



POLICY OF PEACE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENEVA AGREEMENTS IN HOI AN- QUANG NAM (1954-1956)

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Abstract. In the prosecution of American policies, the Saigon administration carried out extremely reactionary strategies, such as refusing general consultation, refusing to reestablish normal relations between the North and the South, refusing the election of the Constituent Assembly (March 31, 1956), the promulgation of the Constitution (October 26, 1956), the establishment of the Can Lao People's Party, the National Revolutionary Movement and the Republican Youth. The Saigon Regime used all measures to repress peace advocates, resistance fighters and those who fought for the Geneva Agreements (1954). The conspiracy and tactics that the US Government and The Saigon regime as the ways of refusing to negotiate with the general election caused ethnic conflicts and social conflicts to increase seriously. Therefore, a political fight for peace and the enforcement of the Geneva Agreements between the people of Hoi An and the authorities of the United States and the Saigon regime became inevitable

Keywords. struggle for the implementation of the Geneva Accords, Hoi An 1955, struggle for peace, General Election.

1. Introduction

On July 21, 1954, the Geneva Agreements on the Termination of the War and the Restoration of Indochina Peace was signed. Accordingly, Vietnam would be divided into two regions, with the Hien Luong River at the 17th parallel as a line of demarcation between the North and the South. A nationwide election should be held to establish a national assembly in two years. In the first years after the Geneva Agreements, under the Sai Gon regime, the geographic zoning of Hoi An remained unchanged.

However, as a result of their long-term conspiracy for keeping South Vietnam under the US. In August 1954, the Sai Gon regime took over Quang Nam - Da Nang, focusing on terrorist attacks in Quang Nam province to the south of Thu Bon River. In order to strengthen the military force as a tool to suppress the revolutionary movement, on April 8, 1955, the Sai Gon regime promulgated Act No. 26 to establish the Security Corps by merging the units of the Union Security and the Viet Cong soldiers belonging to the French Army.

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In Hoi An, Ngo Dinh Diem tried to strengthen the local government and reform the army. In October 1954, the provincial government and headquarters of the Sai Gon regime in Quang Nam were established and strengthened in Hoi An. To strengthen the government in the villages and communes, the Sai Gon regime chose local people to form a "Council of Incense", combining administration and security and dismissing the planned general election [2, p.110].

In August 1954, the Sai Gon regime came to Quang Nam -Da Nang and, in September, brutally massacred inhabitants of Duoc Market, Chien Dan, Cay Coc and elsewhere. By October, the Sai Gon regime were established headquarters in Hoi An, and, in early 1955, they implemented economic and land-use sanctions, essentially eliminating ownership of land that had been divided among the people of the Resistance, and transferring it to the landlords who stand in the Sai Gon regime side.

In Hoi An, the Sai Gon regime terminated the development of commerce and services and started transforming the marketplace to develop their own artificial urban economy. Business activities in Hoi An were generally poor, backward and developing slowly, with only a few small industrial facilities. In culture and education, the Sai Gon regime began focusing on training servants to serve them. The education system did not change for 10 years and primary, secondary, high schools, as well as the middle schools and colleges. In the Report of three months of the Sai Gon regime wrote "*Public school system: High school - Tran Quy Cap (Hoi An) High School: increasing Third-class and 3 class of second classes with 202 students, 2 teachers as Supervisors, 9 Professors. 7 Professors and 3 office staff reduction*" [11, p. 2].

2. Materials

Faced with the difficulties of the revolution, in accordance with the direction of the Party Committee Zone V, the Quang Nam Provincial Party Committee and Hoi An Town Committee were required to maintain and consolidate the mass organization of officials and members, secretly leading the people into a political struggle of various forms for holding the nationwide general election and demanding the implementation of the Geneva Agreements. The Party Committee pointed out that each member of the Communist Party had to raise the awareness of protecting the Party and the organization to the end.

The party members were composed of highly experienced cadres, party members and soldiers whose political bravery and loyalty had been forged in extremely harsh years of previous nine years of the anti-French resistance war. This was the core force who then organized and mobilized the masses to fight for the implementation of the Geneva Agreements [10, p.148].

The Inter-Regional Party Committee of Zone V directed their forces to assemble in the North within 30 days, in the provinces of Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh and all the other provinces of Inter-Zone V transferred their troops and handed over their territories to the enemy by August 31, 1954 [4, p. 26].

On the January 10, 1955 we (the people on ship - Author noted) boarded a large Polish ship. Looking at the mainland we saw a looming island, shaped like the tip of a cone, and found out that it was Cham Island – Hoi An, rejoicing and feeling emotional [9, p. 60].

On May 16, 1955, the last armed units of Inter-Zone 5 left Quy Nhon port, heading to the North. At the same time, Hoi An's armed forces rushed to Tam Ky to take part in the provincial parade and then quickly withdrew to Quang Ngai also [5, p. 28].

Following the guidance of the Quang Nam Party Committee, the Hoi An town commission was secretly established, with Khanh Nguyen Kim as Party Secretary, Tien Dang as Deputy Secretary, and But Truong, Chi Le Viet, Thanh Le Ngoc as members. The party committees of the anti-French resistance were dissolved and their delegations assigned to the provincial Party Committees in charge of each area. Village committees were dissolved and secret committees of 3–5 members were set up. Members were selected for their loyalty, capacity for hard work and understanding of the law, employing the motto "*Dexterity and the Skillful Concealment of Force*". The Party was fully committed to these secret committees for their creativity and flexibility in combining legal and illegal ways of organizing and leading the movement. But it had to be mainly a secret, illegal operation [1, p. 212].

The vast majority of the party members were dispersed to join legitimate mass organizations to select and gather leaders and their forces for the political struggle movement. To work closely together and focus on one area, party members worked methodically in the form of a "*Triple Group*" or a Unicorn. The citizens, now as party members, turned to legal pursuits, such as boat races, theatrical performances, drama teams, small business groups and popular classes, unrecognized in the early stages as a revolutionary force, enabling the masses to unknowingly participate in a new political movement, preparing them for the mental, ideological and physical conditions involved in their upcoming fight with the United States and the Sai Gon regime [3, p. 132].

According to the guidelines of Quang Nam Party Committee, most of cadres and party members of the Duy Xuyen, Thang Binh, Dai Loc, Que Son and Tien Phuoc districts had temporarily left Hoi An to gather in the free zone. The Party Committee of Hoi An urgently assigned members every day in each locality to organize and mobilize dozens of boats, together with a large number of volunteers, to transport forces to Quang Ngai, Binh Dinh. Many boat-workers in Hoi An participated in the concealment, nourishment and transportation of forces to the North, also conveying support materials.

On June 6, 1955, the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam requested the the Sai Gon regime for a meeting to talk about the general election. In support of this request, the Communist Party of Hoi An launched a large political campaign in the town. Everywhere the people held meetings, rallies and signed petitions the Sai Gon regime for talks. Activities took place in all neighborhoods, especially in rural areas, where 95% of the population participated. Many slogans, banners, and pamphlets promoting propaganda appeared with pseudonyms, in the streets, at the market or wherever people talked to each other about the general election [1, p. 217].

On July 20, 1955, a large demonstration broke out in Hoi An. According to plan, from 9am in the morning, groups of people were mobilized in the suburbs to convene at the HoiAn Market. Thousands of people were led by the Farmers' Association and the Women's Union. The protesters walked from the market along the inner city streets, shouting the slogans "Let's Strictly Implement the Geneva Agreement", and "General Election Law Will Unify our Country" [1, p. 218].

The army and officials of the Sai Gon regime encouraged people to find ways to get organized and distributed for the meeting in the Pagoda, school to affirm their belief in the legality of the Geneva Agreements. However, on July 20, 1955, a large demonstration broke out in Hoi An. According to plan, from 9am in the morning, groups of people were mobilized in the suburbs to convene at the Hoi An market. Thousands of people were led by the Farmers' Association and the Women's Union. The protesters walked from the market along the inner city streets, shouting the slogans "Let's Strictly Implement the Geneva Agreement", and "General Election Law Will Unify our Country" [1, p. 218].

The protesters proceeded directly to the Quang Nam provincial office. Diem's forces had to mobilize extra police and army forces to block the crowd. However, organizations such as public-private partnerships, leading trade unions and core members led the people to the Quang Nam Provincial Road Authority, carrying hundreds of petitions calling for a general election. A report published in Quang Nam name "Quyet Tien" by Quang Nam Party Committee newspaper on October 1, 1955, stated: "*The people of Quang Nam - Da Nang continue to fight for consultation. The resounding events after the August 21, 1955 strikes in Danang have had a huge impact. Workers, businessmen, intellectuals, civil servants and soldiers are very agitated. But we have done a great job and will not negotiate with terrorists who will not negotiate for unification. We want to fight to the death and oppose everything.*

The struggle was strengthened, with appeals for ongoing consultations going to the Southern authorities and the International Commission. Hundreds more people in Hoi An responded to the strikes in Danang and, on August 23, 1955, the masses took their petitions for negotiation to the International Commission, denouncing the undermining of the Geneva Agreement by the United States and the Sai

Gon regime. They traveled to Danang to deliver the petitions and join the protest. On August 28, strikes broke out in Hoi An, Vinh Dien, Phu Bong and elsewhere continued. In Hoi An, on the road, on the river, on trees, on floats, on cars and so on, there were signs, banners, leaflets and slogans. The roads were now empty and very few customers were at the market before 9 am" [6, p. 1].

The Sai Gon regime did not respond to the legitimate aspirations of the people. On contrary, they continued to oppress and terrorize the political struggle of the masses. Many officials and revolutionary members were arrested and abducted by the Saigon Army. Nhac Nguyen, a legal party member from Ngoc Thanh was arrested. He was then tortured with cuts to the stomach and dumped into the river in a sack. The party then planned to turn his funeral into a demonstration of the brutality and cruelty of the Diem Ngo Dinh regime. Hundreds of people and their families carried Nhac Nguyen's death body along the main streets of the town, as a proof of the crimes committed by the Saigon government. The Party Committee also arranged for Nhac Nguyen's family to denounce and sue the International Commission in Danang. At the hearing, the Hoi An Town Commissioner sent Gom Dinh, a legal party member who was chairing the "Council of Incense" in Tam Chau, as a witness, to confront the police criminals and force them to plead guilty [1, p. 219].

Gom Dinh after that was secretly killed on arriving in Hoi An by the Saigon Army and also abandoned his body in a sack in the river, which caused much resentment among the people of Hoi An. On September 29, 1955, the Diem government sent a platoon to destroy a monument in Vinh Thanh. Hundreds of people from the South were mobilized to fight fiercely against the enemy. Fearful of interrogation, the Saigon army repressed, arrested and tortured 46 people in Hoi An to control the party organization, but the people did not respond. From the dawn of October 23, 1955, Diem sent security guards to each house to urge the people to vote, choosing voting locations, such as schools, communal houses, temples and churches. At each location he arranged to closely monitor each voter and force them to follow the instructions: "green cards leave in the basket, red cards in the box"¹ [1, p. 221].

The Hoi An voters ignored him and, when the Diem government forced them to go to the polling place, they resolutely struggled to avoid it, under the leadership of the core members, who said "Focus on our objectives, don't let your people become disorganized". In general, when they vote, the people must be organized into teams, with clear core leadership, going from one team to another in turn. "It was necessary to investigate the attitude of the enemy and also determine the attitude of the masses and the strategy of teams fighting together to unite the leadership. If they sign their names on the ballot sheets, they will be questioned individually about the election, on the grounds of

¹ Green cards had Ngo Dinh Diem imagine

Red cards had Bao Dai imagine

preventing a war or questioning the rules, questioning the candidate's name and history, prolonging a complicated withdrawal" [7, p. 3].

In the polling booths, the people pretended to cause trouble, quarrels caused disorder, and they hid the Diem Ngo Dinh ballot slips in their pockets to bring back the revolutionary government. They also placed anti-government propaganda on the ballot boxes.

Many polling stations fought fiercely, tearing up photos of Diem. A woman pretended to be working in front of a ballot box, so voters crushed against the ballot box, surrounded by employees of the National League for Democracy, forcing them to run away. The Saigon administration explained the tactics of the revolutionary government in the "parliamentary" election as follows: *"Politics is the focus of their struggle, a characteristic that we must pay particular attention to. During the day, many elderly men, women and middle-aged people are sent in, but at night more and more younger men and women arrive, holding sticks, proving that they are not just coming for political reasons but have also come partly to be violent" [12, p. 2].*

Many leaflets calling for people to fight for peace, demanding the implementation of the Geneva Agreement, were widely distributed in Hoi An: *"In Hoi An, on the night of December 12, 1955, police officers discovered some Viet Cong lithography, calling for a struggle for peace and unity" [8, p. 1].*

In Ha Gia Village, Ha My², the Saigon army shot and killed several people at the polling place and then ran away. People carried their bodies from Thanh Ha and An Bang to the inner city, where over 1,000 demonstrated, shouting the slogan *"Civilians strictly enforce the Geneva Agreement"*. The Saigon army deployed over 300 security guards and police officers, who were fully equipped with barbed wire, blocked the road at the Long Tuyen Temple³ and Truong Le⁴ and suppressed the rally. The Saigon army flew L.19 aircraft to launch grenades at the protesters, killing at least four people in Hoi An and injuring another 470 [1, p. 222].

Winning control, Diem Ngo Dinh organized the *"Election of the National Assembly"*, in order to cover up dictatorship and nepotism. Meanwhile, the Communist Party continued to lead the people resolutely to boycott the election, and sabotage the propaganda of Diem government in various ways, by authoring their own anti-election slogans, nominated by the entire country. Diem's administration pointed out, In some areas of Dien Ban, the Viet Cong have conspired with the people to disrupt our referendum. Their objective is to:

² Dien Duong - Dien Ban

³ Cam Chau village - Hoi An

⁴ Cam Chau village - Hoi An

1. Cause an echo around Vietnam and worldwide to undermine the political meaning of the referendum, making it appear to be illegal and undemocratic.
2. Use violence to create the momentum to sabotage the upcoming National Assembly elections.
3. Take advantage of the situation of uncertainty and propaganda to create hatred towards the regime.
4. In general, the enemy conspired against the political backers of the people, causing sufficient pressure to force the National Government to accept a deal with the Viet Cong [13, p. 2].

On July 20, 1955, while the National Assembly celebrated the one-year anniversary of "*Annihilation*", the struggle of the people of Hoi An began. On March 4, 1956, security forces and police of the National Guard cracked down on each village and stormed each house to arrest the people and force them to vote to set up a "*puppet parliament*". In Hoi An, laborers mixed with suburbanites at the market. Thousands of demonstrators formed at the Nguyen Hue, Tran Hung Dao and Hoang Dieu crossroads with slogans demanding: "*A Geneva Agreements and a General Election to Unify our Country.*" After marching past police headquarters, the masses headed straight to Quang Nam Province. The core organizations delivered hundreds of petitions directly to the enemy and the military forces of Diem, who were frightened and rushed police and the army to protect the Quang Nam provincial road and suppress the people. In addition, in Hoi An, the People's Committee issued a petition to all levels of government as well as the International Commission to monitor the implementation of the Geneva Accord, in order to put pressure on the National Assembly to conduct a general election [1, p. 236-237].

It can be said that the US-backed Diem administration and its sponsors had implemented a policy that contrasts strongly with the ceasefire agreement and Final Declaration of the Geneva Conventions, the US and the Diem government. Diem Ngo Dinh completely rejected consultation between the two sides to discuss a general election, while receiving a large number of weapons, equipment and American military advisers to build a puppet army. He enforced a brutal policy towards those who had participated in the resistance war against France and endorsed the implementation of the Geneva Agreements, also extending his propaganda to the north of Vietnam. It was clear from their brutal behavior against the people of Hoi An, that the United States and the Diem Ngo Dinh administration had failed to implement the terms of consultation and general elections to unite the country.

3. Conclusion

Hoi An's situation after the Geneva Accord was very complicated. Hoi An was the headquarters of the French colonialists and many other active parties, such as Dai Viet and the Vietnam Nationalist Party. So, soon after the Geneva Agreement came into force, the United States and the Sai Gon regime heavily attacked the revolutionary movement, hunting down and killing cadres, members of both public and party organizations and the old resistance participants. Therefore, struggle for the implementation of the Geneva Accords is so different such as: Form of struggle is so plentiful, Participants who joined the politic struggle come from many class like farmers, workers, students.

Even so, due to the complex conditions at that time and somewhat subjective illusions about the goodwill of American imperialism, the revolutionary power of the masses was underestimated. However, they contributed to slowing down the process of the US and the Saigon government to establish the government here, which is the basis for fiery political struggles later.

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