India are her comparatively advanced economy, her size and geographical location, her non-aggressive foreign policy and democratic form of government at home and being a center of one of the oldest cultures of Asia having its impact outside her territory.

Furthermore, these problems were of paramount importance for the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa, and demanded immediate attention. As a matter of fact, it was the fulfillment of these problems that led India to adopt the Pancha Sheela approach. However, extension of the cold war in Asia through pacts and bilateral alliances under the leadership of the Western powers relegated the problems under consideration to the background. Discussions of these problems at the Conference, on the other hand, emphasized their priority and importance and thus justified indirectly the necessity and suitability of the Pancha Sheela approach for the underdeveloped countries of Asia and Africa as against the military approach of the West.

The third objective of the Bandung Conference was to consider the problems of special interest to the countries of Asia and Africa. Among these problems colonialism and racialism loomed large at the Bandung Conference. It



discussed these problems in all their ramifications and urged upon the governments concerned to end immediately these two practices in all their manifestations. It also discussed specific problems falling under these two heads and expressed its unanimous support and sympathy for the victims of these two practices.

Since some territories of Asia and Africa were still the victims of these two practices, notwithstanding liberation of the vast areas of the two continents from the same after World War II, it was but natural for the Bandung Conference to be concerned with these two problems. But the emergence of the cold war made the considerations of these two problems compelling because they were being subordinated to the strategy of the cold war. To the participants of the Conference, the issues involved in the cold war were something far and distant, whereas the problems of imperialism and racialism were real and present. As a matter of fact, some of the countries like India, Burma and Indonesia saw in the Western oriented pacts and alliances, resulting from the cold war, the advent of Western colonialism in a new grab. In this connection, extension of the N.A.T.O. provisions to the colonial territories like Gao may be taken

into account.<sup>38</sup>

The fourth and final objective of the Bandung Conference was to secure peace which was of absolute necessity for the progress and reconstruction of the under-developed countries of Asia and Africa. The kind of peace the majority of the sponsoring powers desired was not in the sense of a replacement of war or in the sense of uneasy balance of power. They sought positive peace based on friendship, faith and cooperation. The military approach of the West as symbolized in pacts and alliances, on the other hand, created conflict and discord among the Asian countries.<sup>39</sup> The uncommitted nations, it seems, had hoped to demonstrate at the Conference the feasibility of the Pancha Sheela approach by bringing the Asian-African countries having different political, economic, social and cultural backgrounds together in the spirit of friendly cooperation and understanding. Speaking of the Bandung Conference as a striking example of co-existence, Nehru said:

It is essentially an experiment in co-existence for the countries of Asia and Africa -- some of which are

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<sup>38</sup>For the views of Indian Government on this subject, see, Collection of Speeches of the Prime Minister, Nehru in the Closed Sessions of the Asian-African Conference, Bandung, April 1955. (In the files of the Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs), pp.1-9.

<sup>39</sup>Poplai, op. cit., p.21.

inclined this way and some the other way in regard to power blocs -- are meeting together in a friendly way and trying to find what common ground there is for cooperation in the economic, cultural and political fields.<sup>40</sup>

From the above observations on the objectives of the Conference, it will be seen that it tried to proclaim a set of common objectives and interests arising from geography, culture and economics which were independent of those of the two blocs of opposed world powers. The purpose of this Conference was not to create another regional organization or to develop a common policy for the uncommitted states. It was rather to explore the role of the participating states in the international system, to see if their composite influence could be used to increase their freedom of action, to moderate the impacts of the two power structures, and to reverse the apparent trend toward bipolarism.<sup>41</sup>

Participation by the Indian Government in the celebrations of the 2500th birthday of Lord Buddha in 1956 is an additional example of Indian diplomacy towards the

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<sup>40</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, op. cit., p.286.

<sup>41</sup> Constance G. Coblenz, Morton A. Kaplan, William Reitzel, United States Foreign Policy 1945-1955, The Brookings Institution (Mensha, Wisconsin: George Banta Company, Inc., 1956), p.316.

fulfillment of the Pancha Sheela principles in Southeast Asia. It actively participated in the celebrations of the occasion the evidence of which was reflected in its numerous and varied activities and the large amount of expenditure it incurred on them.<sup>42</sup> It justified its participation in the celebrations of the occasion on the ground that Lord Buddha was a native son of India. However, participation by the Indian Government in the birthday celebrations becomes striking and seems out of all proportion when it is considered against the small number of Buddhists India has. It is equally intriguing to find that the Indian Government, vowed to the cause of secularism, closely associated with the celebrations of Lord Buddha's birthday.

The underlying purpose of the Indian Government behind these celebrations becomes apparent when they are related to the objective of Indian diplomacy in Southeast Asia. It may be recalled here that Buddhism is the dominant religion of most of the Southeast Asian countries and hence the occasion of Lord Buddha's 2500th birth anniversary was widely held there in great respect and reverence. The Indian Government utilized this occasion to establish the ties

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<sup>42</sup> India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India: A Reference Annual 1957 (Delhi: National Printing Works, 1957), pp. 94-95.

of brotherhood with the Southeast Asian countries by sharing in their sentiments. To this end, it tried in various ways to impress upon the neighboring Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia that though Buddhism was no more the religion of the majority in India, she was as much Buddhist in spirit and culture as they were. The occasion further provided India with an opportunity to play her traditional role of leadership in Southeast Asia. Since Buddhism had its origin in India, the celebrations inevitably drew the countries of the area closer to India. The substance of the messages<sup>43</sup> received from various representatives of the countries of Southeast Asia, and the number of pilgrims therefrom who visited India on this occasion confirm beyond doubt the truth of the above observation.

From this vantage position, the Indian leaders propogated Lord Buddha's message of peace, love and tolerance. Elaborating on this gospel they emphasized the point that noble ends could only be accomplished through equally lofty means. They also stated that His gospel was far from being outmoded. On the contrary, it was of particular significance in the troubled world of ours which was constantly threatened with holocaust of atomic war. They, therefore, urged upon

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<sup>43</sup>For the text of the messages, see, e.g., The Hindu, May 25 and 26, 1956.

all the countries of the world and particularly the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia to follow from this auspicious day the policy as symbolized in the Pancha Sheela declaration which was based on the teachings of Lord Buddha. Speaking at the public meeting in Delhi on this occasion, the Indian President, Dr. Prasad observed:

It is, I believe, our extreme good luck that the nations of the world have been provided an opportunity by the Buddha Jayanti celebrations to remember and concentrate on the Lord's message. I trust that in the interests of peace and happiness mankind will turn to this message. It is gratifying indeed that some nations have accepted Pancha Sheela, a code of international behaviour based on that very message. I am sure mutual differences and the feeling of suspicion can be got over by adopting Pancha Sheela and the world can free itself from the use of brutal force.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Speeches of President Rajendra Prasad 1952-1956 (Howrah: Messrs. Glasgow Printing Company Private Ltd., 1958), p.251.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, we have analyzed and assessed the activities of the Government of India with respect to the states of Indochina, with a view to understanding its policy in Southeast Asia. The study shows that the Government of India has closely followed the developments in those states and suggests that in the conduct of international relations with those states, it was predominantly guided by its interpretation of national interest rather than by idealism or the cold war considerations.

The Indian leaders, since the independence of their country, have repeatedly declared that elimination of colonialism and imperialism from Asia and Africa has been one of the guiding principles of the Government's foreign policy. Its concern for the people, subjugated by the imperial powers, is logical in view of its own background. It was, therefore, a reasonable expectation that the Government of India would extend its help to the cause of Vietnam's independence. The statements made in favor of Vietnam's independence, by prominent and responsible leaders of India just before and after their country's independence, gave an added reason to believe that the Government of India would translate the kind sentiments towards Vietnam into concerted

action. But we find that in actual practice, the Indian Government adopted towards Vietnam, the policy of 'studied aloofness' (to be distinguished from complete isolation) in the face of repeated requests for its intervention from the Vietnamese themselves.

Although the nature of the Vietnamese conflict had varied during the period 1947-1954, the Government of India maintained the policy of 'studied aloofness' throughout this period. Until the end of 1949, the Vietnamese conflict was essentially a struggle for independence in its simplest form, and hence the Government of India's policy of 'studied aloofness' towards Vietnam becomes conspicuous. This policy of the Indian Government becomes even more significant and striking when, as pointed out in the second chapter, it is evaluated in the context of its active participation in the affairs of Indonesia.

The critical appraisal of the Government of India's policy towards the Vietnamese conflict during the period 1947-1949 (Chapter II) indicated that it weighed the pros and cons of its policy in terms of profit and loss accruing to India. For the sake of upholding the principle of anti-imperialism, and for the friendship of Vietnam, the Government of India did not think advisable to risk at the same time its friendly relations with England, France, China and perhaps with Laos



and Cambodia.

The two main objectives of the Indian Government, after having achieved independence, were consolidation and protection of its very independence and economic development of the country. The United Kingdom was in a position to make a substantial contribution towards the fulfillment of these objectives. The Government of India, therefore, could ill-afford to endanger its friendly relations with its benefactor by adopting a policy contrary to that of the United Kingdom. In this connection, it should be remembered that the Western nations, as explained in Chapter II, were committed to support France in Vietnam for the sake of much needed unity to meet the growing threat of the Soviet Russia in Europe. Anxiety to secure transfer of the French colonies in India through peaceful negotiations also might have militated against the Indian Government taking a stand in favor of Vietnam.

The different treatment which the Government of India accorded to the two struggles for independence in Southeast Asia -- Indonesia and Vietnam -- leads us to believe that its concept of its sphere of influence, or in the language of Prime Minister Nehru, the concept of the area of special interest to India in Southeast Asia, played a considerable role in the development of its policy of 'studied aloofness'

in Vietnam. The Government of India, as shown in Chapter II, considered Vietnam within the sphere of influence of China and refrained from interfering from the Vietnamese conflict. Its initiative in the Vietnamese conflict in the face of China's inaction might have caused among the Nationalist Chinese Government mistrust and apprehensions as to its motives in Southeast Asia. This also might have alienated the friendship of Cambodia and Laos, countries falling within the sphere of influence of India, which feared independent Vietnam more than the continued French domination.

The statements of the Indian Government after 1949 gave added support to the belief that it considered Vietnam outside its sphere of influence. After 1949, when the Vietnamese conflict had become a cold war issue, the Indian Government refused to budge from its policy of 'studied aloofness' on the ground that it was 'other people's troubles.' The Government of India, as explained in Chapter II, indirectly stated that Vietnam was outside its sphere of influence and hence the developments in Vietnam did not affect it. Again, as shown in Chapter IV, by openly pleading for the full implementation of the Geneva Agreement in Vietnam, the Government of India indicated that both South and North Vietnam lay within the Chinese sphere of influence.

The conflict in Vietnam which had originally been a freedom movement, developed into a cold war issue by 1950. This change in the nature of the conflict, as pointed out in Chapter II, was due to developments both inside and outside of Vietnam. The ratification of the Elysee Agreement in early 1950 formally brought into existence two rival governments in Vietnam, each claiming the right to speak and represent the whole of the country. The participants of the two power blocs, by extending recognition to either of the two rival governments in Vietnam, dragged the conflict into the cold war. Both sides to the conflict in Vietnam made approaches to the Government of India with a view to seeking its recognition, but it refused to take side in the cold war conflict and continued to maintain its policy of 'studied aloofness' as it had done before 1950.

One of the basic assumptions of the Government of India's policy of non-alignment is that each international issue should be judged on its own merits in contrast to pre-committing its position by joining either of the two power blocs. In accordance with this policy, the Indian Government might well have given recognition to the Government of the DRV, which from India's own estimate satisfied all the prerequisites for recognition. Those who are inclined to emphasize this aspect of the policy of non-alignment might find in the aloofness of

the Indian Government from the Vietnamese conflict after 1949 elements of a double standard. However, to judge or not to judge is not the ultimate aim of the policy of non-alignment. This policy was adopted in the hope that it would contribute in lessening world tensions. The Government of India realized that its taking side in the Vietnamese conflict during the period 1950-1954 would not make any contribution towards its settlement. On the contrary, it felt that its involvement in favor of either of the two sides in the conflict would deprive it of playing the role of a peace-maker in Vietnam.

The considerations which had compelled the Government of India to follow the policy of 'studied aloofness' in the Vietnamese conflict from 1947 onwards lost their validity in 1954 because of the changed situation both within and outside Vietnam. As a matter of fact, the crisis took such a turn in the spring of 1954 that the Indian Government could not remain aloof from it without endangering its national interest.

To the Government of India, talk of peace is not merely a sentimental cry, but it is based on solid material requirements of the country. The economic, political and social progress to which it has given top priority since the independence of India, made maintenance of peace an absolute necessity. The

Vietnamese conflict which had been a cold war issue until the winter of 1954 appeared to move in the direction of a hot war. And it was the possibility of outbreak of war in Southeast Asia which made the Government of India end its policy of 'studied aloofness' from the Vietnamese conflict. While the growing interventions of Communist China and the United States in the spring of 1954 were causing mounting diplomatic and military tensions in Vietnam, there were equally strong indications suggesting the possibility of a negotiated settlement of the Vietnamese crisis. This provided the Government of India added encouragement to participate in the Vietnamese conflict.

In the outside intervention in the Vietnamese conflict the Government of India sensed a danger to its concept of the 'area of peace' as well. From the inception of its country's independence it has followed the policy of non-alignment, which was both passive and negative. But with the stabilization and normalization of the situation within the country of which the first five year plan and the first general elections were the apparent marks, the Government of India began to play an active and positive role in world affairs. Being interested in economic and social progress it desired peace; not in the sense of absence of war, but positive peace based on mutual understanding and cooperation among the nations.

Moreover, it wanted to emphasize the importance and settlement of the vital problems of imperialism and racialism in Asia and Africa which were being subordinated to the cold war considerations. With this purpose in mind, the Government of India sought in 1952 adherence of other nations and most particularly its neighbors to the policy of non-alignment. It may be pointed out that aloofness from military alliance with either of the two power blocs in the cold war was the essence of the policy of non-alignment. The countries following this policy were to form the 'area of peace.' The fear that enlargement of the Vietnamese conflict would involve in the cold war its Southeast Asian neighbors, the most desired members of the 'area of peace,' the Indian Government bade farewell to its policy of 'studied aloofness' and began to take an active part in the settlement of the Vietnamese conflict.

The Government of India was convinced in 1954 that the Indochina crisis could be peacefully settled only if the states of Indochina were proclaimed independent and if they were removed from the cold war power politics. It was also convinced that since the future of the states of Indochina was interwoven with the developments in the other countries of Southeast Asia, the latter as well should be removed from the cold war considerations. In other words, the whole area of

Southeast Asia should become a part of the 'area of peace.' It was to this end that the Government of India, at the conclusion of Prime Minister Chou En Lai's visit to India in June 1954, got reaffirmation of the five principles of international conduct, popularly known as Pancha Sheela.

The Government of India was fully aware of the fears and apprehensions that existed among the contestants in the cold war in Asia and concluded that the Pancha Sheela principles would not be easily accepted and applied by them to the settlement of the Indochina crisis. Yet the Government of India, as pointed out in Chapter III, tried in varied and vigorous ways to have the Pancha Sheela principles applied to the crisis under consideration, by the participants to the Geneva Conference. The Geneva Conference after almost three months of deliberations and discussions reached an agreement on the settlement of the Indochina crisis, which, as shown in Chapter IV, was in accordance with the spirit and substance of the Pancha Sheela principles, and the outstanding and influential role played by India therein was acknowledged and appreciated by the majority of the members of the Geneva Conference.

The Geneva Agreement, in the words of Prime Minister Nehru, was only a first step in the settlement of the Indochina

crisis. The Government of India realized that lasting peace in Southeast Asia, including the states of Indochina, could be achieved only if the countries of the area and the other major powers in their mutual relations accepted and acted upon these five principles of international conduct. The Government of India, the protagonist of the 'area of peace,' it seems, had decided to play actively the role of a promoter of the Pancha Sheela principles. Its acceptance of Chairmanship of each of the three International Commissions for supervision and control in the states of Indochina is to be viewed in the background of its anxiety to get the Pancha Sheela principles established as the basis of international relations of the Southeast Asian countries. In addition to this, the Government of India, as shown in Chapter V, undertook diplomatic initiative with a view of creating favorable atmosphere for the growth and acceptance of Pancha Sheela approach in Southeast Asia.

Though the Pancha Sheela principles were primarily directed at the settlement of the crisis in Southeast Asia, they were broad enough to serve the Government of India's overall objective of creating the 'area of peace.' Through adhesion of other states, including those committed to either of the two power blocs to these principles, the Government of



India tried to secure wide acceptance of the existence of the uncommitted states and to promote and popularize their point of view with regard to peace and security in Asia. In this connection the efforts of the two power blocs to force the international system to conform to a bipolar concept may be underlined.

However, the significance of the Pancha Sheela principles is revealed when they are understood as an Indian formula for peace and security of Southeast Asia, conditioned by her own strength and evaluation of national and international situations. The Government of India, as indicated in Chapter I, considered Southeast Asia of vital concern, and therefore, would have liked to bring the countries of this area within its sphere of influence. Being militarily and industrially weak, it was not in a position to take any steps to assert its interests in Southeast Asia, and hence it limited its objective to keeping this area free from any form of foreign domination. To the Government of India, looking forward for extending its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia when it developed its resources and was prepared to undertake any commitments in defence of its national interests in the area under consideration, existence of fully independent states was the prerequisite. It was to this end that it

actively sought the acceptance and application of the Pancha Sheela principles by the Southeast Asian countries and the major powers of the world in their mutual relations.

Peace and security of Southeast Asia, through the formation of the SEATO Pact, was objectionable and unacceptable to the Government of India because it was neither realistic nor in the interests of India. If the Government of India should have joined the SEATO Pact, it would have antagonized Communist China against which the pace was directed. The Indian Government could ill-afford to do this in view of the fact that it shared with China almost 1500 miles of common boundary. As a matter of fact, this reality made it imperative for India to have close and friendly relations with China. Moreover, its joining the pact against China, whose aggressive intentions in 1954, as explained in Chapter III, were yet to be proven, would have caused serious repercussions within India. For a new nation like India, which was consolidating her independence, unity of the country was of paramount importance. But if the Government of India had joined the Pact, it would have provided the Communist Party of India with an additional reason to create dissensions and disagreements within the country. The resulting disunity would have adversely affected the Government of India in foreign as well as national affairs. Its

foreign policy of non-alignment which was gradually assuming the character of being a national one would have met a serious blow, and consequently it would have become that of the Congress Party. Its joining the pact also would have directed the country's attention and energy away from economic, social and political development -- without which it could not play an influential role in world affairs -- to the cold war considerations.

Finally, the Indian Government felt that India, being militarily a weak nation, would become a junior partner in the SEATO Pact and hence its views on shaping the future of Southeast Asia would be subordinated to those of the militarily strong members of the Pact. In short, had it joined the Pact, it would have indirectly become instrumental in letting Southeast Asia become a part of the western sphere of influence. This would not have been in tune with the aspirations of the Government of India, to be itself a dominant power in Southeast Asia.

Moreover, the Government of India opposed the pact because it found the timing of the pact inopportune. From its point of view, there were no indications as to the aggressive intentions of Communist China in Southeast Asia. On the contrary, the conciliatory attitude of Communist China at the Geneva Conference of 1954 had convinced the Indian

Government that the former would implement the Pancha Sheela principles in its relations with the countries of Southeast Asia. Moreover, the Pact seemed superfluous to the Indian Government. The Pact was formed to counter overt aggression and internal subversion of Southeast Asian countries by Communist China, but it did not make any contribution in increasing military or economic potential of its members. It added rather to insecurity of the region because it made Communist China morally free to take counter steps in Southeast Asia. The Pact also contributed towards polarizing leftist and pro-western factions in each of the countries of its Southeast Asian members and provided encouragement to the leftist group in these countries to be willing and ready collaborators of Communist China.

The Indian opposition to the SEATO Pact did not mean that it had ruled out any possibility of Chinese aggression in Southeast Asia. As a matter of fact, the Government of India had taken this eventuality into account and had shaped its policy accordingly. It looked towards the United Nations Organization in place of the SEATO Pact for peace and security of Southeast Asia. If the U.N.O. was to be operative and effective to meet any aggression by Communist China in Southeast Asia, it was essential that Communist China was brought within its jurisdiction. The Government of India,

as pointed out in Chapter V, actively sought admission of Communist China in the U.N.O. exactly to this end. The Government of India's reliance on the U.N.O. for peace and security of Southeast Asia was preferable to the SEATO Pact because preparation against aggression in the future did not cause fears and tensions in the present.

This study confirms the importance of the Commonwealth of Nations in the foreign policy of India. The Government of India's close associations with the Commonwealth of Nations, as explained in Chapter II, played a very significant role in its policy of 'studied aloofness' in the Vietnamese conflict until 1949. Again, during the period 1950-1954, when the Vietnamese conflict had become a cold war issue, the machinery of the Commonwealth of Nations provided a ready forum to both the Government of India and its pro-western members to exchange and appreciate each other's views on this conflict. Furthermore, though the Government of India was excluded from the conference table at Geneva in 1954, it got its views on the settlement of the Indochina crisis conveyed to the participants of the Conference through its fellow member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the United Kingdom. The influence which the Indian Government exerted on the British at the time of the Geneva Conference was such that it led

some American observers, as shown in Chapter III, to conclude that the former held veto over the latter's policies in Southeast Asia.

The Government of India's participation as Chairman of each of the three International Commissions for Supervision and Control in the states of Indochina throws light on its role as a mediator. The I.C.S.C. in Vietnam was paralyzed from the very beginning since both North and South Vietnam had become participants in the cold war. Hence our observations on India's role as a mediator are based on her activities on the Commissions in Cambodia and Laos. The main concern of the Indian Chairman was to reconcile the warring groups in each country and the other two members of the Commissions. The Government of India realized that lasting settlements leading up to political stability could be achieved in these countries only if the Commissions worked in harmony, and if the various factions within each country were united in common loyalty to country rather than to any alien ideologies. Consequently, in the beginning, its attempts towards reconciliation were misinterpreted by the partisans of the Western bloc, and the Indian Government was accused of being partial to the Communist side. Secondly, the approach of the Indian delegation was realistic rather than legalistic. It tried to avoid taking a legal stand on

any issue brought before the Commissions if it did not help the parties to reach a settlement. The other two members of the Commissions, in contrast, were interested more in vindicating their points of views. Lastly, the Indian delegation interpreted the scope of the Commissions liberally. It was anxious to bring as many problems of the states of Indochina as it could within the purview of the Commissions. It also desired to prolong the duration of the Commissions as long as it was possible. This tendency of the Indian delegation makes sense when it is viewed in the light of the fact that the Commissions in which the Indian Chairman held a decisive role, enabled it to influence the developments in the states of Indochina which it considered to be within its sphere of influence.

This study shows that the Government of India's Pancha Sheela approach to the problems of peace and security of Southeast Asia was not considered adequate by the Western bloc in general and the United States in particular and consequently their policies in the area rivalled each other. This was most unfortunate in view of the fact that the governments of both India and the United States had common objective of keeping the countries of Southeast Asia free from the domination of Communist China. The differences between them, as pointed out earlier, arose on the means to achieve the common objective. However, with the passage of time, India and the

United States have come closer in understanding and cooperation. The recurring crises in Laos, for instance, have clearly demonstrated to the Government of the United States that the area of Southeast Asia lies outside its strategic and political power. It has also come to realize the practical advantage of not requiring small and weak nations to choose sides in the cold war. In other words, it has begun to accept and appreciate the place of uncommitted nations in the cold war. It should be remembered that non-acceptance of the policy of non-alignment of the Southeast Asian countries by the American Government during the period 1954-1960 was one of the issues that had caused misunderstanding and friction between India and the United States. On the other hand, the attitude and behavior of Communist China in Tibet and the Himalayan border of India in recent years have shaken the Government of India's faith in Communist China's pledge to Pancha Sheela principles and have made it see the American views on the threat of Communist China in Southeast Asia sympathetically.

The recurring crisis in Laos has demonstrated with force the necessity of India and the United States having a Southeast Asian policy which is complementary rather than competitive. Mutual understanding and appreciation of each others views by the two countries should not make this job



difficult for them. The history of Southeast Asia during the period of European domination offers us a good guide in this respect. As pointed out in Chapter I, it was the partnership of India and the U.K. which played a decisive role in shaping the future of Southeast Asia.

Neither India nor the United States could meet any overt or covert aggression of Communist China in Southeast Asia single handedly. But the Indo-American partnership could play as decisive a role as that played by the Indo-British partnership during the period of European domination of Southeast Asia. The Indian experiment, in both domestic and foreign affairs, offers the countries of Southeast Asia a sound alternative to the two ideologies propagated by the participants of the cold war. This would contribute towards reconciling the extremists both at the right and at the left. This, in turn, would unite various fractions in each of the countries of Southeast Asia into common loyalty to their countries instead of their looking towards foreign ideologies. India, because of her cultural, geographical and historical ties, is best suited to play the role of a leader in Southeast Asia. However, her economic and industrial backwardness would not permit her to play the role of a leader in Southeast Asia effectively. In this connection, it may be observed

that the main problem of the Southeast Asian countries is how to improve the standard of living of their people. The American aid, either on a regional basis as symbolized in the Colombo Plan, or on a bilateral basis, would be of great value in securing internal stability in the countries of Southeast Asia.

The need of Indo-American partnership would be even more compelling in case of overt aggression of Southeast Asia by Communist China. Security of India would compel the Government of India to defend the countries of Southeast Asia against Chinese aggression. But being militarily weak, it would find it difficult to defend the area against Chinese aggression on its own. The Indian Government, with the arms and ammunitions of the United States in case of aggression, would be in a position to present effective resistance. The intervening oceans, despite technological developments, make it necessary for the United States Government to have a bastion in Southeast Asia. India, because of her geographical location, resources, manpower, well trained and disciplined army, and relatively advanced economic and administrative apparatus, occupies an important place in the defence of Southeast Asia.

The basis of Indo-American partnership, however, would be different from that of the Indo-British in one important respect. Whereas the British forced upon India the role of a

partner in Southeast Asia, free and independent India would have to be persuaded and convinced rather than to be compelled and coerced by the United States.

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## APPENDIX I

### PRIME MINISTER NEHRU'S 6-POINT PLAN FOR INDOCHINA<sup>1</sup>

New Delhi, 24 April 1954

The Government of India feel convinced that, despite all their differences of outlook, their deep-seated suspicions and their antagonistic claims, the great statesmen assembling at Geneva and their peoples have a common objective -- the averting of the tide of war. In their earnest desire to assist to resolve some of the difficulties and deadlocks and to bring about a peaceful settlement, they venture to make the following suggestions:

(1) A climate of peace and negotiation has to be promoted and the suspicion and the atmosphere of threats that prevail sought to be dissipated. To this end, the Government of India appeal to all concerned to desist from threats, and to the combatants to refrain from stepping up the tempo of war.

(2) A cease-fire. To bring this about, the Government of India propose:

(a) that the item of a 'cease-fire' be given priority on the Indochina Conference agenda.

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<sup>1</sup>India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches: March 1953-August 1957, Vol. III (Calcutta: Shri Saraswaty Press, Ltd., 1958), pp.245-246.

(b) a cease-fire group consisting of the actual belligerents, viz., France and her three Associated States and Viet Minh.

(3) Independence. The Conference should decide and proclaim that it is essential to the solution of the conflict that the complete independence of Indochina, that is, the termination of French sovereignty, should be placed beyond all doubt by an unequivocal commitment by the Government of France.

(4) Direct negotiations between the parties immediately and principally concerned should be initiated by the Conference. Instead of seeking to hammer out settlements themselves, the Conference should request the parties principally concerned to enter into direct negotiations and give them all assistance to this end. Such direct negotiations would assist in keeping the Indochina question limited to the issues which concern and involve Indochina directly. These parties would be the same as would constitute the cease-fire group.

(5) Non-Intervention. A solemn agreement on non-intervention denying aid, direct or indirect, with troops or war material to the combatants or for the purposes of war, to which the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., the U.K. and China shall be primary parties, should be brought about by the Conference. The United Nations, to which the decision of the Conference

shall be reported, shall be requested to formulate a convention of non-intervention in Indochina embodying the aforesaid and including the provisions for its enforcement under U.N. auspices. Other States should be invited by the U.N. to adhere to this convention of non-intervention.

(6) The United Nations should be informed of the progress of the Conference. Its good offices for purposes of conciliation under the appropriate Articles of the Charter, and not for invoking sanctions, should be sought.

## APPENDIX II

### EXTRACT FROM THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE COLOMBO CONFERENCE OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN PRIME MINISTERS<sup>2</sup>

Kandy, 2 May 1954

The Prime Ministers of Burma, Ceylon, India, Indonesia and Pakistan met at Colombo on 28, 29 and 30 April and at Kandy on 1 and 2 May 1954 to exchange views and discuss problems of common interest and concern to them all. This was the first occasion on which the Prime Ministers of these countries met together, and the informal and cordial atmosphere of the Conference enabled them not merely to get better acquainted with one another's views, but also to come to know one another better. While it was not expected that there would be complete unanimity of approach to the variety of problems they discussed, the Conference made it evident that there was substantial community of outlook on many of these problems. It was a happy coincidence that the Prime Ministers of these countries should have met together at a time when problems vital to the stability and peace of the Far Eastern and Asian region were being considered by the Geneva Conference.

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<sup>2</sup>S. L. Poplai (ed.), The Temper of Peace: Select Documents 1954-55 (Delhi: National Printing Works, 1955), pp.5-6.

2. The Prime Ministers reviewed the situation in respect of Indochina, where a long and tragic war threatens the establishment of the freedom and independence of the peoples of Indochina, as well as the security and peace of Asia and of the world as a whole. They welcomed the earnest attempts being made at Geneva to find a solution to the problem of Indochina by negotiation, and hoped that the deliberations of the Geneva Conference would bring about a speedy termination of the conflict and the restoration of peace in Indochina. They considered that the solution of the problem of Indochina required that an agreement on a cease-fire should be reached without delay. The Prime Ministers felt that the solution of the problem required direct negotiations between the parties principally concerned, namely France, the three Associated States of Indochina and Viet Minh, as well as other parties invited by agreement. The success of such direct negotiations will be greatly helped by an agreement on the part of all the countries concerned, particularly China, the U.K., the U.S.A., and the U.S.S.R., on the steps necessary to prevent a recurrence of resumption of hostilities. The Prime Ministers contemplated that this negotiating group would report to the Geneva Conference for final decision. They proposed that France should declare at the Geneva Conference that she is irrevocably

committed to the complete independence of Indochina. In order that the good offices and machinery of the United Nations might be utilized for the furtherance of the purposes of the Geneva Conference and the implementation of its decisions on Indochina, the Prime Ministers were of the opinion that the Conference should keep the United Nations informed of the progress of its deliberations on Indochina.

3. The Prime Ministers viewed with grave concern the developments in regard to the hydrogen bomb and other weapons of mass destruction. They welcomed the current efforts of the United Nations Disarmament Commission to bring about the elimination and prohibition of such weapons and hoped that the Commission would be able to reach an agreed solution to this problem urgently. The Prime Ministers were of the opinion that, pending such an agreement, no further explosions of the hydrogen bomb should take place and that the United Nations should take steps to publish authoritative information regarding the destructive capabilities and the known and probable disastrous effects of these weapons. They believed that such publication by rousing the conscience of the world would help in the search for an agreed solution of the grave problem that threatens humanity.