

Intellectuals with Neutral Views in South Vietnam Towards the Policies of the Republic of Vietnam Government (1955 - 1960)



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ABSTRACT: During the period 1955 - 1960, in South Vietnam, a section of intellectuals gradually formed with a neutral viewpoint, expressing opposition to the war, desiring peace and unification of the country, and demanding Expand freedom, civil rights, and democracy. These views are publicly expressed through political struggle activities, attracting the participation and support of a segment of society, creating a premise for the formation and development of the third force that follows. This is a force with a peace-loving spirit, they are gathered by many forces in society, from students, celebrities, intellectuals, religious dignitaries or possibly religious leaders, the people who are participating in activities in the government of the Republic of Vietnam.

The article analyzes the context and political struggle activities demanding that the government of the Republic of Vietnam expand civil rights and democracy, implement the Geneva agreement, end the war, and restore peace in South Vietnam of intellectuals with neutral views during the period (1955 - 1960).

KEYWORDS: South Vietnam, Third Force, Neutral ingredients, Vietnam war, Republic of Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

During the resistance war against America to save the country (1954-1975), in South Vietnam, besides the confrontation between the revolutionary forces and the forces of the Republic of Vietnam government, there was also another force formed in society of South Vietnam. They have a “non-national, non-communist neutral tendency” (Duong Thi Kim Hue. 2019. p. 30), fighting in the political field, using non-violent methods to protest opposing the war, demanding the expansion of civil rights, democracy and implementation of the Geneva agreement, unifying the country. Initially, this force came from a team of intellectuals and religious monks, and later was joined by congressmen and generals in the Saigon government. This force later became known as the third force. According to Tran Van Giau (2018), this “is a form of gathering without clear boundaries, including all groups and individuals of intellectuals, notables, congressmen, journalists, monks of all religions, and civil servants” merchants and even a number of former puppet generals, including undisclosed communist sympathizers. They are alike on a common program of peace, independence, democracy and anti-Thieu and America” (Tran Van Giau (Editor). 2018. p.553). Or in a speech at the Continental restaurant, female lawyer Ngo Ba Thanh said: “The third force is the peace-loving elements, uniting all trends, combining together into one block, demanding that America withdraw from Vietnam” (PTTg-DIICH, file number 31245). During the period 1955 - 1960, the intellectuals with neutral views in South Vietnam conducted many political activities to express their opposition to the war, demanding that the Saigon government expand freedoms, democracy, implementation of the Geneva Agreement to unify the country through a peaceful path. These were the initial activities for the formation and development of the third force in the later stages of the resistance war.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS AND RESEARCH METHODS

Theoretical basis: The research issue is approached based on the viewpoint of current Vietnamese history, and the policies and guidelines of the Communist Party of Vietnam. In the process of approaching the research problem, the authors also apply the contextual approach, historical principles - specific, comprehensive - systematic to consider the problem from many aspects.

Research methods: The process of researching the issue of intellectuals' attitudes towards the policies of the Republic of Vietnam government in the period 1955 - 1960 is applied in combination with research methods appropriate to the research content, which mainly uses the historical criticism method to evaluate the reliability of historical sources related to the research content. Based on the historical sources, the research team applies the historical method. history - logic, analysis - synthesis to describe and analyze the context and issues facing intellectuals and personalities with neutral views in South Vietnam and their actions in response to these issues.

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3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Context of South Vietnam after the Geneva agreement

In May 1954, the resistance war against the French people of Vietnam was victorious, the Geneva agreement was signed, which stipulated consultations between the two regions starting on July 20, 1955 and general elections issued in July 1956; Take the 17th parallel as the temporary military boundary line in Vietnam. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam views the Geneva agreement as the international legal basis to continue the struggle to complete the people's national democratic revolution nationwide, and seriously carry out the work of gathering and transferring troops according to regulations.

However, the failure of France in Indochina was seen by the United States as a risk leading to communism spreading to Southeast Asia. The US National Security Council assessed that: "The 1954 Geneva agreement was a disaster, completing an important step for communism, which could lead to the loss of Southeast Asia" (Hoang Tung, 2020, p.18). To prevent that risk, the US intervened in South Vietnam by creating favorable conditions for Ngo Dinh Diem - a figure with pro-American views on South Vietnam - to become Prime Minister of the Vietnamese National Government.

In September 1954, the United States transferred economic and military aid directly to the Ngo Dinh Diem government, violating Article 4 of the final declaration (prohibition of bringing foreign troops and military personnel into Indochina) in Geneva agreement. Faced with America's involvement, Head of State Bao Dai had to make concessions and gradually give up his political role in South Vietnam, accepting "signing Decree No. 15 giving Ngo Dinh Diem full power both civilly and military" (Nguyen Xuan Hoai, 2011, p. 24).

On October 23, 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem held a referendum, deposing Head of State Bao Dai and on October 26, 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem issued the 1st Provisional Constitution, declaring Vietnam (South Vietnam) a republic. In addition, Diem claimed that Vietnam had not signed the Geneva Agreement and therefore was not bound. The birth of the Constitution marked the end of the State of Vietnam led by Bao Dai, giving birth to a new regime, the Republic of Vietnam. The title of Head of State was replaced by President. On October 29, 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem issued Decree No. 4-TTP establishing the Republic of Vietnam regime.

During the first period of his rule, Ngo Dinh Diem's government issued decrees and plans to create sympathy with the people of the South, with the guises of "freedom, democracy", "social progress", "proletarianization",... was used thoroughly to attract the people of South Vietnam, but later, this government showed its dictatorial and nepotistic nature. The government strictly controlled the activities of unions, arrested progressive elements, and dared to publicly speak out against unreasonable state policies, even student activities, students are also strictly controlled, activities can only take place within the limits permitted by the government, "faculties only accept social learning activities, even entertainment with scale is prohibited. Discussion activities and seminars are of course completely excluded"(Nguyen Huu Thai, 2017, p.77).

The government of the Republic of Vietnam has limited freedom of press and speech by establishing the General Publishing Office to unified control and promptly block newspapers that dare to express the political opinions and aspirations of the people, criticizing the government's mistakes. These policies were commented by the foreign press: "Vietnam (South Vietnam) lacks freedom, the press is strictly controlled, the opposition is not encouraged, dissatisfaction intensifies, and people believe that the government is corrupt" (Ministry of Information and Youth of the Republic of Vietnam, 1961).

The birth and the dictatorship policies, and violations the Geneva agreement of the Republic of Vietnam government in South Vietnam have pushed the Vietnamese people to face the reality of long-term division of the country and the risk of near-term war adjacent. Faced with that situation, intellectuals with neutral views in South Vietnam have carried out many political activities protesting the terrorist policy, demanding that the government of the Republic of Vietnam exercise the rights to freedom and democracy, seriously implementing the provisions of the Geneva agreement.

3.2. Activities against the government of the Republic of Vietnam of intellectuals have neutral viewpoint

3.2.1. Activities of scholars and intellectuals

From the early days of fighting against America and protesting against the policies of the Republic of Vietnam government. Scholars and intellectuals with a neutral stance have organized progressive peaceful struggle movements to call on the pro-American government in South Vietnam to fulfill the aspirations and wishes of the people for peace. In particular, the Peace Protection movement is considered the first movement of neutral forces to fight for the above purposes. Starting in August 1954, the Peace Protection Movement came into operation with the policy of "Vietnam Unification, Independence, Democracy", the movement sent a Summons to the people of the South, to mobilize for a peaceful Vietnam. This is a large-scale movement, gathering all strata of society with the goal of requiring Ngo Dinh Diem to comply with the terms of the Geneva agreement.

Leading this organization is Pharmacist Tran Kim Quang, holding the position of Chairman. The vice presidents are Nguyen Thi Luu and Nguyen Huu Tho. The movement used the way of protesting, compiling, translation and printing content of the Agreement, distribute and explain the mistakes of the Ngo Dinh Diem government, typically "The movement to compile a book" small in the form of "questions and answers" explains the basic issues of the Agreement" (Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee - Ho Chi Minh City, (2013), p.34). To disseminate

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information to the people of the South, the movement published the Noi Hoa Binh magazine led by Professor Nguyen Van Hieu. With the support of the people, a series of Peace Committees were established in all urban areas.

Faced the activities that violated the Geneva agreement of the Ngo Dinh Diem government, the peace movement sent a representative, Engineer Luu Van Lang, to meet with French High Commissioner Ély to discuss support for the movement to fight for the war. The Southern government implemented peace terms and returned prisoners of war.

Faced with the resolute actions of the Peace movement, all classes in the South participated in increasing numbers. Faced with the growing situation of the Peace Protection movement, the Ngo Dinh Diem government arrested the leaders of the movement and its members, brought them to court to determine their crimes and deported them to Hai Phong. However, in response to the protest activities of the above prominent scholars and intellectuals, 26 people from the Peace movement were returned to Saigon. Only a few remaining characters such as Nguyen Huu Tho, Tu Ba Duoc, Nguyen Van Duong, Tran Ham Lang, Nguyen Tao, and Lam Thi Tu continue to be deported and placed under house arrest in Phu Yen.

The purges of the Republic of Vietnam government against sects and opposition forces have caused much loss of property and wealth of the people. Faced with that situation, intellectuals with neutral views called on society to help and save the refugees. On May 1, 1955, the Committee for the Relief of Victims and the Protection of People's Lives and Property was established and issued a summons as a people's relief organization to create solidarity among compatriots, followed by mobilize a movement to demand security and compensation for the lives and property of the damaged people. Responding to the call, all walks of life from intellectuals, traders, pupils and students participated, and many associations donated to join the Committee in supporting war victims. The Committee also sent members to clean up rubble and places destroyed by raids, set up tents, and contribute clothes and money to support people in need. In March 1955, a representative delegation of the Committee met with representatives of the National Government of Vietnam to request "the Government to help create broad legal conditions for people's organizations to operate...to create favorable conditions" for the people to return to their old home"(Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee - Ho Chi Minh City. 2013. p. 71). This movement spread and was strongly responded by people in urban Saigon.

Fearing that the development of this movement could affect its reputation and further unfavorable changes, the government of the Republic of Vietnam established the Central Relief Committee and abolished the relief movement. The leaders of the Relief Committee were arrested and charged with "continuing to operate and rely on the suffering of the people to cause confusion between the masses and the government"(Vietnam Fatherland Front Committee - Ho Chi Minh City. 2013. p. 72).

3.2.2. Activities of pupils and students

In addition to the fighting activities of intellectuals and intellectuals with neutral views, in the period 1955 - 1960, in the South of Vietnam, political movements also emerged demanding freedom, civil rights, and democracy. and peace of the student force. The expansion of the training scale of Saigon University Institute and the birth of new universities in the South of Vietnam have rapidly increased the number of students, especially in Saigon. With a large number and knowledge, enthusiasm of youth, students in the South in general and Saigon in particular gradually became an important political force in patriotic movements.

During this period, the struggles of students were often associated with the clear struggle goal of demanding that the government in the Southern respect the Geneva Agreement and exercise democratic civil rights. When the Geneva Agreement was signed, students organized musical performances to celebrate the restoration of peace, this also expressed the desire to unify the country. In addition, students and with other social forces took to the streets to hold rallies to celebrate the day of peace and unification, participating in peace committees with a large number of intellectuals, workers and merchants, send collective petitions to the Committee for the Protection of World Peace to publicly denounce things that violate the unity of the Republic of Vietnam government.

During the early years management and administration of the Republic of Vietnam government, the Students coordinated with teachers and the women's committee to organize a protest at Dien Hong Hall to demand that the government unify the country and end evictions, solving unemployment, reducing taxes,... In July 1957, students continued to fight to demand that the Ngo Dinh Diem government change educational plans such as re-teaching Vietnamese at university levels, opening more schools, so that more people could allowed to go to school, and fought for the removal of military training during the summer. The student movements created a development in the public struggle of the people of the cities. Thereby, it shows the progressive views of the forces with a neutral viewpoint.

4. CONCLUSION

America's involvement in Vietnam to prevent communism in Southeast Asia led to the birth of the Republic of Vietnam government led by Ngo Dinh Diem. Authoritarian policies and plots to build a long-term pro-American government in South Vietnam, not respecting the terms of consultation for general elections to unify the country stipulated in the Geneva agreement have pushed the Vietnamese people Vietnam entered a new war for the purpose of unifying the country and escaping US intervention. Faced with that context, Southern Vietnamese society is divided into many trends with different views, with some supporting and siding with the government of the Republic of Vietnam, while others siding with the revolutionary forces to fighting against the government of the Republic of Vietnam and there are parts with neutral views, peaceful political struggles to oppose the war, demanding democracy and national unification according to the provisions of the Geneva agreement, Among them, prominent are intellectuals, pupils and students.

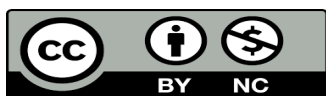
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Although the stance of people with neutral views also fluctuates with the times, whether they continue to fight for peace or just stand aside, they declare that they are not involved in politics,... but in the spirit of love country, the desire for peace and unity, people with neutral views in South Vietnam, especially in intellectuals, have gradually committed themselves to fighting for the goal of national independence and progressive society.

During the period from 1955 to 1960, the activities of intellectual forces with neutral viewpoints aimed to request the US and the government of the Republic of Vietnam stop the implementing policies aimed at dividing the country and impose a dictatorship in South Vietnam although has not created a large and continuous political struggle movement, it has laid the foundation for the strong development and great contributions of secondary forces three in the struggle for national liberation and unification of Vietnam in the later stages.

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