

Best of the Best? Recruitment and Work of Polish Personnel in the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Vietnam in the years 1954-1973.

The aim of this project is to examine the quality of personnel sent from Poland to work in the International Commission of Supervision and Control in Vietnam (ICSC), established by the Geneva Conference on July 21, 1954 and functioning until January 1973, when it was replaced by another international body.

Therefore, the project will examine both the recruitment process for people sent to South East Asia and their functioning as part of the Polish Delegation in ICSC in Vietnam. The changes that have taken place over the years, caused by internal changes in the PRL, limiting the statutory activities of the Commission, and the increased involvement of the United States in Vietnam, will also be analyzed.

In the initial period of the existence of the ICSC, the emphasis on quality was put especially by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs supervising the delegation, which saw in the prestigious international body both the means to build the Polish position in the world and the argument in internal competition of the PRL. From the second half of the 1960s, the emphasis on the quality is taken by the Polish Army, interested in acquiring the best information from the observations of Americans fighting in Vietnam. At the same time, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to lose interest after the failure of Polish diplomatic initiatives to end the conflict in Indochina.

As part of the project, research will be carried out in numerous archives both in Poland and abroad, and an attempt will be made to reach the still living members of the Polish Delegation in ICSC in Vietnam.

The following project aims to explore and present an relatively little known, or even forgotten episode of the Polish presence in Vietnam. Meanwhile, the PRL emissaries stayed in Southeast Asia from the defeat of the French in 1954 to the infamous fall of Saigon in 1975, sometimes playing a significant role in the local political jigsaw.

Focusing on the people that were sent to the Polish Delegation in Vietnam will allow not only to present the functioning of this specific body in a remote region of the world, but also to show the changing priorities of the PRL authorities, and friction between different groups of influence in the communist party ruling Poland during that period. An example of this is the mutual rivalry between the civil and military divisions of the delegation, which was to some extent a reflection of the relations between individual ministries in the country.

The examination of the personnel sent from Poland to Vietnam will also allow us to enrich our knowledge of the then elite of the People's Republic of Poland and the changes that have occurred in this aspect over the 19 years of activity of the ICSC in Vietnam. Only people who were perceived as absolutely loyal to the communist authorities were sent to work in the Commission, although, as the preliminary query of archival material show, sometimes it was more of a wish than the actual practice.