

INTRODUCTION

1. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE TOPIC

As the primary form of struggle, military struggle played the very decisive role in the resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1954). The military struggle of Vietnamese army and people from 1945 to 1954 did contribute much to transforming battle arrangements, grinding down and eliminating the enemies' strength as well as crushing the schemes for aggressive war of French colonialists. Military struggle occurred in a lot of forms, with different scales and levels, under the impacts of various factors such as the balance of power, military strategies of both sides and natural, socioeconomic conditions of each area and region all over the country.

In the resistance against French colonialists (1945 - 1954), Khanh Hoa located in the rear of the enemy. Apart from common features like those of other battlefields in the whole country, military struggle during the national resistance war in Khanh Hoa had its own specific characteristics; the military struggle here happened sooner than that of other provinces in South Central region; from the very first days, the military struggle in Khanh Hoa clearly displayed whole-people art of war - *"the small against the big, the few against the many, the weak against the strong"* and was present throughout the province,... it helped to contain the enemy, advance the failures of French colonial plans including *"quick fight, quick victory"* and *"pacification, encroachment"*; and protect the unoccupied zone in South Central Coast (Quang Nam – Quang Ngai – Binh Dinh – Phu Yen or "Nam – Ngai – Binh – Phu").

The military struggle during the resistance against French colonialists all over the nation in general and in Khanh Hoa in particular has long attracted great interest from both national and foreign scientists. Up to this time, however, there has been no research which deeply examines the military struggle in Khanh Hoa, especially its roles and position in the resistance war against French colonialists in such area. There are still many issues regarding or related to the military struggle in Khanh Hoa that need to be acknowledged and evaluated adequately like directing viewpoints and policies with regard to military struggle of the Party and government; the process of building and developing local armed forces; measures, modes of execution and forms of struggle; characteristics and roles of military struggle in Khanh Hoa in the relationships of the area, region and the whole country ... military struggle in Khanh Hoa had typical difficulties and advantages as well as

the traits that could represent the modes and arts of creating strength in Vietnamese people's war.

For the aforementioned reasons, I decide to conduct a research named "*Military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1954)*" as my doctoral thesis on Vietnamese History.

This research on military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the national resistance against French colonialism has not only scientific values but deep significance in reality as well:

In terms of scientific significance, the research will contribute to clarifying fundamental contents of military struggle activities in Khanh Hoa, a land behind the enemy including a temporarily occupied area, a guerilla area and a guerilla base area during the years of the resistance war against French colonialism ; of modes and arts of building up forces for the resistance war and battle arrangements of local people's war; and of the process of military struggle in Khanh Hoa from 1945 to 1954, with 2 periods including one of 1945-1946 and the other of 1947-1954. On this foundation, the research aims to analyze and elucidate the characteristics and roles of the military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism and draw out some experiential lessons. The thesis also serves as a supplementary source of material regarding the national resistance war against French colonialism in Khanh Hoa, from which a more comprehensive view of the history of this province from 1945 to 1954 can be obtained.

Regarding real significance, the research results can serve as useful reference material for researching, learning and teaching the local history. On the other hand, to a certain extent, the obtained results can be used for reference and employed in the process of building the battle arrangements of local defence and security in Khanh Hoa province currently, contributing to the education regarding patriotic and revolutionary traditions for young generations, especially pupils and students in Khanh Hoa in order to express deep gratitude to the contribution and sacrifice of compatriots and soldiers in Khanh Hoa province, create social consensus and build the bloc of great national unity.

2. SUBJECT AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

2.1. Subject of the research

The process of military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1954), its characteristics, roles and some experiential lessons obtained.

2.2. Scope of the research

- *Regarding space*: Khanh Hoa province from 1945 to 1954.
- *In terms of time*: From October 1945 (when French colonialists started to invade Khanh Hoa, the army and people of this province initiated the resistance war) to August 1954 (when the resistance against French colonialism in Khanh Hoa came to an end). In order to clarify some contents better, however, the thesis also extends the research time scope to the pre-August 1945 period.

- *About content*: the construction, reinforcement and development of resistance war forces, with three kinds of armed forces as the core (regular army, local army, militias and guerillas) in the province; the construction and protection of the revolutionary base for resistance war – the billet of armed forces; the preparation and supply of army ordnance, arms and ammunition, means of war; the developments, results and significance of operations, battles of armed forces in the province; the close coordination of three kinds of armed forces, between army and people, military struggle and political struggle, agitprop in the process of national resistance.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

3.1. Research aims

The research aims to systematically and comprehensively retrace the process of military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism (1945 - 1954). On that foundation, the creative use of military policies by the Communist Party and army and people in Khanh Hoa, which were conformable with the real situations of the province, can be clarified. Simultaneously, the thesis hopes to draw out some useful experiential lessons for the construction of defence and security arrangements in Khanh Hoa currently.

3.2. Research objectives

- Analyze natural, socioeconomic, traditional and historical factors that had effects on military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialists.

- Identify French colonial plots, expedients and schemes of aggressive war against Khanh Hoa; the guidelines on military struggle of

Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Interregional party 5, Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party.

- Systematically retrace the process of military struggle in Khanh Hoa in the periods 1945-1946 and 1947-1954.

- Analyze the characteristics and roles of the military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism; draw out some experiential lessons from real military struggle occurring in Khanh Hoa from 1945 to 1954 to flexibly apply to the current situations of the province.

4. MATERIAL SOURCES AND RESEARCH METHOD

4.1. Sources of material

- Documents of Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Interregional party 5, Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party; writings of President Ho Chi Minh and other leaders of the Party and government during the resistance against French colonialism. Reports, documents... of all levels of government and revolutionary organizations in Khanh Hoa province in the period of 1945 - 1954.

Among these sources of material, special focus is put on the archives collected at Vietnam Ministry of National Defence's Archive, High Command of Military region 5, Archives Department of the Party Central Office, National Library of Vietnam, Vietnam National Archive II, Vietnam National Archive III, Vietnam National Archive IV, Information and Documentation Department of Vietnam Institute of military history, Department of propaganda and training of Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party.

- Domestic and foreign research mentioning the activities of military struggle during the resistance war against French colonialism in Vietnam in general and in Khanh Hoa in particular.

- Writings composed by leaders of the Party, government and army; domestic and foreign studies regarding Vietnamese history in the period of 1945 - 1954; pieces of research investigating the party committee history of Khanh Hoa province and that of cities, districts and towns belonging to the province; doctoral and master's theses on history related to the history of Khanh Hoa during the national resistance against French colonialism.

- Some summary records of seminars, pieces of research published on journals.

- Countryside material on some historical monuments and reminiscences of some witnesses.

4.2. Research method

Marxist historical discourse, Vietnamese Communist Party's viewpoints and Ho Chi Minh's thoughts about Vietnamese revolutionary war are taken as the cornerstone for the study. On such foundation, in the process of research, two main research methods employed are historical method and logical method. Besides, in order to specific problems of the thesis, we also use some concrete research methods such as material collecting and processing (written, countryside, witness interview ...), statistics, analysis, summary, comparison.

5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE THESIS

First, the research is an attempt to systematically retrace the military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism from 1945 to 1954.

Second, the study helps to clarify some characteristics of the military struggle in Khanh Hoa province from 1945 to 1954 in comparison with military struggles in other areas, contributing to the affirmation of military struggle's decisive role towards the victory of the resistance war against French colonialism. In addition, some experiential lessons are expected to be drawn out for reference and applying in the process of planning and executing the guidelines and policies of the Party, Government towards Khanh Hoa, through which the provincial defence and security can be strengthened.

Third, the results of the research are a source of supplementary material regarding the resistance against French colonialism of the army and people in Khanh Hoa in particular, and the national resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1954) in general; at the same time, such results can be used for reference, contributing to the teaching of traditions and researching, teaching local history at schools all over Khanh Hoa province.

6. BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

Aside from Introduction (5 pages), Conclusion (4 pages), References and Appendices, the body of the thesis includes 4 chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Overview of research problems (14 pages)

Chapter 2: Military struggle in Khanh Hoa (1945 - 1946) (43 pages)

Chapter 3: Military struggle in Khanh Hoa (1947 - 1954) (63 pages)

Chapter 4: Characteristics, roles and some experiential lessons (24 pages)

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROBLEMS

1.1. RESEARCH WORK RELATED TO THE THESIS TOPIC

1.1.1. Pieces of research on military struggle during the national resistance against French colonialism (1945 - 1954)

The Military History Research Office of General Political Department (1974), *History of Vietnamese People's Army*, vol. 1, People's Army Publisher, Ha noi. Le Trong Tan (1984), *Winter-Spring War Complexion 1953 - 1954 – One step of creative development in Vietnamese arts of war*, People's Army Publisher, Ha noi. Steering Committee for war summary directly under the Politburo (1996), *Summary of the resistance war against French colonialism – Victory and lessons*, National Politics Publisher, Ha noi. Nguyen Manh Ha (1996), *Political, military policies of French colonialists in Vietnam during the period of 1945 - 1954 and reasons for their failure*. Additionally, there are many articles concerning the activities of military struggle during the resistance against French colonialism.

The aforementioned research work did contribute much to clarifying many significant contents of the resistance against French colonialism such as reasons, developments, the Party's direction, experiential lessons... However, such pieces of research just generally present the activities of military struggle in Khanh Hoa through the process of research on activities of Military Region 5 or through studying revolutionary struggle histories of the provinces in South Central region.

1.1.2. Pieces of research on military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism

The Party's history Research Department of Phu Khanh provincial committee of the Party (1980), *50 years of operation of Phu Khanh provincial committee of Vietnamese Communist Party*, published by the department of propaganda and training of Phu Khanh provincial committee. Military Committee of Khanh Hoa province (1998), *Khanh Hoa provincial armed forces – 30 years of construction, struggle and victory (1945 - 1975)*, published by the Military Committee of Khanh Hoa province. Executive board of Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party (2001), *History of Vietnamese Communist Party's committee in Khanh Hoa province (1930 - 1975)*, published by the department of propaganda and training of Phu Khanh provincial committee. Provincial committee of the Party, People's Council and People's Committee of Khanh Hoa province, High Command of Military Region 5 and Vietnamese Military History Institute (2005), *Nha*

Trang - Khanh Hoa front in South Central region: The early stage of the resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1947), People's Army Publisher, Ha noi... On the whole, the research work above has elucidated the roles of Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party and Military committee of Khanh Hoa province in the process of leading the local masses and armed forces in making the total resistance war against French colonialism, in which military struggle activities did stand out.

All in all, the aforementioned research work of both domestic and foreign authors has mentioned Vietnamese history in the period of 1945 - 1954, in which the causes for the war, military balance of power, arts of war of related sides and the results of the war were analyzed. Thanks to such contribution, some problems related to the context, plots and moves of French colonialists in the aggressive war against Vietnam have been explained.

1.2. MAIN ISSUES INVESTIGATED IN THE THESIS

Given the aims, objectives, subject and scope of the thesis; based on the achievements obtained in research work on military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the national resistance against French colonialism (1945 - 1954), the thesis focuses on investigating the points as follows:

First, clarifying natural, socioeconomic, traditional and historical factors that affected the military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance war against French colonialism along with specific advantages and difficulties.

Second, analyzing invading plots, expedients and schemes of French colonialists towards Khanh Hoa; policies of Vietnamese Communist Party's Central Committee, Interregional Party 5 and Khanh Hoa provincial committee of the Party on the field of military struggle.

Third, clarifying the preparation, building and development of military forces as well as the construction of revolutionary base system in Khanh Hoa province.

Fourth, analyzing and elucidating the developments of military struggle activities, the results and significances of Khanh Hoa army and people's struggling stages during the resistance war against French colonialism (1945 - 1954).

Fifth, identifying the characteristics and roles of military struggle activities in the process of resistance war against French colonialists in Khanh Hoa (1945 - 1954) as well as drawing out some experiential lessons from the activities of military struggle in a "enemy's rear region" (vùng địch hậu).

Chapter 2

MILITARY STRUGGLE IN KHANH HOA (1945 - 1946)

2.1. FACTORS THAT HAD EFFECTS ON MILITARY STRUGGLE IN KHANH HOA DURING THE RESISTANCE AGAINST FRENCH COLONIALISM

2.1.1. Natural and socioeconomic factors

2.1.1.1. Natural factors

The natural factors of Khanh Hoa as a whole were really beneficial to military struggle activities and could meet the requirements for a total war of the whole population. Towards our side, the geographical position and topography of Khanh Hoa province had at once alternate regions of forests, mountains, rural areas, plains, urban areas and coastal areas, islands; especially, all the cities here were encompassed by mountains, with a quite dense system of rivers, which created favorable conditions for sheltering forces and building bases for the resistance war. French colonialists, because of their strength in economic potential, especially in military equipments and means, had certain advantages in employing combat forces, particularly by sea. In certain respects, however, the topography separated by mountains and river system also caused some difficulties in the work of guiding, directing, transporting supplies, especially employing large-scale military campaigns.

2.1.1.2. Socioeconomic factors

Like other regions, after the August Revolution in 1945, Khanh Hoa encountered a lot of difficulties and challenges such as obstinate remnants of feudal regime, low intellectual standard, poor and backward economy and famine as permanent threats towards people's life. The revolutionary government system from provincial level to grassroots level was still young while the standards of cadre, Party members and people could not meet the new requirements of the revolution. Thus, the missions for Party committee and people of Khanh Hoa at that time were quickly consolidating and protecting people's power, with the first steps including stabilizing political situation, strengthening the united bloc of the whole population, building a strong government at various levels, combating illiteracy and famine, improving people's life, actively preparing for struggling in order to protect our homeland.

2.1.2. Patriotic and revolutionary traditions of Khanh Hoa people

Throughout the course of history, Khanh Hoa people always expressed great endurance and fearlessness in the struggle against nature to survive; as well as their unyieldingness and fortitude in the resistance against exploitive ruling forces and aggressors to guard our motherland. It was from such process that Khanh Hoa people's patriotic and revolutionary traditions were developed.

2.2. MILITARY STRUGGLE IN KHANH HOA BEFORE THE DATE OF ALL-COUNTRY RESISTANCE (FROM OCTOBER 1945 TO DECEMBER 1946)

2.2.1. Khanh Hoa after the August Revolution 1945 and French colonial schemes and actions to attack and occupy Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa

2.2.1.1. Situation of Khanh Hoa after the August Revolution 1945

After the August Revolution 1945, like Vietnamese all over the country, Khanh Hoa people from slave condition became citizens of an independent nation, who could really own their destinies. Under the lead of the new government, people in Khanh Hoa province quickly stabilized in every respect and promptly started on constructing a new life, executing 10 policies of Vietminh front, creating a fresh lease of life for the new regime.

2.2.1.2. French colonial schemes and actions to attack and occupy Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa

After occupying the essential positions in Sai Gon-Gia Dinh city, taking control of core arterials and establishing military entrenched fortification, French army gradually escalated the war and expanded the occupied zone. With the support of British army, the staff of French expeditionary forces in Indochina and General Leclerc worked out a strategic plan to “*take advantage of British army's presence to seize control of the entire territory in the south of parallel 16*” [189, p. 2]. In such zone, because of its strategic position, Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa became the first target of French colonialists in their plan of expanding the war to South Central region.

2.2.2. Party's guidelines and actions taken to build battle arrangement for the resistance war

2.2.2.1. Party's guidelines

With a thorough grasp of French colonial schemes and actions in advance, under the direction of the Party's Central Committee, at the end of

September 1945, the Central regional party committee held a military conference presided over by Nguyen Chanh, Chief Commissioner of national defence in South Central region to deliberate what plan to execute in order to deal with French army's war expansion to South Central region. In the conference, a remarkable remark was made, that "the attack of French colonialists on Nha Trang was without doubt a direct threat to the reinforcement routes of national forces from the North and the Middle to the South. Thus, Party's Central Committee entrusted the urgent missions of besieging French enemy in Nha Trang and containing them to Party's executive committee and revolutionary government in the Middle, with Khanh Hoa provincial Party's committee, army and people as direct assignees". The conference also approved some contents including "Ensuring clear traffic in order to reinforce the resistance war in the South; mobilizing the masses against French colonial invaders; appointing military forces from the North and Mid-Central Vietnam to provinces of South Central region for reinforcement; establishing the Military administrative committee of South Central region billeted in Khanh Hoa in order to lead the struggle in such region.

2.2.2.2. Actions taken to build battle arrangements for the resistance

In the new period, the vital missions of Khanh Hoa army and people at that time were nothing but focusing on the construction and consolidation of the People's democratic government at various levels, the promotion of organizations' development and the construction of strong armed forces as stable support for the struggle of the masses; at the same time, the employment of new policies needed to be rapidly executed so as to provide people with pressing interests and encourage the whole population to get good preparation in all respects for the resistance against French colonial invaders.

2.2.3. Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa front (from October 1945 to February 1946)

2.2.3.1. Attacking on occupied positions of French troops in Nha Trang

With the blast of an explosive charge placed in front of railway tunnel gate no. 1 (Ngoc Hiep Ward, Nha Trang) at 3 a.m. on October 23rd 1945, the steering committee of Nha Trang front gave an order for all the local armed forces and Southward march units to attack the positions occupied by the enemy in the entire Nha Trang town. After one day and night of fierce combat with much damage to French troops, in accordance with the guidelines of provincial Party's executive committee and

provincial committee for resistance, the steering committee of Nha Trang front commanded all the armed units to gradually withdraw their troops out of the town, consolidate battle arrangements, build defence lines for battle and leave only a group of police and scouts to continue combatting and eliminating the enemy.

2.2.3.2. Setting up defence lines in order to besiege and contain French army inside Nha Trang town

- Defence line La San - Cho Moi – Bretelles

- Defence line Cay Da - Quan Gieng

2.2.3.3. Withdrawing forces out of Nha Trang, changing the direction of combat

Before the enemy overwhelming power, especially in military equipment and weapons (February 1946), we faced with certain disadvantages; Since French troops had laid a siege to Nha Trang from 3 directions, it was a real lucid, timely and sound guideline to change combatant direction and withdraw our forces from the town to the suburbs and adjacent districts. Here, we had good conditions for reconsolidating armed forces, building people's battle arrangement, executing the total resistance war of the whole population, both deploying resistance and founding country, in order to transform the forces and battle arrangements in an increasingly beneficial way to us. Such guideline was also suitable to the real situations at that time.

2.2.4. Consolidating forces, launching a movement of guerilla war (from February 1946 to December 1946)

In order to take timely lead of the resistance war in new period, on February 3th 1946, Khanh Hoa provincial Party executive committee and Vietminh front of the province held a conference at Dat Set (Dien Khanh district). After the provincial fighting situations were analyzed, the conference put forward struggling directions and missions for the new stage: *“The vital missions now are to stabilize situations, make the resistance war, rearrange the organizational apparatus so that it is conformable with new situations; mobilize the masses, even those in enemy occupied areas, to actively contribute human power and material resources to the resistance; encourage compatriotic soldiers, affirm the determination to fight and to win, and mobilize a movement of guerilla war”*.

Summary of chapter 2:

Before the scheme to expand the war to South Central region of French colonialists, Khanh Hoa army and people, with the traditions of unity and revolution as well as great determination to combat the enemy for national salvation, under the lead and direction of Party's units at various levels, government and local military leaders, initiatively opened fire to attack the enemy, hereby started the resistance war against French colonialism in South Central region. This struggle of Khanh Hoa army and people, which lasted more than one year (from October 1945 to December 1946), was of real great significance. The decision to establish Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa front in order to stop French army's advance was totally conformable to the guidelines of Party's Central Committee. With the direct lead of Party's Central Committee, military struggle in Khanh Hoa in this stage not only succeeded in protecting the essential routes between the North and the South in order to help compatriots all over the country reinforce the resistance in the South but also made significant contribution to the defeat over the strategy "*quick fight, quick victory*" of French colonialists.

Chapter 3

MILITARY STRUGGLE IN KHANH HOA (1947 - 1954)

3.1. DEVELOPING GUERRILLA WAR, GRADUALLY DESTROYING THE “PACIFICATION” POLICY OF FRENCH COLONIALISTS (1947 - 1949)

3.1.1. “Pacification” policy of French colonialists in Khanh Hoa

In Khanh Hoa, after occupying Nha Trang town, district capitals in the province and taking control of strategic traffic routes, French colonialists began to execute the scheme of expanding the scope of occupied areas to the unoccupied zone - Interregion 5 (Nam - Ngai - Binh - Phu). To execute the aforementioned scheme, French colonialists attempted to stabilize the situation in Khanh Hoa and used it as a springboard to attack these provinces. On January 13th 1947, French colonialists mobilized 2 regiments to open a large-scale attack in order to occupy Dai Lanh - Vung Ro region (Van Ninh district).

3.1.2. Deploying battle arrangements for guerilla war, gradually destroying the “pacification” policy of French colonialists

3.1.2.1. Party’s guidelines on the development of guerilla war

Grasping new schemes and actions of French colonialists, in order to foster the total people’s resistance war all over the province, on the 15th and 16th of March 1947, at Hon Lon (Ninh Hoa town), the expanded meeting of Khanh Hoa provincial Party’s executive committee determined to promote military struggle activities and put forward the guideline: *“Shift the resistance war to a new stage, attempt to develop militia, foster guerilla war everywhere, especially in enemy occupied areas, actively resist and smash enemy mopping-up operations, concurrently execute mobile warfare to wipe out a part of enemy forces, depending on specific situations; intensify producing weapons, manufacturing mortars and bazookas to attack enemy military posts; promote agitprop among enemy troops, including French troops, legionnaires and native troops”*, and the immediate task of *“strengthening and developing forces of nonproductive guerillas (du kích thoát ly), militia, creating commando squads; building bases for the resistance war”*.

3.1.2.2. Gradually destroying the “pacification” policy of French colonialists in Khanh Hoa

In order to step by step smash the “pacification” policy of French colonialists, Khanh Hoa army and people made great attempts to execute military struggle activities during the period of 1947 -1949 as follows:

- *Arrange forces for defending and resisting enemy raids on resistance bases.*

- *Lay ambushes for the enemies on the way in order to eliminate their forces.*

- *Attack enemy military posts to destroy French army's siege.*

- *Smash enemy political schemes and economic blockade plan.*

- *Execute Truong Chinh campaign.*

3.2. OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES, CONSOLIDATING AND DEVELOPING RESISTANCE FORCES (1950 - 1952)

3.2.1. French colonial intensification of the “encroachment” policy in Khanh Hoa

In 1950, with new efforts in making war, French colonialists used various methods to strengthen their power in all respects, such as politics, military affairs, economy... On the battlefield of South Central region, French colonialists still kept the initiative and went on with their invading policies towards the occupied territory but of higher levels and with more sophisticated and wicked expedients. On Khanh Hoa front, French colonialists shifted to total warfare with a combination of military, political and economic measures so as to pacify the occupied region and scramble the Reserve with our army. Besides, to consolidate their billets, French colonialists hectically hunted down people for hard labor and building a system of military posts, rummaged everywhere for revolutionary forces, burned houses and committed robberies in order to threaten people and create difficulties, challenges for us.

3.2.2. Overcoming difficulties, consolidating and developing resistance forces

During 3 years (1950 - 1952) of severe combat on the enemy's rear battlefield, Khanh Hoa army and people, under the direction of the Communist Party, heroically fought with a great spirit of sacrifice and gained certain victories. Activities of military struggle in Khanh Hoa also made remarkable progress. The most outstanding point here should be the cooperation between political forces of the masses and local armed forces as well as that between local armed forces and regular forces since such coordination was executed in a more appropriate, close and reasonable manner which was conformable with reality and features of a battlefield in the rear of enemy.

3.3. PROMOTING MILITARY STRUGGLE AND BRINGING VICTORY TO THE RESISTANCE (1953 - 1954)

3.3.1. French colonial attempts to consolidate the occupied region and Party's guidelines

With the support of American imperium, from mid-1953, French colonialists started to execute the Navarre Plan, which aimed to make every attempt to intensify the war in order to find an “exit of honor” by military victories. On Khanh Hoa battlefield, French colonialists kept on fostering the “pacification” policy on the occupied region with greater efforts such as consolidating the apparatus of the puppet government, developing the system of spies, facilitating Protestantism, gathering forces to launch mopping-up operations against the bases of resistance, guerilla regions and attempting to tyrannize over people with systems of military posts and watchtowers.

Thoroughly grasping enemy schemes and actions as well as Party's guidelines, on March 1953 Khanh Hoa provincial Party's executive committee supplied concrete guidance: *“First of all, we need to smash enemy expedients of herding people, gathering rice, causing disagreement between people and armed forces in the province; emulate in intensifying guerilla warfare movement, make every effort to grind down, eliminate enemy forces, reduce their occupied territory and direct the activities of identified armed forces to rural and plan areas”*.

3.3.2. Defeating the system of military posts, watchtowers and mopping-up operations against resistance military bases; cooperating battlefields all over the country to bring victory to the resistance

- *Defeating the system of military posts, watchtowers*
- *Defeating French army's mopping-up operations against resistance bases*
- *Promoting military struggle activities, cooperating all battlegrounds on the whole nation to gain victory for the resistance*

Summary of chapter 3

As a battlefield in the rear of enemy, which was contiguous to Phu Yen unoccupied zone, Khanh Hoa province had to face with fierce raids as enemy attempts to prevent the reinforcement from the unoccupied zone of Interregion 5 to the South. However, with great determination to fight and to win and spirit of self-help for self-improvement, unyielding army and people of Khanh Hoa on the one hand constructed, consolidated and developed resistance forces as well as military bases; on the other hand, they promoted military struggle to reduce and eliminate enemy forces.

Chapter 4

CHARACTERISTICS, ROLES AND EXPERIENTIAL LESSONS

4.1. CHARACTERISTICS

4.1.1. Military struggle front in Khanh Hoa: the “gathering place” for armed forces all over the country right from the first days of resistance against French colonialism

It can be said that in comparison with other provinces in South Central region, military struggle in Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa front received the reinforcement from the whole country much earlier. On such foundation, defence lines were set up in order to besiege, attack and contain French troops right from the first days when they landed on Nha Trang.

4.1.2. Initiative in attacking enemy as the permanent trait throughout military struggle in Khanh Hoa

It was long thought in the world of research that the initiative of Khanh Hoa army and people only manifested itself in the first stage of the resistance. However, in case of deep and systematic investigations into the activities of military struggle during the resistance war against French colonialism in Khanh Hoa, it can be obviously seen that the initiative existed not only in the first stage of national resistances but throughout the whole process as well (1945 - 1954). First of all, the initiative was reflected in early grasp of enemy schemes, considerate preparations in all respects and effective battle arrangements to contain French troops. Concurrently, such initiative was among the essential factors leading to the victory of military struggle. Thanks to the initiative in grasping real situations as well as enemy schemes and expedients, Khanh Hoa provincial Party's executive committee could direct local army and people to employ the preparation for resistance war actively and efficiently.

The sense of initiative also manifested itself in timely besieging attacks and withdrawals to keep our forces intact for the long lasting resistance war. With opportune and rational military attacks, we achieved great success in making the most of military struggle, besieging, containing the enemy as well as reducing and eliminating a considerate number of French troops. On the other hand, when situations changed, military forces in Khanh Hoa initiatively withdrew to preserve

revolutionary strength, forcing French army to divide their forces so as to deal with an extensive people's war.

4.1.3. Local army together with militia and guerillas as primary forces of military struggle in Khanh Hoa

When talking about military struggle, the core role of regular army should be mentioned since only this kind of army can organize large-scale battles with overwhelming arrangements and power over the enemy. Nonetheless, the core force of military struggle in Khanh Hoa was not regular army but local army together with militia and guerillas.

During 9 years of resistance against French colonialism on Khanh Hoa battlefield, despite the support of regular troops (mostly some Southward march units, some detachment units of Zone 6 and some of Interregion 5 afterwards), Khanh Hoa local army and self-defense forces together with militia and guerillas were still the primary forces with core roles during the struggle for guarding the land, protecting people, helping to smash the scheme of expanding the occupied territory to the unoccupied zone of Interregion 5.

4.1.4. Richness and flexibility in military measures and tactics reflected in Khanh Hoa military struggle

The victory of the resistance against French colonial invaders depended not only on the roles of armed forces, military weapons and equipment but on creative, flexible military measures and tactics that were conformable with real situations on the battlefield as well. In the process of military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism 1945 – 1954, the abundance and flexibility of military measures and tactics were obviously exposed.

Thanks to initial combat experience and Party's guidelines for military struggle, in the following years of resistance, Khanh Hoa army and people developed forms of tactics to a higher level and won glorious successes in each battle and operation, from which total victory was achieved.

4.2. ROLES

4.2.1. Helping to contain French troops and protect the unoccupied zone of Nam - Ngai - Binh - Phu

After occupying Sai Gon, French army gathered forces to attack Nha Trang in order to occupy this land and use it as a springboard to attack South Central region. However, they were fiercely contained, attacked and besieged by Khanh Hoa army and people in Nha Trang town. After days of encountering desperate battles on Nha Trang front,

French army got reinforced and temporarily occupied Khanh Hoa. In spite of their pacification and domineering expedients, the military struggle here still operated strongly and enduringly. Thanks to many flexible military tactics, Khanh Hoa military struggle directly stopped, contained the enemy and made lots of difficulties for them, which contributed much to smashing their scheme to attack the unoccupied zone of Nam - Ngai - Binh - Phu.

4.2.2. Reducing, eliminating a part of enemy forces, helping with smashing war schemes of French colonialists

Military struggle always set reducing and eliminating enemy forces as the first goal. Only by this way could we step by step destroy enemy military strategies and war schemes, from which their aggressive war could be beaten.

In Khanh Hoa area, military struggle during the resistance war against French colonial invaders always put forward the aforementioned goal in each battle, each military operation and even in times of resisting enemy mopping-up operations and their expedients to smash our resistance war movement. Especially when the resistance shifted to stage of consolidating forces and developing guerilla warfare (1947 - 1949), Khanh Hoa military struggle continued to be promoted and did succeed in eliminate a lot of enemy forces, contributing to smashing the pacification policy of French colonialists. In April 1947, Ninh Hoa army and people cooperated with Regular Companies of Regiment 80 to hold consecutive raids on contiguous areas as well as on Hon Heo base and Hon Lon base to destroy enemy forces. On April 12th 1947, an ambush attack was laid on Route 21 – the only route for French supply from Nha Trang to the provinces of Central Highlands, with 50 enemy troops disabled. On the evening September 7th, 1947, Battalion 7 of Regiment 80 made a surprise attack on Kho Xanh military post at Van Gia (Van Ninh district), eliminated and injured 90 French soldiers. On the night of 13th April 1948, an attack was launched on Thuong Chanh military post (Hon Khoi peninsula) with all the enemy troops eliminated or captured. On November 12th 1948, with the merit of decimating Phuoc Thuan post, Battalion 360 was rewarded First-class War Medal. After that, the Battalion made another raid on Am Chua post (Dai Dien Trung hamlet) and disabled a company of Eurafican troops on March 27th 1949, etc.

4.2.3. Supporting local people in the struggle for liberation and mastery

Military struggle then was not only for reducing and decimating enemy forces but for helping the masses rise up to regain freedom and liberate the country as well. In other words, military struggle also had a real significant goal of setting people free from enemy invaders' ruling yoke and grip. When armed forces were consolidated, developed in terms of both quality and quantity and battle situations were favorable for us, the chance for defeating the enemy should be higher, which much facilitated the expansion of the unoccupied zone – the rear, or the reduction of the areas behind enemy lines. On the contrary, there were times when the enemy had dominant troop strength, great combat experience and modern weapons but revolutionary armed forces were small in numbers and weak in quality. In those cases, not only the enemy grip was not loosened but also the unoccupied zone – the revolutionary rear could be narrowed.

4.3. SOME EXPERIENTIAL LESSONS

4.3.1. Bringing into play the sense of initiative, self-help for self-improvement, grasping the latest situations, opportunely changing battle arrangements for the resistance war

Right after the General Uprising for seizing power in Khanh Hoa gained its victory, the newly established revolutionary government encountered no end of difficulties and challenges. At that time, Khanh Hoa army and people took the initiative in guarding the government, protecting people, determinedly repressing the provocation from Japanese troops and preparing for the resistance against French colonial invaders. In the context of French army having landed on Nha Trang to start their invasion of South Central region, Khanh Hoa provincial Party's executive committee and people initiatively set up a front to attack and besiege French troops inside the town, hereby timely hindered enemy scheme to occupy Khanh Hoa and use it as a springboard to expand the war to South Central region. It can be said that right from the beginning, Khanh Hoa army and people exposed a great spirit of standing on their own feet without thoughts of much expecting or relying on external forces. When the reinforcement of Southward march units had not reached the place yet, Khanh Hoa army and people did gather all the internal power and local forces to quickly form battle arrangements of containing, hereby reduced military march speed of French army.

When French army got reinforced and made a large-scale raid with two grips in order to rescue Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa army and people initiatively withdrew from defence lines and shifted to guerilla

warfare for long-lasting resistance. Since the situation at that time was much beneficial to French troops, this decision was indeed appropriate and effective. By this way, we could keep our forces intact and avoid unworthy sacrifice and losses.

It can be said that thanks to the sense of initiative, self-help for self-improvement, reinforcement from Central government as well as Interregion and close cooperation with battlefields all over the country, Khanh Hoa army and people won the last victory. This is also the experiential lesson drawn out from the resistance war in this place.

4.3.2. Building people's armed forces conformable with local battlefield conditions as the core of military struggle

In this war for national salvation, the decisive victory could not be obtained without military attacks. Thus, the construction of strong people's armed forces was of great importance. The comprehensive power of local people's war mostly depended on military struggle, in which armed forces were of real significant role. In the process of building armed forces, the province paid much attention on both the construction of military units in province, districts and the building of militia and guerillas as well as resistance armed forces who can combat the enemy right inside their nest.

Building armed forces conformable with real situations, local battlefield conditions as the core of military struggle and concurrently constructing military bases as billets and shelters for armed forces were evidently the keys to the victory of the resistance in general and military struggle in particular.

4.3.3. Closely combining military struggle with political struggle and agitprop

Experiential lessons learnt from reality of the resistance war in Khanh Hoa show that military struggle can only reach its highest efficiency if coordinated with political struggle and agitprop. It is only with such a close connection and cooperation between those respects of struggle that great pressure on the enemy can be created. In the process of combining these "3 directions of attack" (ba mũi giáp công), military struggle should always be considered as the decisive factor. In the first days of French resistance on Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa front, without military struggle, the enemy raid on the unoccupied zone of Nam - Ngai - Binh - Phu would never have been stopped.

Khanh Hoa provincial Party's executive committee appropriately and creatively applied the guidelines and policies of Party's Central

Committee to specific conditions of the province; specifically and timely directed local areas; attached special importance to the construction and development of political forces of the masses and people's armed forces; cleverly used and closely combined two forms of struggle including political struggle and military struggle to defeat the enemy and win the victory; focused on building three kinds of armed forces: regular army, local army and militia and guerillas; mobilized the whole population to fight, formed battle arrangements for people's war...

CONCLUSION

Military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonial invaders (1945 - 1954) was the primary form of struggle with its own characteristics and great contribution to the enrichment military theory, people's war, national salvation and national unity in Vietnamese modern history.

1. Right from the first days of the resistance war, military struggle in Khanh Hoa became a burning and fierce battlefield, a decisive primary form of struggle in the combat against French invaders. Just like other forces throughout the country, Khanh Hoa provincial armed forces were established in people's revolutionary struggle movements because of the requirements of the uprising for seizing power in The August Revolution 1945. People's armed forces and political forces of the masses had such a real close-knit connection, like limbs of a body. On that foundation, military struggle in Khanh Hoa with armed forces as the core was executed continuously during the resistance war against French colonialism from 1945 to 1954, with many participating units and various forms of combat. Military struggle in Khanh Hoa was without doubt a typical example for a people's war in which the whole population took part in the struggle. Further, Khanh Hoa military struggle was carried out on the battle arrangements of guerilla warfare, with the mottos "the small against the big" and "the few against the many". As a part of armed forces' military attacks and of the support for military struggle, local people in rural and urban areas, under the direction of provincial Party's executive committee, through revolutionary organizations of the masses, did execute political struggle, resisted herding and pressing people as well as robbing rice, caused much chaos in enemy rear. Besides, the assistance from political struggle of the masses also

created the great offensive for military struggle and brought into play the comprehensive power of people's war.

As the core factor of military struggle in Khanh Hoa province, the armed forces here developed from few to many, from small to large. In fact, Khanh Hoa province was occupied by the enemy quite early so most of the time it was an enemy's rear region. Thus, the flexible development of armed forces was an unavoidable event. This was also how these forces could exist and develop at that time. Armed forces, from small groups and units operating dispersedly, step by step developed into concentrated units at platoon and company levels that all followed a united plan. At favorable places with enough necessary conditions, the construction went first and the expansion gradually followed. At the beginning, accouterments for the forces of military struggle were mostly rudimentary and home-made weapons. Afterwards, thanks to the reinforcement of Central government and Interregion, such military equipment was much improved in both quality and quantity.

Beside local armed forces, regular army forces at battalion and regiment levels also joined the struggle in Khanh Hoa as military reinforcement by Military District and Higher Command. With good equipment, high mobility and considerable combat abilities, these important forces not only cooperated with local forces to combat the enemy but also executed the mission of assisting local areas in developing militia and guerillas as well as strengthening their fighting abilities. During 9 years of resistance war against French colonialism, military struggle on Khanh Hoa battlefield got the participation of all three kinds of armies including regular army, local army and militia and guerillas.

The contribution of regular army to military struggle also played an important role towards the development of the resistance against French invaders in Khanh Hoa. Regular army was the sheet-anchor for local armed forces. Further, it was the core force with capability to contain and eliminate a large number of enemy forces as well as create favorable conditions for Khanh Hoa province to consolidate, develop forces and initiatively operate the resistance war.

As a result of the requirements of military struggle, local armed forces gradually developed all over the area and took on the primary combatant duty. In the last stage of the resistance, because of the requirements of Interregional battlefield and other national battlegrounds, the regular army here had to be mobile and execute large-scale combats in

various other areas. As a result, they gradually withdrew their troops out of Khanh Hoa province. In such difficult situation, local armed forces played the main and primary role on the provincial military struggle front. In the Winter-Spring strategic offensive 1953-1954, military struggle in Khanh Hoa smashed enemy grip and the “pacification” policy, eliminated a lot of enemy forces, contained them, cooperated with the entire Interregional battlefield to expand the unoccupied territory, contributed much to the common victory and put an end to the resistance war against French colonial invaders with our great success.

2. Military struggle in Khanh Hoa helped with reducing and eliminating enemy forces, destroying enemy military potentials, especially their infrastructure such as traffic system, airports, military posts, seaports, warships, fuel dumps,... military struggle also had a part in expanding people-occupied areas, local free zone and reducing enemy-occupied territory.

Beside the function of a combatant army as the core of military struggle, Khanh Hoa provincial armed forces also executed other duties including assisting in developing local material facilities and encouraging the masses to supplement manpower to military struggle. In order to step by step smash enemy schemes and expedients, especially totally defeat their aggressive war, strong military attacks that could considerably reduce and eliminate enemy forces were indispensable. During the resistance against French colonialism, despite ups and downs, military struggle in Khanh Hoa did manifest its decisive role towards the victory of various operations, battles and the national resistance war.

3. Starting right from the first days when French troops set foot on Khanh Hoa, the provincial military struggle, during the resistance against French colonialism, was always in a see-saw, strained and fierce state with various forms conformable with the reality of battlefield and local potentials. Military struggle in Khanh Hoa made a considerable contribution to the career of national salvation, the protection of the unoccupied zone of Interregion 5 and the victory of the resistance war against French colonialism here. Particularly, the existence of Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa front which besieged French troops in 101 days and nights was of great significance. It not only contributed much to the prevention of French army's attack on South Central region but also created favorable conditions and bought time for the army and people in South Central region as well as compatriots all over the country to get better prepared for the long-lasting resistance war. In other words, military

struggle here had a part in containing the enemy, “sharing fire” with common battlefields of the whole nation, especially directly hindering French troops’ attempt to attack and occupy the free zone of South Central region.

4. Besides the common traits of Vietnamese military struggle in Ho Chi Minh era, Khanh Hoa provincial military struggle had its own specific characteristics. The reality of military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French invaders provided a lot of pieces of precious experience including: initiatively grasping real situations to launch a war; bringing into play the spirit of self-help for self-improvement, concurrently taking advantage of the reinforcement from the entire nation; employing comprehensive power of local people’s war, taking armed forces as the core factor, creating military power to defeat the enemy; building people’s armed forces conformable with local conditions and situations.

The achievements of and experiential lessons drawn from military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonialism were brought into play, inherited and effectively applied not only in the resistance war against the American Empire for national salvation but in the work of country building and guarding currently.

This piece of research on military struggle in Khanh Hoa during the resistance against French colonial invaders is an attempt to analyze the characteristics, identify the roles and draw out some experiential lessons from living reality of the struggle. The thesis not only provides a more systematic view on the nine-year-stage (1945 - 1954) which Khanh Hoa army and people did experience but also helps with the orientation for the work of building and developing local armed forces in Khanh Hoa province in particular and the whole Vietnam in general in the context of innovation and international integration.