

**TRẦN TIỄN SUM**  
**THE STREAM OF VIETNAM HISTORY**  
**1856-1996**



**English Translation by TRẦN TIỄN KHANH**



## Preface

History is a series of real events based on facts. The primary task of a historian is looking for new documents to reconstruct events to approximate the truth, to learn and explain the root and the implications of events that require objective knowledge of history. The historian must extensively scrutinize, copy and narrate exactly like writing a novel or report full of real facts to help the readers read, meditate and learn in a free spirit without being constrained. The Vietnamese people have the right to know what their leaders have done, and have acted in historic times of the country. The Northern Government, north of the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, promoted the sacrifices to fight for national independence and self-determination. Leaders of the South propagandized the protection of freedom and democracy. After the war in 1975, people in the North and the South widely recognized that national independence, self-determination, freedom, and democracy are just labels used in an international ideological conflict. After the rhetoric distortions, accusations, defamation, and indoctrination that took advantage of the patriotism of all sides in the past being exposed in time and space will be beneficial to the knowledge and history lessons if synthesized reasoning and broad concepts can be applied.

Starting from researching and evaluating the event of Tứ Nguyệt Tam Vương (Three Emperors in Four Months) where the First Regent, one of the ancestors of the family, was massacred to find out the links with the thoughts of the son-in-law Nguyễn Lộ Trạch. The latter offered real judgments of the country's situation and innovative ideas in the early anti-French transition. The noted contemporary Hoàng Xuân Hãn wrote: ‘ Throughout his time as a mandarin, Trần Tiễn Thành submitted several petitions for modernizing the country and a flexible policy against the French to preserve our sovereignty. Reading these petitions respect him more.’ The conservative feudal regime of the Nguyễn dynasty lost the country but the modernization ideas influenced many Confucian scholars and patriots in the first three decades of the twentieth century and lasted until the recent reunification and independence of Vietnam. From these times, milestones were selected to write this documentary through separate sections and chapters on the struggles against the colonial French, the American capitalists, and the Chinese Communist empire.

This historical work is divided into three volumes:

- Volume I: The failures of the modernization faction and the abuses of powers by the war faction that led to the loss of independence despite anti-French revolts.
- Volume II: From the thoughts of human rights to the war for the nation's independence that led to the division of Vietnam and the emigration of 1954 during the Cold War between the West and the Communists.
- Volume III: The Vietnamization of the war for the US withdrawal after the Paris Accord that led to the invasion and occupation of the South by the North, the country reunification in 1975, the war effects, and the boat people fleeing the Communists.

After the French raided Đà Nẵng in 1847 for threatening exploration purposes, they officially contacted in 1855 by diplomatic note demanding freedom of religion. However, the Huế court was still passive and had no plans to change. Mgr. Pellerin escaped from Huế in 1856 and returned to France in 1857 to campaign for invading Vietnam. The French invasion began in 1858 and a few mandarins and Confucian scholars suggested some reforms and courageously gave up Confucianist feudalism to accept the ideology of nationalism and human rights of the West. But the Emperors and the court with two opposing factions, the reconciliation pro-French faction (Dục Đức, Hiệp Hòa ...) and the confrontation faction seeking Chinese help (Tôn Thất Thuyết, Nguyễn Văn Tường ...) did not see the urgency for change, and the country was lost in 1885. From the comments of Emperor Tự Đức, “these words are too high” about sending students to the West to the diplomatic efforts of Trần Tiễn Thành-Nguyễn Lộ Trạch via the “uncle-nephew” relationship of Phan Châu Trinh-Nguyễn Tất Thành, the anti-French fight has opened to new and practical ways. Since then, progressive scholars and young students took responsibility for national salvation starting from 1905 with the Đông Du (Go East) Movement or the non-violent Duy Tân (New Modernization) Movement. At the same time, Liên Thành Company mobilized and started a program of national civilization, educational reform, and trade expansion. These reform movements involved the whole population of the Central Provinces that expanded over the whole country, leading to the Anti-tax Movement of 1908. These were the initial steps of revolutionary movements based on traditional patriotism and the sacrifices of all social classes, especially the peasants in the revolt against the French.

With the help of the Communist Third International (Comintern), Ho Chi Minh and other descendants of the feudal officials established the VN Communist party in 1930. They had taken advantage of the label of national liberation by the Việt Minh and the patriotism of the people. Because the Russian-Sino communism thrived after World II, the US and its allies had a policy of preventing it and created a cold war with North Korea and Vietnam as two hotspots. The non-Communist Vietnam was formed under the influence of France and USA to help the free world against Communism and the Vietnamese people killed each other because of these ideologies. After the Japanese army surrendered in 1945, the unification of the country of Vietnam was completely controlled by the Russian-Chinese-American powers. It had just begun after all factions joined together and then killed each other through the national-communist battle line with foreign guns and bullets and Vietnamese gunmen with the arrangement of the foreign powers forcing a temporary division of the country in 1954. After helping the South to fight for freedom in a defensive position, the Americans changed strategies from “Americanization of the war” to “Vietnamization of the war”. Under the influence of the anti-war movement, the Americans withdrew from the South and arranged a “decent interval” in 1972 with Russia and China. This let the Northern army officially seize the South to achieve the country reunification and independence in 1975 under a totalitarian regime. This raises many question marks in history to generations who did not live through this long ideological war.

Through two wars against the French (colonial) and the US (cowboys against the Communists), the North Communists (poor peasants against capitalists) enlisted the support of local people in France and the US who opposed the wars. The Communist Party of Vietnam applied the same strategy of fighting hard, persistently, long-term resistance, sacrificed all even a few generations of young people, used all tricks and inhuman against innocent civilians. They made French and American soldiers feel “dirty”, “humiliated” and “depressed” (Generals Navarre and Abrams).

The consequences of the victories in both wars were that the French colonial regime ended in 1954 and forced the US to withdraw its troops because of the "no-win policy" in 1973. The Communist Party of Vietnam won thanks to the policy of "swinging" between the two comrades, Russia and China, in the "fighting for Russia-China", especially for the expansionist policy of the "northern empire" so that the Vietnamese people would be sacrificed. Hồ Chí Minh criticized: "If you have killed less ..." and Lê Duẩn: "...have to pay too high of a price " Even the Soviet Union, according to Professor Sergey Radchenko, considered this victory pyrrhic.

April 30, 1975, for the Vietnamese who love freedom, was a "Day of National Hatred", for the Communists it was a "Glorious Day", but for Americans condemned as imperialists it was a "Day of Regret" like the French in 1954. Today, when Vietnam integrates into the world, it has to play a familiar game between the US and China to maintain the totalitarian one-party regime, but it needs the "capitalist" ideology to develop its economy and "socialization".

Born, raised, and educated completely in Huế, from elementary school to medical school, and settled in the US after the 1975 event, our soul was always about Hue with the same concern: descendants of the next generations gradually lose the Vietnamese language skills in their temporary lands. These descendants in the US and elsewhere will not read Vietnamese books anymore, but even if they can, they will only read "new Vietnamese" books following the biases after 1975 (by the winning side) or the trends of American political relations (the losing side). Then, with time, the Southern humanistic culture and history (the forgotten side) will be changed according to the one-way Communist/socialist truths. Where are the real truths of the war events in a backward and conservative Vietnam but with much patriotism against foreign ideologies, bitterly fighting and killing each other. The divided country suffered many sacrifices with two "great votes in humanity": the 1954 emigration and the boat people of the 1980s after the 1975 evacuation against the "disaster of communism" when the wars ended and the country reunited and the family of the author was a witness.

In Germany, after the fall of Communism, West Germany became the dominant force with generosity, harmony, and unity to build a strong, prosperous country. Hence this English translation is essential for our future descendants to understand clearly why Vietnamese immigrants had left the country and followed in the footsteps of the Jews present in many parts of the world. It is necessary to educate the public about Communism through the experiences of Vietnamese refugees in asylum countries such as the US.

We want to bring to the readers a lot of multi-faceted information, including opposing views when looking at history due to the synthesis of facts, characters in the form of stories, commentaries, and perspectives outside the containment of current political and religious beliefs. We must carefully consider the actual events that happened due to the evidence recorded in genealogical archives or memoirs of all historical figures, and not based on articles propagating of "dogmatic" political purposes. We have to seriously and honestly present several points of view of the war so that the readers can evaluate for themselves. That is the whole purpose of the author.

If the above goal can be achieved, then this work is useful. Due to the overarching topic, it is impossible to have all the documents and information. Therefore, this research work may have many shortcomings and we hope the cognoscenti will provide the supplements and/or corrections.

Sum Tien Tran, MD  
California, 2020 Covid-19 season

# THE STREAM OF VIETNAM HISTORY 1856-1996

## Table of Contents

Preface	3
<b>VOLUME I: Failure of the Modernization &amp; War Factions 1862-1885</b>	
<b>Part 1. Vietnam at the End of 19<sup>th</sup> Century – The Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Part 2. Modernization to Help the Emperor Keep the Country 1862-1883</b>	<b>31</b>
Phạm Phú Thứ - Đặng Huy Trứ	39
Nguyễn Tư Giản – Trần Đình Túc	46
Nguyễn Thông – Bùi Viện	49
Nguyễn Trường Tộ - Nguyễn Lộ Trạch	53
<b>Part 3. Court Upheavals by the War Faction 1883-1885</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Chapter 1. "Three Emperors in Four Months" 1883</b>	<b>82</b>
Section.1.a. Questions of Royal Will	82
Section.1.b. Royal Palace Coup: Dục Đức	83
Section.1.c. Death of the Fallen Emperor: Hiệp Hòa	84
Section.1.d. Secrets of Royal Palace: Kiến Phúc	93
Section.1.e. Establishment of Anti-French Emperor: Hàm Nghi	96
<b>Chapter 2. Fall of the Capital 1885. Loss of Independence</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Chapter 3. Extraneous History of the Capital</b>	<b>104</b>
Hạnh Thục Ca – Chant of Fallen Ca	104
Chant of The Fall of the Capital	106
<b>Chapter 4. Historical Figures</b>	<b>106</b>
Section 4.a. Queen Dowager Từ Dũ	106
Emperor Tự Đức	110
Section 4.b. Emperors in Troubled Times	118
Dục Đức – Hiệp Hòa - Kiến Phúc	119
Hàm Nghi - Đông Khánh	130
Thành Thái – Duy Tân	136

Section 4.c. The Three Regents	145
Injustice suffered by Trần Tiễn Thành (1813-1883)	145
Power Abuses by Tôn Thất Thuyết & Nguyễn Văn Tường	158
<b>Part 4. Armed Resistance Movement Against the French 1885-1896</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Chapter 5. Hàm Nghi Resistance 1885-1888</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>Chapter 6. Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) Movement 1885-1896</b>	<b>170</b>
Đinh Công Tráng - Nguyễn Thiện Thuật	171
Phan Đình Phùng - Hoàng Hoa Thám	173

## **VOLUME II: Struggle for & Regain Independence 1905-1975**

<b>Part 5. The Ideological Path 1905-1945</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>Chapter 7. "Commentary on the World Affairs" and Liên Thành Company</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>Chapter 8. Nationalist-Democratic Thinking in the Early 20th Century</b>	<b>183</b>
Section 8.a. Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940)	184
Section 8.b. Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926)	187
Section 8.c. The 1908 Tax Resistance Movement	196
Section 8.d. Nguyễn Tất Thành and Paris Group	199
Section 8.e. Two Groups of Revolutionary Ideologies	206
<b>Part 6. Vietnam in the 20th Century</b>	<b>208</b>
<b>Chapter 9. Religious Influences</b>	<b>208</b>
Section 9.a Confucianism	209
Section 9.b Christianity	216
Section 9.c Cao Đài	222
Section 9.d Hòa Hảo Buddhism	224
Section 9.e Buddhism	227
<b>Chapter 10. Southeast Asian Wars</b>	<b>229</b>
Section 10.a. The Third International	229
Section 10.b. Cold War	230
Section 10.c. America's Domino Theory	231



Section 10.d. The Indochina Battlefield (1945-1989)	233
<b>Part 7. Struggle for Independence 1945-1975</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Chapter 11. Nationalist - Communist War</b>	<b>235</b>
Section 11.a. Nguyễn Ái Quốc and Communism	235
Section 11.b. Communist Party of Vietnam - Việt Minh (communist)	238
Section 11.c. Involvement of US Intelligence OSS	242
Section 11.d. Việt Minh (Nationalist) - Việt Quốc - Việt Cách	245
Section 11.e. Japan Granted Independence to Emperor Bảo Đại. Trần Trọng Kim	248
<b>Chapter 12. Democratic Republic of Vietnam</b>	<b>251</b>
Section 12a. The August Revolution	251
Section 12.b. Resistance Coalition Government	257
<b>Chapter 13. France's Plot to Re-colonize</b>	<b>259</b>
Section 13.a. The Việt Minh Nationwide Resistance	260
Section 13.b. Anti-Communist Solution: Bảo Đại	262
<b>Chapter 14. Vietnam - France Battle with Việt Minh 1946-1955</b>	<b>263</b>
Section 14.a. Communist Region – Nationalist Region	263
Section 14.b. Financed by the US	265
Section 14.c. Điện Biên Campaign	266
<b>Part 8. The 17th Parallel (Hiền Lương River) divided North and South</b>	<b>270</b>
<b>Chapter 15. Geneva Agreement 1954. Migration</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Chapter 16. North: Democratic Republic of Vietnam 1954-1976</b>	<b>273</b>
Section 16.a. Land Reforms (1953–1956)	273
Section 16b. Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm (1955-1958)	275
Section 16c. Logistics for the Southern Battlefield	278
<b>Chapter 17. The South: Republic of Vietnam 1956-1975</b>	<b>285</b>
Section 17a. Referendum. Republic Background	286
Section 17b. Personalism. National Revolutionary Movement	287
Section 17c. The policy of Denouncing and Destroying the Communists	287

Section 17d. Southern Liberation Front 1960-1977	289
Section 17e. Buddhist Movements in 1963 and 1966	293
Section 17f. "Americanization" of the War: 1964-1973	303
Section 17g. Tết Offensive 1968	310
<b>Part 9. Anti-War Movement in the US</b>	<b>320</b>
John Kerry – Jane Fonda	325
Thích Nhất Hạnh – Martin Luther King	326
Student Movement	328
<b>VOLUME III: North-South Reunification in 1976</b>	
<b>Part 10. Fighting and Negotiating 1968-1972</b>	<b>331</b>
<b>Chapter 18. Vietnamization of the War</b>	<b>332</b>
Section 18a. Cambodia 1970	332
Section 18b. Lower Laos 1971	335
Section 18c. Shanghai Communiqué of February 28, 1972	337
Section 18d. The North Invasion of Summer 1972	338
<b>Chapter 19. Backgrounds of the Paris Peace Talks</b>	<b>346</b>
Section 19a. Republic of South Vietnam/VC 1969-1976	346
Section 19b. The Third Force	348
Section 19c. Paris Agreement 1973	352
Section 19d. Decent Interval	359
<b>Part 11. Socialist Republic of Vietnam</b>	<b>362</b>
<b>Chapter 20. General Offensive Campaign of Spring 1975</b>	<b>367</b>
<b>Chapter 21. The Forced Death of South Vietnam</b>	<b>374</b>
<b>Chapter 22. Unified Vietnam: Communist Party of Vietnam</b>	<b>381</b>
Section 22a. 1976 General Election	384
Section 22b. Destroying Southern Culture	385

Section 22c. Re-education Camps	396
<b>Chapter 23. The Ages of Subsidies and Renovation</b>	<b>404</b>
Subsidy Period	409
Money Exchanges Impoverished the Society	409
Subsidized Society and Cultural Life	410
Stamps during Subsidized Period	412
Hộ Khẩu Regime	413
Subsidized Economy	414
Economic Reforms since 1986	417
<b>Chapter 24. Overseas Vietnamese Refugees</b>	<b>422</b>
1975 Evacuation	422
Crossing the East Sea 1975-1995	425
Orderly Departure Program (ODP) 1979-1991	431
Repatriation CPA 1988-1997	434
<b>Chapter 25. Border and Island Wars</b>	<b>436</b>
Southwest War 1977-1991	437
Northern War 1979	438
Hoàng Sa (Paracel) Naval Battle 1974	439
Trường Sa (Spratly) Naval Battle 1988	440
Disputes over the Nine-dash (Cow's Tongue) Line	441
<b>Chapter 26. Movements for Democracy and Human Rights</b>	<b>445</b>
Individuals and Organizations in Vietnam	447
Overseas Organizations	452
<b>Part 12. Understanding Vietnam Constitutions thru Different Regimes</b>	<b>456</b>
<b>Chapter 27. DRV 1946 and 1959</b>	<b>457</b>
1946 Constitution	457
1959 Constitution	458
<b>Chapter 28. Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1980, 1992 and 2013</b>	<b>459</b>
1980 Constitution	459
1992 Constitution	460

2013 Constitution	461
<b>Chapter 29. Republic of Vietnam 1956 and 1967</b>	<b>461</b>
1956 Constitution	462
1967 Constitution	463
<b>Chapter 30. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948</b>	<b>465</b>
<b>Part 13. Questions Worth Asking for the 20th Century</b>	<b>467</b>
The "Fake" of the US-Russia-China in the Vietnam War	476
USA	478
Soviet Union	482
China	486
<b>Part 14: Summary instead of Conclusions</b>	<b>496</b>
<b>Part 15: Appendix</b>	<b>526</b>
Letter of Emperor Tự Đức to Trần Tiên Thành on his 70 <sup>th</sup> Birthday	526
References	529

# **THE STREAM OF VIETNAM HISTORY**

**1856-1996**

Volume I

## **Failures of the Modernization and War Factions 1855-1885**



**English Translation by Trần Tiến Khanh**

Vietnamese history always evolves with many lessons through the love of the nation and its people, patriotism, and the determination to bring the country up to the progress of humanity. The opening of the land to build up the country, with blood flowing and head falling, patriotic poems, protecting the sovereignty of every inch of land by many male and female heroes, creating security and prosperity of the country and the peaceful settlement of the Vietnamese people, are all praised and widely circulated in history books. But there are also some people, even intellectuals, who wanted to enrich themselves by rebelling against the people, harming the country, collaborating with the enemies, helping outsiders, and becoming traitors. And there are victims of injustice because of political expediency, personal conflicts, groups with moral or belief prejudices. They accepted losses like great masters of the time.

In decades from the late 19th century to the end of the 20th century, beginning with the patriotic movement helping the Emperor's fight against the French invaders, shifting from the new trend of self-reliance in the country, through the movement of reform and nonviolent struggle to the armed revolution that gained independence, the country had experienced many turns of history. Vietnam's modernization from Confucian studies to western studies, from fidelity to the Emperor to the patriotic nationalism, from the imperial powers to the civil rights, from the loss of the country to its independence and reunification have gone through many arduous periods of the historic whirlwind. Many patriots over the generations responded to the call of the country, including noble sacrifices with the ultimate goal of defeating the French colonialists to regain independence, fought against the US to reunify, but fell into the Chinese orbit.

Reform is an indispensable need in the history of a nation, aiming to bring the country to its development, out of poverty, backwardness, dependence, even loss of independence and slavery. The Vietnamese history has well documented many reform efforts: Khúc Hạo (907), Hồ Quý Ly (the end of the 14th century - early 15th century), Lê Thánh Tông (late 15th century), Quang Trung - Nguyễn Huệ (late 18th century), Minh Mạng (the first half of the 19th century) ... with different success and governed by many reasons. However, the general purpose of these reforms is to affirm the sense of self-respect, the longevity of the nation, the hope of moving the country forward to the same world progress to maintain independence and self-determination. Two centuries ago, before the danger of expansion and invasion of colonial capitalism from Europe in search of raw materials, labor and consumption markets, Asian countries have very different reactions. Recent attempts of modernization under the Tự Đức reign were associated with the reformers Nguyễn Trường Tộ with 58 petitions and Nguyễn Lộ Trạch with only 3 petitions, who were encouraged by Trần Tiễn Thành, the head of the Tự Đức Court. The latter who shared their ideas was unjustly

accused of being friendly to the French. The reformers had little influence on the court mandarins but strong influence on contemporary intellectuals and for the next three decades, they created a way to save the country through opposing political ideologies.

The Nguyễn Dynasty (1802-1945) assumed the responsibility of losing the country but the entire population through the new educated class incited the peasants and workers with fervent patriotism and, together, they sacrificed themselves to create an independent nation before a powerful colonial empire.

Through the trend of national self-determination of the United Nations after World War II (1939-1945) the colonial countries were granted their independence and freedom one after another following the heroic revolts of the ruled peoples: the Philippines in 1946, India in 1947, Burma in 1948, Indonesia in 1949, Malaysia in 1957, Singapore in 1959, Algeria in 1962... but Vietnam had to pay in blood to regain independence in 1975.

## **Part 1. Vietnam at the End of 19<sup>th</sup> Century – The Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Before the expansion of Western colonialism, Southeast Asia became the place where the British and French colonial wars took place. By 1800, Britain had completely conquered the surrounding area of Penang on the Malay peninsula. From 1851 the independence of Siam in this period was mainly due to the hostility and competition between England and France that created a fulcrum in favor of Siam. On the other hand, in 1859, France captured Cochinchina (South Vietnam), making this area a colony. By 1863, France had occupied Cambodia that became a protectorate. The conquest of Indochina by France was completed in 1885. By 1886, Britain occupied the whole of Burma.

Emperor Gia Long started dealing with the French to get their help to fight the Tây Sơn. After ascending the throne in 1802, he adopted Confucianism as the national foundation and the Chinese state as a model for social building. Confucian concepts did not create stability and development, but they only held back the country, making it unstable and unable to unite all forces, every time there is a foreign crisis or threat. In that Confucian society, the structure is formed in a strict hierarchy: ranking from high to low are scholars, peasants, workers, and merchants. But later on, the descendant Emperors changed their policies, forbade Christianity, and did not allow foreigners to trade.

Continuing the Gia Long legacy, though considered to be a more intelligent Emperor, Minh Mạng continued the foreign policy of closing to the world that his father left behind. In addition to some reforms aimed at consolidating the feudal government, Minh Mạng did not change the policy towards the West, despite the changing times. Not only did he not use them, he also tried to render ineffective the French officers who used to work during Gia Long

reign. With an increasing number of ships of foreign traders who came to ask for more commercial opening, Minh Mạng resolutely refused just out of fear of their interference in the affairs of the court. After the defeat of China in the Opium War by the British and other Western countries, the Emperor was even more afraid of the "barbarians" and kept a distance from them. Although in 1840, Minh Mạng sent some delegations abroad but his foreign policy had not changed. These delegations were not sent for establishing diplomatic relations or trade expansion, but mainly to learn about the abilities and plans of the West. During the reigns of Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức, the foreign policy of Nguyễn Dynasty still did not change in the direction of openness and became even more rigid.

Although Buddhism predates Christianity 5-6 hundred years ago, the Western world did not know much about the Buddha and the Western Emperors were very much narrow-minded about "non-believers". Threats of great powers from the West made the Nguyễn court more aware of the dangers from most Christian missionaries. Facing the risk of losing the country and the blatant infringement of the sovereignty by the French colonialists, from the very beginning, the Nguyễn Dynasty had to be more vigilant in relations with France. It enforced the policy of closure and seclusion, port closure, trade restrictions, and limited foreign contact. These actions demonstrated the Court's limited knowledge of world affairs and regional situations, its ability to judge and evaluate the enemy as well as its inadequate behavior in international relations.

From the perception that official or trade relations with the Western countries are likely to lead to moral decline, undermining the Confucian values, directly affecting prestige, power, and the existence of the court. Hence, the Emperors of the Nguyễn Dynasty expressed their disapproval of relations. In addition, blatant activities of missionaries such as illegally entering the territory, supporting some anti-imperial activities in the process of spreading Christianity made the Nguyễn court more cautious and wary of relations with the West. Emperor Tự Đức even issued directives to ban Christianity, restricted clergy activities, causing tension in the Vietnam-France relationship, creating an excuse for the French to push for rapid intervention in Vietnam.

In short, the responses of the Nguyễn Dynasty to commercial expansion and military forces of France and Western countries are passive, fearful, suspicious, lacking self-confidence, and ineffective. Instead of having to learn, approach, study the other side, promote internally the strength of the apparatus, mobilize and gather social forces, the Nguyễn court has sought to avoid, limit communication, and implement the policy of seclusion. The Nguyễn Dynasty since taking power in Vietnam has thoroughly implemented the policy of "encouraging agriculture while limiting commerce".

Agricultural extension measures such as reclamation and irrigation helped agriculture recovery and development more than before. The total area of agricultural land has increased



from 3 million acres in 1820 to 4.2 million in 1847. But the Vietnamese economy under the Nguyễn Dynasty was mainly self-sufficient, backward, and poor. In both domestic and foreign trade, the Nguyễn strictly adheres to a total monopoly. Trade and transport of rice and salt - two items considered critically important – are strictly under state exclusive management. Anyone who violates will be severely punished. This policy has inhibited the development of productive forces. Regarding foreign trade, the Nguyễn also imposed a monopoly, restricting trade with foreign countries. Any trade encountered many troublesome procedures, high tax rates, and corruption of mandarins. Handicrafts play no significant role in the economy, hardly any progress compared to the previous period.

In addition, the Nguyễn Dynasty was met with people's resistance that supported the restoration of the Lê dynasty. The tough policy of the Nguyễn Dynasty through the mandarin apparatus was ready to suppress any resistance, even the slightest, that led to the political instability of the country. During this period there were up to 234 uprisings of the classes. Most notably were the uprisings of Tạ Văn Phụng (Lê Duy Minh) in 1861, impersonating the Lê dynasty to reclaim the throne and causing troubles in the country.

Ascending to the throne in 1847 at the age of 19 with absolute authority, Emperor Tự Đức felt guilty about being unable to have an heir when he was still young, and the forced death of his older brother (Hồng Bảo) with different parents because of a dispute for the throne. The Emperor's physical strength was weak and he was always sick. By nature, he was shy, quiet, self-judging, often hesitant, and undecided. From an early age, his father, Emperor Thiệu Trị, saw these psychological symptoms in Tự Đức and had given him the booklets "Psychological Treatment" and "Good Directions" to study. Intelligent, well-learned in Confucianism, good at poetry, and very filial to his mother, the Emperor often obeyed the advice "should seek peace with the French" by Queen Mother Từ Dũ.

With the country fighting both foreign aggression and internal rebellions, the court must use the policy "sometimes at war sometimes at peace" with the hope that the French would get tired and withdrew. To keep the nation's independence, it had to give up land but did not use the borrowed time to renovate. When Tự Đức ascended to the throne in 1847, the court still ruled according to Confucian style. The court did not have any countermeasures against the West; in contrast, it adopted measures banning Christianity and trade with the West that are more drastic than before. Most of the Tự Đức mandarins were educated in Confucianism and did not keep up with modern scientific and technical advances. Moreover, Đại Nam was a closed state, so the court had very little information about the outside world.

They just perceived the situation hundreds of years before the pre-industrial West while the West has outstripped Đại Nam in terms of industry and technology.



Emperor Tự Đức (1829-1883)



Queen Mother Từ Dũ (1810-1902)

In 1847, French Navy Captain Augustin Lapierre commanded a submarine flotilla at the Chinese-Indian naval base, and Rigault de Genouilly led two warships that arrived in Đà Nẵng port for testing the Court reaction and threatening to sink the Vietnamese fleet. They demanded that Emperor Thiệu Trị ensured security for the missionaries and the right to religious freedom. At first, Emperor Thiệu Trị released the missionaries under arrest to avoid unnecessary conflicts but consecutively issued prohibitions. When Emperor Tự Đức first took the throne in the year 1847, there was a throne dispute with the eldest prince, Hồng Bảo, and the Emperor and the Huế court believed that the French missionaries and the Catholics were behind Hồng Bảo, intensifying the situation.

In fact, at that time France was planning to launch an expedition against South Vietnam and Korea. On August 21, 1852, Alphonse de Bourboulon, the French envoy in Shanghai, sent the French foreign ministry a request letter for stronger action, such as the use of force against Vietnam and Korea because these governments were suppressing Christianity. Under Napoleon III's rule, France had a policy of overseas expansion and was looking for an excuse to invade Asia. In December 1855, France gave the role of the supreme representative to special envoy Montigny, French Consul General in Shanghai, then sent a mission under him to Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Montigny entrusted Father Fontaine, a missionary who had been active for a long time in Vietnam, with bringing a letter to the Huế court, and Montigny personally went to Cambodia and Thailand. In the letter to the Huế court, the French wanted to negotiate with Vietnam.

On September 16, 1856, the ship Catinat of the Montigny mission together with the priest Fontaine had arrived in Danang. Montigny's letter to the Huế court was sent to and refused by the Huế Court. The French felt insulted by the Vietnamese behavior against the envoys of the French emperor and bombarded the fortresses in Đà Nẵng on September 25 and 26, 1856. When the ship Catinat of the Montigny mission arrived in Đà Nẵng (September 16, 1856), Bishop Pellerin secretly contacted the French. With the Montigny mission, Bishop

Pellerin found more hope for religious freedom and the possibility of French intervention in Vietnam. Two months later, when the *Capricieuse* ship of the Montigny mission arrived in Đà Nẵng around mid-November 1856, Pellerin quietly left Huế to hide on the ship. Finally, on January 23, 1857, Special envoy Montigny began negotiations with the Vietnamese side, but no result. After the failed negotiations, Bishop Pellerin went to Hồng Kong with the Montigny mission. There, he received a letter from Bishop Retord who said after the Montigny mission left Vietnam, the persecution had become more severe. He realized that it would be difficult to go back to Vietnam. Moreover, there were several who advised Pellerin to return to France to present to the French Emperor Napoleon III about the situation of prohibition in Vietnam. Thus, in the end, Bishop Pellerin decided to return to France.

In addition to sending the Montigny mission to Vietnam to negotiate, on April 22, 1857, France established the Commission of Cochinchina (southern Vietnam) with the mandate of research and development of a strategy of invasion. During the meeting on May 16, 1857, Bishop Pellerin expressed that it would be right to conquer or protect that land by France. Pellerin said that, in addition to the rights under the Treaty of Versailles (1787), France could require Vietnam to compensate for their failure to enforce the terms of the treaty, the killing of the missionaries and Christians, and the damages to the Montigny mission, etc... Bishop Pellerin also expressed the opinion that patronage over the Vietnamese Emperor would be appropriate. Especially, he advocated immediately after arriving in Vietnam, France would have to capture the Emperor. He also added that when attacked Vietnam, the French would surely receive active help from the faithful and scholars trained by missionaries. In addition, Bishop Pellerin mentioned the commercial benefits. He explained that due to the gentle climate and fertile soil in Vietnam, there are many rivers and canals, so the sources of food were abundant and of good quality. Those were the reasons for conquering Vietnam, and he explained more about the benefits of exporting and importing the products. He also noted the need to replace the current tyrannical dynasty in Vietnam with another family capable of harmony with the French.

From the beginning of May 1857, Bishop Pellerin appealed to the French people to support the campaign against the Vietnamese killing of clergy and converts. Due to the influence of Empress Eugénie, Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873) had to reconsider the treaty of Versailles that was signed in 1787 between Pigneau de Béhaine, representing Nguyễn Ánh (Emperor Gia Long), and Montmorin, representing Louis XVI, to "legalize" the use of troops to invade Vietnam. With the recommendations of Cardinal Bonnechose, Bishop Pellerin had a direct audience with Napoleon III in Biarritz. The Emperor promised to take effective action and commanded Bishop Pellerin to file a petition directly to the Emperor, *"Please allow me to speak with him about the new converts and the French missionaries still living in Annam kingdom. Right now, their blood is flowing and their situation is more tragic even after the French exploration mission. As of now, if no one intervenes, I think Christianity will be destroyed in these lands. The regions are ready to*

*receive the gifts of Christianity as well as our civilization*". In July 1857, Napoleon III decided to intervene in Vietnam by force due to the pressure to find markets and bases in the Far East, especially in southern China, by French capitalist financiers influenced by colonial imperialism. It was a race to win markets between France and other capitalist countries in the Far East, especially Great Britain.

The battle of Đà Nẵng (1858–1859) or the Đà Nẵng attack by the French-Spanish coalition was the opening battle for the Vietnam-France War of 1858–1884 in Vietnamese history. The French-Spanish coalition occupied the port Danang with relative ease and no major resistance on the first day, September 2, 1858. After that, the French-Spanish coalition awaited the support of the Vietnamese army of Catholics in Đà Nẵng. Before that, the French missionaries had tacitly informed Vice-Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, the commander of the French fleet, that there would be 10,000 Vietnamese troops supporting the French attack. Bishop Pellerin also promised that many more lay Catholics would come to cooperate with the French army. But contrary to the promises of both missionaries neither the Vietnamese Catholic army nor the converts appeared. While the French-Spanish coalition was stopped in Đà Nẵng, Bishop Pellerin advocated fighting towards Huế to depose Emperor Tự Đức. But due to disagreement between Vice Admiral Rigault de Genouilly and Bishop Pellerin. Hence, in the end, in February 1859, Bishop Pellerin left the fleet of Rigault de Genouilly and traveled to Hong Kong. Later, he never had a chance to go back to Vietnam again. In February 1859, the France – Spain coalition invaded Gia Định. Then, in March 1862, three provinces in the Southeastern region - Biên Hòa, Bà Rịa, and Vĩnh Long - were occupied by the French, respectively.



Emperor Napoleon III

Queen Eugenie

The French conspiracy to invade Vietnam was clear, though it was not until 1858 before the French started their conquest. It was 11 years between the two attacks by the French colonialists, but the surprise was the Nguyễn court did not use this period to prepare any specific countermeasures to stop that invasion. Because the French colonialists found the confusion, concerns, weaknesses, and conflicts within the court, they decided to act in a more decisive manner. After taking over three Eastern provinces of Cochinchina and no significant

reaction from the Nguyễn Dynasty, the French colonialists gradually expanded their conquest to the surrounding areas.

The majority of the mandarin class was bound by the Confucian ideology and the Emperor-subject relationship, so their interests were closely linked with court interests and very conservative. This class, though educated, had power and economic status, but it did not play the role of driving force in social progress and development. Vietnamese peasants were also bound by Confucian teachings that were controlled by local customs and recorded in the village codes (convention). The autocratic bureaucracy and the village institutions were the main causes making Vietnamese society backward and stagnant.

The great mandarins Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ returned from France in 1863 and launched reforms to keep up with the advancement of Western civilization. This policy was supported by Minister of Military Affairs Trần Tiễn Thành, a trusted mandarin of Emperor Tự Đức for more than 20 years. Together, this trio of high officials formed a group of mandarins who recognized the backwardness of all aspects of the country and worked for the same goal of strengthening the country to fight against the French. This effort was named by historian Đào Duy Anh (1904-1988) **the Modernization faction**. Trần Tiễn Thành, the top mandarin of the Court after the Nhâm Tuất 1862 Treaty, was aware of the invasion and decimation of a weak China by Western countries, so he led the Renovation faction that was based on self-reliance and did not rely on China anymore. Trần Tiễn Thành was directly working, discussing, exchanging face-to-face, accepting to support the progressive scholars in two consecutive decades, the most outstanding one was the Catholic convert **Nguyễn Trường Tộ from 1861 to 1871** and scholar **Nguyễn Lộ Trạch from 1872 to 1882** who had submitted to the Emperor and the Privy Council their petitions and plans to modernize the country and become strong enough to resist the French. Therefore, Regent Trần Tiễn Thành, under the Tự Đức-Dục Đức-Hiệp Hòa reigns, was accused as pro-French as Emperor Tự Đức had said: "*Mouths of the mundane world are wordy. It's really scary*". **Nevertheless, influences of reformed ideas of Trần Tiễn Thành-Nguyễn Lộ Trạch lasted until the early decades of the twentieth century from Trương Gia Mô - Nguyễn Thượng Hiền to Phan Bội Châu - Phan Châu Trinh and Nguyễn Tất Thành.**

After occupying the southern provinces with the Peace Treaty of Nhâm Tuất dated June 5, 1862, the French began to pay attention to the North with expeditions to the Red River to find travel roads to Yunnan, China. Due to obstacles in the expedition and illegal trade of Jean Dupuis with Yunnan (1872) together with the presence of the Vietnamese-Chinese coalition, the French temporarily invaded Hanoi for the first time in 1873 and signed the Treaty of Giáp Tuất 1874 to open the Red River. From here started the Franco-Sino dispute over Tonkin (North Vietnam) where 20,000 Chinese troops were present at the request of Emperor Tự Đức since 1869 to help suppress the Ngô Côn rebellion (Heavenly Kingdom).

The tragic death in Hanoi of Nguyễn Tri Phương (1806-1873) and the fighting situation there made the Emperor pessimistic and passive. The Emperor felt lonely with the relentless fear of France's ambitions through policies becoming more and more stringent, provocations of the French government in Paris and the colonial government in Saigon as well as the urges of French clergy because of the difficulties of the missionaries and bad treatment of the converts. Emperor Tự Đức blamed himself through the essay "Self-Satire" in 1876, "*so much so that heaven will blame from above, the people resent from under, outside the foreigners are angry, inside there is no good plan. Only worry about any coming problem, but there is no good solution*". Through these quite sincere self-criticisms, the Emperor was clearly incapable of fulfilling his duties in a difficult period of the nation's history.

Since the 1874 treaty was not enforced by the Huế court and the Black Flags operations interfered with the French trade and, at the same time, the movement "Defeat The French and Kill the Catholics" caused bloody scenes, the French invaded Hanoi for the second time in 1882 to protect the French overseas citizens and the lay Catholics. They also scrambled for resources (mines) with China. With the situation moving quickly and many urgencies requiring serious effort, Trần Tiễn Thành, 70 years old, was allowed by the Emperor to temporarily convalesce from sickness. Reacting to disadvantageous war defeats and peace negotiations, court mandarins had to choose one of two obvious groups: **the confrontation or war faction** advocated military confrontation directly against the French, killing the Catholics and at the same time asking for help from China, contrary to **the reconciliation or peace faction** with most of the royal family who wanted to cooperate or negotiate with the French to preserve the throne and family line.

One of the reasons for the military's decline was financial. Military weapons and new equipment were almost absent. Weapons included only swords and guns of the 1730 era. Used in the anti-Tây Sơn period they were weak, without great destructive power, and at short range, while French weapons were of the new 1880 era that had a devastatingly powerful and longer range. The military was equipped with obsolete weapons: 50 soldiers had 5 guns and only practiced firing 6 bullets each year. Weapons were also poorly maintained. As for sailors, there was no new steamboat and the navy could not even afford to protect the coast against the sea pirates. Military teaching did not focus on modern Western books but was based on the manuals of Trần Hưng Đạo (1228-1300) of the Trần dynasty. The lives of the soldiers were not given adequate attention, with the reduction in food through corruption and, hence, their fighting spirit was low.

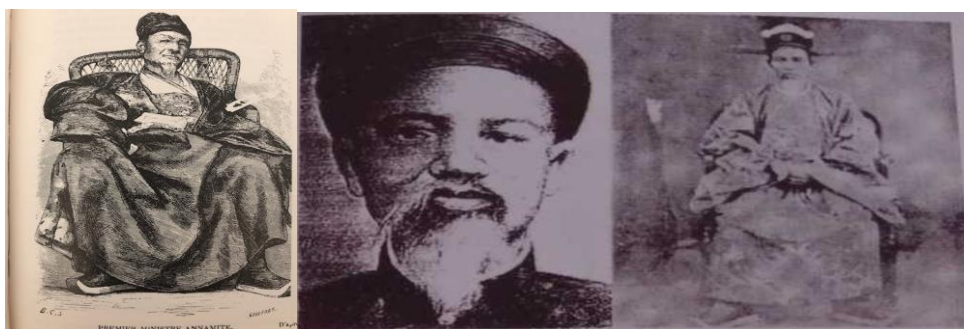
During his last years on the throne, Emperor Tự Đức paid special attention to Tôn Thất Thuyết, a general related to the Emperor (5th branch), but they rarely met. In 1881, Thuyết returned to Huế and apologized to the Emperor because of his previous arguments. He was forgiven by the Emperor with instructions: "*You must study and learn more to become a good human*". Both Emperor Tự Đức was sick and Trần Tiễn Thành was convalescing, so Thuyết,

43 years old, took over the position of Military Minister and Chief General in February 1882 and since June 1882 he also joined the Privy Council (Cơ Mật Viện), because there was no better general with the Emperor's surname for the time being due to the changing situation quickly in the north and the imperial capital of Huế needed to be protected. Thuyết was a battlefield general who returned to the court and had the opportunity to assume the military power but Thuyết had shown more and more his militaristic nature and his ambitions for authority were beyond the reach of the imperial court when he set up his army of personal bodyguards (Phân Nghĩa paramilitary) to execute his violent orders to consolidate his authority and kill Catholics. In the last two years of the Tự Đức reign, two co-regents Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết held all powers during the illness of Emperor Tự Đức that became more and more serious, and at the same time, they eliminated the influence of Trần Tiễn Thành from the court.

In April 1882, Hanoi fell after 6 hours of fighting and Governor Hoàng Diệu (1829-1882) committed suicide at Võ Miếu Temple. Negotiations took place in Huế and Hanoi for the return of Hanoi. But France wanted to delay the negotiations with China in Paris and Beijing to have enough time to send more reinforcements from France. The Emperor's illness became more and more serious, and the medicines began to be ineffective. The court had to send someone to find an Oriental medical doctor in China. In August 1882 (NBVNC, book 6) the dignitaries of the Privy Council Trần Tiễn Thành, Nguyễn Văn Tường, Phạm Thận Duật, Đoàn Văn Bình, and Tôn Thất Thuyết submitted an appeal: *"Since taking the throne up to now, you have to worry inside, worry outside, by difficult current events. With many difficulties, His Majesty was uneasy, accumulating worries in many a day. His Majesty is over 50 years old, as the ancients said half a life. After your working hard for a long time and lately there are many more Privy Council activities, we discussed together and started to worry. For the past two to three months, Your Majesty has not been as bright as before, the medicines of the Court doctor are still slow to see their effect. Fortunes of the world today are like that and all countries are like that as not bringing our power to be able to resolve that great fortune. We beg His Majesty to relax and to calm down or hold Court every 5-3 days, or travel to relax. If His Majesty is not worried, precious medicines will follow. His Majesty will get better and stronger than before, then congratulatory words will make us happy. It will be a blessing for the nation and a blessing for the people. We sincerely hope so"*.

Emperor Tự Đức was heartbroken watching the country gradually losing sovereignty, his authority limited day by day, the society divided because of religious division and the scholars stayed away. He was getting sicker because *"we can't fight or make peace or maintain the status quo"*. Most of the Emperor's close mandarins were gone like Trương Đăng Quế (1793-1865), Phan Thanh Giản (1796-1867), Đoàn Thọ (? -1871), Nguyễn Tri Phương (1800-1873) and Hoàng Diệu (1829-1882). After 36 years under the Tự Đức reign, only Trần Tiễn Thành belonged to the old class and most existing mandarins were from a new

generation in the last two years of his reign. In Huế, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết held all powers. In the North, there were Hoàng Kế Viêm (1820-1909), Nguyễn Hữu Độ (1813-1888) and Phan Đình Bình (1831-1888). Meanwhile, the illness of Emperor Tự Đức got more and more serious, and the influence of Trần Tiễn Thành also decreased because of old age, frail health, and asking for retirement. In September 1882, the Privy Council members again offered the petition: *"Recently, we see that His Majesty becomes ill because of anxiety. The medical treatment has not been effective, seriously we worry but do not know what to do. We think that in recent years there are too many events, His Majesty must worry a lot and suffer, for a long time, pent-up pain. If His Majesty's spirit and feelings are not well as the medical book said, the cure may be too late. We read again the Han classics, seeing Chinese Emperor Quang Vũ one day eating in the temple and fainted on the porch. His mandarins advised the Emperor to visit Chưong Lăng and he had recovered because anxiety is cured when meeting the wind. We saw His Majesty previously fainted and became very tired. We think because of anxiety, so we discuss with each other and suggest His Majesty travel outside. We just want His Majesty to get better, our words are a little fanciful and disrespectful, and we worry about our great cause"*.



Three Regents: Trần Tiễn Thành

Tôn Thất Thuyết

Nguyễn Văn Tường

Working hard, the lung sickness of Emperor Tự Đức got more and more serious. The Emperor approved the request of Tôn Thất Thuyết to ask China for help while Trần Tiễn Thành again tried to prevent it. This made Thuyết very angry and he became impolite at Court. Receiving the official note of Emperor Tự Đức for help on July 29, 1882 (NXT, p.272), the Qing army from the Luỡng Quảng provinces (Quangxi and Quangdong) began to cross the border from August to October 1882 to fight with France, with the ambition of occupying Tonkin. Negotiations between Paris and Beijing led to the temporary treaty of Tianjin on December 20, 1882, dividing North Vietnam into two regions: uplands belonging to China, and the deltas to France. When rumors about this split spread among the people, Emperor Tự Đức decreed that: *"The Chinese do not commit such unethical act"*.

Disbelief or ignorance of this Franco-Chinese conspiracy as well as a lack of information about world affairs, in 1882 the Emperor sent envoy Phạm Thân Duật (1825-1885) to go to China asking for help. He did not know that China was in serious trouble with Western powers and Japan. Just eight months before his passing, when writing the Letter of



Longevity Wish dated November 20, 1882 (pl) to Trần Tiễn Thành, Emperor Tự Đức expressed his feelings to those of the same mind: **“our land was gradually lost to foreign invaders, but efforts to modernize the country were unfinished”**. The renovation efforts were abolished and the progressive scholars were silent because of the violence of the war faction. The emperor also wisely saw the prophecy: *"Then who will prevail and who will not?"*.

In March 1883, France decided to unilaterally abolish the Provisional Treaty of Tianjin and proceeded to occupy Hòn Gay and Nam Định. The Qing army under the command of Lý Hồng Chương (1823-1901) increased reinforcements crossing the border in the name of helping the Vietnamese against France. Franco-Vietnamese relations became extremely tense. In early April 1883, French diplomatic mission under Pierre Paul Rheinart evacuated from Huế to Saigon but the French had about 500 soldiers remaining and waiting for reinforcements from the north that were advancing to Thuận An port. In May, Colonel Henri Laurent Rivière (1827-1883), commanding the French expeditionary force in Tonkin, was killed in battle due to ambush. The French government immediately decided to send one more marine division and a Naval fleet under the command of Major General Courbet (1827-1885). It also established the protectorate of Tonkin led by civil commissioner Harmand (1845-1956). At the end of June, Vietnamese Consul Nguyễn Thành Ý (1820-1897) in Saigon was expelled back to Huế. Huế was in the atmosphere of war, with the Vietnamese side preparing an army of 20,000 to defend the imperial city of Huế. It was led by Tôn Thất Thuyết, the Minister of Military Affairs and Great Commander of Coastal Defense of Huế Capital.

Emperor Tự Đức, who had been sick a few months earlier, made a difficult will: he must decide to choose between Prince Ứng Chân (Dục Đức) at 31 years old or Prince Ứng Đăng (later Emperor Kiến Phúc) at 14 years old. Ứng Đăng and his adoptive mother Học Phi served the Emperor every day and were loved by him, while the adoptive mother of Ứng Chân was reprimanded. Through his own experience, the Emperor was reluctant to choose the eldest son but left comments detrimental to the new emperor. (DNTL, t8, p.575). In June 1883, *“by Edict: I am the second child of the first wife of the previous Emperor; thanks to heaven and earth, my father gave me succession; Emperor of Vietnam for 36 years, I have fear every day, often afraid of not being able to do the job; I am weak, thin, not very talented; I made many mistakes and I hope to change them. I was worrying for a long time, and become very tired. The year before, I had a cough, in April this year, the illness suddenly grew worse and I am taking medicine to cure with daily increased dosage”*. DNTL said: Before April the Emperor was a bit weak and the illness would gradually go away. He was hard at work, reviewed and approved all petitions as before. He turned out to be very ill, and the medicines by the royal doctors were ineffective. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of June in year Nhâm Tuất, he asked for the Privy Council members Trần Tiễn Thành, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết. The Emperor was in the palace and signed the last will for the eldest Prince to succeed the throne.

On July 19, 1883, Tự Đức summoned some high mandarins to witness the signing of the will that passed the throne to Prince Ứng Chân and at the same time conferred upon Tôn Thất Thuyết as the Third Regent after Trần Tiễn Thành and Nguyễn Văn Tường to help Ứng Chân succeeding the throne. On the same day July 19, 1883 (i.e., lunar day 16th June Quý Mùi) Emperor Tự Đức passed away, at the age of 54 years old.

After Emperor Tự Đức passed, the Nguyễn Dynasty fell into chaos. Within 4 months (from July to November 1883), the two men Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết enthroned and dethroned three Emperors:

- Emperor Dục Đức (Ứng Chân), 31 years old, born in 1853 and the eldest adopted son of Emperor Tự Đức, was Emperor for three days, from July 19 to 23, 1883;
- Emperor Hiệp Hòa (Hồng Dật), 36 years old, born in 1847, the youngest brother of Emperor Tự Đức, was Emperor for four months from July 30, 1883, to November 29, 1883;
- Emperor Kiến Phúc (Ứng Đăng), 14 years old, born in 1869 and the youngest child of Emperor Tự Đức, was Emperor for 6 months from November 30, 1883, to July 31, 1884.

According to historian Yoshiharu Tsuboi, the selection by Emperor Tự Đức of Dục Đức to ascend the throne became the source of a series of upheavals in the Huế court. Two regents, who held real powers, had their own choices as Emperor: Thuyết liked Hồng Dật (Hiệp Hòa) and Tường preferred Ứng Đăng (Kiến Phúc). Nguyễn Văn Tường had a son who was married to Ứng Đăng's sister, so he wanted Ứng Đăng to become Emperor to increase his influence. Following this failure, Nguyễn Văn Tường expressed dissatisfaction and cooperated with Tôn Thất Thuyết to depose Dục Đức. But after removing Dục Đức, Tôn Thất Thuyết did not choose Ứng Đăng who was preferred by Nguyễn Văn Tường. Instead, he chose Hồng Dật (Emperor Hiệp Hòa) to ascend the throne. Therefore, after Hiệp Hòa was forced to die by poison, Nguyễn Văn Tường was quick to recommend Ứng Đăng but the latter also died suddenly. Thereafter, Tường was known as “loạn thần tặc tử ” (disloyal mandarin and rebellious subject).

This was the first step leading to the turmoil inside and outside the Huế court: the serious division seriously affected national solidarity in the leadership ranks with violent enthronement and dethronement of four consecutive Emperors in two years, killing three Emperors, a Regent, 40 royal family members and Catholics everywhere. These acts created widespread terror to justify the sole patriotism of the militaristic faction. The vast majority of the masses were indifferent to the country's misfortunes and the scholars were tired of imperial turmoil, so they stayed away from the court and several mandarins took retirement. **The violence of Regent Thuyết and the political intrigues of Regent Tường created deep divisions among leaders that could not be mended. After the passing of Emperor Tự**

**Đức, this was the main reason why Đại Nam (Annam) lost its sovereignty and independence.**

Tragedies in the royal palace, e.g., the event "Three Emperors in Four Months" led to the protectorate under the Harmand Treaty of Quý Mùi on August 25, 1883, and the colonial rule under the Patenôtre Treaty of Giáp Thân on June 6, 1884. Reactions to fight or make peace among mandarins and scholars before the country situation differed by ideology and war strategies, sometimes quiet sometimes open, since the French invasion in 1858. But by 1883, the modernization faction was suppressed and the court was divided into two opposing political factions: the peace faction relied on France and the war faction trusted China. This has led to bloody conflicts, leaving many lessons and questions for history. Meanwhile, the military situation got worse in Tonkin, with Hanoi-Hải Phòng captured, long after the French had taken the South (Cochinchina).

Taking advantage of this situation, the French colonialists launched an attack on August 18, 1883, at Thuận An port near Huế under the command of Major General Courbet. The Court army under Minister of Military Affairs Tôn Thất Thuyết surrendered unconditionally. At that time, after the Harmand Treaty, the French had built the Residence Palace (Tòa Khâm) in the imperial capital of Huế, south of the Hương (Perfume) River. Distressed before troubled circumstances, an unknown Confucianist used the names of the two Regents Thuyết and Tường to write a paraphrase of the turmoil still recited to this day:

*A river "Huong" by two countries "Vietnam-France" is difficult to talk,  
Four months, three Emperors is a bad omen.*

There was also a sarcastic chant parodying historical figures at the time of the "Three Emperors in Four Months" event and the fall of the capital city when Emperor Hàm Nghi had to run away for Tôn Thất Thuyết to avoid the crime of losing the country. According to Phan Khôi (1887-1959), it was published in the newspaper Tràng An Huế on August 6, 1935:

*Annam has four heroes  
Tường is immoral, Viêm lying, Khiêm crazy, Thuyết stupid.*

In just two years, the war faction had taken full power to dispose of four Emperors and to face directly the French, despite being weak and lacking the support of the entire people and military. It urgently appealed to the Chinese that was weakening (three times: Phạm Thận Duật in 1882, Nguyễn Quang Bích in 1885 and Tôn Thất Thuyết himself in 1887). After the 1883 Quý Mùi Treaty that French forced the Huế court to sign, the foreign relation between the Nguyễn Dynasty and the Qing Dynasty was ended. These events put the nation in a sea of fire through the failure of the coup on May 23, Ất Dậu (July 5, 1885) when the

imperial capital of Huế fell and the sovereignty of the country was completely lost to the French colonialists. This event began 100 years of domination and aroused the Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) movement which was strong and majestic, but lacking in unity, coordination, and hope.

The Patenôtre Giáp Thân Treaty (1884) was signed when the scholars went from hope about Tự Đức to the point of disappointment by him. Between 1883-1884 the French Công Sứ (Resident) and officials began to be assigned to the provinces and districts of Tonkin to control the mandarins. The reactions of the scholars were diverse. Some had cooperated with France to ease the people's suffering like Tôn Thọ Tường (1825-1877) who openly justified their attitude. Some others were determined to not cooperate like Nguyễn Đình Chiểu (1822-1888) and Phan Văn Trị (1830-1910). Others retired and stayed in hiding like Nguyễn Khuyến (1835-1909). Others served as mandarins, not with the French but the Huế Court like Dương Khuê (1839-1902) and Chu Mạnh Trinh (1862-1905).

Many scholars began to abandon the notion of loyalty to the Emperor in search of newer strategies to liberate the nation, regain independence and unity for the homeland with innovations "abandon Asia and adopt Europe" through the petitions "simultaneous reform and fighting against the French" that needed to borrow time through reconciliation. The Nguyễn was responsible for not safeguarding the country before the colonial rule in 1885. The reformist strategies of the Tự Đức reign and Hàm Nghi's royal movement had failed. Due to their anti-French stance, Emperors Hàm Nghi, Thành Thái and Duy Tân, the three patriotic



Hàm Nghi-Thành Thái -Duy Tân

Emperors, were exiled abroad. The puppet Emperors were Đồng Khánh, Khải Định, and Bảo Đại during the French rule in Vietnamese history. But most Vietnamese people were patriotic and recognized a sense of duty to improve the society, the military, the economy to mark **the renewal of people's thinking at the end of the nineteenth century that changed from monarchy to democracy, from royal authority to people's**

**rights.**

Those were also the first steps of national salvation by patriotic younger generations to stand up and take the initiative in protecting the country and its independence, forming the foundation for a democracy. Vietnamese feudalism along with the Confucian ideology became more and more helpless against foreign aggression. Against that backdrop, a number of typical thinkers, from Phạm Phú Thứ, Đặng Huy Trứ, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch ... to Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Nguyễn An Ninh ... had taken a political ideological transformation of great historical significance. From criticizing the feudal ideology, they proposed thoughts for modernization in the late nineteenth century and later, initiated the idea of democracy in the early twentieth century and created a great influence on Vietnamese society.

The radical reaction of progressive scholars to the stalemate and helplessness of Confucianism and mandarins demanded changes to the status of the entire economy that was in the hands of the French and the overseas Chinese while the natives were immature, ignorant, and illiterate with an embryonic bourgeoisie still controlled by the French. At that time, the main industries and trade in Indochina were dominated by French capitalists and overseas Chinese. Liên Thành Company belonged to Liên Thành Association, Phan Thiết and chose to produce and trade in fish sauce. It was a small business, not yet in the hands of foreign capitalists, and aimed to practice modernization with three indispensable elements: education, politics, and economics. In addition to fish sauce, Liên Thành was also involved in the field of hotel services and trading of traditional herbs and fabrics before 1922. In 1907, Đức Thanh school was run by Nguyễn Quý Anh (a younger brother of Nguyễn Trọng Lợi) with expenses paid by Liên Thành Company. **The Liên Thành leaders could be considered a connection between the generations of Confucian scholars and modern intellectuals: the 1862 generation of traditional Confucians with Nguyễn Thông; the 1907 generation of modern Confucians with Phan Châu Trinh, Trần Quý Cáp, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng and other followers such as Nguyễn Trọng Lợi, Nguyễn Quý Anh, Hồ Tá Bang; and in the end, the 1925 generation of French-trained intellectuals like Hồ Tá Khanh and Nguyễn Minh Duệ.**

It can be seen that the participants of the country's modernization movement in the second half of the nineteenth century in Vietnam were quite diverse and continuously appearing since the French colonialists opened fire to invade (1858) until the whole country fell into the hands of the enemy (1885). They were in all parts of the country, even in the imperial capital of Huế. They could be Catholics or people of other faiths. They could just be an ordinary educated citizen or a Confucian who had passed the exam and dismissed from the court of Huế. The proposed reforms covered all fields: from economics, politics, military, defense, law, education, culture, science, technology, geography, and society. Generally, the emergence of the country's reform trend in this period showed it was not the product of previous requirements but a "remedy" of an endangered period of national history at the end of the nineteenth century. But the proposed reforms were sporadic and heavily influenced by outside events without touching the internal infrastructure. It did not address the basic problem of the era which were two major contradictions of Vietnamese society at that time, between the people and the invading colonialists and between the peasants and feudal landlords.

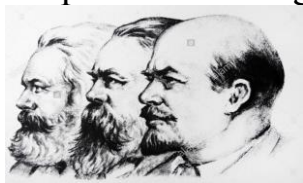
Facing the risk of losing independence, the Vietnamese reformers at that time could only grasp the model of externally-developed societies and apply it to our country. Few people thought that it was necessary to have social support as a basis so that the reform programs could be implemented successfully. There was an urgent need to innovate to save

the country, and when the country lost its independence, the modernization efforts also ended and failure was inevitable.

Let's look at the history of neighboring countries during this period. Japan applied a policy of closure to the world in 1620 out of fear of Christianity, but it was soon modernized in 1866-1869 by three Modernization masters (Ishin no Sanketsu): Ōkubo Toshimichi (1830-1878), Saigō Takamori (1828-1877) and Kido Takayoshi (1833-1877). They followed the reforms and militarism of thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) after the Emperor Minh Trị (Meiji, 1852-1912), who was just crowned at the age of 15, opened the doors to welcome the world civilization and sent students to study abroad to bring home knowledge to renovate the country. Japan adopted a new constitution and in 1889 established a parliament to abolish feudalism and became a powerful country.

Since 1851, Siam (Thailand) opened wide relations with the West, so it was able to maintain its independence. China became wise after its defeat in the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, began to expand relations, and introduced Western culture and technology. Although it had to cede land to maintain its sovereignty, it succeeded in not becoming a victim of colonization. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese court, which was long influenced by China, made many mistakes resulting in the loss of independence.

Although the national modernization movement had failed, its participants and ideological innovations still had a certain meaning to the causes of saving the country and saving people later. Nguyễn Ái Quốc had sown the seeds of a Marxist-Leninist society and succeeded in changing the political ideology of the 1930s of the twentieth century. So, it can be said that the political ideology at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was an important change in ideology that converged into revolutionary parties: from the emergence of innovative thinking within the framework of feudalism to democratic ideology with private ownership and close to the Marxist-Leninist socialist system.



K Marx F Engels V Lenin

The anti-French movements, in turn, passed through many forms from individuals to factions: the reformists to help the Emperor preserve the country, the armed resistance at the end of the nineteenth-early twentieth century, peaceful non-violence, revived national culture, and armed violent revolutionary parties that led to a temporary division of the country in 1954 when the French expeditionary force had to be withdrawn to end the colonization.

Foreign influences through political, religious, cultural, economic ideology and the military upset the traditional society, family, and personal morality. Just like Phan Châu Trinh said before: "**only replace the horse riders**" when fighting against the French imperialism but leaving many other powers (Japan, the US, the Soviet Union, China) that dominated with

individual or group interests to the successful revolutionary wars "against the French, against the US and pro-China" to regain independence, autonomy and reunification in 1975 through autocratic party rule under the card "people's society" until today but "the price is too high" (Lê Duẩn). It was easier to fight against the French than fighting against the Chinese enemy, when the French went to Tonkin to replace the Chinese to disarm the Japanese army. President Hồ Chí Minh also spoke before the 1946 National Assembly: "*Do you already forget history? If the Chinese Chang army remained, they would stay for thousands of years!*" (Indochina War, Wikipedia). That means that it was better to accept 15,000 French troops instead of nearly 200,000 Chinese men stationed north of the 16th parallel.

In the research of history, especially the 1883-1885 period under the Tự Đức reign, there were too many political biases and incorrect interpretations of events due to the loss of main historical documents by chaos and the dishonesty of documents in France. Even the Đại Nam Thực Lục - Fourth and Fifth Century (Veritable Records of Vietnam) were also affected by the French Resident-Superior (Khâm Sứ) and the reformist movement against the French was ignored. Further, because of political needs, the thought of fighting the enemy to save the country was always appreciated and encouraged for patriotism even during peacetime. Hence the materials from family records, headstones, genealogy, quaternaries, petitions and poetry are also very important to find accuracy through the synthesis and examination of facts related to historical figures. This should be somewhat subjective, but the author tries to keep intact the accuracy of historical records to have the cautious objectivity of a scientist.

## **Part 2. Modernization to Help the Emperor Keep the Country 1862-1883**

Entering the second half of the nineteenth century and similar to many other countries in Asia, Vietnam had to face increasing pressure of expansion by Western colonial powers as well as Christian missionaries. Emperors Gia Long, Minh Mạng, and Thiệu Trị in the first 50 years of the Nguyễn Dynasty implemented a conservative policy that did not accept Western knowledge and technical civilization through a policy of "seclusion" or "closing to the world". At the same time, Gia Long abolished the progressive reforms of the Tây Sơn Dynasty and was also slowly mistreating the French people who helped him before (Jean-Baptiste Chaigneau, Phillippe Vannier, ...) and the Franco-Vietnamese missionaries with the policy of "banning and killing Christians" making the Vietnamese people slow to evolve and not progressing as the neighboring countries. This policy was the reason why Vietnam in the Nguyễn Dynasty gradually became persistently stagnant, backward, and not adapting to the new era and Tự Đức had to rely on the Qing Dynasty of China. This led to the invasion by the French imperialists within 30 years in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century later.

Since the French had peered into Vietnam in their quest to find colonies through the first naval war in Đà Nẵng in 1847, the court and the scholars in the country were divided into two main trends: conservative and progressive. Conservatives advocated by the Emperor included the majority of mandarins in the Huế court and most Confucian scholars and respected the values of the traditional monarchy and Confucian education. Progressives by a very few mandarins and some of the contemporary scholars were beginning to develop open progressive ideas to improve the knowledge of the people and innovate the country, to accept modern technology to deal with the foreign invasion and catch up with the development in science and human society of the West. Because of the traditional fighting against invaders to keep the country from ancient times, with great sacrifices but ineffective against the Western military advances, the court leadership was intentional in not realizing its backward weakness to counteract progressive thoughts.

At the beginning of the French invasion, Emperor Tự Đức had a stiff uncompromising attitude but had reconciled under the pressure of contemporary trends according to the required situation: conservative, fighting against the French and reforming through the policy "sometimes reconciliation- sometimes fighting" (formed earlier by the elders Trương Đăng Quế and Nguyễn Tri Phương). However, Emperor Tự Đức still maintained his "reconciliatory" attitude. The competition between two strategies, "defense to draw" or "chase anything from the sea", within the Nguyễn court took place fiercely. The "defense to draw" faction advocated digging ditches to build up a defensive fortress and hoped for the tired French to retreat. This faction said "they are far away from us, so they could not conquer us" and "because we were cold to them, they just fought against us"... Another small part of the "defense to draw" faction advocated a temporary conciliatory period to open up external relations to combat the risk of aggression.

After the loss of three Eastern provinces (1860) and in the planning discussions with Emperor Tự Đức, the elders Đoàn Thộ and Trần Tiên Thành presented honest and clear assessments: "Our financial resources are still fragile, and we have to step by step reorganize to wait for better opportunities for self-reliance". Even at the beginning of the war for the country defense, no one could have guessed the damages would be great in terms of vitality and material resources, but there were already individuals who saw "great powers in the world to realize that with existing forces, we cannot defeat the enemy." Before the French invasion, the Nguyễn Dynasty responded with a policy of closing to the world and forbidding Christianity when Vietnam was not an equal opponent of the French military. The Emperor and Queen Mother were for "peace above all", Nguyễn Tri Phương was "traditional", and Phan Thanh Gian "prevented the fire from spreading". Most scholars were divided by different policies: the conservative Confucianists did not accept the Western culture and became the war faction that asked for the Chinese support and used violence to terrorize the opposing side. The reconciliatory side included many princes who were influenced by the French missionaries (like the strategy of Emperor Gia Long when he collaborated with



Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine (1741-1799) and, hence, weakened the home country and refused to carry out the reforms, so they had to cooperate and then surrender to France. The factions in the court of the Nguyễn Dynasty, from conservative-war-reconciliatory-pro Chinese or pro-Western masters as well as the scholarly class and the people ... all progressed slowly, awakened each day to realize the country weaknesses that led to military failures and land losses.

The way of reconciliation to buy time had wise ideas to reform the country, modernize the military and expand trade strong enough to fight the foreign invasion and the yoke of domination. Therefore, this strategy could suffer losses to have enough time for national development. This reform-self-reliance thinking included anti-French patriotism, conciliation to buy time, space, and opportunities for innovation based on the bilateral autonomy of Annam and France. Scholar Dao Duy called it **the modernization faction** that was different from the faction cooperating with the French or the defeatists. It is the strategy of peace until strong enough to fight.

The war against the French by fighting through literature and poetry began (1859) from Nguyễn Đình Chiểu (1822-1888) to promote patriotism and loyalty among the scholars and the people who would take responsibility for fighting foreign aggression. Armed resistance to the French began with lofty sacrifices by Trương Công Định (1820-1864) who started in Gò Công-Tân An - Mỹ Tho right after the 1862 Peace Treaty with land concessions for peace. After that, the Southern insurgents continued to resist the French with the support of all classes of people. The court quietly supported these popular revolts.



Nguyễn Đình Chiểu



Trương Công Định

During the French invasion of Vietnam, which began in 1858 and ended in 1883, Emperor Tự Đức had a policy of FIGHTING and NEGOTIATION that was fully passive and not consistent through the Elderly Phan Thanh Giản (committed suicide in 1867) and Nguyễn Tri Phương (committed suicide in 1873) ... and sometimes wanted to prolong the negotiations or reconciliation (a war policy) to borrow time for reforming the country according to the reformist's proposals (Phan Thanh Giản, Phạm Phú Thứ, and Trần Tiễn Thành). That was the strategy of "reconciliation to defend, defense to fight" or "temporary peace with France" to preserve the country and its sovereignty and facilitate renovation efforts.

After the loss of three eastern provinces in 1860, there appeared to be sincere writings of progressive intellectuals who realized the country could not cope with the might of the Western arms and the signing by the Huế court of the Nhâm Tuất 1862 treaty would lead to the risks of failure in the war against the French colonialists in defense of national independence. Aware of the country's dire situation, some scholars and officials sent to the Tự Đức court proposals to change policies on the military, economy, diplomacy, culture ... These efforts aimed to consolidate and strengthen all aspects for the country to maintain national independence.

In 1862 when he was 67 years old, Phan Thanh Giản led a delegation to France with deputies Phạm Phú Thứ and Nguyễn Khắc Đản who were over the age of 70 to ask for the redemption of the three southern provinces. These three mandarins had seen firsthand the technological advances of France that were at the level of "heaven and earth". In the report to the Emperor, they expressed their awe of French powers.

The delegates returned to present their renewed thinking through what they had seen and heard in the petitions to the Emperor and begged the mandarins and scholars to wake up in time. But no one believed them. Emperor Tự Đức himself did not believe these things of Western civilization:

*From the days of our mission to the French capital,  
Seeing Europe startled us.  
Calling on fellowmen to wake up: "hurry up and advance",  
Lots of pleading but no one believed ...*

After the Phan delegation visited France and Spain and returned in 1863, they immediately advocated real renovation efforts to keep pace with the advancement of western civilization. This policy had been fully supported by Trần Tiễn Thành, especially after the death of Phan Thanh Giản (1867). Trần Tiễn Thành was alone in the court and the Privy Council who actively advocated for these new ideas. From the time he served as a great minister of the Privy Council from 1862 to 1883, Trần Tiễn Thành was thoroughly supportive and always encouraged the Emperor through several petitions to reform all social, economic and diplomacy aspects within limits of a traditional Confucian loyalist. Trần Tiễn Thành tried constantly helping Emperor Tự Đức to lead the court very cautiously in implementing the policy of War-Defense-Conciliation to maintain the country sovereignty and not take the country on political or military adventures, but not to surrender or cooperate with the French. From 1866 - 1870, Trần Tiễn Thành and Phan Thanh Giản were the pillars of the court as in a folk verse:

*First Trần, Second Nguyễn, third Phan*

### *Who let Đặng out in the middle of the road?*

Trần was Trần Tiễn Thành, Nguyễn Nguyễn Tri Phương, and Phan Phan Thanh Giản, and Đặng was Đặng Huy Trứ. The most powerful in the court were the three officials mentioned above. Đặng often went abroad to buy necessities and was related to Tự Đức through Princess Thuận Lễ, a daughter of Emperor Minh Mạng. After Nguyễn and Phan died, leaving only Trần who did not have enough power to move “Hủ Nho” (Outdated Scholars) to the renovation movement. In the beginning, Phan Thanh Giản was oppressed by Nguyễn Tri Phương and Emperor Tự Đức who followed the conservative policies of his father Thiệu Trị and grandfather Minh Mạng. When the French conquered Cochinchina, the Emperor began to follow the reformists. He paid more attention to the ideas of Nguyễn Trường Tộ, possibly due to the accurate predictions of the latter and the active recommendations of Trần Tiễn Thành. However, the ideas of Tộ were rejected or delayed by the court and Privy Council. After the death of Tộ, Emperor Tự Đức asked Trần Tiễn Thành to collect all works of Nguyễn Trường Tộ for reading by posterity and finding good ideas. Before his death, the Emperor appointed Trần Tiễn Thành as First Regent to the next Emperor Dục Đức who preferred Western studies over Confucian studies. This showed that the Emperor had adopted the modernization efforts right before his death. A few months after the Emperor’s death, Trần Tiễn Thành was killed under the orders of Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường.

During the Tự Đức-Dục Đức-Hiệp Hòa reigns, Trần Tiễn Thành was accused to be “pacifist”, a word according to the scholars implied pro-French and treason. He was unjustly blamed for his activities on behalf of progressive ideas with a patriotic loyalty, through the foresight of the future of a rich and powerful country and improvements in the national military and economy. Because of the need for periodic political goals, the modernization faction was always been confused with the pro-French faction because of the policy of deleting all modernization efforts in the National Historical Archives of the Nguyễn Dynasty. The false rhetoric "modernize to capitulate to the enemy" was frequently used by the conservative scholars and the war faction, even the pro-French faction also wanted to use Thành's prestige to be repeated over and over in any failure, before an aggressor that was too strong and full of trickery. Blaming the reconciliation as a capitulation to the French was the most effective means to damaging the opposing sides. This also served as lessons for the next generations and organizations struggled with many different forms to unanimously unify a people against foreign aggression.

Most of the people as well as the scholars only knew "the pride of Confucianism" and refused to open their eyes to a mechanized civilization as well as a thriving economy with the will to spread the Western Christian civilization. They faked mute and deaf to the world situation and only knew how to slander each other or create a bad prejudice, or slander against people with new or opposite or radical ideologies, leading to unjust deaths to serve short-term political purposes. For those who suffered an injustice, only death can prove their patriotism

and anti-foreign aggression to gain autonomy. Many decades have passed during which those with modernization thought were accused to be "pacifist", "pro-French" or "not patriotic" and even "treasonous". Emperor Tự Đức had complained about "too many mouths".

The conservative prejudices merged quickly and very easily the modernization faction with the pacifist side into one faction. There were wide differences between these factions. The modernization faction advocated improvisation according to the situations to buy time for reforms (Phan Thanh Giản, Trần Tiễn Thành ...) while the pacifist side seek to surrender or cooperate with the colonialists (Hiệp Hòa, Tuy Lý Vương, Nguyễn Hữu Độ ...). Similarly, the war side asked for Chinese help (Tôn Thất Thuyết, Phạm Thận Duật ...), a form of "bring home the snakes to bite own chickens", and Nguyễn Văn Tường himself changed depending on the current events and was full of tricks.

Since 1862 the Cochinchina became a French colony and the Northern wars started in 1872, Tonkin was occupied in "leopard skin" by the French, Chinese Qing, Black Flags, and Vietnamese armies. The domestic rule was delayed due to natural disasters, chaos, and religious warfare, the conscientious scholars staying away from the court, and people going into poverty due to economic failures. Renewal efforts were only half-hearted implemented because the Emperor refused to fully adopt the proposals of the great Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ after the return of their mission. It was also true that "the war faction" or "the pacifist faction" also needed to realize the poor economic and defense weaknesses. The country had to modernize to become prosperous and strong and raise the popular knowledge to preserve the country. Reforming required temporary reconciliation because of its weaknesses in all aspects and actively opened the doors to outside to have enough time to change. The reformist faction conducted diplomatic negotiations with the French to keep the sovereignty of Central and North provinces, and other diplomatic missions to major powers opposed to France. Hence, they met strong opposition from the majority of the court and the traditional conservative scholars close to China without knowing or not grasping the current Chinese situation. Although Emperor Tự Đức at times cared, he did not fully accept and implement renovation ideas as a policy of the court. The Emperor only focused on redeeming the lost provinces.

When six southern provinces were lost to the French in 1867, some Southern scholars including the family of Nguyễn Thông (1827-1884) and the family of Trương Gia Hội (1822-1877) ... refused to cooperate with the French colonialists and migrated to the south-central region still under the rule of the Nguyễn Dynasty. They established the "refugee grounds" in Phan Thiết to continue the revolts against the French and find a way to save the country. Those were the first popular revolts to stand up and take the initiative in protecting the nation and its independence, following the military failures and peace negotiations of the Nguyễn Dynasty. That was the formation of a democratic foundation that generated new ideas in all aspects including science and technology to develop and improve people's lives.

In 1874, Emperor Tự Đức was forced to sign the Treaty of Giáp Tuất on March 15, 1874, for concessions to many claims of the French colonialists with the risk of losing the whole country. The royal court rushed to find other counterparts in foreign countries to reform the country and save it from the French invasion. Before that dark situation, many progressive, patriotic and practical-minded scholars wanted to use their knowledge of reformation to save the country from the risk of invasion. Only Trần Tiễn Thành, the premier mandarin since the 1862 treaty, recognized the real situation between the West-China, accepted and supported the progressive scholars for decades, notably the parishioner Nguyễn Trường Tộ from 1861 to 1871 and the scholar Nguyễn Lộ Trạch from 1872 to 1882. These scholars submitted their views and plans to renovate and modernize the country to be able to fight the French to the Privy Council and Emperor Tự Đức. Their reform proposals from 1862 to 1882 emerged after realizing the inevitable path to modernization and self-reliance to escape the national disaster, most clearly in two phases depending on the wars when the French occupied the South in 1862 and Hanoi in 1873.

Emperor Tự Đức was not the one who did not want to reform the country, but the court officials did not agree to set up a national reform policy. During the period 1863-1882 several officials, scholars, and parishioners repeatedly offered their petitions to the Emperor for comprehensive national reform. But the application of these progressive ideas was not easy in the context of a poor and weak country facing invasion, with a court with limited knowledge of, especially since 1873, the situation of French-Vietnamese-Chinese-bandit warfare in the North and the death of Tự Đức in 1883. Under control by the war faction, the court again enforced its policy of prohibiting Christianity and killing its converts, at a time when it was necessary to unite the people to protect the country's independence. Killing the converts and expelling the missionaries were no different than adding oil to a fire. The court did not agree on a plan to unify the country, causing the darkest period in history.

We would like to take two periods of 10 years each before and after the death of Nguyễn Trường Tộ in 1871 to present the list of participants in the renovation movement. After 1867 when the whole of Cochinchina was lost to the French colonialists, many proposals, not only from Tộ, were sent to the court. All proposals were carefully read, reviewed, and reviewed again by Emperor Tự Đức and his court. However, the lack of a serious policy of the court and the indecision of the Emperor caused major disappointment to the reformists. In reality, the Nguyễn Dynasty implemented some limited or superfluous reforms in many fields, like expansion in mining, communication, and trade with foreign countries, modern education, training of technical staff, recruiting talents, reclaiming of plantations, irrigation ...

**The decade 1862-1872.** Most of the ideas were started by officials from the year 1863. After his trip to France to redeem the three lost provinces, Deputy Minister of Interior Affairs Phạm Phú Thứ had translated and published 5 sets of books about Western civilization. In

March 1863, from Gia Định and after visiting France-Italy, Nguyễn Trường Tộ sent to the Huế court a report about religions, world situation and ways of innovation. Responding to the renewal ideas, in May 1863 an official of Justice Ministry, Trần Đình Túc, suggested the court proceed with the reclaiming of wasteland. In 1865, Nguyễn Thông in Vĩnh Long offered his petition asking the court to recruit talented people to help the country and modernize the military. In June 1866, after the return of a business trip to Hong Kong, Deputy Minister Đặng Huy Trứ suggested foreign trade and building a warehouse. In November 1868, Christian Đinh Văn Điền sent a petition to propose reforms in agriculture and mining.

Throughout the decade 1873-1883, in January 1873, the Privy Council and Office of Foreign Trade asked the Emperor to open the door to foreign business at the Đà Nẵng port. In 1873, Bùi Viện was sent by the Huế court to meet secretly with the Americans and ask for their help. Only scholar Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was aware of the situation and continued the path of modernization under the guidance of Trần Tiễn Thành. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's enthusiasm appeared in the "Report on World Affairs" presented to the Huế court in 1877. It was not until 1878 that the court began to send people to take the first steps to learn foreign languages, but the court was still divided into two factions: the reformists and the conservatives. When the South (Cochinchina) gradually fell into the hands of the French, there were also two factions: the war faction relied on China and the peace faction on the French.

Since then, the Nguyễn court became more and more helpless against the enemies, both inside and outside. The abuses of power of the two regents Tường-Thuyết deepened the division between non-Christians and Christians, and the loss of national dignity and solidarity, making those who were passionate about patriotism stay away. Lack of consolidation and proper direction, the patriotic movements of Văn Thân, Duy Tân, and Cần Vương in turns failed and the country had sacrificed many talents and many innocent victims.

In his Facebook page dated October 26, 2021, LVanLe asked Professor Hoàng Xuân Hãn: *"I had read some reports saying that Trần Tiễn Thành was pro-French so he was killed by Tôn Thất Thuyết?"* Professor Hãn replied as follows: *"When reading history, you have to use your mind for thinking and examination. Throughout his career as a mandarin, Trần Tiễn Thành has submitted several petitions for modernization and flexible diplomacy against the French to preserve the country. Reading his petitions makes me respect him more. Compared to Tôn Thất Thuyết, Trần Tiễn Thành was more careful and had more foresight. A conservative court had its origin in our conservative people. Conservatism leads to slow progress. Until now, when writing history, most historians said that the Nguyễn dynasty had patriotic mandarins such as Nguyễn Tri Phương and Hoàng Diệu... In my youth, I had the same thinking. Later, I asked myself if the powers belonged to Phan Thanh Giản then Trần Tiễn Thành, would our country still be belonged to France? Would our country modernize fast enough? The court, not Emperor Tự Đức, refused to modernize, and Phan Thanh Giản had to bear the responsibility of preserving Cochinchina while our country was too weak*

*compared to the invaders. This task was beyond his ability. Phan Than Giản lost Cochinchina and committed suicide after losing Vĩnh Long. This has made Emperor Tự Đức lonelier before the war faction! The spirit of thinking and examination is even more necessary when reading the history of Vietnam because historians used more interpretations than facts! Interpretations based on incomplete facts lead to errors and doubts for future generations!"*

Below we summarize the petitions presented to Emperor Tự Đức through Trần Tiễn Thành and biographies of some reformists:

**Phạm Phú Thứ (1821-1882)** was also known as Trúc Đường and nicknamed Giá Viên. He was born in canton Đông Bàn, district Diên Phước, now canton Điện Trung, district Điện Bàn, province Quảng Nam. He was an intelligent person, famous for doing well in school, and ranked first in the national exams. He was a great mandarin of the Nguyễn Dynasty under the two reigns of Emperor Thiệu Trị and Tự Đức. Phạm Phú Thứ had a righteous personality and dared to speak his point of view and to criticize even the Emperor without fear of being punished. Even when being punished and demoted many times, he was still not discouraged and still thought that his opinions were right. In the renovation movement of the nineteenth century, Phạm Phú Thứ was considered a reformist with superior ideas, especially those in economics, science, and technology. Even before his trip to France, he had started to think about modernization. In 1856 while holding the position of Chief Judge of Thanh Hóa province, he recommended to Emperor Tự Đức to organize the construction of boats for domestic economic trade. A copper ship was completed in a short time and named Thụy Nhạc, marking the results of his responsibility and ability to apply science in a Central province.



In 1857 he continued to submit his petitions to the court to propose a new plan for the economy and defense: use private merchant boats and hire them to transport rice from the provinces to sell in the capital; use state ships to carry troops and military equipment for coastal patrol and protection duties. A year later, when the French opened fire to attack Đà Nẵng, he appealed to Emperor Tự Đức to let all officials originated from Quảng Nam return to their hometowns to train brave soldiers against the French invasion. In 1863, he held the position of Deputy Minister of Interior and served as Deputy Ambassador to Phan Thanh Giản in the delegation to France for redeeming the three Southern provinces in Cochinchina. He also visited Spain in 1863 - 1864. After returning from France, he gathered what he saw and heard about the politics, customs, and practices of the West and recorded carefully in the book "Diary of a Journey to the West". Along with this diary, he also authored a book of poems composed during the trip to France and Spain and they also contained progressive ideas. Not only writing books to disseminate knowledge, in 1873, Phạm Phú Thứ also offered

petitions for the reorganization of the military, good care of soldiers and officers, friendly relations with major powers, opening of the doors for trade, and establishment of consular facilities in Hong Kong to communicate with foreign countries.

In 1874, he was appointed Governor of Hải Yên province (Hải Phòng, Hải Dương and Quảng Yên) and Trade General Director. More than 20000 people in Hải Dương were seriously hungry and empty-handed because of the flood, the victims of the broken Văn Giang dike several years earlier in Khoái Châu district, Hưng Yên. Before that situation, he released 500000 kg of rice from Hưng Yên storage for distribution and mobilized the rich to use their rice to help the starving villagers. Moreover, he organized healthy people to reclaim wastelands, plant short-term crops, and open irrigation in the Đông Triều and Nam Sách regions to fight hunger more effectively. Along with fighting hunger, he was constantly interested in restoring agricultural production and developing cottage industries. Besides, Phạm Phú Thứ also focused on spreading knowledge about science, engineering, and technology of the West for the people within and outside in the province. Specifically, he restored the Hải Học Đường publishing house which had been in existence since the Gia Long reign (1802 - 1819) and published 5 Western books that were translated from English to Chinese characters and focused on science, technology, mining method, marine engineering, international law and experience of a mandarin.

Along with the above publications, Phạm Phú Thứ also mentioned some scientific issues like gun casting, coal mining, glass. and its performance and effects of sulfuric acid in industry. His publications and lectures on popular science had resonated in contemporary society. His knowledge of science and technology was unique, in particular as a patriotic Confucianist among high officials of the imperial court, beyond the limits of the social situation and the era he lived in. That knowledge was not separated from the thinking of national renewal but had contributed positively with contemporary patriots to a reform trend in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The reform proposals of Phạm Phú Thứ in particular and those of the reformers of the 19th century in general showed a new mindset in response to historical requirements for the nation in this period: Modernization to protect national sovereignty and development. However, all reform ideas advanced during this period suffered the same fate before. They had not been fully implemented, even were not brought up for discussion and ignored by the court. Phạm Phú Thứ died on February 5, 1882, at the age of 61. He left behind a shining example in thought, sense, and dignity. His notes in 40 years as a mandarin became a huge and valuable source of information for research scholars. Furthermore, his ability to learn new things and apply the progress of the era that Phạm Phú Thứ did two centuries ago retains still today its original values.



**Đặng Huy Trứ (1825-1874)** was known as Hoàng Trung, alias Vọng Tân and Tĩnh Trai. He was born on May 16, 1825 in Thanh Lương village (now in Hương Xuân commune, Hương Trà district, Thừa Thiên-Huế province) into a farming family with a tradition of Confucianism. His grandfather and father were both teaching in their village and trained famous men as mandarins of the Nguyễn Dynasty. He was brought up in Confucianism and a product of Confucian education but he valued commerce and the trading of goods. This demonstrated his vision for the times because the policy of "seclusion" was backward and a hindrance to the progress of society. From a young age, he was famous for his intelligence. In 1843, he obtained a bachelor's degree (in this exam year, his father only passed the Baccalaureate). In 1847, he passed his doctorate, but in the Court exam he violated exam rules, so he was punished with 100 whips, stripped of bachelor and doctoral degrees, and banned from examinations permanently. He went home to teach and write books. Eight years later in 1855, thanks to pleading by a great mandarin, he got amnesty from Emperor Tự Đức who allowed him to take the exam and he passed again his doctorate.



During his lifetime, Đặng Huy Trứ was an official in the Ministry of Finance during the reign of Emperor Tự Đức. He was famous for his integrity and honesty and visited as Court envoy to China, Korea, and Siam (Thailand). During 18 years as a mandarin, he had gained experiences through many positions and relationships to all classes of people as well as domestic and foreign scholars. He traveled a lot, communicated with many people, and had a wide range of thinking. His professional career was aimed at reforming the country, but contemporary mandarins often thought of him as a high official who loved trading. He was originally a Confucian scholar, but he had modernization ideas and economic reforms, so in 1865 - 1867, he was sent to Guangdong, China to study and research.

In 1865 Đặng Huy Trứ was ordered by the court to disguise as a Qing Chinese to visit Guangdong (including Hong Kong and Macau) where many Western countries were active. He was to learn science and technology innovations, find and buy weapons to send home, explore the situations in Western countries and find ways to save the country. During his time abroad, he met and exchanged ideas with many innovative intellectuals in China. He learned how to build machinery, boats, cast guns, and ammunition. He also collected books and newspapers from different countries for translation and introduced them to domestic intellectuals. He met and encouraged the Vietnamese who were sent to Hong Kong to learn the craft of building steam-powered ships. He made meticulous notes on the steam engine technology described in the "New Encyclopedia" of the British and brought home. Also, on this occasion, he bought 239 artillery guns and sent them back to the country. With the help of the British, he successfully built the first ship under the Tự Đức reign and named it Mẫn Thỏa. It is worth mentioning that right during a period of feudal, backward, and stagnant thinking at that time, he had an innovative mindset to integrate into the world. During this

trip to Hong Kong, he was exposed to photography for the first time. He had two photos of him to take home. And he recognized very clearly: "The people are the ones who take care of us and we have to take care of paying the people's debt". He seriously valued labor and scientific knowledge. "We have to invite Western experts to teach ".

Returning home in 1866, Đặng Huy Trứ was appointed to be the Assistant to the Ministry of Finance. On this occasion, he asked for and was assigned to establish an Office of Business in Hanoi to raise money for the country. He proposed to the Huế court to allow the Business Office to purchase goods for reserve and wait for when the market price soars, then sell them to stabilize prices and prevent speculative hoarding by private traders. In 1867, he was again sent to Guangdong and Canton to learn the world situation and purchase weapons. On this occasion, he had contact with quite a few Chinese scholars, found and read many books and articles about the military, political, economic, and cultural development in Western and Asian countries. During his second time in Guangdong, he fell seriously ill. Lying in the hospital bed, he still read, wrote books, and composed poems. During this time, he reflected on the destiny of the Fatherland and the road of "Self-reliance and autonomy" pursued by advanced countries. He wrote an essay entitled "While sick, I was instructed by the master" presenting his ideas for reform and saving the country. He asked a friend and Chinese official, Dương Khải Trí, to buy a photographic kit (including camera, film, development chemicals, photos ...). When he returned home, he found a photoshop named Cẩm Hiếu in Hanoi's Thanh Hà Street. The shop opened on February 2, Kỷ Ty year (March 14, 1869) so Vietnamese Photography considers this day to be its birthday.

At the end of 1868, from China, he wrote a petition and sent it to the Huế court to set out the plan for self-reliance and autonomy, focusing on the primary strategic mission of modernization to fight the enemy France. In the petition, he analyzed the self-reliant situations of the Qing Dynasty, in Korea, Japan, and Persia. He asserted the success of those countries and aimed at convincing the Nguyễn Emperor to follow them. This progressive view was further strengthened when he was sent to China and exposed to the novelties of Western civilization. He saw the urgent needs of the country to develop trade, agriculture, industry, promote mining and improve the transportation system. He highly valued the role of business and he voluntarily accepted the "least desirable job" as a businessman to enrich the country.

He vehemently opposed the use of Confucian words and morals by the peace faction to ask the enemy for mercy, because "*if only based on words, who can cool down the heart of the enemy?* ". In addition to economic development, he also advocated a strong military, because the economic and military relationship together was necessary to maintain national independence. He wrote: "*The plows and rice paddies are the roots of food. But if you do not understand the military to preserve independence, even if you have excess rice in the warehouse, the excess cloth on the loom will be also taken away by the enemy*".

With a life of only 49 years, but with talent and enthusiasm, Đặng Huy Trứ had left many legacies compared to contemporary scholars. He was a reformer, sowing the seeds of renewal and civilizing the Nguyễn Dynasty in the middle of the 19th century with the idea of people as the bases of the country, economic development (mining, industrial and handicraft expansion, trade, transportation), military and science advances (ideas of people's war as strategies and tactics, sent people to learn Western industries like boat building, weapon making) and social reforms (against the ideology of respect for literature but neglect for military, anti-corruption, and emphasize the necessary virtues and integrity of mandarins).

**Education:** His educational ideas were progressive compared with those of contemporary scholars, and are still valid to this day: that is the concept of "*Teachers and students study together, grow and progress together. Not just the students need to study but the teachers must also learn more because the knowledge sea is immense, but the knowledge of people is limited.*" Faced with the state of decline, he and many thinkers said that it was necessary to abandon the scholarly style of Confucianism, and could not just use literature studies to absorb the science and technology of the West, to promote the production and to make the people rich and the country strong. He wrote: "*Making people rich and country strong is not something without much concern* " and "*Making riches cannot be taken lightly* ". According to him, fighting the French must quickly change the ways of thinking, from the view of morality and ceremony as supreme and invariant to the production of material possessions.

In a report on the private school Thanh Lương in Quảng Nam in 1849, Đặng Huy Trứ condemned the traditional studies aimed at becoming mandarins. He was not satisfied with old books from the past, so he composed books on industry and commerce. In addition, he also had poems of rich educational values such as Commandments not to drink, Commandments not to gamble, Commandments not to use drugs ... He opened several private schools, bookstores selling modern books, and printing houses.

**Economy:** Since 1861, he had applied for a specialized state agency in water transport, but not until 1864 this agency was established. He considered getting rich a good virtue that was not to be despised. At that time, he already saw the role of the private sector with the government according to the motto "*Mutual benefits by public and private sectors*" set by him. Getting rich is worthy, but do not take greed that infringes on public property. Think benefits, but also think reputation because "*fame in the past is never wise.*" And: "*The bag of a thousand taels of gold is not appreciated as honor* ". He established trading businesses like Lạc Sinh Điểm and Lạc Thanh Điểm to trade with the West, creating the circulation of goods for 3 regions and a financial and military foundation for the imperial court during the 1850s-

1870s. Overcoming the old conception of the scholars at that time which looked down on business, with the economic point of view, "*Getting rich is a worthy cause*", and with a small amount of capital granted by the court (fifty thousand piasters), he encouraged more private capital with the formula "*Mutual benefits by public and private sectors*". His economic ideas remain valid even today. In 1866, he proposed the establishment of a Business Office to promote commerce and improve the financial situation of the country which was in bad shape.

His proposal was approved by the Emperor who assigned him to lead the Business Office. He put economic and scientific problems as having decisive significance for the fight against foreign invasion and country development. He was an engaged innovator, with reforms based on the people and benefits for the people (public and private interests) and commitment to the extreme that was contrary to his weak physical nature. He was one of the very few people interested in expanding the country's industry and commerce, exporting goods to foreign countries, attaching importance to establishing plantations for planting food crops, industrial crops, mining ... At the same time, he gathered households doing handicrafts to produce goods and opened a trading business in Hanoi to trade with foreign merchants.

He organized the circulation of goods between regions of the country. The managing office was located in Hanoi, but its activities extended to the provinces of Quảng Nam, Vĩnh Long, and Gia Định (1866). With a meager capital of 50000 piasters granted by the court, he mobilized more private capital, according to the formula "*mutual benefits by public and private sectors.*" (his own words). These allowed conditions to organize and invest in technology to develop the country's resources. The mobilization of tens of thousands of people in the provinces to develop mining both created jobs for the people and income for the country. He obtained the metal products such as tin and copper for export. He also exported the products of Vietnamese handicrafts such as embroidery, sugar, herbal oil, and cinnamon to Hong Kong to bring money back to the country.

To develop handicrafts, he organized individual households for each business product line and made loans to these households in advance to buy raw materials and then sell goods to the State. He cleared rivers and streams for irrigation and waterway traffic, proposed to the court to set up "benevolent" warehouses in localities to store food for the poor, and issue tax permits in kind for handicraft households. For households working in weaving, he made loans in advance to buy materials for weaving and sell finished goods to the State.

His economic thinking was indeed ahead of his time and kept its values intact nowadays. His work was developing well, but then Tự Đức listened to the conservative officials and abolished the achievements that Đặng Huy Trứ had achieved with enthusiasm. Along with the economic development, it is worth noting at that time, Trứ was especially interested in exploiting the achievements in science and engineering of foreign countries and learning to build machinery, boats, gun casting, and bullets.

*An official with integrity for the people:* Although he became a mandarin quite late when he was 31 years old, he fought for changes in government officials with his talent, enthusiasm, patriotism, and passion. He sought to dismiss incompetent and corrupted mandarins. He wrote books on becoming a good and honest official.

*Reformer:* With the support and suggestions of Phạm Phú Thứ, a patriotic official who knew his talents, Đặng Huy Trứ was sent to Hong Kong, Macau, and Guangdong twice in 1865 and 1867. During these trips abroad, he strived to study, meet and exchange ideas with foreign intellectuals, as well as collected the newspapers written in Chinese. With the ambition of reforming the country, he had summarized in an essay outlining a "Self-reliant, autonomous path" for the country. This *"self-reliant, autonomous" plan to catch up with the advanced countries involved: establishment of industry and manufacturing, especially shipbuilding, iron and steel foundry, casting guns ... Study the Japanese in building ships, training troops, teaching marine engineering to sailors like Japan. Recruit elite young people and send them to England to study military ... The great achievements of advanced countries by implementing self-reliance motivated Đặng Huy Trứ to apply their lessons to Vietnam. This showed his superiority over contemporary scholars and he had become "one among the first cultivators to modernize Vietnam"* as assessed by Phan Bội Châu later.

One thing worth mentioning in the history of reforms was his idea of the people as the roost and masters of the country. This idea was one of the foundations and prerequisites for Phan Bội Châu 's point of view that people are masters of the country and the country belongs to the people. He also said that the Emperor must serve the people, the people are the heaven and the rulers must practice the motto *"Everything is for the people"*. This ideology was against the idea of "supreme power by the emperor" and a stark contrast to the contemporary Confucian view. His idea of the people's supremacy was a prominent new feature in Vietnamese political thought at the end of the nineteenth century. During the Nguyễn dynasty, there were many honest officials who always took care of the well-being of working people and resolutely punished all acts of corruption by mandarins. He was typical among those honest officials, and dedicated all his life to the people and the country. More than anyone, he realized the country faced grave dangers in both foreign invasion, and greed and corruption by mandarins. He frankly unmasked the officials even though they were his superiors, fellow bureaucrats, or his relatives. Thus, his 15-year career was full of ups and downs.

*Military:* In August 1856, French warships arrived at Son Trà wharf, Đà Nẵng. They bombarded the fortress and captured some officers and soldiers, and then left. The war did not break out, but the provocation heralded the danger of invasion. Later, when the French colonialists revealed their true face and occupied Gia Định, Đặng Huy Trứ was with the war faction determined to fight the foreign invaders. In 1869 he founded the "Tri Trung Street" printing house on Thanh Hà street (Hanoi) and printed 2 books on military strategies, one

written by Lương Huy Bích under the Tây Sơn period and the other in Chinese. He sent these books to mandarin friends as gifts. In the books sent to the Governor-General of Thanh Hóa, Tôn Thất Hành, he wrote: "Rebellions in four directions are the shame of officials. To clean up this dishonor requires reading military books ... "

His last act as a mandarin was military: he died fighting against foreign invasion. In 1871, he was appointed to the position of a senior military officer and sent to the northern border with many other mandarins to help Hoàng Kế Viêm to defeat the rebels. At the end of 1873, the French invaded Hanoi, Nguyễn Tri Phương commanded the army, was injured, and died from starvation. The French invaded Hưng Yên, Bắc Ninh, Thái Nguyên and Ninh Bình. Đặng Huy Trứ and Hoàng Kế Viêm retreated to defend the Đồn Vàng base and continued to organize a resistance force against the French. There, he fell ill and died on August 7, 1874, at the age of 49 in Cao Lạng commune, Đồn Vàng, Hà Đông province (now Hanoi). Afterwards, he was reburied at Hiền Sĩ, now in Phong Sơn commune, Phong Điền district, province Thừa Thiên-Huế.

**Nguyễn Tư Giản (1823 - 1890)** whose real name was Nguyễn Văn Phú, was from



Du Lâm commune, Đông Ngàn district, Kinh Bắc town (now is Du Nội village, Mai Lâm commune, district Đông Anh, Hanoi). His ancestors descended from a branch of the Lý dynasty. To escape from Trần Thủ Độ's persecution, they had to change their surname to Nguyễn, traveling to many places and then residing in Kẻ Đóm (now Vân Điềm village, Vân Hà commune, Đông Anh district). By the early nineteenth century, a branch of the family Nguyễn Vân Điềm moved to Du Lâm village. In this new village, the Nguyễn clan continued to thrive in scholarly exams with 2 doctorates and dozens of bachelors, in which Nguyễn Văn Phú was the

person with the highest degree (he was given Doctorate with the Highest Second Class during the reign of Emperor Thiệu Trị in 1844 when he was only 22 years old). Phú was a talented person, wholeheartedly patriotic, straightforward, and honest. Upon retirement, he did not possess an inch of land nor a house in the countryside and his name was changed to Nguyễn Tư Giản by the Emperor. He held many important positions during the reign of Emperor Tự Đức, most notably Minister of Interior Affairs and royal envoy to the Qing Dynasty in the year Mậu Thìn – 1868. He also participated in fighting sea pirates in the Northeast Sea. As the main administrator of dykes in Tonkin in 1857-1862, he proposed many initiatives of flood control for the Northern Delta region. He always worried about the destiny of the people and the country and repeatedly offered petitions that encouraged the renewal of the country. According to him, to respond to the disaster of the French colonialist invasion, it was necessary to make the country strong and the people rich. To do so, the right thing to do was to reform the national administration, and inefficiencies in the state apparatus should be eliminated.

In an essay written to Emperor Tự Đức in 1873, Nguyễn Tư Giản had raised 6 major evils at all levels of officials, especially widespread corruption and too many lazy mandarins. According to him, these problems were not only related to morality as many people before had pointed out, but they were also due to insufficient salaries, the treatment of talents, the shortcomings in State institutions, and the strictness of the law. He suggested eliminating some officials, especially those with poor status and incompetence, and the selection of talented people to enter the State service and pay them appropriately. It was necessary to provide adequate training to the mandarins, especially those in high positions.

Thus, one of Nguyễn Tư Giản 's thoughts on national renewal aimed at the reform of the administrative apparatus, improving its efficiency but, first and foremost, the focus was to get rid of incompetent officials, and choose talented and honest mandarins, by enhancing their management capacity, and paying appropriate wages for their hard work. His thinking still holds today with the administrative reforms of all regimes.

Before the French began to invade, Nguyễn Tư Giản was seen standing in the ranks of the "war" faction. In the year of the Rabbit - 1859, he sent a petition to Emperor Tự Đức asking him to persevere in the resistance and keep the country sovereignty.

In June of the year of the Dragon (1868), he was chosen by the Emperor to go to China. The Vietnamese delegation was led by Lê Tuấn as Chief of Mission, Hoàng Tịnh, and him as Deputies. All documents were drafted by him. Through the trip to the Qing Dynasty, Tư Giản knew more about the situation of China, Japan, and other continents. He saw young Chinese studying abroad in many countries around the world. He too wanted our country to have relations with Europe and America to allow people to study new industries. After his return (February of year Canh Ngọ, 1870), Nguyễn Tư Giản presented to Tự Đức a plan of "self-reliant reforms", by expanding relations with Western countries and sending students to study abroad, like Japan and Siam. But, the suggestions for renovation by him and colleagues were not accepted.

At that time, Tự Đức imperial court had diverse opinions: the faction of Trương Đăng Quế and Phan Thanh Giản advocated a defensive stance and peace negotiations; that of Trương Quốc Dụng and Phan Huy Vịnh advocated the long-term defense; and that of Tô Trân, Hồ Sĩ Tuấn ... advocated the decision to fight and not to reconcile with the French. Emperor Tự Đức was confused between those lines of thought. He was waiting for ideas but no one was suggesting any newer, only a copy of Nguyễn Tư Giản proposal from afar was sent back to the Emperor. The two great leaders Trương Đăng Quế and Phan Thanh Giản strongly protested and claimed that his plan offended their good intentions. The plan was immediately investigated. Nguyễn Tư Giản was reprimanded and demoted, and had to serve in the campaign against the rebellion in Quảng Yên area while still having to do his old job.

Together with Hoàng Phan Thái, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Bùi Viện ... he formed a national organization to save the country called the New Party. Emperor Tự Đức knew that he was an important figure in this party, but did not ban him and still assigned him to important positions like Interior Minister and Head of National School. At the end of his life, Nguyễn Tu Giản still did not give up the idea of sending young people to study abroad. He sent one of his children to Hải Phòng to find a way to go to Hong Kong but the plan failed, closing a hope of unrealized reforms. Nearly 70 years old and more than 40 years of life as a mandarin, Nguyễn Tu Giản always showed a thoughtful heart towards the people and the country. He was a talented, honest, and righteous person and a real, noble gentleman.

**Trần Đình Túc (1818-1899)** was from Hà Trung village, Gio Châu commune, Gio Linh district, Quảng Trị province. He was awarded a bachelor's degree under the Thiệu Trị reign in 1842 and became a great mandarin during the Tự Đức reign, holding the position of Governor-General of Hà Ninh (Hanoi, Ninh Bình). He was moderate in temper, honest, talented, and experienced in diplomacy. The Emperor always gave him difficult missions to many places in Vietnam and overseas. He went to China and Hong Kong as envoys and communicated with the British and Korean delegations. He also led the delegation to negotiate fiercely with the French mission, especially the negotiation to take back Hanoi after the second fall of the city.

In May 1863, he was appointed to the Agriculture Development Office reclaiming wasteland in Thừa Thiên and Quảng Trị provinces. In March next year (1864), he again recruited people and established a hamlet to reclaim wildlands in Lương Điền commune, Phú Lộc district, Thừa Thiên province. In March 1867, he applied for developing an iron mine in Lưu Biểu commune, Hương Trà district (Thừa Thiên). After that, mining activities were promoted in many localities, e.g. coal mining in the provinces Thái Nguyên and Quảng Yên. The important meanings of these activities were related to the situation of the mining industry at the beginning of Tự Đức's reign.

Around July to August of the lunar year of the Mậu Thìn (1868), Trần Đình Túc returned from a mission to Hong Kong (Hương Cảng). With Nguyễn Huy Tế, he submitted a petition to Tự Đức to open a trading port at Trà Lý estuary (nowadays in Thái Bình province). He emphasized the requirement of "open communication with the people of the outside world and trading goods for the long-term benefits in the future".

Trần Đình Túc was one of the key leaders in reconciliation with the French, apart from Nguyễn Văn Tường when the French invaded Vietnam. In December 1873, when the French fought in the North for the first time, he and Nguyễn Trọng Hop were sent to Hanoi to reconcile with Garnier, requested Hoàng Tá Viêm and Tôn Thất Thuyết to a standstill, and asked Lưu Vĩnh Phúc to pull back his troops to the Northern frontier. Besides, he was called



out of retirement to be the Chief of Mission in negotiating and signing the 1883 Quý Mùi Harmand Peace Treaty with France.

**Nguyễn Thông (1827-1884)** was from a poor family of scholars in Bình Thạnh village, Tân An district, Gia Định province (now Phú Ngãi Trị commune, district Châu Thành, Long An province). When he was a child, he and his brother were taught by his father. His mother died when he was 10 years old and his father died when he was 17 years old. In 1844, Nguyễn Thông went to Huế to study. In 1849, he passed the bachelor exam but he did not pass the doctorate exam because his exam papers were stained with ink. In 1861, after the fall of the fortress Chí Hòa, he was promoted to a military officer and joined Trương Định in fighting the enemy. In Vĩnh Long, he devoted himself to educating the people. He established the Literature Temple (completed in 1866). He also founded the school Văn Xương Các for educating the people and gathering patriotic scholars like Bùi Hữu Nghĩa, Phan Thanh Giản, Phan Văn Trị, Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, Huỳnh Mãn Đạt, Hồ Huân Nghiệp, ... who came there to talk and find a plan to fight the enemy.



After the loss of six southern provinces to the French colonialists in 1867, some Southern scholars cooperated with the French and others rose against the French. Some families including Nguyễn Thông, Tra Quý Bình, and Trương Gia Hội... refused to cooperate with the French and their colonial rule. They refused to live on the land that the enemy had occupied and had migrated north to the central region under the Nguyễn Dynasty for asylum. There, they set up “refugee centers” in Phan Thiết, the southernmost part of Trung Kỳ, to continue the anti-French resistance of the southern militia as well as the beginning of the modernization movement (the Đông Kinh movement or Liên Thành companies later). His poetry did reflect the lethargic sorrows of a scholar feeling helpless before the fate of the nation and the people that he loved. These were the first steps in which the people must stand up and take the initiative in national defense and independence after the continuous failures of the Nguyễn Dynasty.

In 1867, Nguyễn Thông was appointed to be the Judge of Khánh Hòa and then Quảng Ngãi. In April 1868, he presented to the court a petition to defend Phan Thanh Giản. When Emperor Tự Đức prayed straight talks, he boldly said from his heart "suffering with people suffering "," doing whatever for the people "... and proposed 4 reforms in internal administration: “Choose talented people to serve as mandarins, improving the military, modify land and property taxes, and focus on compassion. ” However, all his proposals were not accepted because of the defamation of other political leaders.

In early 1869, he was appointed Administrator of the Quảng Ngãi province. He actively implemented measures to eliminate embezzlement and bullying people by evil powers. He encouraged local people to build dams, plant trees, cultivate rice, implement water irrigation

and educate the public. Disgusted with the mandarins and suffering from serious tuberculosis, he got sick and retired in 1873 to Vĩnh Hòa village, Bình Thuận province, but he devoted still to education and land reclamation.

Since his proposals were rejected by the mandarins, in 1876 Nguyễn Thông composed a set of seven books on Vietnamese history that pointed out mistakes in court history. These books were highly appreciated by later Vietnamese historians for clarifying many historical sources, boundaries, and geography, including the assertion of sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly archipelagos. Not only expressing opinions about the wrongs of the court, Nguyễn Thông also actively proposed to reclaim the border areas from the West Highlands to Quảng Trị based on the Trường Sơn mountain range. The reclamation plan was approved by Tự Đức (Bình Tuy province today) and in February 1877, he became the agricultural envoy to Bình Thuận province, holding the position of Chief Administrator of this province.

The most practical things he had left were the organization and campaigns to reclaim land, do irrigation, plant trees ... in Quảng Ngãi and Bình Thuận. He organized many survey trips in the western mountains, establishing Đồng Châu communes to unite and gather people for land reclamation and secretly fight the French. Unfortunately, these activities were later banned by the court under pressure from the French colonialists. It was clear that he was a practical, progressive and knowledgeable scholar who loved the people and was closer to the people than many Confucian scholars at the time. In 1880, he founded and built Ngoại Du Sào school (on the campus of Dục Thanh) as a poetry reading place. (In 1910, Nguyễn Tất Thành came here to teach and read books).

He was married to Ngô Thị A Thúy (Ngô Thị Tý), the great-granddaughter of Ngô Nhân Tịnh, who gave birth to two sons, Nguyễn Trọng Lợi (or Lỗi) and Nguyễn Quý Anh (both were reformers in the Duy Tân Modernization movement). He died on July 7, 1884, at the age of 57. His grave is located on Ngọc Lâm hill, on the road from Phan Thiết to Mũi Né. Today, Nguyễn Thông was known as a patriotic intellectual and a typical great scholar of the South-Central provinces in the second half of the nineteenth century. He was a political activist, an educator, poet, famous writer, and a historian with a high sense of responsibility. He had made very positive contributions to the general causes of the country.

**Đinh Văn Điền (1829–1883)** was a Catholic and an intellectual during the Tự Đức reign. His dates of birth and death are unknown. He was from Yên Mô district, Ninh Bình province. Although studying with a French cleric, he was not very close to the French and a patriot. At the end of 1868, he offered secret documents to Emperor Tự Đức, proposing some activities for the national interests: setting up the agricultural office, organizing land reclamation, establishing commerce office for goods circulation, gold mining, shipbuilding, asking the West and the British for help to fight against the French, freely teaching and

learning military tactics and strategies, increasing salary for soldiers, reducing taxes for people and implementing social welfare. Unfortunately, the Court used his Catholicism as an excuse to deny those recommendations. Afterward, he died silently at home.

**Bùi Viện (1839-1878)**, aka Mạnh Đức, was born into a scholarly family in Trình Phố village, Trục Định district, Nam Định province, now Trình Nhi village, An Ninh commune, Tiền Hải district, Thái Bình province. His father was dispensing herbal medicines. In 1864, he passed the baccalaureate and in 1868 won a bachelor's degree. His younger brother Bùi Phùng also got a bachelor's degree and was appointed a judge in Hưng Hóa. Bùi Viện failed two doctorate exams in 1868 and 1869. In 1871 he accepted to help Vice Minister Lê Tuấn fight the rebellion of Black Flags and Yellow Flags which were remnants of Taiping from China. Upon the completed mission, he returned to Huế. He was then asked to help Doãn Khuê in reclaiming land and the construction of Ninh Hải port (i.e., Hải Phòng harbor today). Bùi Viện enthusiastically recruited soldiers and villagers to dig the river, drain the water to sea and reclaim the land for gardening or building houses. Soon this little-known secluded quagmire had become crowded and full with economic activities.



In April of the year of the Rooster (1873), Emperor Tự Đức visited the Thuận An port. While there, the Emperor witnessed the loss of imperial ships by pirates. That incident made Tự Đức recognize the weaknesses of the court and, perhaps because of that, he approved the request of Bùi Viện to go abroad to examine the situation and find help. He had received the mission approval by the recommendations of the great minister Trần Tiễn Thành to Emperor Tự Đức. Emperor Tự Đức gave Bùi Viện a solemn going-away ceremony at Túy Vân Mountain with careful advice before he set sail across the sea.

Leaving Annam in July 1873, Bùi Viện arrived in Hong Kong. After many written dialogues with the US consular officer, he realized that besides Britain and France, the US was also the nation that can be counted on. Knowing the aspirations of Bùi Viện, the US officer wrote an introductory letter to an influential friend in the US who could give him access to the US President. Bùi Viện immediately left Hong Kong for Yokohama (Japan) and found that this country just opened up and was not strong enough to help Vietnam. He then took a boat trip to cross the ocean to San Francisco, then New York and Washington, DC (1874) where he stayed for a year to try for a meeting with the 18th President of the US, Ulysses Simpson Grant. After almost a year of patient campaigning, he was received by President Ulysses Grant and convinced the US President to establish diplomatic relations and help An Nam against France. At that time, France and the US were at odds with each other because of the war between the US and Mexico, so President Grant expressed his intention to help Vietnam. However, it was a pity that Bùi Viện did not bring a national letter, so the two sides did not have a formal commitment.

The following year (1875) when he returned to Huế, he briefed the Emperor about the situation of the US and the eyewitness events. Upon hearing that, Emperor Tự Đức granted Bùi Viện an Imperial Envoy with a national letter for full official diplomacy. Once again, Bùi Viện went abroad to bring the national letter back to the US. But unfortunately, the world situation had adversely changed for An Nam. The US had changed its policy, so although President Grant was still welcoming the mission, but gave ample reasons to refuse aid for An Nam against the French. Too disappointed, Bùi Viện returned home. When he arrived in Đà Nẵng, he learned of his mother's death and asked for a leave for the mother's funeral. Tự Đức noted: *"I did not grant you any favor, yet you have considered the nation work as the work of your own family, do not mind worrying even far away, the saints will surely witness."* Three months later, he was recalled to the capital to hold the position of Chief Business Officer and later Chief of Sea Patrol.

In July 1877, Bùi Viện was ordered to set up a permanent naval force including 200 ships, 2000 soldiers, and a system of trading posts located in the Northern coastal provinces. This task force was responsible for the defense of these coastal provinces, transport of supplies for the state, and protection of merchant boats. Although the naval force of Bùi Viện was still young, it soon achieved some successes against the Chinese invaders. His sailors were equipped with weapons, fully trained, but also strictly disciplined and regulated for distinction. That showed new professionalism and progressive thinking of Bùi Viện in the contemporary context.

The progressive thoughts of Bùi Viện were also reflected in the main post stationing at Ba Lat which is the estuary bordering Thái Bình - Nam Định. However, he still set up more guard posts in the provinces Hải Dương, Hải Phòng, Quảng Nam, Đà Nẵng ... to expand waterways and open seaports to trading. The policy of setting up trading posts was to organize the trade between Vietnam and China, exchanging agricultural and native products, ceramics, and silk. Since then, they became an international place for goods exchange, as well as a prerequisite for importing civilization directly into the imperial capital and also an increase in revenue for the state from the collection of tax on foreign merchant ships entering the port. Unfortunately, the bold reformist ideology of Bùi Viện soon faded away. On the night of November 1, Tự Đức year 31 (1878), he died of sickness at the age of 39, leaving an unfinished career in modernization that marked a milestone in the history of Vietnam-US relations in modern times. Notably, he was the rope that tied the naval force to the court because once he was gone, those sailors were automatically disbanded; some returned to the old robbery, others voluntarily find other ways to make a living. They were only loyal to their master, not to the nation. Maybe their dissolution was the policy of some insiders of the Huế court at that time.

Bùi Viện was a brave mandarin with two trips to the US with the hopes of having a nation-saving relationship. Although 32 years old during his first trip, the court had relied on

him. After six provinces of Cochinchina fell into the hands of the French enemy, some Confucianists, including Bùi Viện, had the thought that if we wanted to win over France, we had to reform our country. With a patriotic heart, he and Hoàng Phan Thái, Nguyễn Tư Giản, Đặng Đức Thuận, and Nguyễn Trường Tộ founded the New Party Committee that recommended that the court should conduct political, military and cultural reforms ... However, his way was different and bold compared to contemporary Confucianists. That was the policy of reaching out to the sea, mastering coastal lands, reforming and equipping naval forces, and strengthening regional defense. He said that when the pirates were defeated, favorable conditions for trade by sea would occur.

### **Confucianists: NGUYỄN TRƯỜNG TỘ and NGUYỄN LỘ TRẠCH**

Nguyễn Trường Tộ and Nguyễn Lộ Trạch were devoted intellectuals born and raised when the country was invaded by the French and the people fell into hard times. They were scholars in an Asian society influenced by the culture of ancient China. A scholar with knowledge plays the leader's role and is ranked first among four people classes: Scholar, Farmer, Laborer, and Trader. Both men were the most prominent innovation thinkers during difficult times, but a generation apart, they had the great will to help the Emperor and the nation before the invasion. The proposals of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch were not submitted extensively to the Emperor like Nguyễn Trường Tộ but, depending on the immediate situation, they were measures for a timely response.

Nguyễn Trường Tộ was a famous reformer of Vietnam from the mid-nineteenth century. For nearly 10 years, from 1863 to 1871, he sent to the court of Nguyễn Dynasty nearly 60 proposals. His reforms were proposed in all fields such as economics, finance, politics, administration, military, foreign policy, and education. Only a year after Nguyễn Trường Tộ died at the age of 41, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, 20 years old, began to study all the proposals of Tộ through the training of his father-in-law, Military Minister Trần Tiến Thành, to continue the national modernization.

Under the reign of Emperor Tự Đức with the persecution of Catholic believers, Nguyễn Trường Tộ stood as an oppressed scholar suspected of supporting the enemy, but Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was an orthodox scholar belonging to a Confucian family and looking forward to the response and trust of the Emperor, other mandarins and Confucianist scholars. The two men also did not care about fame, did not like mandarin exams but were highly talented with a progressive mind that was unusual for the scholars at that time. History books, until a few decades ago, rarely mentioned Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, because the influence of Nguyễn Trường Tộ obscured most of his image, and above all, Trạch's original documents were almost completely lost. Only piecemeal "relics" contributed by descendants and later generations were left, including "Quỳ Ưu Lục" (a collection of his essays including two "Proposals for

current situation” and a “Commentary on world affairs”), and about a dozen poems in Chinese characters. And even his photograph, up to now, is still unclear.

**Nguyễn Trường Tộ (1830-1871)** was born in 1830 under the reign of Emperor Minh Mạng from a Catholic family for many generations. He was from the village of Bùi Chu (now Hưng Trung commune, Hưng Nguyên district, Nghệ An province). At the age of 10, he learned to read Chinese characters with his father, Nguyễn Quốc Thu, who was an oriental herbal doctor. After four years, when he was 14 years old, he studied with other Confucians like Baccalaureate Giai, Cống Hữu, and the retired Địa Linh district chief. These teachers were all compatriots, living in the same district. Nguyễn Trường Tộ passed the first local exam in his hometown at the age of 27 but was not allowed to take the bachelor exam organized by the Huế court because he was a Christian. While young, he was known to be the “genius Tộ” in the region. Growing up, he opened a class teaching Chinese characters. He got married with two children: a daughter and a son named Cữu (author of The Story of Nguyễn Trường Tộ). He just wished for Vietnam to be progressive, strong, and able to defend its independence. He was considered to be the person with the most extensive reform program and pushed national modernization into a raging movement throughout an important period of history. In the famous work of Vietnam National History, Phan Bội Châu praised Nguyễn Trường Tộ as "*the first grower of culture in our country*".



Famous among the Catholics in 1855, Tộ was invited by Bishop Gauthier (Ngô Gia Hậu) in Vinh to teach Chinese literature to the priests in Xã Đoài Monastery. The bishop also taught him French, Latin, and general scientific knowledge of the West. As a progressive and intelligent person with self-study motivation, Nguyễn Trường Tộ pursued practical learning and research on his own. Soon he was reading many Western books, studied Western culture, and was knowledgeable about world politics at the time when he was less than 30 years old.

At the end of 1858, he accompanied Bishop Gauthier to Đà Nẵng to avoid family separations (merging two or three Catholic families into a non-Catholic village and not allowing Catholic concentration as before). After the French were held in Đà Nẵng and before sending troops to the South, Admiral Rigault de Genouilly tried to force the French missionaries to return to their posts or went to shelter in Hong Kong. At the beginning of 1859, Bishop Gauthier took Nguyễn Trường Tộ to Hong Kong. From Hong Kong, he was sent to visit France and Italy alone. Interested in learning about the Western socio-political situation, he visited a lot of industrial facilities, meeting many intellectuals, technicians, and scholars in Europe. Especially, he was interested in the experimental scientific studies in Paris and also Chinese New Books and local publications in French and English. During the time abroad, especially while still in France, Nguyễn Trường Tộ had the opportunity to contact

many scientific and technical experts, learned a lot of knowledge about military, navigation, architecture, and industry, and visited many modern production establishments in France. He also met and made contacts with the great Japanese reformer Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) who was studying abroad. As a result, Nguyễn Trường Tộ possessed a fairly broad knowledge of many scientific disciplines and intended to bring back his knowledge to help the country.

At that time, he was one of the rare Vietnamese intellectuals with direct contact with many civilized and industrial achievements of the West. On his way abroad, he also saw the dangers of invasion by the British, French, and German forces on all the continents. At that time the British army invaded India, Burma, and Korea. Thinking about the situation at home, he realized that the enemy was strong, the country was weak, the court was confused and economically backward, and the society was troubled by a series of uprisings by farmers all over the country. Education at home still weighed heavily on reciting, repeating, and lack of realism and practical applications. Moreover, the dangers of foreign invasion were increasingly visible. These events had a strong impact on Nguyễn Trường Tộ. By the age of 30, he had a wide and deep knowledge of modern politics, economics, science, and technology. He had great ambitions and strong desires to reform and help the country before the invasion. He thought it best to find a plan for the delay as the only chance. During the audience with Pope Pio IX in Rome (according to Nguyễn Trường Cữu and Đào Duy Anh), he was given 100 books about modern studies. Perhaps the Catholic world leader had seen Nguyễn Trường Tộ as one who wanted to help the people and the country and expand his knowledge, so he helped him with such valuable documents. With an abundance of books that the Pope donated to Nguyễn Trường Tộ, indeed he was very willing to help Vietnam at that time.

In early 1861, Admiral Léonard Charner was ordered to bring troops from China to Saigon to expand the occupation area. With this determination, Charner convinced some French clergy in Hồng Kong, among them Bishop Gauthier, to return to Saigon. Accepting the invitation, Bishop Gauthier led Tộ back to his home country. When the French opened fire to take over the southern provinces, Nguyễn Trường Tộ worked as an interpreter for the French army, with the hope of contributing to reconcile the "conflict" and limit the damages to the country. He informed the mandarins of the enemy's plot to use the Vietnamese criminals for harassment in Tonkin. Once the French asked him to translate a captured secret document, he exchanged it for another and informed the court. After November he asked to stop because there was no hope for the reconciliation between France and Vietnam and the French decided to fight a war of invasion. He then returned to live in Gia Định. After the 1862 treaty allowing religious freedom, Emperor Tự Đức started to use a number of French and Vietnamese missionaries in some work related to the French expeditionary army, and this caused disagreement and opposition leading to the movements Văn Thân (Friendly Scholars) (1864) and Bình Tây Sát Tả (Defeat the French and Kill the Catholics) (1868) with bloody massacres.

Nguyễn Trường Tộ was influenced by two cultures, Eastern Confucianism and Western Christianity. He just carried the responsibility of being a Christian, with "righteousness" and "charity" towards everyone in society, while carrying the responsibility of a scholar toward his homeland according to the Confucian spirit of "*trung quân ái quốc - loyalty to the emperor and love of country*". While courageously sending several petitions to Emperor Tự Đức, Nguyễn Trường Tộ was one of many parishioners who were secretly sent abroad to study during 1858-1861 to help the French mission or diplomacy. He stopped collaborating with the French and started to write petitions to the imperial court of Huế to reform the country. Nguyễn Trường Tộ had an ambition of using his knowledge to modernize the country. He did not have the guilt of being a Catholic, a religion that was discriminated against, persecuted, seen as treason, and spying for French troops in their homeland. But he boldly presented his reformist thoughts to the Emperor. That showed that he was a fervent patriot and, despite all obstacles, was determined to help his people and homeland.

After the treaty of 1862, Tộ began to write proposals to the Huế court to reform the country and send the first petition to Nguyễn Bá Nghi, Imperial Envoy in Sài Gòn. He suggested that the court should reconcile with the French to avoid a painful war for the nation. He made contact with Trần Tiễn Thành for the first time in 1861 via Phạm Phú Thứ and learned that Regent Trần Tiễn Thành was influential to Emperor Tự Đức. In addition, Tộ also knew Trần Tiễn Thành from colleagues as an open-minded mandarin with progressive ideas of the West as well as a person who did not discriminate based on religion, locality, and Western ideas. Nguyễn Trường Tộ had sent via Phạm Phú Thứ to the Huế court a petition about his beliefs.

With the instructions of Phan Thanh Giản, in March 1863, Tộ sent 4 documents to Trần Tiễn Thành. Especially in the first document, he spent more time and effort than most to discuss reforms that needed to be done immediately for self-reliance and the development of the country. The later suggestions just detailed the basic points in these articles. From the beginning of 1861 to the beginning of 1866, Nguyễn Trường Tộ sent all 11 documents to the Huế court. He actively campaigned with Minister Thành to have his proposals received and considered by Emperor Tự Đức. But the texts were sent without being answered. Nguyễn Trường Tộ had waited for the response of Emperor Tự Đức with all his sincerity.

In 1863 after the first few petitions sent to the Huế court through Phạm Phú Thứ that went to Trần Tiễn Thành, he was invited to Huế to stay at the latter's residence to discuss the world for a month. The two became confidants with a friendship of "family members". Also because of this relationship, Trần Tiễn Thành suffered as a French collaborator like Catholic lay followers and clergy. Nguyễn Trường Tộ always felt that the Catholics were questioned by the Huế court and that the Emperor did not appreciate them. However, Trần Tiễn Thành also agreed with Nguyễn Trường Tộ in working together to pursue reforms and even asked



Emperor Tự Đức to end the persecution of Catholics. It was the Emperor who assigned Trần Tiễn Thành the responsibility of caring for and receiving Nguyễn Trường Tộ.

In Saigon during 1862-1864, Nguyễn Trường Tộ had the opportunity to exhibit his knowledge. He designed and personally commanded the construction of St Paul Monastery in Saigon. This was a Western-style building with vestiges remaining until now and its success made him famous. Around 1864 he was invited by the British to a scientific conference in the UK. Nguyễn Trường Tộ sent the letter of invitation to Trần Tiễn Thành and asked to volunteer to go to England to expand the relationship between two countries. Thành submitted all letters of Nguyễn Trường Tộ to Emperor Tự Đức. The Emperor ordered Trần Tiễn Thành to investigate Tộ and invited him to the court. But then the court refused to let Tộ go abroad. At that time, in July 1864, Nguyễn Trường Tộ had an accident and broke his pelvis while watching the construction of a monastery. Since then, he had a limp and a severe rheumatism that required him to rest on a bed for a while.

In addition, there were some other important documents like Plan to Enrich People (June 1864) and Land Reclamation (February 1866). Perhaps, after the Reclamation proposal, a document presenting the plan for the development of the country in a relatively clear and easy-to-do manner, he got the attention of Emperor Tự Đức. Invited by Trần Tiễn Thành for the second time, in February 1866, Tộ came back to Huế and was warmly welcomed. He was invited to Thành's private house to show intimacy between the two men and Tộ was allowed to stay in the compound of Military Ministry to discuss the nation's affairs. At the same time, Thành also asked Father Croc, a colleague of Bishop Gauthier, and Vietnamese Priest Nguyễn Hoàng along with Tộ, to buy a steam-powered boat. On the Emperor's order, Tộ went to Saigon to help with the acquisition of the London ship but he was ripped off. After submitting a resolution that was not executed, he was perhaps depressed and asked to return to Nghệ An (April 10, 1866). Although in Nghệ An, he still made contacts with the court and helped with some local affairs.

In a letter to Trần Tiễn Thành (written from Nghệ An dated June 15, 1866), his mind at that time was quite gloomy. He noticed the court's hesitation in applying his innovation proposals. He continued to send 3 more letters to Trần Tiễn Thành, and 2 letters to Phạm Phú Thứ, discussing weapon purchases, sending students abroad, economic development, and relations with great powers. Emperor Tự Đức knew that he had gone home and ordered all his petitions to be collected. After Trần Tiễn Thành submitted all his letters to the Emperor, including those sent to Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ, the Emperor immediately ordered Trần Tiễn Thành to consider whether to ask the Christians for help without dangers to the regime and why Tộ did not come even after the invitation? After reading carefully his documents, Emperor Tự Đức summoned him together with Bishop Gauthier to Huế and assigned them to a mission to France.

On August 17, 1866, Nguyễn Trường Tộ and Bishop Gauthier were invited by Emperor Tự Đức to Huế to go to France. They were charged to hire a mechanic and buy equipment to bring back and open a technical school in Huế. This time, Nguyễn Trường Tộ and the delegation were received by Emperor Tự Đức in the Forbidden City. Emperor Tự Đức wanted to ask the bishop for help in lobbying the French government for the redemption of three provinces ceded to France. But Nguyễn Trường Tộ answered that the bishop could not do it. He also advised the Emperor not to reveal to the bishop the Vietnamese position. He suggested to the Emperor to let him and Nguyễn Hoàng (Vietnamese Priest) negotiate that together. Some suggestions of Nguyễn Trường Tộ were approved by the Emperor. He advocated reforming the educational system and letting the people to learning pragmatic things first. In the case of Hồng Bảo who failed to overthrow Emperor Tự Đức, he advised the Emperor to reconcile wisely with the French to avoid fighting enemies both inside and outside.

On September 15 of that year, the delegation took the Emperor's ship to Saigon and stayed there waiting to go to France. During their stay, the two men met with Admiral Lagrandière and Spanish Consul to grasp the situation at the request of the Court. While waiting for the ship to go to France, before January 10, 1867, he sent to the Emperor 6 proposals for reform. On 10 January 1867, the delegation boarded L'orne to go to France. During eight months there, they bought books, tools, machines ... to build a technical school in Huế. This time Nguyễn Trường Tộ went to France by order of the Emperor and was given the opportunity to learn more about the situation. In addition, Bishop Gauthier went to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Ministry of Maritime and Colonies asking the funding for his programs; at the same time, they contacted some French merchants and engineers.

Arriving in France, he sent back to the Huế court a report on the pros and cons of the agreement with mining associations (Legacy No. 26). He also sent back to Huế (5-1867) eight issues were urgently needed to be addressed. On November 25, 1867, the delegation returned to Viet Nam and arrived in Huế on February 29, 1868. After his return, he experimented with coal mining methods and molten metal making by order of the Emperor. He launched a project to open vocational schools and recommended some people to be in charge of those schools. After returning from France, Tộ sent to the court nine more documents proposing reforms. But all proposals for reform as well as the opening of vocational schools were left unfinished because the war situation between France and Vietnam became more and more serious. Emperor Tự Đức and the court at that time were only interested in how to regain 6 provinces in Cochinchina that were lost to the French. Back home, during the period from the end of February 1868 to the end of April 1868, he consecutively sent the court at least 9 documents reporting on the trip to France and the ideas of opening technical schools and developing the country but they were not being carried out because of the fighting situation in Western Cochinchina.

After the unsuccessful negotiations between Trần Tiễn Thành and Admiral Lagrandière in Saigon at the end of January 1868, Emperor Tự Đức definitely appointed a mission to France to negotiate with the French government. In this matter, Tô's point of view was that the country needed to be strong and self-reliant to get back the lost land, and not through begging. However, he was still willing to follow the delegation and made very specific recommendations for the trip. Around mid-March 1868, Nguyễn Trường Tô was provided with horses and expenses back to Nghệ An to visit his old mother before leaving for France. However, after returning to Huế, he changed his mind and suggested to the Court not to send the delegation to France but instead it should only send the envoys to Saigon to negotiate.

His suggestions reached the hands of the Emperor who had read them and asked for the opinions of the court. But most officials were conservative, prayed for peace, and did not want to reform. Emperor Tự Đức was caught in the middle of such a court. How then could he boldly carry out the reforms? On one of his reform proposals, Emperor Tự Đức wrote down: "*Nguyễn Trường Tô can be useful. We can give him a position to gain his mind, and use him later?*" Trần Tiễn Thành informed Tô about the Emperor's intentions. But Nguyễn Trường Tô only wanted reforms and not fame nor officialdom for himself. Therefore, after a period of waiting in Huế and seeing that the Emperor did not carry out any reform, Nguyễn Trường Tô cited his illness and asked to return to his hometown to take care of his sickness! Emperor Tự Đức reread the old petitions and newer versions just sent in by Tô from Nghệ An, found them to be reasonable and ordered to find Nguyễn Trường Tô. But he was no longer in Huế but returned to Nghệ An already. Therefore, the Emperor was angry at him for not staying in the capital. Trần Tiễn Thành was also blamed by the Emperor. The Emperor complained that he was skeptical by leaving for his hometown ...

In the last few years of his life, Tô continued to send to the Huế court nearly 20 proposals on strategies to fight the enemy, negotiate with France, communicate with other countries, expand farming activities, reform the military ... Before his persistent attitude, Emperor Tự Đức once got angry and had a rebuke "Nguyễn Trường Tô believes too much in his suggestions ... Why did he urge so much, when my old methods are sufficient to rule the country already?" All the proposals were presented to Emperor Tự Đức. The emperor read them and had asked for more details from the Privy Council, but did not take them or carry them out seriously. The officials who consistently rejected all the reforms were Võ Trọng Bình, Trương Đăng Quế, Nguyễn Tri Phương and Queen Mother Từ Dũ.

His series of proposals during the period 1866 - 1868 easily identified Tô as a pacifist and they outlined three urgent things to revive the nation because it was backward and lacking money, with a weak military and no international friends. Nguyễn Trường Tô advocated that there was nothing better than a delay through peace to carry out the renewal. When the country was sufficiently strong and self-reliant, it would not be too late to reclaim the

Cochinchina provinces. Returning to Nghệ An, he was invited by the Governor of Nghệ An, Hoàng Kế Viêm, to command the digging of the Iron Canal. Since ancient times, many people had studied this canal but could not dig it. Nguyễn Trường Tộ studied the geology of this area and concluded that there was a section of the river with large rocks. Without explosives to break them as in the West, he advocated to avoid that river section and dig another route. With the canal digging completed, Nguyễn Trường Tộ wrote an essay about digging that canal. It was called Iron Canal because the river bed was full of rocks as hard as iron.

Returned to his hometown, he enthusiastically wrote 3 more proposals to be sent to the Emperor, including a plan to organize a fight against the French. At home, he helped build the Seminary in Vinh (i.e., the Episcopate now). At the beginning of November 1870, he asked again to be sent to the South to help defeat the French army to recover six provinces of Cochinchina. At the time, the French were losing to Prussia (Germany) and the French Revolution was emerging. On December 28, 1870, the petition of the Privy Council offered to Emperor Tự Đức had a passage: "We reviewed the secret proposals of Nguyễn Trường Tộ and conclude that he is on our side and this is maybe the time with a good opportunity. The opinions of the court also concur with my arguments. Trần Tiễn Thành".

In early 1871, he received an urgent order to Huế for the reason of "sending students away to France ", but actually to discuss with Emperor Tự Đức about military strategies and diplomacy that he presented in documents sent to the Court at the end of 1870. But the Imperial Court of Huế discussed again and again but could not come to a decision: The delegation was not sent to other countries, and plans to defeat the French to reclaim 6 provinces in Cochinchina were also not executed. After a few days in Huế, maybe because he didn't have much to do, or maybe because the old illness recurred, Nguyễn Trường Tộ asked for permission to return to Xã Đoài commune (now Nghi Điền commune, Nghi Lộc district, Nghệ An province).

On January 22, 1871, he suddenly died because of stomach bleeding. He was only 41 years old with a regret that the war situation in the North had turned worse and all reform programs had to be interrupted since 1873. His grave is located in Bùi Chu village, Hưng Trung commune, Hưng Nguyên district, province Nghệ An.

He died at a young age with a broad knowledge that no one else could match, such a talent and such fervent patriotism had been wasted and it was really a great misfortune for the Vietnamese people. The tragedy of Nguyễn Trường Tộ was an unbelievable but real paradox. He was patriotic but could not help the country overcome foreign invasion. He had outstanding talent but stumbled over too large obstacles - the conservative stagnation and resistance to modernization by the Tự Đức court and their persistent distrust of Christians. When reading his poems, we felt sorry for a human, a personality, a genius like him who was born in a chaotic time where the Emperor was not bright, the country was no longer

prosperous, and he was not trusted. Already over 150 years, in re-reading his poetry, we understand and respect his gallant and beautiful personality.

From 1863 to 1871, Nguyễn Trường Tộ submitted in all 58 proposals and plans on diplomacy and internal politics as well as the economy to reform the country. These reforms were for the military, government, education, economy, and society to be able to fight against foreign invasions. He displayed a respectable quality: perseverance – he was exceptionally patient in pursuit of goals he considered to be correct. Therefore, continuously for 10 years (1861 - 1871), Nguyễn Trường Tộ sent to Emperor Tự Đức and the Huế court many petitions (58 in total). These proposals covered all areas, focusing on key aspects of governing and developing the country. Tộ was seen as the man with the largest reform agenda, the one who pushed the country's modernization throughout a historical period. His reform program covered a series of important issues of society at the time such as reorganizing bureaucracy, developing industry, commerce, and finance, strengthening the military, expanding diplomacy, and reforming education. His reforms were quite comprehensive, covering almost all areas. According to him, for reforming the country, it was necessary to absorb all scientific and technical achievements of the West.

In **economic** terms, Nguyễn Trường Tộ proposed to the court many programs for economic development. He was primarily interested in making the people rich and the country strong, because according to him, those were necessary conditions to save the country and keep its independence. He suggested to the court to purchase motorboats, send people to the West to learn how to navigate, repair to be proactive, reduce costs and limit foreign dependence. He suggested developing mining, setting up factories for fabric weaving, and producing sugar and consumer goods for industrial development.

In **commerce**, Nguyễn Trường Tộ raised some issues such as organization and export of agricultural, forestry, seafood, and mineral products because they were plentiful and easy to produce. Tộ advocated a goods exchange by domestic trade as well as foreign trade. For domestic trade, Nguyễn Trường Tộ concerned mostly about roads and waterways. At that time, transport of goods was mainly by sea and he realized very clearly many difficulties because of piracy and natural disasters such as storms. He suggested digging a large canal from Hải Dương province to Thừa Thiên-Huế to overcome difficulties in transporting goods "The canal can be used by large and small boats, official and private boats, then we set up tax collection stations and create conditions for people to do business and bring great and long-term benefits not only for the provinces but also for the whole country. The State benefits from more taxes".

For **foreign trade**, Nguyễn Trường Tộ always emphasized the importance of opening seaports for ships of other countries to do business. In many proposals sent to the Huế court, Tộ always mentioned the need to expand the seaports for ships of other countries to trade, for

that was a trend inevitable in the world that Vietnam could not go against. To enrich the people and strengthen the country, doors must be opened to foreign trade. To develop foreign trade, he made some proposals to the court, specifically as follows:

- The court organized means of transport and procurement of ships to trade with foreign countries and encouraged private merchants to invest in business and trading;
- Build ports, dig canals, expand trade. Open trade and investment to exploit potential resources of the country. Encourage the export of agricultural, forestry, marine, and mineral products because that was "a great benefit. "

The Nguyễn Dynasty thoroughly implemented the policy of "expand agriculture and limit commerce", so agriculture was recovered, which had been seriously and continuously in decline due to domestic rebellions. However, this policy had hindered the development of other economic sectors such as trade, handicraft ... Both domestic and foreign trade were underdeveloped. These industries were only kept at a low level to satisfy the minimum needs of the people, the royal family as well as the court.

In **finance** Nguyễn Trường Tô proposed measures to make full use of taxes, reduce bureaucrats, quickly exploit national resources (sea, forests, land ...), borrow from the people, borrow foreign money and call for foreign investment ... Regarding finance, he advocated fair and reasonable tax collection, land measurement and annual population counting to avoid revenue loss and fraud. He proposed raising heavy taxes on casinos, imported alcohol, tobacco, and luxury goods to protect domestic goods, and imposing taxes on the rich. But that was only a limited source of revenue, and it was far more important to produce more wealth.

For **industry**, industrial innovation thoughts by Nguyễn Trường Tô were quite extensive, including exploiting resources and opening up for foreign investors to invest in exploiting the country's resources. He noticed the country's rich resources and their importance in economic recovery and development. In industrial reform, he attached great importance to the mining sector. The exploitation of mining resources, according to Nguyễn Trường Tô, must have a plan and needed labor specialized in the field of geology, exploration, and mining. He suggested that the court should ask the French foreign business association to help exploit some mines (like current international cooperation). With this cooperation, our country would have new financial resources since the State could collect land and housing rentals and workers learned a new profession.

Nguyễn Trường Tô also focused on the metal industry. He once talked about metal development in France and raised the need for iron in scientific, technical and economic development. To have a steel plant, he explained at that time, we "do not have enough money and strength to do it" but we must do it. He proposed that the people's iron payment so far

would be replaced by money that would be used to buy goods from foreign firms. This would be convenient for both the State and the people.

In **agriculture**, more than 90% of the population lived by farming but the country's agriculture at that time decreased seriously with little rice reserves and people's lives were getting more and more difficult. He stated the importance of the agricultural economy and the situation at that time. He proposed the Court must pay attention to technical improvement issues, including training of a team of agricultural experts, which he called "the agriculture mandarins" who would be in charge of local agriculture and forestry and widely disseminating agricultural knowledge to the people. He suggested limiting the devastation of floods by planting forests and digging canals. Nguyễn Trường Tộ also raised the issues of correcting the field boundaries, obtaining information on cultivated areas, setting taxes on all kinds of fields to avoid embezzlement by local authorities, attaching importance to gathering experienced individuals and promoting initiatives ...

During the Nguyễn Dynasty, private ownership of land was more developed than in previous dynasties, but it still not prevailed over the State's ownership (in theory, the Emperor was the owner of all lands in the country). The Nguyễn Dynasty allowed private rice fields to develop but still maintained public fields so the process of land privatization was constrained. Tộ noticed the farm industry was out of date with poor farming techniques and did not know how to make full use of good natural conditions, so to improve the agriculture Nguyễn Trường Tộ proposed the following measures:

First, reorganize agricultural boundaries and formulate policies to reclaim and improve the system of canals for agriculture. Accordingly, correct and open boundaries with concrete and practical methods because the boundaries of rice fields under the Nguyễn Dynasty were not clear and wastelands were still numerous. These would make a great impact on the development of the agricultural economy. With boundary correction and land reclamation, Nguyễn Trường Tộ considered them as "big policy" in agriculture that the whole world was interested in.

Second, set up a ministry of agriculture and train mandarins who knew farming techniques. Nguyễn Trường Tộ petitioned the Huế court: "*The reason Western countries are wealthy is largely due to agriculture. Hence, establish a ministry of agriculture with a grand mandarin as the leader*". According to him, the training of a contingent of agricultural specialists should be done immediately. These mandarins were not only in charge of agriculture but also forestry. They were trained to master the knowledge in geography, flora, weather, and agricultural organization. For each district, they should be chosen among the bachelors and baccalaureates to train as "full-fledged agriculture specialists", according to the motto of working while studying. To contribute to promoting agricultural development, the

court should soon open a major agricultural school, study Western agricultural science and learn from their experience for our country's agriculture.

Third, technical innovation in agriculture should be implemented to improve efficiency. Vietnam's agriculture was backward and under-developed, according to Tô, because there were few agricultural sciences, outdated farming techniques, and poor production. To improve techniques in agriculture and its efficiency, agricultural development, according to him, needed to overcome the prolonged stagnation. In three petitions on agriculture (Di Thảo number 18, 27, and 53) he mentioned 10 benefits to urge the Court to immediately implement the reclamation and to expand the cultivated areas.

**Taxes:** The feudal state during the Nguyễn Trường Tô period was mainly financed by taxes (personal and property taxes). According to Nguyễn Trường Tô, paying tax was the duty of each citizen, however, the tax payment rate must be fair and reasonable. He also proposed some tax collection measures to increase the country treasury.

First, it was recommended to measure the land and count annually the population to avoid loss of income and cheating. The State must re-measure the land plots to avoid loss of tax collection and accurate counting of the population to avoid the fraudulent understating of the population to pay taxes.

Second, it was proposed to increase taxation and tax collection of luxury goods and activities such as gambling, alcohol, cigarettes ... including taxation of the rich; taxation of tobacco and especially opium; heavy taxes on luxury goods and imported products such as tea, flowers, and silk to increase financial resources and protect domestic goods; heavy taxation of gambling that was strictly forbidden by a penalty from 1,000 up to 3,000 piasters; taxing alcohol, tea, singing and traveling and other useless activities that cost people money and cause many evils.

**Military:** To reform the military, Nguyễn Trường Tô stated that military theories must be respected, attach importance to soldiers, pay attention to training commanders, to enhance the national prestige of the military and built underground forces in the enemy areas. At the time Tô proposed to reform the army, things were very difficult. The Nguyễn military relied heavily on Nguyễn Tri Phương. But this general was not an omnipotent saint. Telling him to fight modern weapons with rusty machetes was a bit too much. For improvement, Tô proposed to retire half of the old soldiers and recruit unmarried twenties for new training. He mentioned a series of issues such as raising salaries, increasing remuneration for more loyal soldiers; reviewing all the military warfare books of ancient times; finding out and keeping what was still applicable in practice. When seeing that our military books were not adequate, he offered to buy and translate books of the West (not only from France) and then synthesized them into new books. He also proposed to hire former Western officers to train recruits. Even



the training of generals must be renovated. To be promoted, officers must undergo experimental tests with at least 6 different situations. Whoever solved a difficult situation or offered creative plans could serve in most provinces. He also asked the Emperor to put more labor responsibility and tax for students (candidates). There were many other items like building coastal defenses, improving weapons in the Western model, and so on. In general, these systematic proposals would increase the military strength of the Nguyễn Dynasty. Regarding the reasons, Tô wrote: "Literature is comparable to a beautiful shirt and martial arts like robust blood. People without blood will die, and having good clothes is useless".

In particular, Tô considered military strength as the foundation of negotiation. With Phan Thanh Giản in the past when he went to negotiate the Nhâm Tuất 1862 Treaty, he was completely in a weak position when the fort of Chí Hoà fell. He realized this event when he wrote: "Foreign countries do not dare to invade our country because we have a strong military ... If we don't have the reputation that will scare the enemy first, then reciting a poem or saying a word can drive the enemy away?" (1867).

**National Defense:** He suggested temporary peace with France to consolidate forces, tighten ranks, repair the military, draft new military manuals, organize military training with the help of Western experts, have preferential policies for the army, strengthen the critical places, build new weapons ... He also proposed plans to fight and expel the French from the Southern States (Di Thảo 40 on February 9, 1871). The greatest problem of Vietnam was the French invasion. The sounds of canons in Đà Nẵng in 1858 surprised the court and the people. Because the country was backward, without money, with a weak military and no international friends, Nguyễn Trường Tô advocated that there was nothing better than temporary peace to implement the innovations. Until self-reliant and strong, it was not too late to reclaim Cochinchina.

**Diplomacy:** Tô proposed multi-lateral diplomacy and necessary relations with major powers. A small country in the midst of competition among powerful countries had to skillfully restrain the outside forces and use them to restraint France and among themselves. He was also very wise to realize the principle in diplomatic relations with countries around the world was "both sides benefit". Sometimes a tough position was needed, sometimes a flexible position, but the ultimate goal must be achieved, i.e. "keeping what is not yet lost" and "reclaim what is lost gently and beneficially". In terms of diplomacy, he advocated a temporary yield to France and established relations with other countries to promote self-reliance and wait for the opportunity to chase away the enemy. As can be seen, Tô knew a lot about diplomacy and believed that he could negotiate well to help Tự Đức.

Nguyễn Trường Tô determined that the driving force behind the French invasion was because of their need for market. Obtaining this objective then they thought about resources. In the end, they would take over the country. However, this process did not take place one

way, but there was always a struggle between the two sides: postponement (not wanting an adventure abroad) and urgency (fighting hard to occupy before other countries).

With the request of delay time to reform the country, Nguyễn Trường Tộ in 6 petitions proposed a multilateral diplomatic strategy to expand the influence of the pacifist side: Peace with France was required. Temporarily leave the Southeast provinces and unite with Cambodian insurgents to divide the French into two eastern and west zones. Secret dealing with Spain, the country which should have interests in Cochinchina but was robbed by the French. Ask the Spaniards to put pressure on the French Foreign Department, increasing the reason for the postponement. In particular, use the benefits of the Southern provinces of Cochinchina with the rich Indian Ocean and the Great Lake in Cambodia to invite the British to intervene. England and France were each other enemies. Imitate what the Siamese were doing to make the French even sicker of being adventurous in a remote country and having to deal with "natural enemies". In short, it was necessary to help the French pacifists in France. Vietnam would then make more friends, with more multilateral relations and trade opportunities. Conspiracy of invasion of any country will be watched over by the others. With many people in the house, the bad ones would be afraid to act.

This was probably the easiest part to do but also Tự Đức was most disturbed. Adopting that proposal meant he had to leave Gia Định (the hometown of Từ Dũ, the Emperor's mother), that was unfilial. It was not known by accident or intentionally that the Emperor sent Nguyễn Trường Tộ to France to purchase equipment to open a technical school (as proposed by Tộ). Objectively, Tự Đức himself was not sure to have such an external vision like Tộ. If so, he would not have martyred the Catholics when his opponents waged war in the name of religion.

**Reform of the bureaucracy:** After criticizing the status of the bureaucracy under the Tự Đức reign, Nguyễn Trường Tộ also introduced reform measures such as: renewing academic studies, training mandarins in a modern way, treating equally by law regardless of public or officials to ensure fairness, limiting the Emperor's authority and being careful in the selection of bureaucrats ...

In the Nguyễn Dynasty, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, corruption and bribery were not diminished but somewhat exacerbated than before. This situation happened for many reasons. Many innovators of this period, especially Nguyễn Trường Tộ, pointed out that the cause of corruption in the bureaucracy was because the salary was too low. In Di Thảo number 27 (November 15, 1867), Nguyễn Trường Tộ proposed merging some provinces and districts, reducing the number of officials and increasing their salaries.

On stabilizing the socio-political situation, Nguyễn Trường Tộ considered fairness as a sustainable condition for social security. There should have a strict legal system, use public funds to help poor people, set up free schools for children... Social problems that Nguyễn Trường Tộ raised are still valid today. In the political sector, he advocated a policy of maintaining and consolidating the existing social order. In Di Thảo number 27 on 11-15-1867, he proposed merging some provinces and districts to streamline staffing and raise salaries for officials, draw border maps, perform census and statistics on all activities of the country. He also suggested the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (besides the traditional six Ministries) and an independent court. The Emperor could only pardon, not condemn.

**Education:** The reforms proposed by Nguyễn Trường Tộ were comprehensive and systematic, both concrete and practical with three outstanding policies: a critique of corrupted studies, emphasis on practical learning, and use of Western education. As in the article "Trần Tình" written in 1863, Nguyễn Trường Tộ wrote: "About learning, I do pay attention to all subjects: from the heights of astronomy to the depths of geography... ". Regarding the obsolete education: According to Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Vietnam's education at that time was focused on studying the unrealistic stories of the past that had no meaning in the present life. Learning these Chinese stories was not suitable for the country and did not help the country solve urgent problems at that time.

About the practical education, Nguyễn Trường Tộ said implementing real practical education would bring benefits to the country and people. He recommended the creation of National schools, provincial schools, and private schools, all teaching essential and practical matters. When asking questions, the focus should be on current issues such as law, soldiers, justice, military power, politics.... Any exam paper that analyzed clearly and accurately current events should be considered successful, but others based on old stories, literature, and classic books were to be secondary.

He launched learning and widely disseminated his experiences and initiatives among the people, adding a number of subjects to the current education system such as agriculture, astronomy, geography, encyclopedia, jurisprudence, ... He wanted to send students to foreign countries to study languages and modern science, use unified language and compile dictionaries for easy learning and understanding by the people.

The third policy in education reform of Nguyễn Trường Tộ was to encourage the learning of western education. Western education under the eyes of Nguyễn Trường Tộ was "a good model, so we need to learn", "they know how to study the real world", but he emphasized, "to study in the West is to learn their technology, talent, civilization, but not studying the West with the spirit of slavery and low self-esteem ". His policy of Western education mainly focused on studying engineering rather than studying the basic sciences of

the West. The origin of this policy stemmed from the reality of the country's urgent need for technicians to explore and exploit natural resources to serve the needs of protecting the country in danger of colonialist invasion.

**Customs:** Regarding culture, he recommended setting up printers to publish books and newspapers to improve the popular intellectual level, at the same time controlling, restricting, and prohibiting harmful books. In Di Thảo no.47, he paid attention to building a modern lifestyle such as road sanitation and against indiscriminate defecation. He also resisted laws that did not allow people to ride cars or wear shoes. He proposing each province set up an education camp managed by the bishops and purge evildoers and send them to reformatory labor to protect social order and security. Reading through his 58 proposals, we cannot help but marvel at his perseverance and extraordinary wisdom. These documents help us to better understand the personality and talent of Nguyễn Trường Tộ. On the other hand, they are still useful for today's society.

In reality, the Nguyễn Dynasty had developed some modernization plans involved in several fields such as mining, foreign relations, and trade, modern education, training technical staff, recruiting talent, reclaiming lands, establishing plantations, and irrigation.

For example, in terms of mining, in 1864 the court opened an iron mine in Quảng Bình; from 1867 to step up the mining of iron mines in Thừa Thiên and Thái Nguyên; coal mines in Thái Nguyên, Quảng Yên and Nông Sơn in Quảng Nam; Thạch Lâm silver mine in Cao Bằng; and gold mines in Quảng Nam. The court not only took the initiative but also involved Vietnamese or French, German, or Chinese private individuals.

Regarding agriculture, especially irrigation, since the end of 1857 Nguyễn Dynasty ordered the digging of rivers in Hà Tĩnh, Thừa Thiên Huế, and dykes in Hanoi, Bắc Ninh, Hưng Yên ...

In trade activities, the Huế court regularly sent missions to Siam, Hồng Kong, China, Singapore, France, and even to America. Trade relations with England, Spain, Germany, China, and Hong Kong were maintained for quite a long time. In October 1872, the Huế court sent a delegation to Hong Kong to negotiate with the German Consul. In 1875, Bùi Viện mission made contact with the US. In December 1875, the Huế court wanted to contact Italy but suffered the French prevention. For commercial development, in January 1866, the court established the Nhu Viễn port at Cấm River in Hải Dương province and reduced tax to attract foreign trade. In September 1874 it again opened a market from Ninh Hải station upwards the two sides of the Cấm River to attract merchants from China and the West. In April 1876, the court removed the ban on going to sea to trade, allowing free trade with outside, and hired steamboat builders to transport goods. In June 1876 it sent merchants abroad to buy and sell

goods and in December 1876 it exempted tax for Western customers to attract them to buy and sell.

In the education and training of talents, the Nguyễn Dynasty made many attempts to innovate, such as in March 1863 it asked localities to recommend those who were literate in French. By September 1864, again, students were encouraged to study French and established monetary rewards. In July 1866 it invited people to translate Western books. In 1868 it again sent people to study French in Saigon. From November 1878, the State provided for 5-year funding for students to study abroad foreign languages and when returning home, they would be recognized as the equivalent of baccalaureate and bachelor's degrees and appointed as mandarins. In May 1878 it opened a French school in Hải Dương and from July 1879 all people had the right to learn French. Western science books were translated and printed for sale to mandarins and students. From September 1881 they were printed and issued to schools everywhere.

In training a contingent of technicians, from December 1864, the Huế court sent 8 healthy people to learn to build steam-engine ships. In March 1866 it sent 20 people to learn the skills of the West. The court also ordered the Privy Council to translate western technical books for teaching students. In September 1866 it sent people to France to buy ships, telescopes, telephones, printing tools, barometers, generators, chemicals, marine manuals, and electrical books. In 1868 it hired foreign technicians to teach students, and at the same time, it forced the teachers must regularly teach students military strategies and knowledge about farming and irrigation. Huế court also encouraged learning overseas, with strict regulations from 1878 to 5-year funding for students to learn about shipbuilding, gun casting, weapon making, mining ... and when returning to be recognized as equivalent to baccalaureate and bachelor's degree and appointed as mandarins. In 1879 the court sent people to study mechanics in Toulon, France, and at the end of the year sent again 20 students to Spain to study industry (but when they came to Saigon, they were stopped by the French). In 1881, 12 students were sent to Hồng Kong to study at the British industrial school ...

To recruit talents, from July 1858, the state persuaded local authorities to nominate talented people. In May 1861, it was defined that the talented people, including 10 areas, were proficient in martial arts, stronger than most people, knowledgeable in astronomy, geography, food, good communication, medicine, good detective skills, and technical skills. From 1870 it sent students from the Central region to Saigon to learn French and English, but the results were limited because there was not much support from the people because of the xenophobic and anti-French spirits, These were still the main goals of the scholars and conservative bureaucrats who sometimes even blamed the Christians entirely that they tried to fight. In June 1871 again it called on officials to recommend talented people according to 8 criteria: virtue, intelligence, good at governing, commanding soldiers, treating patients, negotiating, reasoning, and knowing literature, technical skills, knowing how to make material objects,

mastering the medical profession, fortune-telling, astronomy, and calendar-making. In February 1873 it put out regulations to recommend people learn a foreign language. From May 1876, it was stipulated that the entire population had the right to nominate talented people without limits, which was also the culmination of the recruitment of talented people of the court.

In terms of military, inferiority to the West caused the Nguyễn court to make some improvements aimed at enhancing the military's power, such as buying more steamships and purchasing, repairing, forging, and casting firearms. In September 1865, it bought a large copper ship of the Mãn Thỏa brand; in April 1869 it sent people to Hạ Châu to find and buy motor ships; in May 1870 bought a copper ship Đằng Huy; in October 1872 it bought German steam engines in Hong Kong; in December 1874 it asked the French to sell more motorboats for fighting the sea pirates; in April 1882 it sent people to Hong Kong to buy midsize steamships ...

The Huế court also interested in the production and procurement of weapons, such as in November 1869 it asked local authorities to find people who knew how to manufacture bombs, steamship machinery, saw machines, guns; in December 1872 it ordered Nghệ An province to cast 500 cannons and 2000 firearms; in December 1882 it sent a Lạng Sơn official to Hong Kong to buy 200 Western rifles and 2 chests of gunpowder for the military. In December 1875 the court ordered the translation of 16 Western books about technical knowledge for training the new military.

By January 1873, officials in Nha Thương Bạc (Office of Foreign Relations) also asked to open 3 seaports for foreign trade. The court also strengthened the coastal defense force of the country. It also formed naval squadrons to protect the coasts and to prevent sea pirates. In addition to the reform efforts mentioned above, the Nguyễn Dynasty also made efforts to recruit people to reclaim wastelands, set up plantations and mountain sites to store food, weapons, and prepare the military force to support the war against France.

These actions showed that the Nguyễn did not completely deny the renewal requests of the patriots, nor they were insignificant efforts and expenses. But that much had not yet shown that the Nguyễn Dynasty implemented the reforms on a large scale and were also tentative. Some of them were only perfunctory, half-hearted ... As a result, the resurgent reform trend did not change the fate of history and the failure of the Nguyễn Dynasty was assured.

The proposals for national renewal by Nguyễn Trường Tộ also failed. Most proposals that Nguyễn Trường Tộ submitted in the last years of his life were discussed again and again by the court of Emperor Tự Đức. But they were not adopted nor implemented. The main

reason was that the existing socio-political situation prevented their implementation. Emperor Tự Đức and the court were old-fashioned, out-of-date, and confused, e.g., the awkward handling of Nam Kỳ (Southern provinces) problem.

Tô was also the typical tragedy of most contemporary Catholics. An anti-Catholic atmosphere was still heavy. Social suspicions and hostilities between the non-Catholics and Catholics grew with each step of enemy invasion. Some comments said that his reform proposals did not address some issues such as division of land to farmers, reduction of rent for tenants, tax exemption for the poor ... Hence, they were not fully supported by the people. His short life 41 years and his desire to reform the country through 58 proposals, though not yet realized, have left us with many valuable lessons today. His reforms were comprehensive in the fields of economy, finance, education, defense, diplomacy, culture, and customs. He said that they should be real, practical, and forward-looking.

However, the reform proposals of Nguyễn Trường Tô faced limitations when he did not realize the intentions of the French colonialists in invading the country. He also misjudged those of the Western missionaries who took advantage of religious beliefs to serve the colonial invasion. Meanwhile, he valued too highly the weapons and courage of the invaders. On the other hand, he underestimated the spirit of patriotism, the will to fight against the foreign invasion which has been molded from thousands of generations. Nguyễn Trường Tô also could not see the urgent demands of the masses, e.g., tax and rent reduction, so his reform proposals were not fully supported.

Nguyễn Trường Tô was the most typical thinker in the late nineteenth century. He was a reformer but he considered "the throne is precious, the mandarin is important", i.e., he did not want to change the monarchy but a capable ruler to lead all the people and reform the country. Nguyễn Trường Tô also realized the role of law and said that the Emperor should also humble himself to obey the law. Thus, in the opinion of Nguyễn Trường Tô, these elements of democratic thought appeared very early, interwoven with the perspectives of Confucianism. These new ideas were too strange for the scholars because "their language is too high".

In short, the emergence of the country's renewal trend in the late nineteenth century showed it was a "remedy" for a critical period of national history where Trần Tiễn Thành and Phạm Phú Thứ shared their advocacy to mandarins and Emperors. Nguyễn Trường Tô was an intellectual with an outstanding reform mindset. His innovative thinking had gone beyond that of Confucian intellectuals at that time. It contributed to awakening the conscience, courage, and patriotism of the Vietnamese people. His reform proposals were not approved or fully implemented by the Nguyễn court but they still provided valuable lessons to date.

**Nguyễn Lộ Trạch (1853-1898)** was one of five sons of Dr. Nguyễn Thanh Oai, Minister of Justice, and the son-in-law of Dr. Trần Tiễn Thành, Military Minister under the reign of Emperor Tự Đức. He was considered a Confucian scholar following the great ideal of Nguyễn Trường Tộ and reflected the reform efforts of Thành. A good source about the life of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch together with his activities was a book by his daughter Nguyễn Thị Nghiêın that was published by Anh Minh in 1966. He was born on February 15, 1853 (some documents stated in 1852) and died in 1898. His original name was Hà Nhân, alias Kỳ Am, alias Qùy Ưu (also other nicknames such as Hồ Thiên ...). He was from Kế Môn village, Phong Điền district, Thừa Thiên province (now Điền Môn commune, Phong Điền - Thừa Thiên Huế) but Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was born in Cam Lộ (Quảng Trị). According to Nguyễn Huệ Chi (Literary Dictionary, World Publishing House, 2004), his ancestors were from the Thanh - Nghệ - Tĩnh region today and emigrated with Nguyễn Hoàng to Thuận Hóa in the 16th century.



He belonged to an elite family. His father was Nguyễn Thanh Oai (Doctorate in 1843 under the reign of Emperor Thiệu Trị and fellow laureate with Phạm Phú Thứ) and held many important positions such as Governor-General of Ninh Thái (Bắc Ninh and Thái Nguyên), Acting Minister of Justice ... Different from contemporary scholars, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch did not take the exams but focused on the applications of scientific knowledge. Due to his generous personality, he liked traveling throughout the country, making friends with other scholars and like-minded people. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch did not care for becoming a mandarin, only interested in learning, so in the newspaper "Voice of the People" number 424 on October 3, 1931, Nguyễn Thượng Hiên (1868-1925) wrote in Trạch's biography "*At that time, there was a tendency for scholars in the country to study for the mandarin exams, but he often talked about European and American events, so people thought he was crazy and gave him the nickname of "The Crazy Son".*

From a young age, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch had been famous as a studious and knowledgeable young man with outstanding intelligence. He studied widely and learned a lot, but did not study to become a mandarin to enrich himself and his family. He was a true patriot, but too idealistic. It was these two close fathers who helped him absorb the renovation ideas through two archives of books that the two doctorates owned and the proposals of Nguyễn Trường Tộ: the country must reform, be strong and self-reliant to have hope to escape the yoke of colonialism. In his situation, being the son of a great mandarin, Dr. Nguyễn Thanh Oai, and also the son-in-law of a grand mandarin of the court, Dr. Trần Tiễn Thành, surely with his intelligence and talent, the road of a great mandarin ahead would be wide open to him.

However, Trạch never dreamed of becoming a great mandarin like his father and father-in-law. He chose a different way because in front of his eyes, the country was being invaded



and the people were becoming slaves. The contemporary education based on Confucianism was too out of date and did not help the people and the country before the threat of invasion by a foreign state.

In 1872, after the passing of Tô, Trần Tiễn Thành married one of his daughters named Nhàn, 17 years old, to Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, 20 years old. Trần Tiễn Thành immediately educated Trạch of his reform wishes to continue the path of Tô via the books and magazines at his home and office. Modern books and documents on self-reliance, Western innovations, and science were neglected by contemporaries, but his intelligence made him pay attention to them, especially the proposals of Tô. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was strongly influenced by these reform proposals. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch and Trần Thị Nhàn lived together for 8 years and had 3 sons who died young. Soon after that, the two divorced in 1880. Although no longer a son-in-law, Trạch was still treasured by Trần Tiễn Thành, regularly discussing together the state affairs and considered him to be the successor of Nguyễn Trường Tô even though the two did not "live at the same time".

Through three proposals, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch did not present a system of reforms as comprehensive as Nguyễn Trường Tô, but only depending on the immediate situation where he outlined timely and practical measures to halt the imminent collapse. Therefore, after the agreement of 1877 in the 30<sup>th</sup> year of Tự Đức, the Huế court conducted doctoral exams. At the age of 25, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, although not participating in these exams, offered "Strategies for the Current Situation I" (aka First Proposal), exposing the hypocrisy and peace pretending of the French and, at the same time, he proposed the "immediate policy of self-reliance and strength for the country". In naming his proposal as such, he wanted to say that these were immediate measures for emergency rescue. After analyzing the enemy's situation, he saw that it was too late to initiate long-term reforms and, thus, proposed immediate measures. The "Strategies for the Current Situation" was well-received by the scholarly world but did not interest the court.

The First Proposal by Trạch was written three years after the 1874 Giáp Tuất treaty when the French had swallowed up six southern provinces and initially began annexing the whole country. He suggested to Emperor Tự Đức to urgently reform the country and the military to be able in dealing with the conspiracy to annex Vietnam by the French colonialists. Before the pressure of France, in 1874, the Huế court signed a treaty to cede the remaining three western provinces, but the ambitious French wanted to go further by occupying the Northern provinces (Tonkin) and a route for easy trade with China. He found that the court officials were too weak, with most of them advocating concessions to France to seek peace or to ask China for help. Both of these positions were detrimental for Vietnam and contrary to the wishes of his father-in-law.

The First Proposal expressed the worries of a young intellectual who could not sit quietly in front of the nation's imminent catastrophe, while the rulers were self-satisfying and caught off guard against the enemy's plot. A special feature of the proposal was the concept of war - defense - draw. At the time, the peace side was winning, and the war side was having difficulty. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch fiercely criticized the notion of peace without a war, neither did he endorse the policy of only defense by some military leaders. He did not separate the war - defense - conciliation, but he wisely analyzed the mutual relationships between battle - defense - draw to reach the ultimate goal of fighting the enemy and defeating him. It can be said that Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's strategic stance at this time was fighting for defense, and only solid defense, self-reliance, and strength could be done. In the current situation, in terms of military tactics and weapons, there was a wide gap between the enemy and the country. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch advocated overcoming the differences by learning the enemy's forte i.e., ships and guns to modernize the military. He also boldly suggested an active coastal defense to limit the enemy's forte and not the usual passive defense.

Discussing war-defense, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch put it based on self-reliance and a rich and strong country and saw it as the secret for success. In his first proposal, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch showed a clear vision, new thinking, and passionate love for the country. Unfortunately, his ideas had not been accepted by the court. However, he was not discouraged and continued to keep track of the times and present, whenever the opportunity arose, his concerns and measures to save the country.

A scholar with the same idea of expanding diplomacy with European and American countries to fight against France was Nguyễn Hiệp. In 1879, after a mission in Siam, Nguyễn Hiệp informed Emperor Tự Đức that Siam (Thailand) used to trade with the Portuguese and it should know well about the situation of Western countries. Until the British came to ask for trade access, Siam again advocated peace with England, so Siam was not conquered and still kept its sovereignty. No foreigner could bully it. Therefore, it did not lose land and reconciled with many foreign countries (France, Italy, Germany, America, Spain, Portugal, Netherlands, UK).

At the beginning of 1881, the academician Phan Liêm (1833-1896), the third son of the great minister Phan Thanh Giản, proposed to the court to open business trade, establish trade associations, promote mining, send people to study foreign languages and industry in foreign countries. With the same thought, in 1882, after returning from a mission in Hong Kong, was the mandarin Lê Đình (1847-1920). He was from La Kham village, Điện Bàn district, Quảng Nam province and was the father of medical doctors Lê Đình Thám and Lê Đình Dương. He told Emperor Tự Đức that Western countries became rich and prosperous through trade and military development. They used the military to support trade and used trade to develop the military, so improving trade was a top priority. Japan imitated the West

and there was trade everywhere. China also did this and its people flourished. Our country had lots of resources (such as gold, silver, copper, coal mines ...) and intelligent people. If we tried hard, then a rich and strong country would not be difficult. It was only due to the love of poetry and a thinking too conservative that the country could not develop ...

At the end of his life, in early 1882, Trần Tiễn Thành tried through the Privy Council to allow Nguyễn Lộ Trạch to study abroad in Hong Kong. Trạch also worked to exert diplomatic pressure on the French government as the domestic situation turned out to be serious after losing Hanoi. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch sent a letter to Trần Tiễn Thành, with the intention of reminding the court through his father-in-law "to strive for self-reliance and self-rule, and have secret relations with hostile powers to France such as England, Germany ... to restrain the French ". In this letter written a few months before the second proposal, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch asked to take on the difficult responsibility of communicating with foreign countries. However, Emperor Tự Đức had criticized that "language is too high" and the study abroad by Trạch did not occur because it was refused. The Emperor still advocated concessions to the French colonialists and on the other hand wanted to ask China for help, while this country was torn apart by European powers. Further, the last disappointment was that Trần Tiễn Thành failed to present the weak situation of China to protest the sending of the delegation to China by warlord faction. Trần Tiễn Thành immediately asked for retirement.

In April 1882 on the occasion of the French conquest of Hanoi (the second time), the French moved to Tonkin, took Hanoi, and then attacked Nam Định. Peace no longer existed and the war broke out fiercely in the provinces of Tonkin. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was asked to write a rescue petition. The second proposal was born under such circumstances. It included the ideas of Nguyễn Trường Tộ and an additional proposal on technical study abroad and political advocacy. At that time the French had consolidated a strong rule from South to North, so he assessed: "Today is not the same as before. In the past it could be done but now what we want to do, we cannot do it in time ". Compared with the time when he wrote the first proposal 5 years ago, the situation had changed. War occurred again and the internal situation was troubled. It would be difficult to fight or defend and the risk of losing the country had appeared. However, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch still tried to propose to the court immediate positive strategies to save the situation. In that dire situation, the peace faction was disillusioned and no longer dared to show off miracles for "a peaceful world ... nothing to worry about?" as before, but was only "sitting, complaining and feeling helpless". On the war side, some recklessly intended to "gather the remaining forces for one last fight". Nguyễn Lộ Trạch criticized both of these false policies. To cope with the extremely difficult situation, he suggested the 5 positive measures:

1/ Move the capital to Thanh Hóa to take advantage of its strategic position to preserve the national origins. When analyzing the location of Huế Citadel, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch stated

that Huế was too close to the coast and easily threatened by French ships. He also asserted that Thanh Hóa had many advantages in economy, politics, and military over Phú Xuân (Huế). His proposal to the Emperor was not accepted. It can be said that this was a daring and wise thought of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch that no other reformers had.

2/ Accumulate rice and money to have enough food. Establish plantations in the northern mountainous areas. Select good troops for the defense of strongholds, the rest sent to the above plantations to make food. In wartime, the issue of food to feed the troops must be placed at the top. If the soldiers were starving, they would not have the will to fight the enemy. Therefore, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch proposed the policy of mobilizing soldiers, developing agriculture, and cultivating rice fields to get rich. He also paid attention to the rights of the laborers. Also in this proposal, he wanted to change the conservative concept of "hate of commerce" to instead advocate trade with foreign countries both doing economics and "learning useful things to enrich and strengthen the country".

3/ Regularly train soldiers and purchase new weapons. To have a strong army, it must first make the people and country rich. He not only recognized Western weapons reached a high level of sophistication, but he also wanted to find ways to learn them. In the second proposal, he said "For example, motorboats and fire canons with superior technology were manufactured initially in England, France, Prussia and then Japan, and eventually China. Yet for decades, our country had not had one." Indeed, this was a very damaging delay. With conservative and backward thinking, the Nguyễn did not want to learn French technology but also showed contempt. The objective of learning was to pass the exams and become a mandarin. This thought has created a popular mentality in society that few people want to learn engineering. Therefore, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch suggested incentive policies aimed at attracting smart people to learn engineering. Learning Western technology demonstrated his strategic vision. Unfortunately, the royal court refused. In this proposal, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch also discussed military reforms by equipping the military with new weapons. He also suggested the formation of a local militia in each village that could be used quickly and effectively.

4/ Send talented youths abroad to study Western science and engineering. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch did not directly contact the West, but he did not have a conservative and backward mind like other contemporary scholars. "Please choose the children of a mandarin or a mandarin, or those who passed the bachelor exams, or those with intelligence and good character. Provide them with a good salary, send them abroad to study, and plan good rewards afterward then they would be willing to study for a few years and would have success ..."

5/ Expand diplomacy with European countries, especially Germany and Great Britain, for their support and restraint of the French. This was a perceptive acumen consistent with

historical strides. Diplomatic demands between countries are a daily international issue. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch also pointed out the relationships would help us exploit mutual domination among countries and would create an equilibrium: "Nowadays, the countries of the West are intertwined with each other. Strong and weak forced each other as in the Warring States period." This was a sharp vision because opening the door to trade was the path of innovation to help the country become self-reliant and strong.

By the Second Proposal, the world's situation was not the same as before. Therefore, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch mainly mentioned urgent measures of immediate nature. However, it should not be assumed that Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was only worried about immediate rescue and had no long-term view. Many of his measures were not only to deal with the immediate situation, but also created conditions to get out of the difficult situation but also as a support for self-reliance, long-term autonomy, and then gradually progressed to win in the end. Furthermore, those countermeasures also required a foundation for reform, which meant breaking with conservative ideas and attitudes, praying for security, and fearing the enemy. These attitudes prevailed in those in power and the actions of the Nguyễn Dynasty. Thus, the proposals of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch were shelved like those of Nguyễn Trường Tộ before and other contemporary reformers.

Compared with the First Proposal, these measures were broader, more specific, and could be implemented immediately. At this time, the French had torn apart the Treaty of Giáp Tuất (1874) and nothing could bind the court in the implementation of self-defense measures, so previous prohibitions such as foreign engineering studies and broad diplomacy were no longer applicable. However, specific measures of the Second proposal still showed us the strategic vision of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch. Not only he proposed a general strategy but also quite specific measures that could be implemented.

In the Second Proposal, he mentioned more specific criteria in the selection the secret diplomat: "Please choose someone who is moderate, has never been glorified (...), acts as a businessman and given a lot of money to make large acquaintances. In a year or two, there must be results to report the court". He placed lots of hope on this policy, but the wise mind of strategist Nguyễn Lộ Trạch never assumed that it was enough to rely solely on foreign help. He said: "*The survival or loss of a nation is due to politics and education, not strong or weak, large or small. Compared to China, although Japan is a small country but it will become a powerful country thanks to the reforms and modernization policy of Meiji*". However, like the First Proposal, the Second Proposal did not interest the court because of the fierce fighting situation, so the war side prevailed with the Emperor. Like Nguyễn Trường Tộ, he advocated self-reliance and learning from the scientific and technical advances of the West.

He commented that China was being dominated and torn apart by European powers such as Britain, France, Prussia, and Holland. The Chinese could not take care of themselves, how could they help another country? But our country's situation at that time was too late and the Emperor and the court could not manage anything either, so his enthusiastic words were not considered. Unfortunately, the opposition factions were mistakenly suspicious of the leaders of the modernization side as "pro-French" and "treasonous". The results of these constant reform efforts were the death of Trần Tiễn Thành in 1883 and Phan Thanh Giản before in 1867 or the passing of the Chinese revolutionary Đàm Tự Đĩnh (1865-1898) and the reform-minded Chinese Emperor Guangxu (Quang Tự) in 1908.

At the end of his reign, Emperor Tự Đức saw the country shrinking even more because of the French occupation and the only way left was to ask for Chinese aid. With the delegation led by Phạm Thiện Duật he sent a private letter addressed to Lý Hồng Chương (Li Hongzhang), Chinese Prime Minister, on January 26, 1883 (NXT, p.280). In this letter, Emperor Tự Đức praised China for opening the doors to trade with foreign countries, encouraging learning and research of new Western techniques while, at the same time, he called on China to help Vietnam defeat France with a list of requested aids. Emperor Tự Đức asked China to help recruit foreign experts and military trainers, supply the necessary equipment and materials to manufacture weapons or battleships as well as accept Vietnamese students.

The issues discussed in this secret letter seemed that Emperor Tự Đức had learned one lesson after the 1874 Peace Treaty when France provided 5 steamboats, 100 canons, and 1000 rifles and ammunition as well as military specialists to help organize the marines, financial specialists, and engineers. But the equipment received from France was all damaged and the technical specialists were harassed and left to go home. In the letter dated 7-11-1878 sent to Governor of Cochinchina Philastre, the French representative in Huế wrote: "The Annam government received 2,000 guns which are temporary weapons that they can use with good care. At the moment or a year later, not one gun can still be used normally. The ships are in the same situation, as everything else".

This was a lesson at the last moment of his life and after so many years, Emperor Tự Đức had sought to refuse or insist on not implementing the proposals of the modernization faction. When the Emperor realized that his country needed real change and seeing clearly the French real intentions then it was too late, only relying on China was left. Emperor Tự Đức also looked far when he asked Phạm Phú Thứ, after returning home full of new thoughts, to be the teacher of Ứng Chân who was 16 years old. Western civilization was welcomed by Ứng Chân who explored and learned more with the priest Thơ since he had a liberal nature and did not like to be confined to Confucianism. Through his will, Emperor Tự Đức said that he had to choose an older prince for national leadership in this difficult time. Ứng Chân was selected a long time ago, had learned to be Emperor, and acted on behalf of the Emperor in important festivities. The Emperor must have known that Ứng Chân was instructed by the

great master Phạm Phú Thứ, was not very fond of Confucian studies but had a progressive spirit and a generous personality. He was in intimate communication with Catholics and French, and since 25 years old, intentionally learned more French and Western culture with Father Nguyễn Hữu Thơ. Thus, when Emperor Tự Đức chose Ứng Chân to be heir to the throne, the two ministers Tường-Thuyết decided to dethrone the new Emperor. Probably his studying French and having progressive thoughts were disclosed to Emperor Tự Đức. The royal court had also opened for a long time French classes for some people and sent people to study abroad in France, Hong Kong, Singapore ... Moreover, Father Thơ had worked as a court interpreter (he was given a North Star medal by the French) and served in the Huế parish (led by bishop Caspar) from 1879 to 1887 (Father Thơ was the uncle of Nguyễn Hữu Bài and the teacher of Ngô Đình Khả; both passed the training in Penang and were very close to the French bishops). It was during this time Father Thơ became a private secretary to Ứng Chân. The militant faction thought that this was a conspiracy by the Franco-Vietnamese clergy to exert a direct influence on the future Emperor, so this was used as an excuse for dethronement.

The tragic death of Trần Tiễn Thành resulted in the disruption of the influence of the innovation faction among the masses and scholars for a quite long time. Here was a lesson for history through the words of Cao Cao during the Three Kingdoms period: "I have no more military power in my hands, so I will be harmed by others ". Nguyễn Lộ Trạch retreated to seclusion after refusing to cooperate with the royal court that was dominated by the war faction. He began to lecture on his proposals after witnessing and searching the reasons for the failure of the Văn Thân (1867-1874) and Cần Vương (1885-1896) movements. These included true patriots who loved their country, though temperamental but willing to sacrifice for the country.

In January 1884, Regent Nguyễn Văn Tường invited Trạch and Phạm Phú Dương (Phạm Phú Thứ's son) to the Huế capital to discuss national affairs. As in a previous letter sent to both regents Tường-Thuyết, he repeated the proposals against foreign aggression, i.e., 5 strategies of the Second Proposal to save the immediate emergency. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch retreated to seclusion after rejecting Nguyễn Văn Tường's invitation to become a mandarin.

In 1885, after the fall of the Huế imperial city, Emperor Hàm Nghi fled to Quảng Trị, gave the edict Cần Vương and was then arrested (1888). The Cần Vương movement faced fierce repression by the French colonialists and henchmen. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch took refuge, but "still did not stop being anxious about the times ". There was no hope for change and the country's collapse happened exactly as he had been foreseen. He had tried to prevent it by offering saving measures but failed because the court was short-sighted and conservative. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch sat at home and collected his proposals into a book named Quỳ Ưu Lục with a preface and a conclusion dated September 16, Giáp Thân year (1884). Both essays showed the griefs and sadness of a patriotic intellectual who foresaw the disaster for the

nation and tried to find a way out through proposals that were sent to authorities but were not used. Finally, only resentment remained and he gained the reputation of being a prophet, and the people still suffered under the heels of the invaders. Writing these lines, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch wanted to express his suffering for posterity. Frustrated, painful, and sad but Nguyễn Lộ Trạch never ignored current events. He traveled extensively, communicating with like-minded people. Confucian scholars in later generations respected him as a senior.

Although not as well known to the world as Nguyễn Trường Tộ, his comments on the situation in Vietnam at that time and his proposed reforms had been judged by later generations to be very discerning and timely. For a century now, from Phan Bội Châu to scholars and intellectuals today with differences in opinion, political stance, and religion, but when studying about Nguyễn Trường Tộ and Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, the majority still have similar remarks: the two men are patriots and pioneers of the Vietnam modernization movement in the 19th century. Phan Bội Châu in "Vietnam Quốc Sử Khảo" (Survey of Vietnamese History) written in Chinese and published in Japan in 1908 said: "Nguyễn Trường Tộ was one of those who laid the first foundations for civilization for the country ". It was Huỳnh Thúc Kháng who called Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was "a person of culture" of Vietnamese culture.

Thus, what are the causes of failure of the national renewal movement in Vietnam in the second half of the nineteenth century?

First, the reform movement had only really blossomed after the country was invaded and Nam Kỳ (Cochinchina) fell into enemy hands, respectively. That shows the reforms are mainly to keep independence from foreign invasion after the military failures of the Huế Royal Court in Cochinchina, rather than for the sake of establishing a new socio-economic level higher than before. Because of that, the reforms did not have important social and human support. They lack sufficient popular support and must rely on the feudal state for reform.

Second, the Nguyễn court played the main role of reform implementation, but from Emperor down to mandarins these rulers were from feudal class with feudal thoughts while this bourgeois reform required a change in the society of both infrastructure and superstructure following the capitalist path, and the feudal class itself had to begin to tend to capitalization. Because of this, the majority of the Nguyễn Dynasty was dominated by narrow vision and conservatism, so the reform agenda has been largely suppressed.

Third, the reform implementation must have the collaboration of a community already transforming more or less in quality and the support of people who know more or less scientific and technical advances. It was difficult for the Nguyễn court to renovate because there was no one who knew how to organize and manage, no workmanship, and weak technology. These deficiencies lead to unfinished business, gullible corruption, and failures.



Fourth, the reforms only happened after Cochinchina was lost, the financial resources were exhausted, food shortage continued to grow and rebellions occurred everywhere. Therefore, investment in innovation was not enough, foreign study programs were abandoned halfway and imported machines did not work properly. The lousy financial situation contributed to the failure of reforms.

Fifth, after the invasion and occupation of Cochinchina by the French colonialists, the Huế court did not yet lose complete independence, but the French could take advantage of past unequal treaties signed in turn with the Nguyễn to prevent implementation of renovation by the Nguyễn Dynasty. On several occasions, the French colonialists prevented Vietnamese students from studying abroad or the purchase of foreign machinery and weapons that were also destroyed by the French.

If we respect Nguyễn Trường Tộ, the pioneer reformer with comprehensive and bold proposals, then we will value more Nguyễn Lộ Trạch and consider him as a continuation of the unfinished reforms of Nguyễn Trường Tộ. Even the proposals of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch on national renewal were not implemented by the Court, or performed half-heartedly to nowhere, but all his reform proposals have been highly appreciated by later generations. He has left many precious legacies. Today reading Nguyễn Lộ Trạch not only explores historical documents that have receded into the past, but on the contrary, the problems that he raised in his time are still hot today for us when the country is entering a new, forward-looking era with the goals of a rich population within a strong country.

The modernization was not implemented because there was not enough time or capable personnel (lack of specialists and budget). It was also because Emperor Tự Đức had absolute authority and wholeheartedly defended the country against the French, but he was too conservative, too cautious, and too trusting in the Chinese Qing Dynasty. He did not closely follow the actual situation as well as lacked the insight of Emperor Meiji in Japan at that time. The main causes were the big difference in Franco-Vietnamese weapons and the continued Chinese-style Confucianism that the Emperors Gia Long and Minh Mạng lacked preparation and improvement in all aspects during their reigns of 50 years, leaving the unlucky Tự Đức to face the invader with many internal difficulties, outdated weapons, and half-hearted reforms. These weaknesses caused the loss of national sovereignty and independence after his death.

The historical values of the national renewal efforts under the Tự Đức reign showed the requirement of full cooperation and determination of the development of society and economy to quickly enrich and strengthen the country to fight the foreign invasion. In a quarter of a century from the date of the French first invasion in 1858 to the Harmand peace treaty on August 25, 1883, if the Emperor and the court of Huế decided to modernize the country and expand trade with the West as proposed by progressive scholars or mandarins such as Phan Thanh Giản, Trần Tiễn Thành, Phạm Phú Thứ, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, and Nguyễn Lộ Trạch ... then Vietnam could

have maintained its independence and autonomy like Japan and Thailand. Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn had asked himself “ *if the political powers at that time were held by Phan Thanh Giản and then Trần Tiễn Thành, would our country be still belonged to France? Would our country modernize fast enough?*”.

## **Part 3. Court Upheavals by the War Faction 1883-1885**

### **Chapter 1. "Three Emperors in Four Months" 1883**

#### **Section.1.a. Questions of Royal Will**

In June of the year of Quý Mùi 1883, Emperor Tự Đức suffered from lung disease due to his hard work started writing a will under lack of clarity and confusion. He must decide to choose between Prince Ứng Chân (Dục Đức) 31 years old or the youngest prince Ứng Đăng (later Emperor Kiến Phúc) 14 years old to succeed the throne. By his own experience with the abandonment of the eldest son (Hồng Bảo) in favor of the younger son (Tự Đức) of his father Emperor Thiệu Trị, Tự Đức reluctantly chose his eldest son but left adverse comments on his defects detrimental to the new Emperor. One month before his passing, Emperor Tự Đức forced Trần Tiễn Thành (on his convalescence) to accept the position of First Regent even though at that time, the real powers were completely in the hands of the other two Regents Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết. Emperor Tự Đức assigned the members of Privy Council, including Trần Tiễn Thành, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết, and together with Thọ Xuân Vương Miên Định (1810-1886) and Tuy Lý Vương Miên Trinh (1820-1897) (both were uncles of Tự Đức), to prevent the wrongdoings of the new Emperor.

On July 17, 1883, before his death, Emperor Tự Đức had shown to three Regents Trần Tiễn Thành, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết his will to enthrone his eldest son that included this paragraph “... *due to an eye defect his behavior was unclear, he may not be smart in the future, his lust is not a good thing, he may not be qualified for the job. The country has an older Emperor that is lucky for the nation, if abandoned, what should I do?*”). Surprised that the eldest Prince would be enthroned, Tường could not be at peace in his heart, neither could Thuyết be happy. After reading the will, the three regents asked the Emperor to drop the detrimental sentences for Ứng Chân, but Tự Đức refused and said that those words served as a warning to him. When they learned that Ứng Chân would be crowned, the two Tường-Thuyết were surprised but they also asked Emperor Tự Đức to leave out those sentences to protect the new Emperor but then changed their mind within five days to work together to overthrow him and take over all powers.

On July 18, 1883, before the coronation, Ung Chân invited the three regents to Quang Minh Palace to discuss the omission of detrimental passages to protect the new Emperor's reputation. All three regents agreed. Ung Chân said that: *"The Emperor is the head of the hundred families, must be the one with the highest morality. The previous Emperor was worried about the people, so there were strict words in the will. Nowadays, the country is in a difficult situation and diplomatic relations are strained. If those words are allowed to spread, the French would find excuses to cause trouble and the neighbors would also look down. With such a situation, what would the Court do?"* Then he recommended the removal of the above passage, but the mandarins replied: *"The Council of Regents has asked to leave it out but the previous Emperor refused"*. Ung Chân asked the mandarins to think some more to *"avoid damage to the nation"*. Tường and Thuyết held secret talks to remove the new emperor.

On July 19, 1883, after the will was signed by Tự Đức before his death, the mandarins held the ceremony to enthrone Ung Chân. At the time to read the will, Tường declared sick and removed himself to the side. Thuyết stood to one side and let Trần Tiễn Thành read it. Thành read to that paragraph in a lower voice and a cough. Tường was on the left-east side, acting oddly, *"why omit part of the will of the Emperor?"*. Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết spoke up to protest and stop the ceremony. They then asked Tham Tri (Assistant Minister) Nguyễn Trọng Hợp (1834-1902) to read it back aloud and then dismissed the court. After reading the will, the two of them questioned Trần Tiễn Thành. The latter knew that he was deceived, and said *"It's not like I did not read it, but I had a cough, ran out of breath and read it in a low voice."* Thuyết did not approve, said it was wrong and bad, just like what Tường said. He then sent his guards to guard inside and outside the palace and arrested all the Emperor's followers (about 10 people led by Nguyễn Như Khuê).

### **Section.1.b. Royal Palace Coup: Dục Đức**

July 21, 1883, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết (without Trần Tiễn Thành) submitted a petition to Great Queen Mother (Hoàng Thái Hậu) Từ Dũ, openly accusing Dục Đức of fixing the will, bringing a Catholic priest (Father Thơ who was his French teacher and himself a mandarin) to work in his office and having close relations with the French Resident-



Superior Rheinart in the past (indirectly reporting and providing the secret request to the Qing Dynasty in 1882). Great Queen Mother Từ Dũ accepted their petition. Three days later, July 23, 1883, at the Court, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết took turns presenting the reasons for removing Dục Đức and declared his dethronement following the orders of two Queen Mothers (Great Queen Mother Từ Dũ and Queen Mother Lê Thiên Anh, mother and wife of Emperor Tự Đức, respectively). Trần Tiễn Thành was accused of voluntarily modifying the will and reading it incorrectly. Trần Tiễn Thành spoke up and protested. He was overwhelmed and scolded by Tôn Thất Thuyết: *"You also committed a lot of big mistakes, what else do you want to say?"* Ngự Sử (Censor) Phan

Đình Phùng (1847-1895) bravely stood up to protest fiercely against the removal of Dục Đức. Phan Đình Phùng complained, *“The new Emperor had not yet committed any crime and then discarded like that, that is not right. The basis is shaken, what will become the future of the nation?”*. He was immediately arrested, stripped of all titles, and ordered back to his original village. So, the whole court was silent.

Ứng Chân was detained in Dục Đức School, then moved to Royal Medical Institute. In September of the Quý Mùi year (October 10, 1883), he was transferred to the Thừa Thiên prison. A few weeks later, Tường-Thuyết ordered to give him poison but this plot failed. Maybe Thuyết wanted to kill Ứng Chân before Phạm Thận Duật (who was the teacher of Dục Đức) returned to Huế from China. Dục Đức was starved, but a loving guard gave him daily a handful of rice and an old shirt soaked in water. He squeezed it out to drink. After a while, the scheme was revealed and the soldier could not supply food anymore. Dục Đức died in the Thừa Phủ prison on October 6, 1883 (according to royal genealogy). He died on 6 September in Giáp Thân year (October 24, 1884) at the age of 31. He did not have time to have a name for his reign. Future generations took the name Dục Đức Đường, a place of residence and also a place of imprisonment to call him Emperor Dục Đức.

### Section.1.c. Death of the Fallen Emperor: Hiệp Hòa

The two regents Thuyết-Tường were dissatisfied when Emperor Tự Đức wrote in his will the name Ứng Chân in front of three regents because Thuyết wanted to choose Hồng Dật (later Emperor Hiệp Hòa but he was also killed) and Tường preferred Ứng Đăng (he also died later unexpectedly). The competition to nominate the next Emperor between Tường and



Thuyết was noted in ĐNTL, t8. p.578, June of Quý Mùi year 1883 as follows: *“Văn Tường pays attention to the third prince while Thuyết prefers Prince Lãng (Hồng Dật). Văn Tường thought he could not compete, and then suggested the enthronement of an older Emperor to Gia Thọ palace (i.e., Từ Dũ Great Queen Mother). She issued an edict: “Currently, we are worried about the Emperor passing, outside about foreign invaders, the young people really can’t take care of state affairs, but this old body does not know much. Therefore, I am asking Royal relatives (Tôn Nhân), Regents and mandarins, together choose a proper brother of the Emperor who should be enthroned.”* Thuyết went to the Privy Council (Cơ Mật Viện) and told Minister Nguyễn Trọng Hợp, Thị lang (Assistant Minister) Lâm Hoành, Trần Thúc Nhẫn, Hoàng Hữu Thường, Chief of Royal Guards Tôn Thất Thái: *“Today, we are looking for an older Emperor and no one is better than Lãng Quốc Công, you should say so”*. At that time, no one knew until the meeting in Tả Vu (Left Pavilion). Tường and Thuyết asked members of the royal family who said: *“Although we are in the same family but daily each person usually lives in our own house. We do not know each other well, so we ask the 3 regents and Court mandarins to make the selection”*. Trọng Hợp then said that among the princes, there was Lãng Quốc Công who was commended for his studies, nominated by the Emperor to the Tôn Đài position. Could

Lăng Quốc Công be able to handle the existing state affairs? Lăng Quốc Công stood up crying: *"I am the youngest child of the previous Emperor, with a mediocre nature; for a million times I dare not accept"*. Văn Tường and Thuyết both said that it was a blessing of the nation and asked him not to refuse it. Then together with the dignitaries, they signed a petition asking for the approval of the Great Mother Queen to set him up as Emperor”.

After deposing Emperor Dục Đức, the two regents Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường presented their petition to the two Queen Mothers to propose the enthronement of Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Dật, the youngest brother of Emperor Tự Đức. Approved by the Queen Mothers, Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường immediately sent a delegation to the mansion of Hồng Dật in Kim Long, to bring him to the palace to be Emperor. Now, however, the throne had become a very dangerous place so no one wanted to sit on it. So, Hồng Dật refused: *"I am the youngest son of the previous Emperor, with a mediocre nature, for a million times I dare not accept"*. The delegation begged: *"For the welfare of the nation, please do not refuse."* Hồng Dật still disagreed. The delegation had to use force to bring him into the Citadel in Huế. On June 27, the Year of Quý Mùi (July 30, 1883), Hồng Dật ascended the throne and became Emperor Hiệp Hòa when urgent news arrived that the French brought troops from Hanoi to Huế.

After the enthronement ceremony of Emperor Hiệp Hòa, Trần Tiễn Thành was promoted to Thái Bảo Càn Chánh Điện Đại Học Sĩ (Highest Column of the Empire). Two mandarins Hoàng Côn and Đặng Trần Hanh under the pressure of the two regents submitted a petition charging Thành for deliberately skipping a few paragraphs in the will that he was assigned to read at the Hữu Vu (Right Pavilion). Hiệp Hòa brought the matter out for deliberation, the first time in August 1883 Trần Tiễn Thành responded to the accusations and presented a petition as follows: *"On the 14th of last month, the previous Emperor summoned us to the temple, Trần Tiễn Thành with Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết, to give us the will to put in the box. We went to the eunuch room to read it. The will has the following paragraph: - He is lustful, in addition to the very bad character, can't handle big state affairs. Nguyễn Văn Tường said: The will is for succeeding Heaven's throne. I'm afraid this part doesn't fit well, so please leave it out. Tôn Thất Thuyết and myself Trần Tiễn Thành also had the same idea and we submitted together a similar petition. But the previous Emperor refused. On day 18, Thụy Quốc Công summoned us to Quang Minh Palace and said: - *"The Emperor who is at the top of hundreds of families and must also be the leader of morality. In the will of the previous Emperor, because of "concern for the future, it should have strict admonitions, such as the one about the bad behavior of the Prince"*. I do not dare to contradict the previous Emperor but add: However, at this time the country is in turmoil, the diplomatic relations are strained, if rumors spread about the country. Not only the troublemakers will use that as an excuse, but the neighbors will also consider contempt. How to save this situation?"*. The prince asked if we could remove that paragraph but he dared not. We replied that the Council of Regents had requested to remove that paragraph but the

*previous Emperor refused and now it can no longer be changed. The prince asked everyone to think more and not to hurt the nation. On the 19th (the day of the announcement of the will), Nguyễn Văn Tường excused himself from his illness. I myself am excused many times due to old age. Tôn Thất Thuyết said I am the eldest to read the will. At the declaration ceremony I was ready, I could no longer refuse, I had to read the will. But I was in so great pain that it blurred my vision, caused deafness in the ears, and an uncertain mind due to a recent illness. I also do not remember if I made any mistakes when I read it. Now I am accused by the mandarin Khoa Đạo, I would like to bear all the consequences".* Trần Tiễn Thành was demoted two grades. He then asked for resignation and retirement.

When he first took the throne, Hiệp Hòa maintained a friendly attitude to Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường and wanted to implement the treaty signed with the French. But later on, seeing that these two were too authoritarian, Emperor Hiệp Hòa was annoyed with them and intended step by step to eliminate Tôn Thất Thuyết. Furthermore, Hiệp Hòa usually reprimanded the officials for the mistreatment of Catholics, making Tường against the Emperor. Tôn Thất Thuyết realized this, so he pretended to resign from the position of Minister of Military Affairs to avoid the reputation of using the army to manipulate power. Emperor Hiệp Hòa moved him to work at the Ministry of Rites, then to the Ministry of Interior Affairs. But in fact, Tôn Thất Thuyết still ran all military operations. Tôn Thất Thuyết also established a private bodyguard group called Phấn Nghĩa team. This army wore a blue shirt and a hat with wide rims, bearing machetes and it usually followed the orders of Tôn Thất Thuyết to kill his opponents.

At that time, in dealing with the French, the opinions of Emperor Hiệp Hòa and some princes often contradicted those of Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường. Under pressure from the French and for wanting to protect the throne and royal family, Emperor Hiệp Hòa wanted to accept the protection of the French and decided to have Tuy Lý Vương Miên Trinh dealing directly with the French Resident-Superior (Khâm Sứ) in Huế and limiting Nguyễn Văn Tường's power to diplomacy with China. The French colonialists knew very well the distinction between the two factions, the peace and the war factions, inside the Nguyễn Dynasty at that time, as well as the real roles and positions of the individuals in the dynasty such as Emperor Hiệp Hòa, Queen Dowager Từ Dũ, Tôn Thất Thuyết, Nguyễn Văn Tường... They wanted to entice Emperor Hiệp Hòa and Từ Dũ with some princes to the peace faction. Now it was clear that they were pro-French and against the two Tường and Thuyết of the war faction. The ink of the words "*all of you have to be of the same mind*" in the will was not dry, yet the two regents Tường-Thuyết had revealed their nature of greed and hunger of power that caused harm to the country when the enemy inside and the enemy outside were causing trouble. Regent Trần Tiễn Thành was old and weak, no longer had real power and influence on the court. The Resident-Superior (Khâm Sứ) of Trung Kỳ (Annam, Central Vietnam) at that time, De Champeaux, said: "The Emperor of Hiệp Hòa who is recently enthroned is just

a supporting character, the current main characters are Great Mother Queen Từ Dũ, and some princes such as Gia Hưng Quận Vương Hồng Hưu and Tuy Lý Vương Miên Trinh."

On the same day, July 19, 1883, of Tự Đức passing, the French Ministry of Navy and Ministry of Colonial Affairs in Paris approved the plan to move the target from Hanoi to Huế to complete the invasion of Vietnam at the request of Resident-Superior Pierre Paul Rheinart in Huế and Governor of the Southern Provinces Thomson. On July 30, 1883, during the enthronement of Emperor Hiệp Hòa, in Hải Phòng the operation plan was decided between Major General Bouet commanding the French military force operating in the North and Vice-Admiral Courbet commanding the naval fleet with many gunboats and marines ready for battle against Thuận An, Huế. Harmand and Champeaux went to Huế on a cruise ship and brought with them a draft protection treaty that had been prepared to force the signature of the Huế Court. The French Cabinet under Jules Ferry in the telegram on August 11, 1883, allowed "*to show force at Thuận An port, not to advance to Huế.*"

On August 16, 1883 French Admiral Anatole-Amédée-Prosper Courbet or Amédée Courbet (1827-1885) arrived in Thuận An and commanded the French fleet to attack Trần Hải station. Starting with a letter declaring war, the French asked the governor of Thuận An to surrender unconditionally. After three days of battle against the French modern weapons, Trần Hải citadel fell on August 21, 1883, despite the Vietnamese fierce resistance with ancient weapons, swords, and spears. Many military officers gave great sacrifices: the mandarins Lê Chuẩn, Lê Sĩ, Nguyễn Trung and Lâm Hoàng died in battle, while Trần Thúc Nhẫn committed suicide. Meanwhile, Military Minister Thuyết who held the command flag of Emperor of Hiệp Hòa rested and avoided the conflict in the Citadel (according to Phan Khôi). The Huế court had to appoint Minister Nguyễn Trọng Hợp to ask for mediation.

On August 21, 1883, Trần Tiễn Thành, 71 years old and on long-term sick leave, was requested to return (until the end of September, the Emperor officially approved his retirement) to the court to discuss peace. Emperor Hiệp Hòa asked Trần Tiễn Thành (excluded from court matters and without real authority) to go to Kim Long Church to meet Bishop Caspar as a mediator to negotiate the cease-fire between Admiral Courbet and Nguyễn Trọng Hợp in Thuận An due to previous foreign relations. But Trần Tiễn Thành did not go down to Thuận An, nor did he participate in the negotiations to sign the Treaty. Bishop Caspar led Nguyễn Trọng Hợp, representing the Huế court, to Thuận An aboard the naval ship to request a cease-fire and accept the French conditions (confirmation received in a letter dated September 5, 1883, by Bishop Caspar to the Society of Foreign Missionaries Paris) (Op. Cit., VIII, 163). Official history stated that the Emperor had to summon retired minister Trần Đình Túc. The latter was appointed to be Minister of Rites and Court representative with full authority and together with Nguyễn Trọng Hợp as Minister of Interior Affairs and member of Privy Council, they went to the French mission to discuss and sign a protection treaty under the guns of France.

On August 22, 1883, Harmand sent the Nguyễn Dynasty an ultimatum that the Huế court had seriously violated the 1862 Nhâm Tuất Treaty on freedom of religious preaching. Harmand threatened: “You have only two things to decide: peace or war. If you choose war, the war will lead to your downfall. If you want peace, we are ready to give it to you, but you must accept our protection. And that event will bring the best luck that your court can survive “.

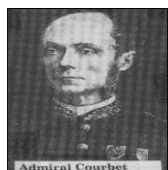


Trần Đình Túc



Nguyễn Trọng Hợp

On August 25, 1883, the Treaty for the Protectorate was signed with Jules Harmand and de Champeaux: Annam must accept the protection of France and France had rights controlling the Vietnamese relations with other countries, including China; and province Bình Thuận had to join Cochinchina (South Vietnam) occupied by the French. Upon signing of the peace treaty, Túc was allowed to retire again.



Admiral A Courbet



The signing ceremony of the Treaty of 1883 Quy Mui Harmand



Tổng ủy viên Bắc sĩ Harmand Khâm sứ Champeaux

Yet, Emperor Hiệp Hòa also listened to De Champeaux, sending an envoy to Tonkin to summon the military commanders to return to the Capital while the French-Sino conflict was still on. Although both failed attempts, generals like Hoàng Kế Viêm (1820-1909), Trương Quang Đản (1833-1914), Ngô Tất Ninh ... all disobeyed the order and stayed with the soldiers to continue to resist the French. By this action, the Emperor made many people even more indignant. Many Vietnamese soldiers continued fighting against the French and caused much damage to the French with the help of the Chinese army. This peace signing made Tôn Thất Thuyết very dissatisfied. Tôn Thất Thuyết insulted Emperor Hiệp Hòa before the Court and refused to bow in front of the Emperor. Tôn Thất Thuyết told Nguyễn Văn Tường: “ *It is Lãng Quốc Hồng Dật that I have put both faith and hope to honor the throne with the Hiệp Hòa era. The parable is still there. But like turning over the hand, signing the peace treaty is like surrendering to the enemy. The land was lost and the army generals were forced to return. What kind of person is that Emperor then?* ”. Tường-Thuyết immediately had intended of causing many obstacles in the Franco-Vietnamese relations in Huế to not enforce the provisions of this 1883 treaty.



After this event, the relationship between Emperor Hiệp Hòa and the two regents was more strained. Two princes, Assistant Minister Hồng Sâm (son of Tuy Lý Vương) and Hồng Phi (son of Tùng Thiện Vương), protested and criticized Tường-Thuyết at the court. They sent a secret petition to Hiệp Hòa to kill the two autocratic regents. With a new French envoy to Huế, the Emperor immediately sent Tuy Lý Vương to contact Resident-Superior De Champeaux who was just been appointed, to discuss the procedure for a court appearance and secret appeal to the French to remove the regent Tôn Thất Thuyết. Therefore, on November 28, 1883, a private meeting between the Emperor and De Champeaux happened in the morning at the Văn Minh Palace but the two regents Tường-Thuyết did not know. Hiệp Hòa's secret appeal to De Champeaux was brought to the French by Hường Kỳ that day. This secret letter fell into the hands of Tường.

This plan to kill the two regents was revealed with various details due to biased opinions or false rumors at that time that passed down:

- According to Đào Duy Anh (1904-1988), the content was announced by eunuch Phạm Tác (private? secret agent?). According to some contemporaries who wanted anonymity, after reading the letter, Hiệp Hòa wrote: "Passed to Trần Tiễn Thành" and ordered eunuch Phạm Tác to hand it over to Hồng Phi. But the eunuch mistakenly gave it to Minister Phạm Như Xương (1829-1883). Phạm Như Xương immediately transferred to the Emperor since it was not for him. Hiệp Hòa got angry and punished Phạm Tác 30 whips. It is that punishment that led the latter to betray.
- According to other witnesses who also wanted to hide their name, through historian Đào Duy Anh, after reading the Emperor wrote: "Transferred to Trần Tiễn Thành". Hiệp Hòa gave it eunuch Trần Đạt to bring it to Trần Tiễn Thành. As a rule, the letter was put in a sealed box. It was dusk, and the eunuch came to Nhật Tinh gate and ran into Nguyễn Văn Tường who was entering the palace. Seeing the eunuch confused, he had doubts and took the box, opened it, and saw his death sentence.
- Recently, according to researcher Trần Đức Anh Sơn, the secret plan was revealed by Trần Quốc, the brother of eunuch Trần Đạt, who knew about the plan. Quốc informed Nguyễn Văn Tường. Nguyễn Văn Tường ordered his guards to intercept Emperor Hiệp Hòa's men and confiscated the secret document approving the killing of Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường.

Nguyễn Văn Tường went straight to the Ministry of Military Affairs to find Tôn Thất Thuyết there. After Thuyết learned about the incident, he proposed to immediately summon the court to judge the Emperor Hiệp Hòa, Trần Tiễn Thành, Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phi regarding the planned murder of two regents. Having obtained a secret letter from the

Emperor asking for French help, Tôn Thất Thuyết immediately ordered the guards to arrest Hiệp Hòa for trial. However, after listening to the advice of Nguyễn Văn Tường, Tôn Thất Thuyết suppressed his anger, summoned the mandarins to sign a petition to Great Mother Queen Từ Dũ, reciting the crimes of Emperor Hiệp Hòa and proposing his removal. Emperor Hiệp Hòa was charged with the following crimes: plotting with foreigners, fostering treason ... In danger and self-defense, "act first with strength" at the second watch (8:00 pm) Tôn Thất Thuyết ordered the closure of all gates of the Citadel, and gathered soldiers outside the Palace at the house next to Tịch Điền (Agriculture Palace), waiting for all mandarins to come to sign the petition for removal of the Emperor, after a meeting at the Finance Ministry to hear Tường presenting the reasons for the Emperor dismissal. It was not until 2 a.m. on November 29, 1883, the signing of the consent was complete, except for Đoàn Văn Hội who claimed to be ill and did not come (so he was forced to resign later). Early in the morning, the court sent a representative to the residence of Trần Tiễn Thành in Gia Hội to present the incident and ask for his signature of consent, but Thành refused and wrote on the petition: (DNTL q32) *"Enthronement and dethronement are a very important matter, why do many times? I have retired and dare not participate "*.

After the two Tường-Thuyết forced Ung Đăng to accept the throne, Hiệp Hòa knew what was going on, wrote his own abdication and asked to return to his residence. In the edict, the Emperor confessed: "lack of morality ... committing the crime of selling the country to the French" and asked Trần Đạt to bring it to the two regents. Further, according to Bửu Kế, Chief Librarian of Huế University Library, the secret letter of Hiệp Hòa to De Champeaux that Hường Kỷ took to the Residence fell into the hands of Tường and Hường Kỷ was imprisoned in the evening of November 28, 1883. The existence of these two documents (Sâm-Phi petition and secret letter from Hiệp Hòa to Champeaux) had confused historians until Bửu Kế cleared this matter. (Father A. Delvaux wrote in BAVH in 1916 confirming the existence of this letter).

The main historical data are these 3 documents which are still in existence to this day and can avoid recent conjectures or inferences:

- The secret petition to Hiệp Hòa by Vice Minister Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phi (There is no name of Thành or in the Emperor's comments)
- The resignation edict of Emperor Hiệp Hòa
- The document deposing Emperor Hiệp Hòa (with disagreement written by Trần Tiễn Thành).

Around 3 pm on November 29, 1883, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết went to Diên Thọ palace to offer the petition of "removal of the old Emperor to establish the new Emperor" to Great Mother Queen. At the same time, they sent Ông Ich Khiêm and Trương Đăng Duệ with 50 soldiers into the palace Càn Thành to force Emperor Hiệp Hòa to commit

suicide. Seeing a group of armed men burst into the palace, Emperor Hiệp Hòa let out a horrified cry and curled up in a blanket. The soldiers rushed in, took the Emperor wrapped in blankets, and carried him to Dục Đức Đường. There were three things left on the table: a sword, a string, and a cup of poison. Ông Ích Khiêm and Trương Đăng Duệ knelt in front of Emperor Hiệp Hòa, crying while saying: "*By the orders of the Great Mother Queen and the court, please choose one of these three things and take care of yourself*". Emperor Hiệp Hòa lamented: "*What crime do I commit that the royal court wants to kill me?*". Ông Ích Khiêm and Trương Đăng Duệ replied: "*We only know to obey the above command and we understand nothing else*". Emperor Hiệp Hòa kept refusing to kill himself, then Ông Ích Khiêm immediately ordered: "*Your lordship does not want to handle himself, then you just do your job*". Immediately the soldiers pressed down the Emperor Hiệp Hòa, pried open the Emperor's mouth, and poured poison into his mouth and ears. According to Đào Duy Anh, while Emperor Hiệp Hòa was struggling and not yet dead, Đê Đốc Trần Xuân Soạn carried the secret order of Tôn Thất Thuyết to kill him quickly lest the French came to save the emperor. Ông Ích Khiêm then used a wooden stick to beat the Emperor to death.

All princes were invited to meet at Finance Ministry to be informed, but Tuy Lý Vương and a number of princes Hồng Sâm, Hồng Tu, Hồng Hoa and Miên Tăng escaped to the French ship in Thuận An and assisted by Picard Destelan who commanded the ship Vipère. Hồng Phì came later. That night, Thuyết gave orders to Hồng Chuyên to lead a group of Phấn Nghĩa, a private army of Thuyết to kill Trần Tiễn Thành and Tuy Lý Vương (who had fled before).

On November 30, 1883, Trần Tiễn Thành was killed during the third watch (3-5 am) at his private house in Chợ Dinh, Gia Hội. The assassination of Trần Tiễn Thành was performed by the Phấn Nghĩa army under the control of Hồng Chuyên, Hồng Hàng and Hồng Tề, with an overt form of routine carrying an edict. The Trần Tiễn Thành case was listed as "robbery and murder". At the same time, Hồng Chuyên was ordered to kill Catholics in villages south of Thừa Thiên (Truồi, Cầu Hai, Nước Ngọt), killing 300 innocent people so that other Catholic villages would have to arm themselves or ask the French army for protection.

The two Tường-Thuyết made a public judgment of death for the Emperor Hiệp Hòa and the princes with the approval of Từ Dũ, but on the contrary, the death of Thành was unclear, his death under no judgment and unacceptable under law. According to Thực Lục (Veritable Records), fourth century, book 70: "the two have known". Thus, Tường-Thuyết knew clearly about the Sâm-Phì petition and the secret letter of Hiệp Hòa asking for French help. They also knew that Thành was not involved in the scheme of Hiệp Hòa when sending an official to meet Thành on the morning of November 29 to consult with him and before submitting to Từ Dũ. Thực Lục had confirmed: "It was well known that those two sent the murderers" imitating the bandit's behavior. The Veritable Records, vol. 35 page 256, shows

that the petition of Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phi had not the name of Thành as well as in the comments of Hiệp Hòa. These are in stark contrast to the charges by Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết at the meeting in Tả Vu and the public opinion at that time.

The details of the draft petition contained written words of Thành but Đại Nam Thực Lục reported as SPEAK (not PHÊ/approval in the draft version). The second error is the time of Thành's assassination. According to Tran's genealogies, it occurred at night and the morning of November 30, 1883. In addition, there are errors regarding the time of the visiting official to obtain Thành's signature of approval, during the night but early in the morning, and Hiệp Hòa was killed in the late afternoon of November 29, 1883, as mentioned above. Thực Lục reported as follows: "The night before we met at Sở Tịch Điền (Agriculture Office), the two regents also brought the draft of the petition to show to Thành and asked for his approval. Tiễn Thành declined again, saying: *"Removing one Emperor and setting up another Emperor, how can we do it again and again? I was dismissed and do not dare to participate."* The two had even more doubted and hated it. That night they sent people to kill Tiễn Thành in his private house (in Doanh Thị Trung hamlet). Tiễn Thành was reported by the government of Thừa Thiên to be killed by bandits. Everyone knew it was due to the two regents who sent the murderers, but no one dared to say it (ĐNTL.CB, vol. 35, KHXH, 1976, pp.255–260).

Later history books and even those recently (in the 2010s), because of lack of documents, reported that in the petition submitted to Emperor Hiệp Hòa asking for the elimination of two powerful regents Tường-Thuyết, included the opinion of Thành, and the Emperor asked Thành to execute through the note "Transfer to Trần Tiễn Thành". There are also other books which stated that, when Sâm-Phi submitted a secret petition to Emperor Hiệp Hòa, they had obtained Thành's approval to persuade the Emperor. Those are the allegations of the followers of Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết that are based on sometimes contradictory rumors, and all are not on a solid basis. With the caution of a scholar, Đào Duy Anh, who was constrained by the times, has recorded two different sources as above about this story, and it is clear that both are based on anonymous witnesses at that time, that is, a kind of rumor no more, no less. In short, many details in the classical versions and rumors are too different from the two sentences (transfer, approve), extract (record, say), 3 eunuchs (Đạt, Quốc, Tác) and 3 ways of detecting the secret petition, and even Veritable Records was also confused. Due to the political situation and terrible violence lasting until the beginning of the twentieth century, a few contemporaries courageously mentioned the event, but still kept their name confidential (according to the article in BAVH 1943 by Đào Duy Anh).

The Hiệp Hòa directive "send to Trần for approval" as presented by two regents Tường-Thuyết at the Finance Ministry was not correct in reality, because at that time everyone knew Thành was in name only and did not have any real authority. Moreover, Emperor Hiệp Hòa must have known that Thành was sick, old, and retired and had no longer

held any position with real authority. How was that possible to assign him to execute the order to kill Tường-Thuyết? Besides, surely the Emperor and the Court mandarins must know that his dignity and equanimity were difficult for him to be a rival to the two regents who were his juniors. Thành voluntarily pulled out of his duties at the Privy Council that, adapting to political and military situations, required the ability of two Tường -Thuyết (as a thank you to the Emperor). Further, Paul Philastre, a naval officer in charge of the colonial criminal system and the Special Envoy negotiated the withdrawal of troops from Hanoi in 1874, and the Provisional Representative in Huế from 1877 to 1879, had comprehensive remarks about the Emperor and the Court mandarins that were sent to the colonial government in Saigon. Philastre did not praise Thành as he praised other pro-French officials but only criticized him as: "an old man, easy-going but no real power "(AOM Aix, Amiraux 12863-12865). For that reason, Hiệp Hòa and the princes had to rely on the French Resident-Superior.

Hồng Sâm, Hồng Phì, and Hồng Tu, after a period of hiding, were returned by the French to the Huế court and executed after being convicted of treason. Miên Tăng was exiled to Bình Định, Miên Triều was exiled to Phú Yên. Tuy Lý Vương Miên Trinh, because of his old age and weakness, was spared from death and was only exiled to Quảng Ngãi. The Book of Emperor Minh Mạng and Royal Medical Institute stated: *“Even with a love for the country and the people, but under the influence of feudal ideology (taking the interests of the court and the royal family as the most important), so Miên Trinh tacitly opposed Tường and Thuyết. Then Hồng Sâm, son of Miên Trinh, conspired with Emperor Hiệp Hòa using the hands of the French colonialists to remove those two regents. Upon disclosure, both Emperor and Hồng Sâm were killed.”*

#### **Section.1.d. Secrets of Royal Palace: Kiến Phúc**

Tường and Thuyết chose a new prince, Nguyễn Phúc Ưng Đăng, who was also an adopted son of Emperor Tự Đức, to be put on the throne. Ưng Đăng was a prince that Emperor Tự Đức most loved among his three adopted children. Right away, Tường and Thuyết sent Hậu Quân Nguyễn Hạnh to Khiêm Lăng mausoleum (Emperor Tự Đức's mausoleum) where Prince Ưng Đăng was staying to mourn his father. At 3:00 am on November 28, 1883, Ưng Đăng was returned to the palace. The prince was afraid and refused, and Hạnh had to put him in a hammock to bring him to the guarding house in the Tịch Điền area. Upon hearing the two Thuyết and Tường wanted him enthroned as Emperor, the prince said: *"I am still young, and afraid I cannot handle it"*. Two regents said: *"That was the idea of the previous Emperor, but was not realized in time. Now by heaven destiny, please show respect for the nation"*. On November 1, the year Quý Mùi (November 30, 1883), Ưng Đăng came to Cần Chánh Palace to receive the jade and gold seals of the nation. Two days later, on December 2, 1883, the enthronement ceremony was held at Thái Hòa Palace, taking the following year (i.e., Giáp Thân 1884) as the first year of Kiến Phúc. Gia Hưng Vương



Hồng Hưu (8<sup>th</sup> son of Thiệu Trị) was appointed as Royal Regent, but all authority were in the hands of two regents Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết.

At that time, Tôn Thất Thuyết also summoned Đoàn Kết soldiers to get ready and waiting for the decree to destroy the parishes, kill the Catholic clergy and converts nationwide, because Thuyết believed that all Catholics were pro-French. In the end, although the decree was not issued, the Catholic regions south of Huế capital city and the western part of Thanh Hóa province were badly damaged. In January 1884, Hồng Thành (son of Miên Niết and grandson of Minh Mạng Emperor) was executed for having commanded the burning of houses, killing parishioners in the commune Dương Hòa, Hương Trà district. In March 1884, officials in Thanh Hóa were sanctioned for allowing the burning of houses and killing of Catholics in the province. Acting Governor-General of Thanh Hóa, Tôn Thất Trường, was punished by whip and exiled. District Chief of Thiệu Hóa Nguyễn Đình was sentenced to be a soldier, while other men directly involved were executed.

For the French, the ascendancy of Kiến Phúc to the throne was a risk. Because the Emperor was still at a young age and without power, it was impossible to discourage the two regents "from causing war" with the French. The envoy of Trung Kỳ at that time, De Champeaux, was afraid of Tôn Thất Thuyết who could suddenly attack the Residence. He demanded that Lèjard, the commander of French forces at Thuận An port, reinforced the Residence with 50 more soldiers. Lèjard gave De Champeaux 100 soldiers and a ship that was anchored on the Perfume River, right in front of the Residence Palace (Tòa Khâm) to protect against any incident. But De Champeaux was still not assured and constantly asked more French troops from Saigon to reinforce them. De Champeaux also refused to recognize Emperor Kiến Phúc, cut off all contacts with the Vietnamese court, and remained entrenched in the Residence Palace to wait for reinforcements. On December 28, 1883, when Tricou was sent as the Envoy Plénipotentiaire in Huế, the court suggested some amendments unjust for Annam in the 1883 Harmand Treaty. After discussing, Tricou asked to join the court for an audience with the Emperor for signing the amendments that would be sent back to France for final approval. Emperor Kiến Phúc solemnly welcomed Tricou at Càn Chánh Palace.

Although ascended to the throne when he was only 14 years old and sitting on the throne for 8 months, the court of Emperor Kiến Phúc already had some memorable deeds. In December 1883, guns of the American and German styles were tested and at the same time, all kinds of artificial flowers and raw fabrics of the West were produced. In February 1884, the Emperor issued the order of using all talents and forced all those who had passed the doctorate and baccalaureate exams to work at government offices across the country.



Toàn quyền Patenôtre



Khâm sứ Rheinart

The war situation in the North (Tonkin) was disturbed again due to the Vietnam-China coalition (according to the demand for assistance of Tụ Đức). In May 1884, the Qing army lost the battle, so they signed the treaty Tianjin on May 11, 1884. China pledged to withdraw its troops from the North and respect the Vietnam-France treaties. In addition, according to the agreement in the Tianjin Peace Treaty between the French and the Qing dynasty, Vietnam no longer depended on China. On May 30, 1884, Governor-General of France Jules Patenôtre was on his way to Beijing to accept the ambassadorship and visited Huế to discuss the amendments of the Harmand 1883 Treaty that were not yet approved. After a few days of discussing and comparing two French documents (protect) and those in Chinese characters (help) on the meaning of the diplomatic noun "Protectorate" and under the intimidation of the French army, the Treaty of Giáp Thân (June 6, 1884) was signed between Patenôtre and Nguyễn Văn Tường, Phạm Thân Duật, and Tôn Thất Phan: Vietnam was both protected in domestic rule and diplomacy (or colonization), divided into 3 parts (South as a colony and Trung-Bắc Kỳ belonged to Annam), lost its diplomatic power, and let the French garrisoned anywhere, even right in Mang Cá citadel, but had its budget and army. The French would help the court to pacify or put down the riots. Rheinart was appointed as the Resident General for Bắc and Trung Kỳ, based in Huế. After the peace treaty, Nguyễn Văn Tường was accused of selling out the country and betrayal because he was tricked by the French from the protection only on diplomacy in the Harmand treaty signed by Trần Đình Túc and Nguyễn Trọng Hợp to now more protection of domestic and foreign affairs so that Vietnam became a complete colony of France.

Meanwhile, Emperor Kiến Phúc died on July 31, 1884, ending eight months of rule by the reluctant Emperor. Regarding the death of Emperor Kiến Phúc, the official history of the Nguyễn Dynasty reported that the Emperor died due to illness. Unlike Dục Đức and Hiệp Hòa, he was not accused as pro-French. However, many people suspected that he was murdered by Nguyễn Văn Tường who put poison in his medicine. Historian Bửu Kế said that Nguyễn Văn Tường killed Emperor Kiến Phúc for 3 reasons and the third was to hide the love affair between Tường and Học Phi (a concubine of Emperor Tụ Đức and adoptive mother of Kiến Phúc) when it was discovered and published by the author of Hạnh Thực. Even the genealogy of the Nguyễn Dynasty mentioned very specifically about this case. It wrote: "*One day, the Emperor was sick. Tường came in at night for a visit, sat, and talked freely with Học Phi. The Emperor saw and scolded Tường: "Do not think the sword of the Nguyễn Dynasty*

is not sharp". Tường saw the danger and went to the royal doctors to pick up a medicament. The next day, the Emperor died".

### Section.1.e. Establishment of Anti-French Emperor: Hàm Nghi



His name was Nguyễn Phúc Ưng Lịch, the 5th child of Kiên Thái Vương Hồng Cai and Phan Thị Nhàn, a half-brother of Emperor Kiến Phúc and Emperor Đồng Khánh. After Emperor Kiến Phúc died, the throne should go to the second adopted son of Emperor Tự Đức, Chánh Mông (Nguyễn Phúc Ưng Biện, born in 1864), but the two regents feared that setting up an older Emperor would lose their powers, so the two men chose one younger who was not the adopted child of Emperor Tự Đức but the biological brother of Emperor Kiến Phúc, and that was Ung Lịch.

Hoàng Thái Phi (i.e., Học Phi Nguyễn Thị Hương, a wife of Emperor Tự Đức and adoptive mother of Emperor Kiến Phúc; when he was crowned Emperor Kiến Phúc installed her to be Hoàng Thái Phi) invited Tôn Nhân Phủ Miên Định, Royal Regent Hồng Hưu, two Regents Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết and Finance Minister Phạm Thận Duật. She told them that the Emperor had a will that said: "*The Emperor's virtues are thin and the younger brother Ưng Lịch is virtuous and studious. If the Emperor passes away, Tôn Nhân and Regents should put Ưng Lịch on the great throne*". Tôn Nhân Phủ and the Court officials asked Great Mother Queen Từ Dũ (the eldest wife of Emperor Thiệu Trị and the mother of Emperor Tự Đức), Queen Mother Trang Ý (the eldest wife of Emperor Tự Đức, adoptive mother of Emperor Dục Đức) to install Prince Ưng Lịch (son of Kiên Thái Vương Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Cai and Phan Thị Nhàn, half-brother of Emperor Kiến Phúc) on the throne on August 2, 1884 (June 12, year Giáp Thân) as Emperor Hàm Nghi. Ưng Lịch lived from a young age in a poor, rustic environment with his biological mother unlike two older brothers who were raised in the royal palace. When he saw the officials coming to pick him up, Ưng Lịch was frightened and did not dare to accept the offered costumes and hats. On the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> June year Giáp Thân, i.e., on August 2, 1884, Ưng Lịch was escorted between the two rows of guards, entered Thái Hòa Palace for coronation and began the reign as Hàm Nghi. At the time, Ưng Lịch was only 13 years old.

Resident-General Rheinart saw that Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết freely established new Emperors, without consulting the French as agreed, so they sent troops to Huế to demand that the court must ask for permission. Colonel Guerrier brought in 600 troops with a squad of artillery from the North to Huế in a show of force and occupied the Mang Cá fortress. Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết sent a document in Nôm characters, but the Resident-Superior refused, asking it to be written in Chinese characters. After the two regents had to rewrite it, the new Resident-Superior accepted and then the French demanded to enter the main entrance to Thái Hòa Palace to crown Emperor Hàm Nghi. The first act that Emperor Hàm Nghi had to play, under the guidance of Tôn Thất Thuyết was to welcome the



French delegation from the Residence on the South river bank to the Thái Hòa Palace located on the North bank of the Perfume River to celebrate the Emperor's coronation. This was the victory of the Huế court in defending the throne of Hàm Nghi. For the French, after the unsuccessful claims and demands, they had to make concessions to avoid additional new problems by accepting the “fait accompli”.

At 9:00 am on August 17, 1884, the French delegation including Colonel Guerrier, Resident-General Rheinart, Captain Wallarmé, and 185 soldiers crossed the Perfume river to go to the Huế Citadel. Guerrier demanded the Huế court to let the whole French delegation entering the Ngọ Môn Gate by the middle aisle (this entrance was only for the Emperor), but Tôn Thất Thuyết definitely refused. In the end, only 3 main officials were allowed in the middle aisle of the gate and the rest of the delegation had to go through the side doors. Both the court of Huế and the French delegation were not happy, but the ceremony was "finally finished smoothly". When the French delegation said good-bye, Tôn Thất Thuyết implicitly forced the soldiers to close the Ngọ Môn Gate, so the French team had to exit through Hiền Nhon Gate in the East. After that, Rheinart and Guerrier withdrew the soldiers back to Hanoi. Recognizing this event, French writer Marcel Gaultier wrote in the book *The Exiled King (Le Roi Exilé)*: “*Emperor Hàm Nghi kept his sacred stature towards his subjects. Unknowingly the young Emperor did something that had a resounding effect across the country: with a determined will to be independent and even though the French were stationed in Huế, the An Nam court still showed an attitude that was not cowardly. This attitude was set by the Privy Council. That council had a lot of reasons to believe that the people were looking to the Emperor's attitude to follow. They considered that attitude was like an unspoken imperative [against the French]*”.

By the end of 1884, the French government was notified through Sylvestre and Bishop Puginier about the Tân Sở plan of the Huế court. In early 1885 the Northern war situation became more active because China refused to obey the treaty of Tianjin by sending more troops, up to 20,000 as requested by the Vietnamese. The Paris government immediately appointed Admiral Courbet to concurrently command the French navy in Chinese waters, expanding the battlefield along the coasts of Fujian and Taiwan, while fighting in Lạng Sơn and Tuyên Quang continued between the French and the Qing armies. Due to the unstable political situations in Paris and Beijing, the negotiations only started in May 1885, leading to the signing of the New Treaty of Tianjin on June 9, 1885. According to this treaty, China withdrew its army and recognized the French domination of Vietnam. On the day of the signing of the treaty, Courbet fell ill and died at Makung, Penghu Island, Taiwan.

After the settlement was completed with China, the French pressured Vietnam to enforce the Giáp Thân Patenôtre treaty and began to pacify, exploit and colonize Vietnam, turning from a protective posture to direct ruling. In Huế, the two regents Tường-Thuyết were resolutely against the French by creating many problems for them, but they did not join forces

to arouse a broad patriotic movement and only created a military adventure by an agitated general.

On April 12, 1885, General Henri Roussel de Courcy (1827-1887) was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Expeditionary Forces and Resident-General in the North-Central regions to assist with the establishment of the protectorate. He was granted a very large war budget approved in March 1883 and a powerful army with 9 generals, 30,000 soldiers, and an additional force of 5000 Vietnamese soldiers (pro-French against the Vietnamese people). On May 21, 1885, De Courcy had just arrived in Tonkin and immediately went to Huế to discuss the relation between him and the Huế court while waiting for the troops from France. Upon his arrival in Huế, he declared "*The bottleneck of the Vietnamese problem is in Huế*". On the same day May 21, 1885, the French Foreign Minister instructed Lemaître (just replaced Rheinart as Resident-Superior in Huế): "*It is impossible not to punish the behavior of the Minister of Military Affairs. You tell the court that we would not let Thuyét be a Regent for much longer. You must ask for his dismissal and stay far away ...*".

De Courcy's troops from France arrived in Hạ Long Bay on May 31, 1885. After being notified about the situation in Huế, de Courcy pleaded with the Paris foreign ministry to arrest Tôn Thất Thuyét to put an end to the plan to invade Vietnam. On July 2, 1885, De Courcy returned to Huế, with an army consisting of a battalion of African soldiers under the command of Battalion Commander Metzuiyer, including 16 officers and 870 soldiers, and a task force taken from the Montagnard battalion commanded by Boines consisting of 3 officers and 157 soldiers. In total there were 19 officers and 1,024 soldiers. De Courcy demanded the Huế Court ordered the people and scholars to obey completely the protectorate regime and deliberately provoked by asking the entire entourage of up to 500 soldiers to enter by Ngọ Môn gate by the main door reserved only for the Emperor when he came to submit a letter of introduction to Emperor Hàm Nghi and the Patenôtre treaty that was ratified. The Huế court only invited the generals to enter the main entrance of the Ngo Mon Gate and the soldiers through the two sides door, according to court rites from the past to the present. But De Courcy was determined to refuse, and the back-and-forth correspondence caused a lot of problems. In response, Tôn Thất Thuyét directed the pointing of cannons from the Citadel to Mang Cá fortress, on the other side the French allowed Major Pernot to patrol around the Citadel. Replacing Rheinart (still only a small official at that time) was Lemaire who persuaded Tôn Thất Thuyét of removing the cannons targeting the French. But the French did not know that Tôn Thất Thuyét had secretly moved them to the Tân Sở base.

## **Chapter 2. The Capital Fall in 1885. Loss of Independence**

After learning of the French conspiracy that wanted to arrest Thuyết who led the war faction, Tường tried to buy time through negotiations for Thuyết to prepare the resistance at the Tân Sở base (in fact, it was an area that could not be used for the resistance war for a long time, only a waste of money and resources). They were planning to defeat the French by surprise or find a satisfactory solution for Thuyết on his free will to meet De Courcy. Thuyết knew this conspiracy, excused himself from sickness and let Nguyễn Văn Tường and Phạm Thận Duật meet with De Courcy. General De Courcy requested that, when Tôn Thất Thuyết had healed, a date to meet the Emperor would be set. At the same time, he sent Dr. Maugin to examine Thuyết. If he was sick, he would lie on a stretcher to go to the French residence but Thuyết refused. In addition, the French also set a condition that when the delegation came to the Imperial City, Emperor Hàm Nghi must step down from the throne to personally welcome them. He still required all members of the French delegation must be allowed to go to the Citadel by the main Ngọ Môn Gate and he refused to go alone. De Courcy also declined the gift of Emperor Hàm Nghi and declared "If you want peace, you have to pay 200,000 gold bars, 200,000 silver bars, and 200,000 francs." Arrogance and insults of the French angered the war faction that decided to take action first.

At that time, the warring faction in Huế had to accept because of a weaker military. On the other hand, they also had to prepare for the upcoming fighting. Minister of Military Affairs Tôn Thất Thuyết ordered 300 cannons to be placed on the Citadel wall, set up bamboo and rattan shields, and covered by two layers of buffalo skin to reduce the destructive power of enemy cannons on the wall. On the other hand, he gave orders to transfer weapons and foodstuffs to the imperial base at Tân Sở (Quảng Trị). Thuyết resolutely refused the French invitation until the afternoon of May 22 Ất Dậu (July 4, 1885). Thuyết was willing to write a resignation letter but De Courcy refused to accept this letter and the gift from Từ Dũ. Tôn Thất Thuyết ordered to direct cannons towards the Residence Palace (Tòa Khâm) and Mang Cá fortress that were two locations stationed by the enemy. Near evening, Trần Xuân Soạn in turn ordered to close all the gates and put more cannons on the top. That night, Tôn Thất Thuyết secretly divided the army into two parts. One part was entrusted to his younger brother Tôn Thất Lệ and used boats to cross the Perfume River at night to attack the Residence Palace (Tòa Khâm). Tôn Thất Thuyết along with Trần Xuân Soạn were on this side of the river and attacked Trần Bình Đài where new French reinforcements from the North stationed. He also sent an ambush team at Thanh Long Bridge, in case Colonel Pernot, the commander of the army at Mang Cá, and his subordinate officers returned from the Residence Palace and crossed this bridge where they would be immediately attacked. Tôn Thất Thuyết commanded a third army stationed in the rear of the Ministry behind the Citadel to serve as additional combat and reserve troops.

In the end, in less than half a day after planning his operations, Thuyết ordered the attack of the Residence Palace and Mang Cá in a hopeless final battle the next day, July 5, 1885. The Emperor, the queen, and the court were neither consulted nor informed.

Unilaterally Thuyết decided for a surprise attack on the French military's gala dinner in Huế and Thuyết was deceived by de Courcy's conspiracy. On the night the 4<sup>th</sup> and morning of the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1885, while the French rewarded their army, it was at one o'clock in the morning, Thuyết and Soạn ordered one cannon shot as a signal to attack Trấn Bình Đài. Meanwhile, on the other side of the river, Tôn Thất Lệ commanded his troops to simultaneously attack the Residence Palace. The French were surprised but still kept their defensive position to wait for the morning. They hid in the camp and refused to go out. They were ordered to assemble at a location far from the range of the Vietnamese's bullets. When the sun rose, the French counterattacked. They loaded their guns onto the roof of the Javelin gunboat to clear the way for the French infantry. The French divided their troops into three wings to enter the Citadel through the gates of Đông Ba, Thượng Tứ, Chánh Đông, Chánh Tây, An Hòa ... One team started from Cửa Trài, breaking Thanh Long bridge, crossing Ngự Hà River into Lục Bộ, trying to attack the Hiền Nhon gate to open the way to the Citadel. The second team crossed Cầu Kho, attacked the Vietnamese army in the royal garden, and at the same time, provided support for the troops trying to break the Hiền Nhon gate (the eastern door to the Citadel).

Being suddenly counterattacked, at first the Vietnamese army resisted very bravely. Finally, the French army entered the city. Before the counterattack of the French army, the court army could not keep the citadel, both armies on the inside and the outside were unable to fight, were shattered, fled towards Lục Bộ, and overflowed the Đông Ba gate. Here they were surrounded by French troops from Cửa Trài. Unprecedented atrocities had happened: more than ten thousand civilians and soldiers of the court had fallen that night from being hit by French bullets, or by stampeding and crushing each other when trying to get out of the Citadel. The French army had robbed, burned, and killed the civilians very brutally. Nearly all families had someone who died in this turbulent night. The French entered the Citadel, lowered the Huế imperial flag, and raised the tri-colored flag on the flag monument. Then they continued to enter the Citadel and made every effort to destroy, rape, kill, and plunder. A French team burned the headquarters of Ministries of Interior and Military Affairs, and gunpowder storage areas. The French occupied the treasuries and palaces, obtained a lot of gold and silver, and more than a million quintals that the court could not take away in time. Thus, the capital fell after only 6 hours of fighting between 1500 French troops and 20,000 Vietnamese soldiers. This was a careless personal decision by Thuyết with immeasurable consequences for the Court, the people of Huế, and the country.

Reviewing the battle in the Imperial City on the night of May 23, year Ất Dậu (July 5, 1885), it was a complete defeat for the Huế court. France only lost 16 soldiers with 80 injured, while the Annam suffered more than a few thousand soldiers. Although quite well prepared in attacking enemy posts, but due to lack of communication, especially in the dark, and weak weapons that could not shoot at long range. Annam lost the battle due to outdated swords and cannons in ancient 1730 style that were used in the Tây Sơn period while the French weapons were made of a new type in 1880 that had a stronger destructive power and a longer

range of fire. Not only tens of thousands of civilians were killed, but the imperial city of Huế was also robbed of most of the most precious assets. The French captured a great deal of wealth that the court could not move yet, including 2.6 tons of gold, 30 tons of silver, 700,000 taels of silver. These riches were boxed by five French soldiers in five days and returned to France. Father Pierre Siefert, a witness of this event, recorded: *“Treasures in the palace had lost nearly 24 million in gold and silver ... The raid lasted for 2 months and was more extensive than the sack of the Summer Palace of the Qing Emperor in Beijing”*. General De Courcy, who commanded the attack on the imperial capital of Huế, on July 24, 1885, sent the French government a telegram with the following content: *“Total gold or silver treasures hidden in closed vaults are valued at 9 million francs. More seals and books worth millions have been discovered. It is very difficult to gather art treasures. Need to send here one ship with skilled personnel to bring home everything along with the treasures”*. In addition, during the French pursuit in July 1885, they had confiscated in Quảng Trị province 34 silver cases containing 36,557 silver coins and 6 silver cases containing 196 silver bars (each bar is 10 taels) and 18,696 silver coins.

According to General De Courcy's report on the morning of July 5th to the Governor-General of Indochina: *“Huế, July 5 at 3 am. The Mission and Mang Cá were suddenly attacked by the entire army of the Citadel. The whole area of the Marines' cottages around the Mission were fired upon by artillery shells and burned. The mission's building remained intact. There was no significant loss. There is no news yet about Mang Cá which is the base of the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of African soldiers. The imperial city was burned in many places, with many explosions by big and small guns. I looked at the firepower and I'm sure the enemy was pushed back. I protected the cottage where the phone was located. I ordered the Hải Phòng troops to station there. I don't see anything to worry about.”* De Courcy also reported: *“Huế, July 5 at 11:00 am. The Citadel is already in our hands. The damages are quite large. The Annam army attacked at 1 in the morning towards the area in the City where we are located, and the Mission area (i.e., Mang Cá station). Attackers with more than 30,000 persons at first burned the barracks of thatched cottages at Mang Cá and the station of the Marines in the Mission area.”*

In the early morning of the imperial capital's fall, when the French counterattacked and invaded the Citadel, Nguyễn Văn Tường immediately saw the danger and asked the Emperor to leave. While Thuyết was holding the French army in the Citadel to block the rear, Tường did not meet Thuyết (Hạnh Thục Ca and Hoàng Cơ Thụy, vol. 7, page 1326) so he waited for Emperor Hàm Nghi and Tam Cung outside the city gate without going inside the palace to bring the royals up to Kim Long. Nguyễn Văn Tường was ordered to stay behind to make arrangements and left without saying goodbye to the Emperor before Thuyết came to welcome the Emperor and flee to Quảng Trị through Thiên Mụ pagoda. That noon, Tường went to Bishop Caspar's house to ask for a meeting with General De Courcy.

Tường was staying at Thương Bạc and guarded by Captain Schmitz. The French forced him to spend two months getting things settled. After surrendering, Tường was entrusted with the responsibility of stabilizing the situation with Nguyễn Hữu Độ, Phan Đình Bình, and Champeaux who ruled the Privy Council. So Courcy and Nguyễn Văn Tường used an uncle of Tự Đức, Thọ Xuân Vương Nguyễn Phúc Miên Định (75 years old), currently the person with the highest prestige and head of Tôn Nhơn, as the Nation Controller, while waiting for Hàm Nghi to return. Tường sent his petition to Quảng Trị for the return of the three Queen Mothers. But then there was a power struggle between Tường and Độ so Độ left Huế to return to Hanoi. De Courcy had to exile Tường to Tahiti with the excuse that his mission could not be completed within two months.

On the morning of the 23rd, seeing the hesitation of the Emperor and the royal family, Thuyết had to use his sword to force the Emperor and the three Queen Mothers to flee. Emperor Hàm Nghi said: "*I have not fought with anybody, why do I have to run?*" Great Queen Mother Từ Dũ said disgustedly: "*A weak country loses to a stronger country, that is nothing strange. The previous Emperor still had to execute peace treaty, let alone today.*" Commanding General of Right Army Hồ Văn Hiến escorted the Royal Family to the southwest gate, rested a while at Trường Thi (Exam Academy) and then left for Quảng Trị. Thuyết kept up, with about a hundred people left. Thuyết did not respect the tradition of a brave general, "generals commit suicide following the city's fall", as the examples of Phan Thanh Giản 1867, Nguyễn Tri Phương 1874, Hoàng Diệu 1882, Trần Thúc Nhẫn 1883 and many other unknown generals who sought honors in their noble sacrifice. Thuyết forced Emperor Hàm Nghi to follow him as a "hostage". The Emperor always cried, complained, and pleaded to return to Huế with the three Queen Mothers. Thuyết must scare him "*If His Majesty wants to return to Huế, he must leave his head here first*". Thuyết brought Emperor Hàm Nghi to Tân Sở (Quảng Trị). The French announced rewards of 2000 silver taels for the head of Thuyết and whoever caught Emperor Hàm Nghi would be rewarded with 500 taels.

Here at Tân Sở, on July 13, 1885 (June 2, year Ất Dậu), Tôn Thất Thuyết issued on behalf of Emperor Hàm Nghi the "*Chiếu Cần Vương*" or "*Order to Assist the Emperor*" which was drafted by Phạm Thận Duật and called on the scholars and the people to stand up and help the Emperor in resisting the French to save the country. The Order cited the crimes of the French: "*In the past, the strategies of dealing with the enemy were no more than the following three: fighting, defending and negotiating. There will be no chance for fighting, not enough strength for defense, and negotiations for peace require long efforts. Recently, our country has suddenly encountered many difficulties. I ascend the throne while still young, and I do not stop thinking of self-reliance and independence. The Western envoy is hard-headed, more and more excessive in demands, forcing the impossible. If you know, you must participate, grind your teeth, raise your hair, swear to kill all the enemies, and everyone should have such heart.*"

After reading it twice, the Emperor said, “*Now I understand why you do not want me to return to Huế while it is still under the French occupation*”. Thuyết asked: “*if the resistance war requires going and living in the forest, do you want to go?*”. The emperor replied: “*Wherever we go, we can live as long as we chase the French enemy out of the country*”. With time, Emperor Hàm Nghi matured and was aware of the resistance war against the French colonialists for independence. Từ Dũ wrote several letters asking him to return, but they were useless. From Central to North, the movement Cần Vương started.

Since then, a patriotic anti-occupation movement had risen vigorously and lasted until the end of the nineteenth century, and it was called the Cần Vương (Assist the Emperor) movement. Responding to the Order Cần Vương, people everywhere under the leadership of patriotic scholars stood up against the French even though they only had crude weapons, simple swords, and spears. The vigorous movement of Cần Vương caused a lot of difficulties for the French. Hence, the leaders of the movement were also pursued fiercely by the French, especially Emperor Hàm Nghi, Lê Trực, Tôn Thất Đạm, however, there were no results. The resistance war after the Cần Vương appeals lacked a long-term strategy and coordination, remained localized, and lost its spiritual leadership, so it was easy to be defeated by the French.

When Regent Thuyết left Vietnam to cross the Chinese border in 1887, he went to China to ask for help. Emperor Hàm Nghi was arrested in January 1888 at the age of 17 because of the betrayal of two bodyguards, Nguyễn Đình Tinh and Trương Quang Ngọc. When he was arrested, Emperor Hàm Nghi pointed straight in the face of Trương Quang Ngọc and said: “*You better kill me than you take me to the French*”. Two sons of Thuyết were full of heroism: 18-year-old Thiệp was shot by French soldiers when he wanted to kill Emperor Hàm Nghi so that the latter would not fall into the French hands, while 20 year- old Đạm accepted full responsibility and committed suicide.

After this event, everything in the court was controlled by the French Resident. The Order dated July 14, 1885, of Hàm Nghi (actually of Thuyết, drafted by Phạm Thận Duật) had patriotic advice to send a message to Tường: “*Now the great mandarin Tôn Thất Thuyết is close to me, and you are the regent and stay behind for negotiations. Everyone who either goes away or stays behind should take the love of the country and the people as the basis*”. Two months later, the French dismissed Nguyễn Văn Tường and installed Emperor Đồng Khánh on the throne on September 14, 1885. In the middle of the day when Emperor Đồng Khánh stepped onto the throne, Tôn Thất Thuyết launched a notice on September 20, 1885, with a passage about Tường on the day of the fall of the capital as follows: “*At that moment, Nguyễn Văn Tường followed me out of the citadel, but unexpectedly he hid in Kim Long church ... From then on, Tường has followed the enemy, deceived the people, planned to arrest me to surrender to the French for personal gains ... He also impersonated the words of Empress Dowager to entice my return ...*”. According to the Lô Giang biography (Minister

Tiểu Cao Nguyễn Văn Mại) and Sông Hương 1994 (Nguyễn Hương Nguyễn Cúc, Houston), the letter sent by Tường to the governor of Tahiti a few weeks before his death showed what was going on after the fall of the capital. It highlighted the ruses of Tường in surrendering to the French through Bishop Caspar. He had encouraged the Emperor and Mother Queens to return to the palace and blamed Thuyết for everything.

Under the French colonial regime since 1885, the court of the "pro-French" group (Nguyễn Hữu Độ, Phan Đình Bình, Hoàng Cao Khải, Nguyễn Thân ...) took the initiative of becoming tools of the French colonial government. There were still some mandarins with noble character (Hoàng Kế Viêm, Đào Tấn, Nguyễn Trọng Hợp ...). On July 17, the two Empress Dowagers returned to the capital and ordered the officials to search for Prince Chánh Mông who was brought back to live temporarily in the residence of Duke Tĩnh Giang. The French used the notice of Queen Dowager, ordered the officers and mandarins to return, but not many people did. On July 28, Governor General Hải Ninh Nguyễn Hữu Độ was invited to the court, negotiated with the French side and asked for the suggestion of Queens Dowager, deposed Emperor Hàm Nghi and established Prince Chánh Mông on the throne on September 14, 1885. On September 19, 1885, Ứng Đường had to go to the residence of Resident-Superior and then went back to the Forbidden City for the crowning ceremony at Thái Hòa Palace as Emperor Đồng Khánh. The procession of the new Emperor from Phu Văn Lâu into the Càn Thành Palace was led by De Courcy and Champeaux. Along the procession, French soldiers holding guns and Vietnamese soldiers holding swords and spears stood guard.

Since then, the 23rd day of the fifth lunar month becomes the great annual memorial for the Huế people. In 1894, the Minister of Rites built in front of the Imperial Citadel a temple called Đàn Âm Hồn (Temple for Souls of the Dead), with an area of 1,500 square meters. It was near the gate of Quảng Đức where Tôn Thất Thuyết directly commanded the imperial army to attack the Mang Cá fort, but now there are no traces left. Currently, in Huế Citadel, at the intersection of Mai Thúc Loan-Lê Thánh Tôn streets, there still is a shrine Âm Hồn to commemorate those who died in the attack.

### **Chapter 3. Extraneous History of the Capital: Hạnh Thục Ca – Chant of Fallen Capital**

In the nineteenth century, the fall of the Capital City was a great event of Vietnam in general and the people in Thừa Thiên Huế in particular. This major event has greatly influenced many authors who wrote poems and stories in which the poem Hạnh Thục Ca and the song "Vè Thất Thủ" (Chant of Fallen Capital) are the most famous. The contents of the two works speak the truth of historical events, supplemented by lively scenes described by poems. Therefore, it can be said that Hạnh Thục Ca depicts the situation in the Forbidden City and Vè Thất Thủ Kinh Đô (Chant of the fallen capital) outside the Citadel. They are



very valuable for historical research since they give us a more complete and objective view of the event.

The two works above reflect the fate and life, the heroic and dramatic battles of our people from 1883 to 1885, and other unforgettable years and months later. Only insiders and eyewitnesses know the tragic details. Only living during the moment of tragedy gives birth to ideas passed down as divine wills to future generations, integrating into the spirit of heavy water to mean the oath of oath. Hundreds and thousands of details are woven together into a unified, fully connected body that shows the extreme misery and endurance of the people at the time of losing their country.

Hạnh Thục Ca was written by the author after the fall of Huế Citadel in July 1885 and completed in 1900, that is, after the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Great Queen Mother. Hạnh Thục Ca is a long Nôm poem (Nôm is a Vietnamese version of Chinese Han characters) composed of 1036 verses. This is a literature work retelling a volatile period of Vietnamese history. For the most part, it recounts the events that happened from the French invasion until the enthronement of Thành Thái. It fluently tells the story of the people suffering in this period. The poem illustrates examples of loyalty and patriotism which bravely fought against foreign aggression. It has a historical value from a point of view of a woman in the royal harem,



revealing many details that official history does not record such as palatial secrets after the death of Emperor Tự Đức.

In explaining the title of the work, Lê Thần Trần Trọng Kim said its general idea is as follows: It is because the Nguyễn Dynasty at that time had to leave the capital city to run to Quảng Trị-Quảng Bình similar to the situation of the Tang Dynasty in China in the past. Tang Emperor Minh Hoàng was beaten by An Lộc Sơn and had to leave Trường An capital to flee to Szechuan. In the literal sense, when the Emperor goes somewhere it is called “hạnh”. Hạnh Thục means the Emperor goes to Ba Thục (Szechuan). Because of similar situations, the author took the first two words of that story as the title of her work.

The author of this chant was Nguyễn Nhược Thị, also known as Nguyễn Thị Bích (1830-1909). Her full name is Nguyễn Nhược Thị Bích, often called and recorded in history books as Nguyễn Nhược Thị, also known as Lang Hoàn. The history of the Nguyễn Dynasty recorded her as a famous talented woman: both a concubine of the Emperor Tự Đức, and a teacher to the royal children.

When introducing Hạnh Thục Ca, Trần Trọng Kim only emphasized its historic value. He wrote: ... *"These things are secrets of the Court. It was difficult for outsiders to know clearly. Fortunately, at that time, there was Nguyễn Nhược Thị who told what she had seen with her own eyes and heard with her own ears". At the end of her life in the Forbidden Palace, amid the loss of the country, she wrote the work Hạnh Thục Ca to accurately describe*

*the events of the runaway and the mood of the Emperor, the three Queen Mothers and the mandarins on the way to Quảng Trị.”*

**Vè Thất Thủ Kinh Đô (Chant of the Fallen Capital)** describes the happenings outside the Citadel such as the scenes of panicky people searching to escape, the scenes of people trampling and painful death. The chant is longer than 1009 verses, with other versions with 1770 sentences or sometimes up to 1850 sentences. The authors of these chants are anonymous people from many walks of life from Thừa Thiên-Huế to Quảng Trị-Hà Tĩnh.

The chant reflects the fortunes of the Nguyễn Dynasty that are caused indirectly by the policy of isolation (closing of the gates and ports) and directly due to the autocracy of the two regents: Tường controlled the finances and the mandarins and Thuyết kept all the powers in his hands that led to court turmoil, and their blindness in military attacks against France. The chant recounted the French demands and claims to the Huế court, the autocratic acts of the regents related to the death of Emperor Kiến Phúc and the failure of their anti-French schemes, causing the capital to fall and Emperor Hàm Nghi fleeing to Quảng Trị. The city was engulfed in smoke and fire, and the people of Thừa Thiên Huế were suffering and resentful. They were traumatized by this event and still commemorate it annually to this day.

## Chapter 4. Historical Figures

### Section 4.a. Queen Dowager Từ Dũ. Emperor Tự Đức

**Great Queen Mother Từ Dũ or Từ Dụ (1810-1902)** was the queen of Emperor Thiệu

Tri, the biological mother of Emperor Tự Đức. She was commonly known with the title of Từ Dũ Hoàng Thái Hậu (Great Queen Mother). Her name was Phạm Thị Hằng, born on June 20, 1810, in Giồng Sơn Quy (Gò Rùa), Gò Công village, Tân Hòa district, Gia Định province (later Gò Công province, now belongs to Tiền Giang). She was the eldest daughter of Minister of Rites Phạm Đăng Hưng and Phạm Thị Vị. She was both a wife, mother, grandmother, and advisor of the Nguyễn Dynasty for 78 years. All her life she loved the people, wholeheartedly for the prosperity of the country. Her name was registered in history forever, is the model mother of the people of all time, is the exemplary



image of Vietnamese mothers in teaching their children. Từ Dũ served as a wonderful example of the virtues of Vietnamese women. Also because of her good qualities, she was honored with her name in 1948 replacing the Vietnam Maternity Hospital. This hospital includes 1000 beds, was built in 1923 in Saigon, and is currently located at Hospital Từ Dũ, 284 Cống Quỳnh Street, District 1, HCMC.

In her youth, she was famous for being filial, intelligent, and beautiful. At the age of 14, she was selected as the wife of Nguyễn Phúc Miên Tông who was the son of Emperor Minh Mạng. In 1841, Miên Tông ascended the throne as Emperor Thiệu Trị. She became Cung Tân, held the position of Thượng Nghi to take care of Lục Thượng. Two years later, she was named Thân Phi. At the beginning of the 6th Thiệu Trị year (1846), she was appointed Giai Phi, then Nhất Phi (First Wife). Despite the great authority, she was righteous, elegant, simple, and kind. She earned the love and respect of everyone in the palace. She often advised the palace ladies to devote themselves to their work. She was a fair rewarder. She would find a way to teach whoever made mistakes, rather than punishment.

Every night, Emperor Thiệu Trị stayed up late to read books, and she also stayed up to exchange and discuss everything with the Emperor. She often advised the Emperor: *“A human being must learn to know the good and the evil. The good should be promoted, the evil should be kept away so as not to fall into the wrong place. Old books have the saying: people who do not learn do not know what is right”*. Emperor Thiệu Trị believed very much in the knowledge and political sensitivity of his wife. During his reign, the Emperor sat at the Khâm Văn palace listening to the nation’s affairs and let Từ Dũ sit back in the background listening to the Emperor’s decisions. After that, she would comment to the Emperor one by one. When Emperor Thiệu Trị was sick, she would take responsibility for all court matters.

But her life as a wife was very short. In 1847, Emperor Thiệu Trị fell ill and died after 8 years of succession to the throne and ruling the country. After the Emperor died, she was very sad and every day she went to Hoàng Lăng (mausoleum) to kneel and mourn. Every year on the anniversary of the Emperor's death, she was dressed in uniform and stood in front of the shrine, fully devoted to being a wife throughout her lifetime. Emperor Thiệu Trị passed away and her son Hồng Nhậm was chosen to ascend the throne, i.e. Emperor Tự Đức. After the passing of her husband, she devoted herself to teaching and advising his children. Emperor Tự Đức was educated in knowledge and ceremonial rituals since childhood. She was the teacher of knowledge as well as the Confucian rituals and activities of the Emperor afterward. Perhaps in the history of the country, Từ Dũ was the most famous Queen Mother leaving many valuable lessons in teaching children. It is these details that future generations admire her.

That is why, although still young, Hồng Nhậm was very studious. She often mentioned the words and deeds of the elders to teach the children. Every night she read books to Emperor Tự Đức. She taught the Emperor how to rule and govern the country in a way that suits the people. Every time Emperor Tự Đức was at fault, she often used a whip and strict words to teach him. Thanks to that, Tự Đức became an intelligent and filial Emperor. He was gentle, liked to recite poems and proses, had a talent for composing poems and literature fluency. She was very strict with her relatives, harshly criticizing those who rely on her family line to

look for honor and position. On the other hand, she highly valued such talents as Võ Trọng Bình for his honesty, Phạm Phú Thứ for his correctness, or Nguyễn Tri Phương for his talents and diligence in everything. She often advised: *"If there are many such people, one person for each province, it will be beneficial to the people's work and the Emperor also does not worry about day and night ..."*

Like many other Vietnamese women, Từ Dũ was a very frugal person. Although she had the conditions to enjoy luxuries, she was aware that they belonged to and were provided by the people, so she could not use them wastefully. Her brocade clothes were neatly folded in a chest, only worn during ceremonies, and daily she dressed normally like everyone else. She did not require exotic dishes and was only vegan. She often advised the mandarins: *"One silk thread or a grain of rice are also the blood, sweat, and tears of the people, so wasting them is useless and regrettable, just put them in the warehouse for use in helping the country"*.

Every day, in her conversations with the Emperor, she always reminded him of this essential policy expressed in modern language as "to clean house". For example: *"In the past, mandarins have not removed the word" greed." Damaging the country is caused by that. How much blood and pus of the people can they fill their pockets? But illegal gains do not last long, do not take a few generations to disappear, people laugh at their children's poverty. You must teach the mandarins to do benevolent things to enjoy lasting benefits"*.

Because of his filial piety, Emperor Tự Đức often held ceremonies to celebrate the longevity and honors for her, but she refused. In 1860, the Court planned to honor her, but she said to the Emperor, *"I enjoy the care of the people, so I must take care of the things that people are worried about. This year, there is no good harvest, people are worried and not happy yet. So you have to worry about the worries of the people. Besides, I am thrifty and do not like luxuries. Son, today I am enjoying riches but I often fear and cultivate goodness, yet you want to give me a vain title for what? To be more unethical? Thus, festivals and ceremonies should be abolished. I just pray that the ministers, the mandarins and you will take care of national affairs and education so that the country is at peace and the people more prosperous. These are my only wishes"*.

She frankly criticized the habits of abusing power, embezzlement, luxury, and waste. She was very strict with relatives, harshly criticizing those who seek positions and riches. In folklore, there is a saying, *"One person becomes a mandarin and the whole clan benefits"*. But this concept is not necessarily true of Từ Dũ. From Gò Công, a member of her Phạm family went to the capital and begged her to ask Emperor Tự Đức to appoint him as his guard. But before that pleading, she said, *"People of my lineage don't worry about becoming mandarins, just be afraid of being incompetent. Without talent, I can help with a little money to study for future progress. But you have no merit or contribution to the country, yet you want to enter as a guard. If you were granted a position like that, then all my relatives from*

*the same clan will all become mandarins? ". With these righteous words, this person still pleaded with her. She frankly refused and said to Emperor Tự Đức: "If any of my family members do not have any merits, do not give them positions. Anyone who breaks the law is strictly punished as usual to keep national discipline ". With such a clear attitude, later on, relatives stopped bothering her.*

Great Queen Dowager Từ Dũ was always conscious of self-improvement in social and cultural knowledge by her love for reading. Thanks to her studies, she was able to communicate with the Emperor when talking about history. Almost when she read any good history, she had made all the right comments. She discussed the politics of the Chinese Emperors such as Qin Shi-huang, Han Wu, Qin Hui or analyzed such characters as Hàn Tín, Viên Thiệu, Khổng Minh, Lã Hậu, and Jia Yi with many in-depth remarks. These comments were helpful to Emperor Tự Đức in ruling the country. Phan Bội Châu, with the temperament of a revolutionary, wrote in the book "History of the Lost Việt Nam" a fierce criticism of Từ Dũ as follows: "In the country, the Empress Dowager Phạm often participates in the court matters. Emperor Tự Đức always submits all orders to the Empress Dowager before they will be executed. Nguyễn Văn Tường often took precious objects as bribes from the French and gave them to the Empress Dowager for her support".

In addition, Từ Dũ was a person who "liked politics" or, at least, who was also "politically minded" or liked to be involved in court matters. During the Thiệu Trị reign (1841-1847), she was allowed by her husband, Emperor Thiệu Trị, "to seat behind the curtain of the Emperor's throne", to monitor the court matters and to help the Emperor with comments when needed. Indeed, Từ Dũ was "very familiar with important decisions" and was the decisive voice during Tự Đức reign. Emperor Tự Đức was known for his filial piety and possibly the Emperor followed the advice of his mother to "make peace with the French". And perhaps it was Từ Dũ who implicitly advocated the peace reconciliation with the French and her thinking had a strong influence on the decisions of Emperor Tự Đức in the past.

In 1850, when he first took the throne, Emperor Tự Đức was giddy and neglected the national affairs, and the mandarin Phạm Phú Thứ submitted a petition to warn and stop him. The Emperor finished reading it, was very angry, and immediately asked the court to try him. Some officials took advantage of this opportunity to win the heart of the Emperor and condemned him to commit a high crime and proposed to punish Phạm Phú Thứ to be a soldier. Từ Dũ knew the story immediately and asked: "This person is worthy of respect! He submitted the petition because he loves the Emperor and because he wants him to take care of the country better. He was punished for Loving the Emperor and helping the Emperor without a single complaint and had shown his strong loyalty. He is a gentleman and not happy in his position, well-respected or contemptuous by his superiors but happy with his true work. You should think again! " Emperor Tự Đức heard it, hurried to cancel the sentence for Phạm Phú Thứ and invited him to return to the court to reclaim his old responsibility. As

Từ Dũ remarked, Phạm Phú Thứ was later to become a respected official of the Nguyễn Dynasty. It can be said that Từ Dũ was a gentle mother with a very delicate understanding and compassion for the people.

All the teachings of his mother, the Emperor recorded them in the book "Teachings of a Gentle Mother". Although history may severely judge the Emperor in his rule of the country, everyone recognizes that Tự Đức worships his mother out of filial piety. Since taking the throne, Tự Đức offered many times to honor her mother, but she refused or delayed for fear of expenses. It was not until April 15, the second Tự Đức year (May 7, 1849), on the occasion of the inauguration of Gia Thọ palace, she accepted Kim Bảo and the title of Great Queen Mother. She died on the 5th of April of the year of the Tiger (i.e., May 12, 1902) at the old age of 92.

**Emperor Tự Đức (1829-1883)** was the fourth emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty. His real name was Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Nhậm, also known as Nguyễn Phúc Thì. He was the second son of the third emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, Thiệu Trị. He was the Emperor with the longest rule of the Nguyễn Dynasty from 1847 to 1883. In 1847, Emperor Thieu Tri passed away, and during a meeting of the princes and mandarins at Cần Chánh Palace, Trương Đăng Quế declared the intention of Thiệu Trị of establishing the second prince, Hồng Nhậm, as the next Emperor. With the will reading unfinished, the eldest son, Hồng Bảo, was indignant and spitted blood, lying down in the middle of the palace court. Hồng Bảo did not believe it was the intention of the father, but that Trương Đăng Quế had changed the will. Emperor Thiệu Trị used to say, despite being an older child, Hồng Bảo, was rude, giddy, and less willing to study. Hồng Nhậm was bright and studious, so he was more loved by his father. From childhood, Hồng Nhậm was often seen by his father to teach him more.

When Tự Đức was a child, he was gentle, calm, quiet, and often spoke softly like out of breath. By nature, he was sentimental, even shy, timid, less social, emotional, self-blamed, often hesitant and indecisive. The Emperor was physically weak and always sick. From an early age, Emperor Thiệu Trị saw the mental symptoms of Tự Đức, and gave him the book "Treatment of Mental Problems" and "Directions of Good Way" to study. Intelligent, erudite in Confucian studies, good at poetry and very filial to his mother, the Emperor often obeyed her recommendation to "reconcile with France" by Mother Queen Từ Dũ. Indeed, he was the most literate and scholarly Emperor of the dynasty Nguyễn. The Emperor used to read books until late at night, having little contact with the world outside, so he did not understand the people's life as well as current happening in countries in the world, especially in China and Japan. All his life was in the capital Huế, only once he went away with his father to the North Vietnam at the age of 13. He was also a lonely man during 56 years of his life. How to live and respond also adhered to the traditional culture.



Tomb of Tự Đức

Tự Đức was an Emperor who lived simply, not lavishly. He usually wore a yellow shirt, a thin yellow scarf, and a pair of yellow-painted wooden clogs made by the inner palace. Yet he built an expensive tomb for his father Emperor Thiệu Trị. He also proceeded to build his tomb with an architecture that would last forever and was called Vạn Niên Cơ (Ten Thousand Years Mausoleum). It was built from 1864 to 1867 and was also the cause of the Chày Vôì rebellion. At the end of his life, the Emperor changed the name Vạn Niên Cơ to Khiêm Cung (later called Khiêm Lăng, Humble Mausoleum). He wrote a memoir about the Humble Mausoleum as an honest self-assessment about his own life. In it, there are these words: "... *It is my sin not to be wise in knowing people; it is also my sin not using people correctly; hundreds of tasks cannot be done and they are all my crimes ...*". This memoir was inscribed on a stone stele located at Khiêm Lăng.

Hồng Nhậm ascended to the throne at the age of 19, taking the reign as Tự Đức. He adopted the following schedule each month: on odd days, he held court; on even days, he went to worship his mother, the Queen Dowager. Consequently, each month, no matter how busy the work was, the Emperor would only hold court with the mandarins for 15 days! The Emperor often brought court affairs to his mother for important decisions, who often advised reconcile with France. The Emperor recorded the Queen's advice in the book "Teachings of a Gentle Mother". There are few Emperors who are as filial towards their mother as Emperor Tự Đức. He was a hard worker and had a sense of great responsibility of an Emperor to the people and the nation. He hoped the country would be "at peace and prosperous" like during the reigns of Emperor Nghiêu and Emperor Thuấn in ancient times. Emperor Tự Đức wished to have talented officials who could help him in ruling the country. He conveyed his sadness as an Emperor during chaotic times in a poem written during a boat ride on the Perfume River (it was translated by Ứng Trình in BAVH-191, volume 8, Vietnamese translation 1997, Thuận Hóa):

*Winter night on Perfume River  
A winter night, windy and cold  
Perfume River with little waves  
The boat is smooth, the wind breeze, the stars are just bright*

*Who understands the Emperor's heart?  
My heart is in pain forever for the country  
Hard to find talented persons  
With a good driver at the boat  
A peaceful crossing of the river is easy.*

With the task of protecting the country against foreign aggression, the position of Minister of Military Affairs and as the head of the Court, the elders starting from Trương Đăng Quế for 14 years, Trần Tiễn Thành for 16 years and Nguyễn Tri Phương for 2 years, had managed to keep the country's independence and sovereignty using the battle-defense policy combined with diplomacy negotiations (Treaties of 1862 and 1874). Meanwhile, they encouraged the anti-French movement to raise the spirit of patriotism and at the same time to try to mobilize renovation in all aspects of society.

Coming to the throne at the age of 19 with absolute power, Emperor Tự Đức felt guilty for not having an heir, and the death of a biological half-brother (Hồng Bảo) because of a throne dispute. Since ascending to the throne, Tự Đức had faced many difficulties from the previous three Emperors which brought about economic, military, and budgetary weaknesses, high war costs, and compensations for the French that were even more burdensome. War chaos was amid a scene full of catastrophes: floods, droughts, crop failures, starvation, economic difficulties, social upheaval, court internal turmoil, and foreign aggression by the Chinese in North Vietnam and especially by the "white demons". His reign lasted for a total of 36 years, but it was also a period of turmoil and the most chaotic compared to the previous Nguyễn reigns. In the country, the people were starving due to crop failures and rebellions emerged everywhere. The elder brother Hồng Bảo who could not become Emperor emerged as a traitor. In Tonkin, there were 40 peasant rebellions. The revolt of Lê Duy Phụng (1861) and the army of the Châu Châu (Cricket) revolt was very large. The Chày Vôi rebelled in the imperial capital (1866). The invaders from outside were the French who were seeking excuses to invade the country, and the Court had to cede land for peace and the country gradually lost to the French. Through the colonial invasion by France, the Emperor was poorly knowledgeable, so he had little interest in reforms. The military was thin, the weapons outdated and the logistics not enough for 36 years of the Tự Đức reign.

The prohibition of Christianity also created an excuse for foreign colonists to invade our country. In the beginning, the French officially attacked the Đà Nẵng harbor in 1858, occupied Gia Định in 1859 and the three Eastern provinces of Cochinchina in 1861, forcing the court to sign the 1862 Nhâm Tuất Peace Treaty. Emperor Tự Đức seemed confident in the fighting spirit of the Vietnamese people, giving instructions to officials not to give in, but to be tough against the French in negotiation. But when they failed, he blamed and reprimanded them with heavy penalties. Tự Đức felt helpless and there was the only way was to send envoys to ask for ... redemption. Tự Đức blamed the negotiators for not completing



the assigned task! The Emperor had to just beg ... to redeem a piece of his mother homeland in Gò Công. In 1867, the French occupied the remaining three Western provinces and then invaded the North again, causing the court to lose all sovereignty in Tonkin and Cochinchina and finally to sign the Treaty of Giáp Tuất 1874. The political situation and the hostilities became darker and darker, the country became more and more occupied by the French army, and the spirit of Emperor Tự Đức was always in panic mode, leading to severe illness without any cure.

In 1862, Emperor Tự Đức was 33 years old, after 15 years of experience on the throne. He began to possess fully authoritarian powers but was indecisive in national matters. Even in the imperial city, many officials and royal relatives protested and wanted to overthrow Emperor Tự Đức to open a way out for the country. On August 3, 1864, a cousin, Hồng Tập, and Phò Mã Trương Văn Chất conspired to dispose of the Emperor and planned to kill two great mandarins Phan Thanh Giản and Trần Tiễn Thành, because they were thought to surrender to the enemy and did not support the anti-French movement. They then proceeded to kill Catholics. But being exposed, they were all arrested. The Court mandarins thought the Hồng Tập group was treasonous rather than a political disagreement.



Cao Bá Quát and Emperor Tự Đức

When the three remaining western provinces of Cochinchina were occupied in July 1867 and Phan Thanh Giản committed suicide, Emperor Tự Đức released a "repentance" on October 9, 1867, with a passage *"I am... physically sick, mentally stupid... Sitting or lying down I am worrying and sad ... My face is pale and thin, I am less than 40 years old and my hair is already gray like an old man "*. He also had similar words inscribed on the stele of his mausoleum (1875).

In the year of Mậu Thìn 1868, Vân Đình Dương Khuê (1839-1902) obtained his doctorate in the Huế capital. That year the relationship between Vietnam and France became even more difficult: six provinces of Cochinchina were just lost and the court was inactive and worried. In the Court exam that year, Emperor Tự Đức posed the question: Fight or Reconcile? In the postscript, to express his grief before the situation of the country after Emperor Tự Đức accepted responsibility for losing the six Southern provinces, Dương Khuê wrote under the headings as follow:

*Reading His Majesty's edict and not crying in pain will not be  
a good subject*

By the early 1870s, the relationship between Vietnam and France was increasingly unfavorable for the Vietnamese side because of its passive weakness, and the French made more and more special claims, especially the violent activities of Jean Dupuis who arbitrarily used the Red River for the arms trade with China and illegally arrested Thọ xuong District Chief Đặng Huy Xán (4-1873). Before that situation, even if he was only a low mandarin, Dương Khuê presented to Emperor Tự Đức a petition to be fierce towards the French and not to give in forever. But the Huế court, at that time, was advocating negotiations for peace, hoping that the French governor in Saigon would intervene to settle the Jean Dupuis incident. Hence, after looking at Dương Khuê's petition, Emperor Tự Đức criticized "Don't know anything about the times", and then demoted Dương Khuê.



A few years later, in 1879, when the Emperor celebrated his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, he heard a song about Dương Khuê's story so he forgave his sins:

*I cheapened myself, but he could not afford to abandon me  
Although the guilt is heavy, the Emperor still loves me*

Emperor Tự Đức was heartbroken, watching the country gradually losing sovereignty and authority day by day, the society divided because of religious killings and the scholars staying away, so he became sicker because "we can't fight, we can't make peace, we can't keep it either" (VNC, p.1, p.249-252). Most of the Emperor's close mandarins were gone like Trương Đăng Quế, Phan Thanh Giản, Nguyễn Tri Phương, Đoàn Thọ, Hoàng Diệu ... After 36 years under the Tự Đức reign, only Trần Tiễn Thành belonged to the old class and most mandarins were of the new generation in the last 2 years of his reign. Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết held all powers in the court and, in the North, there were Hoàng Kế Viêm, Nguyễn Hữu Độ and Phan Đình Bình while Emperor Tự Đức got more and more

ill. At the same time, the influence of Trần Tiễn Thành also decreased because of old age and sickness.

After occupying the South (Cochinchina), the French began to pay attention to the North (Tonkin) with the Red River expedition to find a way to trade with Yunnan, China. The tragic death of Nguyễn Tri Phương in 1873 and the fighting situation there caused the Emperor to be pessimistic and in a passive mood. The Emperor felt lonely with a deep fear of French ambitions through their increasingly hard policies and provocations by the French government in Paris and the colonial government in Saigon as well as the urging of French clergy because of difficulties on missionaries and abuses of the converts.

Since 1872, the Tonkin was constantly occupied like "leopard skin" by various armies, e.g., the French, Chinese Qing, Black Flags, and Vietnamese. Internal affairs were delayed due to natural disasters, chaos, and religious warfare, the scholars staying away from the court, and the poor people were impoverished due to economic failure. The reform program was only implemented half-heartedly because the Emperor refused to approve the request of the great mandarins Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ, after they returned from France, or the petitions of Nguyễn Trường Tộ a few years ago who had predicted: *"if the reform problem is not solved, the country will be lost"*.

In 1873, the French colonialists attacked the Hanoi citadel. Nguyễn Tri Phương was injured but refused to be treated by the French. This event caused the Emperor to be emotional, self-blamed, and to think a lot. Much later, in 1878, reading the Hongkong newspaper had awakened the Emperor to move the country forward to open to the world via trade, learning Western technology, building ships, casting guns ... And doing these reforms required studying foreign languages and sending people to study abroad. The Emperor consulted the Privy Council, but the officials there all refused and thought that reforms could not be done because the Minister of Military Affairs Trần Tiễn Thành was in the minority. The Emperor himself saw the inertia at this time, so he approved learning a foreign language right away. Some young people were sent to Siam to learn the Thai language. But this move of Tự Đức was too late!

The French invaded Hanoi for the second time in 1882 to protect the overseas French, the Catholic converts, and the mining resources against China. Hoàng Diệu fought hard to protect Hanoi citadel and committed suicide at Võ Miếu. With the situation changing fast and several matters urgently needing hard work, Trần Tiễn Thành was allowed by the Emperor to take a temporary sick leave. Tôn Thất Thuyết was present in Huế after a long time of meditation to treat his mental illness. He was appointed to take over the position of Minister of Military Affairs in February 1882 to respond to the Northern battlefield and in June he started to join the Privy Council with the recommendation of Phạm Thân Duật. He adopted the policy of fighting against the French with military solutions to protect the capital.

When he picked the princes, the Emperor also questioned his own spirit and body. History books of the Nguyễn Dynasty (DNTL) recorded as follows: (DNTL, t7, p. 1200) September of the year Kỷ Ty (1869): *"I have thin virtues, young, succeed the throne so soon. Unfortunately, I was not healthy with unlucky destiny, heavy work, serious errors, chronic illnesses, do not know how to practice training to be a good Emperor. I was childless, not reassured about the establishment of the Crown Prince and no other sin is bigger! I am very scared and ashamed "*.

But due to the lack of children and the will content of Emperor Tự Đức, the historical period from 1883 to 1885 from the time of the death of the Emperor became troubled by the abuse of powers by the regents while the French colonialists wanted to impose a colonial rule over the whole Indochina and the Chinese conspiracy to occupy the Northern land. Reacting to the detrimental defeat of the war and negotiating with a weak position, mandarins had to choose one of two obvious trends, either against or following the enemy only: the warring faction advocated face-to-face confrontation by force against the French, killing Catholics and at the same time asking China for help. In contrast to the warring faction, the reconciliation side consisted of most of the royal family wanting to cooperate or negotiate with the French. In that situation, the Huế court was divided into two clearly opposing trends with violent acts directed by the regents who had installed and removed (and killed) three consecutive Emperors in four months.

The Emperor had to take medicines for the rest of his life to cure his illnesses, but "they remained incurable". From the moment of his birth, the Emperor's health was bad, at times it seemed that he might not survive. His immune system was weak and various illnesses were raging until he became an adult. Royal doctors used several famous prescriptions from the Ming Mang period, "One night six copulations yield five children" or "one night five copulations yield four children" or "Yang Rebirth" but they were ineffective. Through two recent research articles about the health of Emperor Tự Đức by a modern physician, Dr. Bùi Minh Đức, we see Emperor Tự Đức was a man with many illnesses from a young age. According to Dr. Bùi Minh Đức, his infertility was due to "Primary gonadal insufficiency", which causes a decrease in spermatozoa (Azoospermia or Oligospermia) and a decrease in the male "Testosterone" factor in the body. We can count a total of 14 diseases: shortness of breath, indigestion, constipation, blurred vision, bone fatigue... But the most serious is "Infertility". This has caused influences on the psychological side, making the Emperor sullenly weak, indecisive hesitancy, non-aggressive determinism. This lack of determination and assertiveness in the way of handling national affairs has caused many harmful effects in governing the country of Vietnam during the turmoil, especially when the French were determined to bring troops to invade our country.

Tự Đức has composed a huge volume of literary works: 600 essays, 4,000 poems in Chinese characters, and about 100 poems in Nôm (Vietnamese version of Chinese characters). He also repaired and edited some folk plays. The Emperor opened two cultural centers (Tập Hiền Viên and Khai Kinh Diên) to discuss poetry, history, and politics with writers and poets. Tự Đức was even more prominent in the field of history. He directed the National Historical Archive (Quốc Sử Quán) to compile comprehensive historical records. Under his reign, printing and compilation took place in a frantic manner, and many major works were completed such as Khâm Định Việt Sử Thông Giám Cương Mục, Đại Nam Nhất Thống Chí ...

Like previous Emperors, Emperor Tự Đức frequently emphasized the importance of researching and compiling history: *“Born in a hundred thousand years, knowing what happened hundreds of thousands of years ago depends on history, isn’t it? Therefore, up to now, everybody study history from the Emperor down to the students”*. Our country has proclaimed a culture a long time ago. If we know how to collect records, one generation after another, with each generation having a history of its own, either good or bad, then we have enough good historical evidence, comparable to the huge Chinese history”. In the edict on the compilation of Vietnamese history, Thông Giám Cương Mục, on January 22, 1856, he wrote: *“Recently, the study of national history has not yet been extensive, so students who read books or write literature only know Chinese history and our people care little about the history of the country! ... The study is not extensive, not because of the old history but due to an incomplete history? ”*. National Historical Archive was assigned to compile a complete historical record of the Nguyễn Dynasty. It also had a full written history of the process of formation and development in thousands of years of history and geography of the nation. Emperor also wrote that if this work was not done, it was a shortcoming of the Nguyễn Dynasty. With the expanding compilation and printing of works, the court added a library of wooden plates, called Tàng Bản Đường, behind the main building. By February 1884, the court built one more row of tile houses in the east of the main building for the compilation of Thực Lục Chính Biên đệ tứ kỷ.

In summary, Emperor Tự Đức proved to lack determination and confidence in the role of a ruler as in writing the will *“the next Emperor may not be capable of handling important state matters”*, creating an upheaval in the royal court. Most of all his indecisiveness about fighting or seeking peace with the French has led to *“the more France encroaches on Vietnam, the more we lost”*. Further, his nonuniform support for the renewal of the country and his resignation to losing the national land, from the South (Cochinchina) to the North (Tonkin), and then to lose both the imperial capital of Huế and the country autonomy. Tự Đức is rated as an Emperor with good character and gentle temperament. He often woke up early at 6 am, diligently reviewed the petitions, and was an industrious, hard-working Emperor. But Tự Đức ruled in a difficult time, with several rebellions within the country and the French invasion from outside. He was hard-working but not talented enough to propose adequate reform

policies to change the situation of the country. In fighting against the French, he proved to be a weak man. The imperial army was defeated in a few battles, and he was forced to cede the provinces of Cochinchina to make peace with the French, although the anti-French forces in the South were still fighting and gained some victories.

The Emperor lived in the palace and was not familiar with life outside, so he had to take the mandarins as his ears and eyes, but the officials assisting Tự Đức were trained in old Confucian studies, did not understand the new age, so everything would fail. Trần Trọng Kim commented: *"Although the Emperor has the responsibility of the Emperor, the officials have the responsibility of the officials. Nevertheless, Emperor Dục Tông could not avoid responsibility with his home country, but the court's fault at that time was not that trivial."* In general, the failure of Tự Đức was very much like that of Emperor Đạo Quang of the Qing Dynasty, who ruled about the same time. Both were industrious Emperors who were diligent and highly thrifty but not determined enough and deceitful, and without knowledge of the situation. Therefore, it was impossible to save the country from inside and outside dangers. Their personalities and abilities were only suitable for ruling in peaceful times. During the times of turmoil, they were not capable of leading the country. At the end of his life, Tự Đức and his close mandarin Trần Tiễn Thành were with the same mind of *"a person with unfulfilled wishes"* and *"The country is gradually lost and the reforms are unfinished"*.

#### **Section 4.b. Emperors in Troubled Times**

When Emperor Tự Đức was born, he was difficult to raise and he was also thin. Even though he had a wife as early as 15 years old, it was difficult for him to have children. At 17 years old, he suffered from smallpox with serious complications and was thought to die. Enthroned at the age of 19, he had many wives and concubines (over 100) but with a weak physique and many diseases, including mental illness, so he had no children. He discussed the establishment of the princes as early as 1865. The Emperor asked 3 biological nephews for adoption according to chronological order as follows:

- 1866 Ung Thi (later Emperor Đồng Khánh) was born in 1864
- 1868 Ung Chân (Emperor Dục Đức) was born in 1853
- 1871 Ung Đăng (Emperor Kiến Phúc) was born in 1869.

According to the genealogy of Nguyễn Phúc, the next Emperors to Tự Đức were as follows:

- Hồng Y, the 4<sup>th</sup> brother of Tự Đức with descendants: Dục Đức-Thành Thái-Duy Tân. Hồng Y was a famous scholar at the time. Two brothers Tự Đức and Hồng Y were very close to each other. Y died at the age of 45, had a child Dục Đức, a grandchild Thành Thái and a great-grandchild Duy Tân as Emperors. All three Emperors were deposed.

- Hồng Cai, the 26<sup>th</sup> brother of Tự Đức with descendants: Đồng Khánh-Kiến Phúc-Hàm Nghi. Hồng Cai died young at the age of 31, but had many descendants as Emperors: children Đồng Khánh (oldest son), Kiến Phúc (3<sup>rd</sup> son), Hàm Nghi (5<sup>th</sup> son), a grandchild Khải Định and a great-grandchild Bảo Đại. At that time, there was a saying in Huế: “A family gives birth to three Emperors, one Emperor still exists, one Emperor was lost and one Emperor ran away”- The existing Emperor was Đồng Khánh, the lost Emperor was Kiến Phúc and the ran-away Emperor was Hàm Nghi.



Đồng Khánh



Kiến Phúc



Hàm Nghi



Hiệp Hòa

-Hồng Dật, the youngest brother of Tự Đức, became Emperor Hiệp Hòa.

From 1881, the war situation became darker and darker, the warring faction became the majority in the court supported by scholars. After the Emperor Tự Đức died for two years, four Emperors were deposed by the plots of Regent Tường with the support of Regent Thuyết. These events had dire consequences for the country. i.e., the French colonialists ruled over our entire country.

**Emperor Dục Đức (1853-1884)** ruled from July 20, 1883, to July 23, 1883. He was originally named Ứng Ái and the second child of Thụy Thái Vương Hồng Y. His mother was Trần Thị Nga who was born on January 4, Quý Sửu year (February 11, 1853). At the age of 16 years, he was adopted by Emperor Tự Đức and sent to Tập Hiền Institute for teaching by dignitaries. In terms of age and role, Ứng Chân was the eldest of the three adopted princes. In 1869, Ung Ái was 17 years old and Emperor Tự Đức changed his name to Ứng Chân. In October 1869, Emperor Tự Đức gave a decree showing the choice of Ứng Chân as the First

Prince as a result of recommendations by Empress Dowager Từ Dũ. He was then handed over to the Emperor's first wife Vũ Thị Duyên who took care of his education. In 1870 the Emperor built Dục Đức School outside the Hiển Nhơn gate of the royal citadel where Ứng Chân would stay with his wife and children and continued his studying.

Because of his residing in Dục Đức School, so later Ứng Chân was called Emperor Dục Đức. Emperor Tự Đức also appointed learned mandarins as his teachers. Phạm Phú Thứ from 1871, Lê bá Thận from 1877 and Phạm Thận Duật from 1878 were teachers of Ứng Chân. With three adopted nephews, the Emperor still asked the court to find more children to train in the palace and to choose as Emperor later, because Ứng Chân had nearsightedness in the eyes, his virtues were not yet good and his open mind did not conform to the rules of the royal court. After a few years studying at Dục Đức, Emperor Tự Đức was not very satisfied and his comments on Ứng Chân were even more harsh, so the teaching style needed to be adjusted. The Emperor also said that Ứng Chân belonged to the "middle and lower-level" and needed to be taught seriously to become a good man. A rattan whip was given to two teachers to punish Ứng Chân when he was lazy to study. In 1882 when Phạm Thận Duật was a teacher of Dục Đức and Đồng Khánh he noted that " The eldest prince (Dục Đức) studied literature well and had submitted for grading a poem titled Cold Night and full of unhappy resentment. " (Quote from Phạm Thận Duật, Cultural Career, Cần Vương Mission, Vietnam Association of History Science, Hanoi 1997).

Emperor Tự Đức wanted to choose a talented successor, so he often paid attention to the activities of Ứng Chân. The latter was not eager to learn Confucianist classics, liked western education (under the influence of Phạm Phú Thứ) and did not follow the palatial rules. He was often rebuked by the Emperor and delayed in promotion. In 1876 one of his children got sick and medical doctor Nguyễn Tấn was asked to stay overnight, so Ứng Chân was fined for one year. Then in 1882, his guard Nguyễn Văn Thành faked orders from the Empress Dowager to offer his daughter as a concubine to Ứng Chân. After this affair was discovered, he was fined for two years. Afterward, the Emperor used changes in salaries and allowances to encourage learning.

From 1879 Ứng Chân studied French and Western civilization with Father Nguyễn Hữu Thơ. This priest used to study abroad in Penang, Malaysia for 6 years (1847-1853) and stayed in France for 3 years (1864-1867). He was very close to the French bishops, worked as an interpreter for the foreign delegations to the court, and went abroad many times. He was appointed by Emperor Tự Đức to be the chief commercial consultant and helped with the correspondence with foreign countries (TGP, t3, p. 384). During this time, Ứng Chân liked to hang out with Catholics of western education, especially French expatriates in Huế and Consul Rheinart (1879-1880 and 1881-1883). In January 1883, Ứng Chân was promoted as Thụy Quốc Công and prepared for the throne succession.



Reading through the DNTL (Historical Records of Great Vietnam), we know the strict selection among the descendants of the Emperor, their careful education and training, especially Ưng Chân since he was 16 years old. Phạm Phú Thứ with strong reform ideas was teaching Ưng Chân what he saw and heard in France and Western civilization that were welcomed by Ưng Chân who learned more with Father Thơ. Although he had been chosen as the eldest prince but Ưng Chân was still fined because of his liberal nature and his dislike of Confucian studies. Emperor Tự Đức deliberately delayed the promotion of Ưng Chân through the edicts to the mandarins and royal princes while expressed his preference for the younger Ưng Đăng who had a better character than Ưng Chân.

Through his will, Emperor Tự Đức said that he had to choose an older prince to lead the nation in these difficult times. He must have known that Ưng Chân was instructed by the great minister Phạm Phú Thứ, did not like Confucian studies very much, had a progressive spirit and an open mind and was intimate with the Catholics and French expatriates, and since 25 years old he deliberately studied French and Western culture with Father Nguyễn Hữu Thơ. These did not escape the observations of Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết. These two men were busy preparing for their "cards" (Ưng Đăng and Hồng Dật, i.e. Emperor Kiến Phúc and Hiệp Hòa later). When Emperor Tự Đức chose Ưng Chân as the successor, the two Tường-Thuyết paid more attention to his behavior and activities in the past to plot the dismissal of the new Emperor.

His studying French and having progressive thoughts must be known to Emperor Tự Đức. Probably there was no reprimand nor encouragement from the Emperor since the court historical records DNTL did not mention them. The royal court had also opened for a long time French classes for some people and sent people to study abroad in France, Hong Kong, Singapore ... Moreover, Father Thơ had worked as a court interpreter (he was given a North Star medal by the French) and served in the Huế parish (led by bishop Caspar) from 1879 to 1887 (Father Thơ was the uncle of Nguyễn Hữu Bài and the teacher of Ngô Đình Khả; both received their training in Penang and were very close to the French bishops). It was during this time Father Thơ taught western culture to Ưng Chân. The militant faction thought that this was a conspiracy by the Franco-Vietnamese clergy to exert direct influence on the future Emperor.

With the decisions to choose Ưng Chân as the successor to the throne and appoint Trần Tiễn Thành as First Regent, Emperor Tự Đức might want the court of Dục Đức to follow the policies of peace, openness, no fighting between Catholics and non-believers, and continued the "war-defense-talk" to retain sovereignty and have enough time for economic and military reforms, imitating the path of renovation of Japan, Thailand, and China. At that time, China still retained its independence despite having to cede land for peace. In the will, there was a paragraph telling the three regents to "*keep yourself upright, manage the subordinates and work together well for success*" (DNTL, t8, p.575). At the time of this writing, Emperor Tự

Đức knew that Trần Tiễn Thành was on sick leave and "sad" (Longevity Wishes). Thành was discouraged from getting involved in the court intrigues by different factions, when the proposals of the reform faction failed to be implemented, his advice to the Emperor and the court against asking Chinese help was not followed and the studying abroad by Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was not approved.

Due to the failed war situation and the determination to colonize by the French, the court was divided clearly into two opposing factions: the war faction and the peace faction. The selection of Nguyễn Văn Tường (Interior Minister) and Tôn Thất Thuyết (Military Minister) as Second and Third Regents meant to put the military solution as secondary. Also, this division of power is based on the Emperor's feelings towards the three regents and the respect of Thành in recommending the two juniors. However, the myopic vision and greed for power of the two junior regents had resulted in strenuous division, political turmoil, and military adventures during a turbulent two-year period causing our country to lose autonomy and independence.

The ink of the Emperor's will was not yet dry, the two regents Tường and Thuyết staged the dethronement of Dục Đức against his will as well as the courageous protest of Phan Đình Phùng. If Phạm Thận Duật, the teacher of Ứng Chân, were present at that time, probably the face of the palace would change in another way (Phạm Phú Thứ was also dead). The two regents with real powers were playing their "cards" in choosing the future Emperors: Thuyết preferred Hồng Dật (Hiệp Hòa) and Tường aimed at Ứng Đăng (Kiến Phúc).

The tragedy began with a few sentences in the will about the morality and responsibility of Ứng Chân. Emperor Tự Đức was concerned that Ứng Chân could not fulfill his responsibilities as an emperor due to his myopic eyesight and his lust for concubines. It was deplorable for an intelligent Emperor to start the misfortunes of the Nguyễn Dynasty. Dục Đức had enough wisdom and reason to suggest the deletion of this paragraph but Tường-Thuyết refused. They started a dark conspiracy by raising doubts about the relation of Ứng Chân with the French representative. The main reason was Father Thơ worked as a secretary or private advisor, making Tường-Thuyết afraid of Dục Đức and believing that he was pro-French. From the moment of entering the palace, he had brought a number of confidants and issued his own regulations of court activities but his response to the petitions was slow as well as violations of ceremonial rules.

DNTL, volume 8, page 581 noted: "Detained Nguyễn Như Khuê and 13 other people in prison... Then tried and sentenced Như Khuê to die by guillotine, but assigned to Thừa Thiên province to wait next year for the execution (due to the solemn day of enthronement)". Nguyễn Như Khuê was a mandarin during the Thiệu Trị reign. According to Phạm Văn Sơn in Việt Sử Tân Biên (New History of Vietnam), volume 5, page 385: Dục Đức brought to the palace some people who had dealings with him before, but most of them were

disrespectful of royal laws, spoke freely and acted disrespectfully to the regents. The two regents Tường-Thuyết visited the new emperor in the palace, but the latter continued to have fun and did not receive them. According to Nguyễn Xuân Thọ, among the arrested, there were two Christians (p. 299).

Confidential correspondence exchanged between Paris-Saigon revealed later that Ưng Chân had disclosed publicly many important news about the country, such as the call for Chinese aid. According to BAVH, December 1943, p.106, French consul Rheinart asked Ưng Chân to provide a copy of the letter of Emperor Tự Đức asking for Chinese help in October 1882 as evidence in a report to Paris. Also due to the intimacy with Rheinart, the son of Emperor Dục Đức was enthroned later as Emperor Thành Thái (TGP, t3, p.372). Public opinion later said that the two regents Tường-Thuyết knew the transfer of documents to the Resident Rheinart and found a way to discard Ưng Chân (even historian Trần viết Ngạc). Why the regents did not set out an official sentence accusing Dục Đức of treason to be executed when there was clear evidence (like Emperor Hiệp Hòa later). Of course, the reason for treason was stronger than the four reasons mentioned above to dethrone the Emperor made two men responsible for causing chaos in the court leadership while inside and outside enemies caused the country to quickly lose its independence.

Certainly, when choosing Dục Đức to be his successor, Emperor Tự Đức knew his character and study of the Western culture with a deep desire to implement the innovation and national solidarity, but most mandarins were conservative and pro-Chinese. Emperor Tự Đức's aspirations were only based on a fragile reputation, unreal power, and no faction of Trần Tiễn Thành at that time. Dục Đức was Emperor for only three days. A few weeks later, Tường-Thuyết ordered to give poison to Dục Đức but failed. Maybe Thuyết wanted to quickly kill Ưng Chân before Phạm Thân Duật (who was the teacher of Dục Đức) returned from China. Although there were orders to starve him, a loving guard gave him every day a handful of rice and an old shirt soaked in water. Dục Đức squeezed it out to drink to survive. After a while, the scheme was revealed and the soldier stopped providing food and water, so he died in Thừa Phủ Prison on October 6, 1883 (according to the royal family genealogy).

The body of the dead Emperor was wrapped in a bamboo mat carried by a squad of soldiers to An Cựu for burial. The plan was to bury it in the territory of Tường Quang pagoda, where an aunt was practicing but only half the way through, the mat was broken and the body fell to the ground. It was a "heaven burial" at Phước Quả islet, An Lăng, near the pagoda today. (Legend has it that, later on, a beggar was lying dead on the grave of Emperor Dục Đức. Local people unknowingly buried him in the Emperor's grave. Now the grave has both the corpses of the ill-fated Emperor and the lucky beggar).

A few days later, the court permitted his wife, Từ Minh Phan Thị Điều, to visit the grave and perform funeral ceremonies at Tường Quang pagoda. Dục Đức left behind 8 wives,

11 boys, and 8 girls. All were confined to Trần Vũ house in the Citadel. In 1885, Emperor Đồng Khánh granted the family a palace in the village of Phú Lương. Due to a power dispute between Nguyễn Hữu Độ (father of Đồng Khánh's wife) and Phan Đình Bình (Từ Minh's father), Dục Đức's descendants were under house arrest in Trần Vũ. After this, a son of Emperor Dục Đức, Bửu Lân, who was 10 years old and under house arrest, was put on the throne in 1889 as Emperor Thành Thái due to the affection of Resident-General Rheinart and the tricks of Diệp Văn Cương, a husband of an aunt of Bửu Lân.

After ascending the throne, Thành Thái immediately built the tomb for his father and named it An Lăng (Peaceful Tomb). Following the instructions of those who knew the matter, Emperor Thành Thái had found the right place where the body of his father was buried. But when re-buried, two bodies were found in the tomb, so they had to cover it up and build the tomb immediately on this "heaven burial". The mausoleum was completed in early 1890, named An Lăng, but without a shrine. All rituals to worship Emperor Dục Đức were organized at Tường Quang pagoda located 200 meters away. In 1899, Emperor Thành Thái added Long Ân temple to the right of the tomb as a place to worship Emperor Dục Đức. In addition to Long Ân Palace, the Emperor also built auxiliary houses that were used for living quarters for seven concubines of Emperor Dục Đức, who were taking care of the tomb. After Từ Minh (the Emperor's first wife) died, the court buried her body to the right of Emperor Dục Đức's tomb as in the tomb of Emperor Gia Long.

One of the great-grandchildren of Emperor Dục Đức, currently living in An Lăng area, said *“two persons were buried in Emperor Dục Đức's tomb (Emperor Dục Đức and the beggar), so every time we worship the death anniversary of the Emperor, descendants of Emperor Dục Đức do not bow in the middle of his grave, but only to the left. This is because according to the traditions of the ancients, the person with a higher position, the older or being a male is worshiped on the left. Therefore, the Emperor's relatives believe that his soul is on the left, and the beggar resides on the right, and they only prostrate to the left”*. Finally, Emperor of Dục Đức was buried next to his wife. However, because Emperor Dục Đức was deposed, he was not worshipped in Thế Tổ Temple in Huế Citadel like other Emperors of the Nguyễn dynasty.

**Emperor Hiệp Hòa (1847-1883).** The Hiệp Hòa name meant peace and harmony. He was born on November 1<sup>st</sup> 1847 and named Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Dật. He was the sixth emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty and reigned for 4 months from July 30, 1883, to November 29, 1883. He was the 29th child and the youngest son of Emperor Thiệu Trị, and his mother was Trương Thị Thận. He was also known as Mệ Mến when he was a child. In Tỵ Đức 18<sup>th</sup> year (1865), Hồng Dật was appointed Lăng Quốc Công by the Emperor. On June 27, the Year of the Goat (July 30, 1883), Hồng Dật, 36 years old, ascended the throne to become Emperor Hiệp Hòa.

Emperor Hiệp Hòa wanted to implement the treaties signed with France. Under pressure from France, Hiệp Hòa assigned Tuy Lý Vương Miên Trinh to represent the Emperor directly in dealing with the French envoy in Huế. But later on, seeing the two regents too autocratic, he intended to step by step eliminate Tôn Thất Thuyết. The ink in the will of Tự Đức was not yet dry, the two regents Tường-Thuyết were exercising their powers with the bodyguard team Phấn Nghĩa. The French colonialists knew very well the inner divisions of the Nguyễn court at that time and enticed Emperor Hiệp Hòa and Queen Mother Từ Dũ together some princes against the two regents Tường and Thuyết.

On August 16, 1883, French Admiral Amédée Courbet arrived at Thuận An to command the French naval forces. They attacked Thuận An estuary and the fort Trấn Hải fell on August 21, 1883. Bishop Caspar, through Trần Tiễn Thành's recommendations, was the go-between in armistice negotiations between Admiral Courbet and Nguyễn Trọng Hợp in Thuận An. The official history noted that the Emperor had to summon the retired mandarin Trần Đình Túc and Nguyễn Trọng Hợp who went to the French delegation to discuss and sign with Harmand and Champeaux the Treaty of the Protectorate on August 25, 1883. With this treaty, Emperor Hiệp Hòa's prestige in the court as well as with the people was damaged seriously. The protests against the court's surrender were widespread. This treaty signing made Tôn Thất Thuyết very angry but he did not accept responsibility for the fall of Thuận An. Tôn Thất Thuyết insulted the Emperor Hiệp Hòa before the Court and refused to bow before him. After this event, the relationship between Emperor Hiệp Hòa and the two regents grew much tenser. Emperor Hiệp Hòa was bullied many times openly at the court, so he made a plan to eliminate Tường - Thuyết with French help.

The two princes Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phì submitted a secret petition to Hiệp Hòa to kill the two regents. This plan to kill the regents was revealed with many different details due to biased public opinion or false rumors at that time. On the occasion of a new French envoy to Huế, the Emperor immediately sent Tuy Lý Vương to contact Resident-General De Champeaux to ask for French help in removing Tôn Thất Thuyết. Therefore, on November 28, 1883, a private meeting between the Emperor and De Champeaux happened in the morning at the Văn Minh Palace but it was not known by Tường-Thuyết. The secret letter of Hiệp Hòa was brought by Hường Kỷ to De Champeaux. It fell into the hands of Tường and Kỷ was sentenced to prison on November 28, 1883 (according to Bửu Kế et Father A. Delvaux).

Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết summoned the court mandarins to sign the petition to Queen Mother Từ Dũ, reciting the crime of Emperor Hiệp Hòa and proposing his removal. Until 2 am on November 29, 1883, the signing of this agreement was finished. In the early morning, the court sent a representative to visit Trần Tiễn Thành at his residence in

Gia Hội to present the incident and ask for his signature of consent. Thành refused and wrote in the binder "*I am retired and dare not participate*". (DNTL q32)

Hiệp Hòa knew what was going on and wrote his resignation edict. With clear evidence of the secret letter sent to Champeaux and the resignation edict, Emperor Hiệp Hòa was sentenced as a collaborator with France. According to DNTL, volume 35, page 256 the secret petition by Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phi did not have the name of Trần Tiễn Thành as well as the comments of Hiệp Hòa contrary to the accusations of the public at that time or recently. Actually, Tường -Thuyết knew that Thành, 71 years old, was retired and powerless. These records still exist today to avoid distortions or inferences.

Under an order of the regents, Ông Ích Khiêm and Trương Đăng Duệ forced the Emperor to kill himself by poison on November 29, 1883. The two regents Tường-Thuyết made the verdict of treason publicly and the death penalty for Emperor Hiệp Hòa and princes, but the death of Thành was mysteriously carried out without orders. DNTL, book 70 confirmed: "*Everyone knew that the two regents ordered the killing*". This was the first step leading to serious divisions and loss of national solidarity in the leadership ranks with violent enthronement and removal of four Emperors in two years, killing three Emperors, a great mandarin, 40 royal relatives, and Catholics everywhere. All these violent acts created terror to justify the policy of the militaristic faction.

**Emperor Kiến Phúc (1869-1884)** was born on February 12, 1869, in Huế. He was the third son of Kiên Quốc Công Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Cai who was Emperor Tự Đức's younger brother. He was Emperor for eight months from November 30, 1883, to July 31, 1884. Because Ứng Đăng's biological uncle, Emperor Tự Đức, could not have children and adopted three nephews, and Ứng Kỹ (later Emperor Đồng Khánh) and Ứng Đăng were siblings of the same father and mother. According to the National Dynasty history, Ứng Đăng was adopted by Emperor Tự Đức and raised by Học Phi Nguyễn Văn Thị Hương from the age of 2. Ứng Đăng studied hard so the Emperor loved him very much. The Emperor sent him to Nguyễn Thị Bích to learn classics and rules. In the fall of 1882, he was sent to study at Dưỡng Thiện School. Later in his free time, the Emperor sent him the court documents so he could get familiar gradually with national affairs. Emperor Tự Đức originally intended to allow Ứng Đăng to succeed the throne, but at that time this prince was still too young. There was a passage about Ứng Đăng in the will: "*Ứng Đăng is cautious, easy to learn, careful to serve early and without defects, but too young and still need learning. At this difficult time, he does not yet know about the responsibility, so I give up my own affection and think about the national interest ...* "

Tường and Thuyết chose the young prince, Ứng Đăng, 14 years old for easy manipulation. Ứng Đăng was the prince most loved by Emperor Tự Đức among three adopted

children. Right away the two men sent people to Khiêm Lăng on November 28 1883 to bring back Ứng Đăng to the palace. The prince fled, cried, struggled, and was forced to sit on the palanquin but still refused. He had to put on a hammock back to the Citadel. When hearing that the two Thuyết and Tường wanted to put him on the throne, the prince said: "*I am still young and afraid I am not capable.*" On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1883, the enthronement was held at Thái Hòa Palace.

For the French, the ascendancy of Kiến Phúc to the throne was a risk. De Champeaux was afraid that Tôn Thất Thuyết might suddenly attack the Residence Palace (Tòa Khâm) so it was reinforced with 100 soldiers and a gunboat anchored on the Perfume River. De Champeaux refused to accept Emperor Kiến Phúc, cut off all liaisons with the Vietnamese court, entrenched in the Residence Palace to wait for reinforcements. On December 28, 1883, when Tricou was sent to act as Governor-General to handle the case in Huế, the court proposed to amend some articles that were too unjust for Annam in the Treaty Quý Mùi 1883 (also known as Harmand). at the palace Cần Chánh, Emperor Kiến Phúc and Tricou signed and sealed the modifications for transfer to France for ratification.

Although ascended to the throne when he was only 14 years old and reigned for only 8 months, the court under Emperor Kiến Phúc had some memorable deeds. In January of the year Giáp Thân (1884), there was a trial production of guns in styles of America and Germany. At the same time, there were trial weaving of all kinds of fabrics of the West. Not long before his death, in February 1884, the Emperor issued a solemn order to employ talented people, e.g., those who had received the doctorate, bachelor, and baccalaureate degrees and those who retired or resigned, to work in offices across the country. The Emperor ordered local officials to be responsible for sending the talented people to Huế. It was said to be the program of recruiting talent across the country, hoping to help the country through the turbulent period.

The war situation in the North (Tonkin) was disturbed again by the Vietnam-China coalition forcing the French government in Paris to negotiate with the Chinese government in Beijing. With reinforcements, the French chased the Qing and Black Flags troops to the border. In May 1884, the Qing army was defeated and signed the Treaty of Tianjin on May 11, 1884. China pledged to withdraw its troops from Tonkin and honor the treaties between Vietnam and France. The French representative was Lieutenant Colonel Fournier and the Qing representative was Governor-General Lý Hồng Chương (Li Hongzhang). This treaty consisted of five terms, with an agreement to share the interests of the Chinese with the French in Vietnam. Two terms changed the situation on the battlefield and affected the politics in Huế, i.e., the Chinese must withdraw all their troops back home and must respect the agreements between France and the Huế court in the past and the future.

Having reached an agreement with the Qing Dynasty and the situation in the North was put to rest due to the retreat of the Black Flags to the other side of the border, France focused on settling the matter in Central Vietnam. Based on the request of the Vietnamese court, the French agreed to modify the Harmand Peace Treaty signed with the Hiệp Hòa court on July 23, 1883. On May 6, Giáp Thân year (May 30, 1884), Governor-General Patenôtre came to Huế to discuss the amendments to the Harmand Treaty. On May 13, Giáp Thân year (June 6, 1884), the new treaty included 19 articles and was signed between Patenôtre and the representatives of Annam, Regent Nguyễn Văn Tường, Governor-General Phạm Thiện Duật, Deputy Governor-General Tôn Thất Phan.

The terms of this treaty were similar to those of the Treaty of Quý Mùi (Harmand), but the French agreed to return Bình Thuận, Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An and Hà Tĩnh provinces to Annam. Vietnam accepted the French protection, divided into 3 parts with different administrative organizations and lost its diplomatic power but the Huế court maintained its own budget and military. (Note: Emperor Thành Thái asked the French to enforce these two provisions and was dethroned because of "madness disease". Also, the treaty had two important items: Article 1 - Protection - and Article 15 - Commitment to Suppress Domestic Rebellions. These were among the reasons forcing the French to return the independence to Vietnam from the Declaration of Independence on March 11, 1945, by Emperor Bảo Đại after the Japanese reversed the French on March 9, 1945). This was a very unfavorable treaty for the Nguyễn Dynasty, because there were the provisions that allowed the Resident-General to have an audience with the Vietnamese Emperor and French troops to station in Mang Cá in Huế Citadel. According to the newly signed Treaty of Giáp Thân (also known as Patenôtre), Rheinart was appointed as Resident-General North and Central Vietnam and based in Huế.

In addition, under the agreement in the Tianjin Peace Treaty between France and Qing Dynasty, then Vietnam would no longer be dependent on China, so the gold seal weighting 6 kg with a Chinese inscription “Việt Nam Emperor” that the Qing dynasty conferred upon the Nguyễn Dynasty, was no longer in effect. Thus, the French asked the Nguyễn Dynasty to send this seal to France as a souvenir. But Nguyễn Văn Tường refused to accept this. Finally, the two sides agreed to destroy the seal by melting it. All of the above matters were out of the control of Emperor Kiến Phúc because the Emperor was ill and the two regents Tường and Thuyết did not allow the young Emperor to participate. Nonetheless, it marked the disappearance of the last vestige of Chinese authority over Vietnam. In the middle of that time, Emperor Kiến Phúc passed away (July 31, 1884), ending eight months as a reluctant Emperor. He was only 15 years old.

Regarding the death of Emperor Kiến Phúc, the official history of the Nguyễn Dynasty stated that the Emperor died of violent sickness. On August 1, 1884, the day after the death of Emperor Kiến Phúc, Rheinart noted that the Emperor died normally of illness. However, many people suspected that he was murdered by Nguyễn Văn Tường who put poison in the



Emperor's medicine. According to some researchers, the poisoning hypothesis was inaccurate and they claimed that, at this historic period in Vietnam, France and their followers wanted to discredit Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết (the advocates against the French) and weaken the Nguyễn Dynasty. At the same time, based on historical data in ĐNTL and related palatial regulations, some researchers stated that the Emperor died because of a critical recurrence of illness, and all kinds of medicine were ineffective.

Bửu Kế said that Nguyễn Văn Tường killed Emperor Kiến Phúc because of the following reasons:

- First, both Tường and Thuyết chose a young Emperor for maintaining total authority. The two regents wanted to fight a dangerous final battle
- Second, these two regents claimed that the Treaty of Giáp Thân signed in the name of Emperor Kiến Phúc was too disadvantageous for the Nguyễn Dynasty and especially for the war faction. If Emperor Kiến Phúc died, this peace treaty would no longer be in effect.
- Third, because Nguyễn Văn Tường entered the forbidden palace at night (some claimed he had amorous relations with Học Phi Nguyễn Thị Hương), was caught and scolded by Emperor Kiến Phúc So Nguyễn Văn Tường had to kill the Emperor to cover up the affair. No one could be sure because the insiders were all dead.

After Ưng Đăng was adopted by the Emperor Tự Đức, the Emperor entrusted the Prince to Học Phi Nguyễn Thị Hương who raised and taught him. Học Phi became influential after Kiến Phúc was the Emperor. Nguyễn Văn Tường realized that he should be friendly with her and won her feelings. A lucky occasion for Tường: Emperor Kiến Phúc suffered from smallpox, Học Phi had to stay with and take care of the emperor day and night. Tường did not miss a good, daily he went inside to see the Emperor until evening. Gradually, Tường fell in love with Học Phi, and sometimes both of them appeared flirtatious. Although he was a child, Emperor Kiến Phúc was annoyed and frustrated by his gestures and attitude. One day he faked asleep to observe the Regent and Royal Mother. Finally, the Emperor cried out: "*When I get well, I will behead all three generations of your family.*" Tường retreated to the Royal Hospital. That very night, after drinking the medicine, Emperor Kiến Phúc passed away. Nguyễn Văn Tường announced the next day. "The Emperor has passed away because of the sudden change in sickness". Everyone knew the poison that killed Emperor Kiến Phúc, but the authority of Tường was too great, so no one dared to open their lips. Up to now, the death of this Emperor is still a historical mystery. After his death, the Emperor's body was buried in Dương Xuân Thượng village and his tomb was called Bồi Lãng.

**Emperor Hàm Nghi (1871-1944).** The Emperor's name was Nguyễn Phúc Ung Lich, the fifth son of Kiên Thái Vương Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Cai and Phan Thị Nhàn. He was a younger brother of Emperor Kiến Phúc and Emperor Đồng Khánh. Ung Lich lived from a young age in a poor house with his biological mother, unlike his two brothers who were raised in the royal palace. When he saw the mandarin come pick him up, Ung Lich was scared and did not dare to accept the royal costume. On the morning of the 12th of the 6th month in Giáp Thân year, that is August 2, 1884, Ung Lich was carried between two rows of guardians and entered the Thái Hòa palace to perform the enthronement ceremony, setting the reign as Hàm Nghi. Ung Lich was only 13 years old. First, Emperor Hàm Nghi had to welcome the French delegation from the Residence Palace on the south bank to the Thái Hòa Palace on the north bank of the Perfume River to celebrate the Emperor on August 17, 1884. For the French after the unsuccessful claims and demands, they had to make concessions to avoid additional troubles by accepting the “fait accompli” but the ceremony was finally finished smoothly.

Unable to bear the aggression of the French colonialists with a direct provocation of Military Minister Tôn Thất Thuyết, during the night of lunar May 22 to 23 (i.e., July 4-5, 1885), Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết ordered the attack of the French barracks at Mang Cá post and the Residence Palace on the south bank of the Perfume River. The Emperor, the Queen Dowager, and the Court were not consulted and informed. In the morning, the French counter-attacked and the Nguyễn army was not strong enough to resist and had to leave Huế city. Tôn Thất Thuyết entered the palace to report the fighting during the night to Emperor Hàm Nghi and Tam Cung (Three Palaces i.e., the mother of Emperor Tự Đức, the wives of Emperor Tự Đức and the mother of Emperor Hàm Nghi) and invited them to go to Quảng Trị to flee to Tân Sở. Having to leave the Citadel, Emperor Hàm Nghi frantically said: “We have not fought anyone. Why do we have to run?”. On July 9, under pressure from Tôn Thất Thuyết, Emperor Hàm Nghi had to say goodbye to the Three Palaces and went on the way to Tân Sở. Emperor Hàm Nghi reached Tân Sở and then went to Tuyên Hóa area (Quảng Bình).

Emperor Hàm Nghi suffered a lot of hardships because he had to wriggle between mountains and forests with harsh weather, amid a plethora of needs, sickness, hunger, and life-threatening dangers. At Tân Sở, Emperor Hàm Nghi declared Hịch Cần Vương (Order to Assist the Emperor) which appealed to the scholars and people to revolt against the French for the country independence. Seeing the help and enthusiastic participation of local people from Quảng Trị through Laos as well as in Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình, he realized the importance of his role and no longer felt forced as before. The Emperor was trained by hardships to be patient and welcomed them with a very casual attitude. He issued an edict Dụ Cần Vương, twice sent letters asking for help to the Governor-General of Yunnan of the Qing Dynasty and many orders to the mandarins and leaders of the anti-French movement during three years of the resistance war.

During the resistance war of Emperor Hàm Nghi, the three Empresses Dowager and Emperor Đồng Khánh kept sending letters calling for the Emperor to return, but he insisted on refusing. The French Governor-General in Indochina, Paul Bert, also planned to establish Hàm Nghi as Emperor of four provinces (Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh and Quảng Bình) but failed. The Emperor often said that he preferred to die in the forest than to return as Emperor under foreign domination. At the base of the Cần Vương movement, the Emperor Ham Nghi was guarded by two sons of Tôn Thất Thuyết, 20 years old Tôn Thất Đạm and 18 years old Tôn Thất Thiệp. Other military leaders such as Lê Trực and Nguyễn Phạm Tuân defended and attacked French forces in the area, while Thuyết went through the forest roads and crossed the border to ask the Qing Dynasty for help. In September 1888, a squad leader Nguyễn Đình Tinh surrendered to the French at Đồng Cá station. Nguyễn Đình Tinh seduced Trương Quang Ngọc to surrender. Then Nguyễn Đình Tinh and Trương Quang Ngọc volunteered with the French to bring troops to arrest Emperor Hàm Nghi. Late during the night of September 26, 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi was arrested while sleeping. The Emperor pointed directly at Trương Quang Ngọc and shouted: *"I would rather you kill me than you would bring me to the French"*. Emperor Hàm Nghi was then 17 years old and was fighting the French for three years.



The French brought him back to Huế on November 22, 1888. At this time, the Huế court learned about the arrest of Hàm Nghi, and Emperor Đồng Khánh sent out a delegation to pick him up and take him back to Huế. However, the French were afraid that the people would be excited when they saw the face of the resistance war, so they informed the Privy Council that Emperor Hàm Nghi now had an unusual personality, would be inconvenient to return and needed to go to another place for a while. However, the French colonialists had planned to exile Emperor Hàm Nghi to Algeria in North Africa. Rheinart informed the Emperor that the Empress Dowager was seriously ill. If the Emperor wanted to visit, he would send him back for a meeting. Hearing Rheinart saying this, Emperor Hàm Nghi replied, "I am a prisoner and the country is already lost, so I dare not think about my parents and brothers anymore". After his reply, Emperor Hàm Nghi was silent and went back to his room.

At 4:00 am on November 25, 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi was taken aboard the ship for Lăng Cô and boarded the Comète ship to go to Saigon. Helping him to live in the French colony, Trần Bình Thanh was sent as an interpreter and two other guards helped him with daily life. On November 28, 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi arrived in Saigon. From here on, the French colonialists and the court of Đồng Khánh forced the people to call him Duke Ứng Lịch. The Emperor was kept in a camp for half a month to wait for the French authorities to prepare for his exile. On December 13, 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi was taken aboard the Biên Hòa ship to North Africa. Before he left his homeland, the Emperor looked up to the shore.

Unable to contain his emotions because of his sadness and the country's destiny, he burst into tears. Even not being used to sea travel, the Emperor was continuously seasick but still never uttered a cry or resentment. In the afternoon of January 13, 1889, Emperor Hàm Nghi arrived in Algeria's capital Alger. At the time, the Emperor just turned 18 years old and lived in the castle called Villa des Pins (Pine Villa). Governor-General of Algeria sent Marie Jeanne Delorme (1852-1941) nearly 20 years older than Emperor Hàm Nghi to act as his housekeeper, and, perhaps, she was also assigned to watch over the "political prisoner" Hàm Nghi.

During the first 10 months of living on foreign land, Emperor Hàm Nghi refused to learn French because he thought it was the language of the invaders of his country. He had few friends and almost no contact with anyone, all communication went through the interpreter Trần Bình Thanh. But later on, he found the French in Algeria friendly, different from the French people in Vietnam, so from November Emperor Hàm Nghi started learning French. A few years later, Emperor Hàm Nghi spoke and wrote in French very well. Although in a foreign country, all Vietnamese cultural features were still preserved by him. Emperor Hàm Nghi still used a scarf and long dress according to the old style in his hometown and lived "quietly like a carp". His clothes were made in the same old Vietnamese style and tied her hair in a bun until he died. His joys came from studying the piano, drawing paintings, and taking pictures. Emperor Hàm Nghi also had relationships with some famous French intellectuals. In 1899, he had visited Paris and saw an exhibition by the painter Paul Gauguin. Afterward, his painting was influenced by Gauguin's style.

However, Emperor Đồng Khánh was chosen by the French to replace Emperor Hàm Nghi in Huế and was despised by the Vietnamese people. Therefore, even though Hàm Nghi was exiled to Alger, the French in Indochina still had the thought of using Hàm Nghi when needed. Thus, the French had a special treatment for Hàm Nghi in Alger such as the Emperor was invited by the Governor-General to dinners and go hunting; lived in Villa des Pins; when sick the Emperor was healed by a good doctor; the children of the Emperor all had scholarships to study in France. Just half a month later, on January 28, 1889, Emperor Đồng Khánh died and, in his will, he did not specify who would succeed the throne. Prince Bửu Đảo, the son of Emperor Đồng Khánh, was still too young to succeed. The era "Hàm Nghi" was mentioned again.

Following the death of Emperor Đồng Khánh without a successor, Nguyễn Trọng Hợp, Imperial Envoy in Tonkin, immediately went to meet the Governor-General of Indochina Richaud and suggested that the French government should bring Emperor Hàm Nghi back to the throne to appease the people. The Governor-General of Indochina required a reputable person to stabilize the situation in Annam (Trung Kỳ-Bắc Kỳ) at that time so he approved Nguyễn Trọng Hợp's proposal. Unfortunately, the French government in Paris disagreed and

they supported Bửu Lân who was 10 years old and the son of the 3-days Emperor Dục Đức. Bửu Lân ascended the throne as the reign of Thành Thái.

In 1904, Emperor Hàm Nghi married Marcelle Laloe who was the daughter Laloe, Chief Justice of the High Court of Alger. The wedding of Emperor Hàm Nghi became a cultural event in the capital city of Alger. An Emperor of the Orient dressed in a black robe with a black head scarf while the French bride had a Western ruffled wedding dress; no one had witnessed the wedding without admiration and curiosity. After the engagement until the wedding of the former emperor to Laloe, all these events were fully exploited by Algerian postage at that time. Emperor Ham Nghi and Marcelle Laloe lived together for 40 years and she gave birth to 3 children: Princess Nhu Mai (1905-1999), Princess Nhu Lý also known as Nhu Luân (1908-2005), and Prince Minh Đức (1910-1990). Emperor Hàm Nghi and Marcelle Laloe built a house named "Gia Long Villa" and designed by Guiauchain, a French architect in Alger. That warm Vietnamese-French love story had positive effects on their children. Although living far away from the home country and separated from the news from Vietnam, Emperor Hàm

Nghi still retained a good reputation for his family and country. Knowing that it was impossible to bring his wife and children back to the homeland in Vietnam, Emperor Hàm Nghi often taught his children: *"If you cannot be a good Vietnamese yet then be a good French."*



After the death of Emperor Hàm Nghi (1944), she lived alone in Alger. After Algeria gained independence in 1965, under the orders of the French Government, she and the children re-buried the remains of Emperor Hàm Nghi and the housekeeper Marie Jeanne Delorme in the cemetery of village Thonac, commune Dordogne in the province of Corrèze in the region Nouvelle-Aquitaine in western-central France. Since then, she often lived with Princess Nhu Mai at the castle De Losse. She was very well cared for by her daughter. In 1972, she visited Princess Nhu Lý and stayed with the Princess at the palace De la Nauche, Vigeois (Corrèze). She later became ill and died in the arms of Princess Nhu Lý in 1974. She was 90 years old, including 40 years of happiness with the exiled Vietnamese Emperor and 30 years as a widow in Algeria and France. Her body was buried in the same grave with Emperor Hàm Nghi and the housekeeper Delorme. In this tomb, later were buried the bodies of Prince Minh Đức (the only son of Emperor Hàm Nghi) and Princess Nhu Mai (a leading French agronomist and his eldest daughter).

Prince Minh Đức, the only son of Emperor Hàm Nghi, became an officer in the French Legionnaire. In 1946, upon receiving orders to go to Indochina, Prince Minh Đức decided to refuse. ***"I cannot take a gun and shoot my people. If the French government wants to bring me to a military court, I will obey. But I cannot go to Vietnam to fight the enemy for France and against the Vietnamese people"***. So, the French brought Prince Minh Đức to serve in Algeria. Emperor Hàm Nghi did not hesitate to do what he had to do as he taught his children:

*“Si vous ne pouvez pas être de bon Vietnamien, soyez de bien Français - If you cannot be a good Vietnamese, be a good French”.*

Communicating with the home country was very difficult, but every time there was a chance to talk about the homeland, Hàm Nghi did not hesitate to express his pride in his country. *“The history of France was very interesting, but my country’s history also has beautiful and glorious pages”.* To outsiders, those who know their inner self-love one’s own country. To his people, he knew he was a symbol of patriotism and he kept that symbol until his death. Thus, after his arrest, the Cần Vương movement continued for many years. Until 1913 when Hoàng Hoa Thám died, the influence of former Emperor Hàm Nghi ceased to have a direct impact on patriotic movements. It proved that although his body was in exile, his will and love for the homeland and Vietnamese people had always lived in him.

**Emperor Đồng Khánh (1864-1889)** . The Đồng Khánh Era meant "Trùng Hưng Đồng Khánh "(Revival makes everyone happy). The Emperor's names were Nguyễn Phúc Ưng Thi and Nguyễn Phúc Ưng Đường. He was born on February 19, 1864 and took the throne with the name Nguyễn Phúc Biện. He was the ninth emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, in office from 1885 to 1889. Đồng Khánh was formerly the adopted son of Emperor Tự Đức. He was the eldest son of Kiên Quốc Công Nguyễn Phúc Hồng Cai and Bùi Thị Thanh and an older brother of Kiến Phúc Emperor. He was only two years old when Emperor Tự Đức adopted him and assigned him to an imperial concubine Nguyễn Thị Cẩm who raised and taught him. He was also called Chánh Mông since in 1882, Emperor Tự Đức ordered him to build a school house called Chánh Mông Đường.

When he was still a prince, he wanted to know when he was to be crowned and how to rule. The Emperor asked the goddess at Ngọc Trản temple (Hòn Chén temple) and the goddess correctly guessed the day when the Emperor was crowned. In March 1886, the Emperor changed the temple name from Ngọc Trản to Huệ Nam Palace (meaning to bless the South). The Emperor considered himself a disciple of the Holy Mother and called her "sister". He ordered the Ministry of Rites to make offerings twice a year (Spring and Autumn).

In 1885, after the court army was defeated by the French in the Battle of Huế Capital, Emperor Hàm Nghi and Tôn Thất Thuyết fled to Quang Tri, the French established him as Emperor by the suggestion of Nguyễn Hữu Độ who had asked for permission from the Mother Queens to oust Emperor Hàm Nghi and put Prince Chánh Mông on the throne. On September 19, 1885, Ưng Đường had to go to the French Residence Palace in advance. After that, the enthronement ceremony occurred at Thái Hòa Palace where he was enthroned as Emperor at 21 years old and took the era name of Đồng Khánh. After taking the throne, he sent his national letter to France to "thank you" and promised to keep the good relationship

between the two countries. He also gave De Courcy the title of Guardian Duke and Champeaux as the Protector Duke.

In his book, historian Trần Trọng Kim wrote: "*Đông Khánh had a gentle personality and liked jewelry. He also wanted to reform and was very friendly with the French*". During the Đông Khánh reign, the court was in bad financial shape because the French colonialists were plundering and most of the money in the treasury was brought to Quảng Trị by Tôn Thất Thuyết. The court became a puppet under the French Protectorate and received annual allowances from the Governor-General's Palace in Hanoi. Đông Khánh was the first Emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty who accepted the French protectorate in Vietnam and became a puppet Emperor, because of his interests, pleasing the French and selling off the nation's interests. His submission and acceptance of the French domination were showing off by hanging a protective flag everywhere, especially on big holidays. The French had to admit that: Never in any country, was there an Emperor who was hated by his subjects like the puppet Emperor Đông Khánh! During his reign, the French colonialists began to establish their rule that lasted for more than 60 years in Tonkin and Annam, during which the Huế court expressed its admiration and submission, daring not to cause friction with the French. Đông Khánh advocated the French civilization and use Western products, and was awarded the Order of North Star by the French. Exposed to Western civilization, he drank Bordeaux wine, drank canned milk, and liked French-made toys. In daily activities, the Emperor often paid attention to appearance and even used makeup. He loved to read books on divination, and mysteries.

Responding to Hịch Cần Vương (Order to Support the Emperor) of Emperor Hàm Nghi, revolts against the French arose everywhere. At that time, at Tân Sở, Emperor Hàm Nghi issued the Order and the country at that time had two Emperors. In Summer 1886, before the growing Can Vương movement, Emperor Đông Khánh issued a letter to lure Hàm Nghi and the resistance patriots to surrender but was unsuccessful. There was a folk saying about the circumstances at that time:

*It is sad to contemplate the situation,  
In the middle Đông Khánh, at the two ends Hàm Nghi.*

In early 1889, Đông Khánh became seriously ill and passed away when he was still quite young. He was Emperor for only 4 years and was succeeded by Emperor Thành Thái. In 1888, Đông Khánh suffered from a strange disease that was not specified in all of the Nguyễn history records. He could not eat or drink. He also had an occasional fever, soreness in the body, and often nightmares. The mandarin doctors could not cure, some to be dismissed and others to be imprisoned. Resident General Rheinart suggested the French doctor Cotte, who was summoned from Thuận An, but his diagnosis and treatment were also ineffective. After nearly 2 weeks of becoming ill, on January 26, 1889, the illness became worse. On

January 28, 1889 (lunar December 27, Mậu Tý year), at 8 pm, Đồng Khánh died in the Càn Thành Palace. He was 24 years old and reigned for more than 3 years. Since his children were still young, they could not succeed. The court mandarins consulted with Governor-General Pierre Paul Rheinart. At that time, the interpreter Diệp Văn Cương, a brother-in-law of Dục Đức, deliberately misinterpreted Rheinart to help Bửu Lâm ascend to the throne.

**Emperor Thành Thái (1879-1954).** The Emperor's birth name was Nguyễn Phúc Bửu Lâm, the tenth emperor of the dynasty from 1889 to 1907 (18 years). He was the 7th child of Emperor Dục Đức and Phan Thị Điều and was born on March 14, 1879. When he was four years old, Emperor Dục Đức was deposed and died in prison. When he was nine years old, his maternal grandfather Phan Đình Bình, Minister of Finance, was arrested by Emperor Đồng Khánh and then left to die because he scolded Đồng Khánh for flattering the French and being pro-French when Đồng Khánh went to Quảng Bình to lure Emperor Hàm Nghi to surrender. Bửu Lâm and his mother Từ Minh were then put under control and lived in poverty.

On January 28, 1889, Emperor Đồng Khánh passed away at the age of 24. Bửu Đảo, the son of Emperor Đồng Khánh, was only 3 years old, so he could not succeed to the throne. The Huế court asked for advice from the Resident-General Rheinart. At the Residence Palace, Diệp Văn Cương was an interpreter. Cương married an aunt of Bửu Lâm and had sympathy for Emperor Dục Đức (brother-in-law). He tried to help the nephew ascend to the throne. He mistranslated for Rheinart what was the intention of the Privy Council. So Bửu Lâm was chosen for the throne.

One day, when Bửu Lâm was playing with his friends in front of the house, he saw a delegation that came to pick him up for the throne. At that time, his mother, Phan Thị Điều, was away, so he was afraid and hid in the house. When his mother returned, she saw the delegation standing in front of her house. When she heard her son would be put on the throne, she ran over and begged the delegation to forgive both her and her son. She thought of the death of her husband Emperor Dục Đức and the tragedy of three Emperors in four months not long ago. So, she cried and begged. Finally, after advice from neighbors, Phan Thị Điều accepted to send her son Bửu Lâm to the Forbidden City.



On February 2, 1889, Bửu Lâm ascended the throne at the Thái Hòa Palace and took the title of Emperor Thành Thái. He was then 10 years old. Unlike previous dynasties, there was no national jade seal because when leaving Huế Citadel, Emperor Hàm Nghi had brought it and lost it in Quảng Bình province. So, Emperor Đồng Khánh had to use another jade seal. In addition, there was no will. Emperor Dục Đức or Emperor Đồng Khánh did not pass the throne to Emperor Thành Thái. There was no jade seal and no will, but there was a group of French soldiers holding guns at the Noon Gate inside the Citadel.



Thành Thái was a young Emperor with many special personalities. In the first few days, although he was an Emperor and still a child, he liked to play around and be naughty. Some regents such as Tuy Lý Vương, Nguyễn Trọng Hợp and Trương Quang Đản often discouraged him, but he did not obey. The queens were very worried about Thành Thái, and took him out to live on Bồng Dinh island on Lake Tịch Tâm. They tried to restrain and forced him to obey rules. Sometimes later, he returned to the Forbidden City. He hated the opportunist mandarins very much. Once, the bridge Long Biên in Hanoi (also named after the French Governor-general Doumer) was completed, Hoàng Cao Khải presented a list asking for the Emperor's rewards for those with meritorious services. The Emperor smiled faintly and replied: "I do not know any of them". The French close to him were not well respected. Many important officials like Nguyễn Thân offered their daughters to the Emperor (His daughter was the first wife of Thành Thái), but he did not treat them well. Therefore, they were often prejudiced against him. There are some documents claiming that the Emperor tried to secretly go to China, but was stopped in Thanh Hóa by the French. There was also an opinion that he agreed to help and facilitate Cường Để to go to Japan with Phan Bội Châu.

Emperor Thành Thái secretly set up teams of female soldiers to cover the eyes of the French. The Emperor paid himself their expenses, housing, and daily martial arts practice. Therefore, the recruitment and training were conducted in strict secrecy. The Emperor sent his trusted guards to contact them and their families. If approved, the Emperor "staged" their kidnapping, by appointment of the time and place, then the bodyguards or the Emperor himself brought a chariot to pick them up and carry them into the Forbidden City. For privacy, the "kidnapped" girls were usually brought to the Forbidden City through the Hữu (Right) Gate of the Citadel, near Kim Long village since this road ran along the outside of the Imperial Citadel and leading to Hữu Gate was very deserted at night. Hence, Kim Long girls were recruited with the highest priority. Besides, the Emperor also recruited girls from An Ninh village (bordering Kim Long). Because most of them were weavers (fabrics from An Ninh are very famous), Emperor Thành Thái disguised their activities by organizing the market to sell cloth woven by these female soldiers in the palace. The Emperor easily deceived the French, since the female soldiers had jobs to cover their expenses. Some documents recorded that the Emperor had recruited 4 teams, each team of 50 girls. After training, they went back to their family and the Emperor started a new team. When the opportunity arose, they would fight against the French. But the scheme was finally revealed when the Interior Minister and the Privy Council reported it to the French envoy Levecque.

Thành Thái loved very much his people, often traveled to be close to the people and to understand the sufferings of a slave nation. Folklore had a story about the behavior of Emperor Thành Thái from his love story with Nguyễn Hữu Thị Nga, a younger sister of the first wife of Đồng Khánh :

*Kim Long has a beautiful girl,  
I love, I remember, I risk, I go.*

Thành Thái was considered to be progressive, patriotic, and anti-French. Unlike other past Emperors, he studied Chinese characters and French. He also allowed his children to study French. It was unspoken but clear that his intentions of learning French would be able to communicate with these people in an anti-French spirit. He also cut his hair short, dressed in uniform, learned to drive a canoe and a car, and got acquainted with the Western culture. As an Emperor close to the people, he frequently traveled and also allowed a royal concubine to accompany him by car. And for the first time "people looked at the Emperor's face without punishment". He paid attention to the weapons and ordered the painter Lê Văn Miến (a graduate of Paris School of Fine Arts) to draw for him pictures of French guns. Emperor Thành Thái loved to read modern Chinese publications from China and Japan. From these, the Emperor developed national resilience and a reformist mind. Thành Thái did not compose many poems, but some were excellent. He was also interested in art, beat drums well, and sometimes acted in a few plays in Duyệt Thị Đường. It can be said that Thành Thái had a quite comprehensive knowledge. Thinking about the future of the fatherland, Emperor Thành Thái ordered the opening of Quốc Học (National School) in Huế (1896) to train talented people in modern civilization and Western culture. Many famous landmarks existing today were built during the Thành Thái era such as Huế Central Hospital (1894), Trường Tiền bridge (1897), Trường Tiền Street and Đông Ba Market (1899) ...

Emperor Thành Thái was also a poet. On the occasion of a visit to the North (Tonkin) in 1902, he witnessed that the people were trampled and exploited by the French colonialists. Emperor Thành Thái wrote a poem that revealed his will to follow the ancients in the past to rise up and chase away the enemies.

Facing the radical ideas of Thành Thái, the French worriedly and tried to obstruct them. To cover up, Thành Thái acted like a madman. When the drawings of French guns were discovered, Thành Thái faked madness, scratched the concubines, and tore up the drawings. Taking advantage of this opportunity, the French falsely accused him of going mad and forced him to abdicate, giving up the throne to his son for health reasons. The French envoy even said frankly he already knew he had anti-French intentions, so he could not stay on the throne. If Thành Thái wanted to stay in office, he must sign a letter of apology, declaring to the nation that it was a conspiracy against France and now must sincerely repent. But he threw down the draft statement to the ground and refused.

On July 29, 1907, on the occasion of Thành Thái's disapproval of the appointment some mandarins that have been agreed by the Privy Council and the Resident-General Levêque who declared his disqualification and detained Thành Thái in the Citadel. From that day, Emperor Thành Thái's authority was narrowed down, and the Emperor gradually became

isolated and resentful. A Regent Council led by Trương Như Cương was created. On September 3, 1907, mandarins under French orders entered the Càn Thành Palace to present the Emperor the draft of the abdication edict that was signed by the court mandarins except for Ngô Đình Khả "Exile Emperor no Khả, dug Emperor's tomb no Bái", citing health reasons for voluntary withdrawal. After viewing the draft, Thành Thái just smiled, wrote the word "ratify", turned around, and went in. On September 12, 1907, Thành Thái was put under house arrest in Bạch Dinh (White Palace), Cap Saint Jacques (at present day Vũng Tàu). By 1916 he was exiled to Reunion Island with his son, Emperor Duy Tân.

He and his family rented a house in the city of Saint-Denis on the island of Réunion. Thành Thái and his wife Chí Lạc taught their children Vietnamese language and musical instruments such as storks, flutes ... He assigned daily family tasks to all the children from young to older members. The princesses helped with the kitchen work and gardening. Some princes served as bodyguards for Thành Thái, some served betel and areca, some prepared breakfast, some cleaned house ... Unlike Emperor Hàm Nghi who was exiled in Algeria earlier, the life of the former Emperor Thành Thái and his son Duy Tân was quite struggling. Emperor Thành Thái suffered much, with the landlord collecting rent and the creditors collecting debts. In 1925, Emperor Khải Định knew about the situation, deducted from the budget to send him 1,000 VND, and then sometimes sent him extra money. After Khải Định died, there was no more money. On September 21, 1935, Bửu Lân had to write a letter to Emperor Bảo Đại asking the French Protectorate for a sum of money to buy a house, "for the rest of his life", and the state will recoup it afterward. In early May 1945 (after Emperor Duy Tân died), thanks to the actions of his daughter and son-in-law Vương Quang Nhưông, former Emperor Thành Thái was allowed to return to Vietnam. He and his family lived at Villa Anna in Cap Saint Jacques (Vũng Tàu today). In March 1953, he was allowed to return to Huế to visit the tombs of his parents and ancestors. He died on March 20, 1954 in Saigon and was buried in the An Lăng tomb of his father (Dục Đức mausoleum) in An Cựu commune, Hương Thủy district, Thừa Thiên province. He was 75 years old.

**Emperor Duy Tân (1900-1945)** . The Duy Tân era meant "All are renewed". The Emperor was the 11th emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, on the throne from 1907 to 1916, after Emperor Thành Thái. Emperor Duy Tân was named Nguyễn Phúc Vĩnh San and born on September 19, 1900. He was the eighth child of Emperor Thành Thái and Nguyễn Thị Định. Emperor Thành Thái had many sons, and the eldest should be chosen for succession.

However, the French were afraid that a mature Emperor would be difficult to manipulate so they chose a young person. When the French envoy Fernand Ernest Lévecque holding the list of princes of Thành Thái entered the palace to choose the Emperor, Vĩnh San was missing. The court ordered people to find Vĩnh San who was hiding underneath a bed with a stained face. When questioned, Vĩnh San said: "I was looking for a cricket that just escaped." For fear of being reprimanded, the soldier looking for Vĩnh San did not take him to a shower and brought him directly to the French officials. The French approved right away because they saw Vĩnh San as shy and dull. The court saw the Emperor too young, so they increased his age by one to 8. They also set the title for Vĩnh San Duy Tân, as if looking towards the unsuccessful career of Emperor Thành Thái.



On September 5, 1907, Vĩnh San took the throne as Duy Tân at the age of 8. Only one day after the coronation ceremony, Duy Tân completely changed. A French journalist recalled that "... *Un jour de trône a complètement changé la figure d'un enfant de 8 ans*". (One day on the throne completely changed the face of an eight-year-old boy). Like his father, from a young age, the new emperor had a fierce will to resist the French. According to history books, around 1913, Emperor Duy Tân became a teenager and to distract the Emperor from politics, the French built the "Thừa Lương" vacation house in Cửa Tùng (Quảng Trị) for fun during summer days. To control Emperor Duy Tân, the French established a council of six regents including Tôn Thất Hân, Nguyễn Hữu Bài, Huỳnh Côn, Miên Lịch, Lê Trinh and Cao Xuân Dục to rule Vietnam under the control of the French envoy. A doctorate in biology Ebérhard was brought in to teach Emperor Duy Tân, but according to many people, it was just to control him.

Right from the moment he took the throne, the French envoy wanted Emperor Duy Tân to learn French and Western culture and to turn him into a henchman. However, as the Emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, he could not turn his back on the Hán (Chinese) characters, and a Hán teacher recruitment took place and was decided by the Emperor. The chosen one was Mai Khắc Đôn, Province Chief of Quảng Trị. From this decision, he had a crush on the teacher's daughter Mai Thị Vàng when they first met. There was also an anecdote recounting that, during the selection of consorts in early 1916, only two candidates were left, Hồ Thị Chỉ (daughter of Minister of Education, Hồ Đắc Trung) and Mai Thị Vàng. Their pictures were presented to the Emperor. The Emperor chose the latter for her simplicity. In addition, there was also information that Emperor Duy Tân married Vàng to repay the debt to his teacher after withdrawing from the marriage proposal with Hồ Thị Chỉ in late 1915 after agreeing to participate in an upcoming armed revolt with Trần Cao Vân and Thái Phiên.

Once, the young Emperor came from Cửa Tùng beach (he often came here every year) with sandy hands and feet. A guard brought the water basin for the Emperor to wash.

When washing his hands, he asked: "*When hands are dirty, wash them with water. When the country is dirty, how can you wash it?*" The guard did not know how to answer. Emperor Duy Tan continued: "*If the country is dirty, it must be washed by blood. Do you understand?*" "



Plaque XVIII — Le Conseil de Breton à Hoi, en 1909 — De gauche à droite : Li, H. Ton-Tai-Han (hoare), Nuy-Nhieu-Bai (hoare), Huyen-Gon (hoare), S. A. le Prince des-Tiens, Prendre du Conseil, Li, H. Li-Tan (hoare) (Travail Public) ; Cao-Nou-Duc (Instruction Publique) (D'après une carte postale D'ARLÉRIE).

Around 1912, the envoy Georges Marie Joseph Mahé launched a search campaign for gold. Mahé took the golden statue from the reign of Lord Nguyễn Phúc Chu in Phước Duyên tower of Thiên Mụ pagoda, dug Emperor Tự Đức's mausoleum and dug wildly in the Citadel to find gold. Emperor Duy Tân and Minister of Public Works Nguyễn Hữu Bài ("Exile Emperor no Khả, Dig Grave No Bài") strongly opposed these cruel actions, but Mahé still ignored them. Duy Tân ordered to close the Citadel to all. He also threatened to cut off all relations with the French in Huế. Finally, Governor-General Albert Pierre Sarraut arrived from Hanoi to settle with Emperor Duy Tân before he opened the Citadel again.

When Emperor Duy Tân was 13 years old, he reviewed the treaties that the two countries of Vietnam and France signed. The Emperor felt that the implementation of those treaties was not in compliance with the conditions that the two sides had signed. One day, in front of the court, the Emperor expressed his wish to send Nguyễn Hữu Bài who was fluent in French to France to request a revision of the 1884 treaty (Patenôtre). But no one at the court dared to take that trip. At the age of 15, Emperor Duy Tân summoned all six regents and forced them to sign the request so that the Emperor himself would bring to the French Residence. The regents were afraid of the angry French and refused to sign. They then went to see Empress Dowager asking her to intervene with the Emperor. Since then, not only did the Emperor hold a grudge against the French colonialists, but also with the court officials.

Knowing that Emperor Duy Tân was a patriot against the French, Vietnam Quang Phục Hội (Vietnam Restoration Association) established by Phan Bội Châu in 1912 decided to contact him. The two leaders of the Association were Trần Cao Vân and Thái Phiên who spent money to entice the Emperor's private chauffeur to resign. They replaced him with Phạm Hữu Khánh, a member of the Association. In April 1916, when Emperor Duy Tân went to Cửa Tùng beach for a vacation, Phạm Hữu Khánh gave the Emperor a letter from the two leaders Trần Cao Vân and Thái Phiên. Duy Tân read the letter and wanted to meet them. The

next day, all three went fishing in Hậu Hồ, and Emperor Duy Tân agreed to join the uprising. The rebellion was expected to start at 1:00 a.m. on May 3, 1916.

But at the end of April, a member of the Vietnamese Quang Phục Hội in Quảng Ngãi Võ An revealed the secret news. On the afternoon of May 2, the French envoy in Quảng Ngãi sent a telegram to the Resident-General Charles. On hearing the news, the envoy Charles ordered the collection of guns from the Vietnamese soldiers, put them in storage, and forbid the camps to let Vietnamese soldiers out. On the night of May 2nd, Trần Cao Vân and Thái Phiên took a boat to Thương Bạc wharf to welcome Emperor Duy Tân. The Emperor disguised himself as a commoner with two guardians, Tôn Thất Đền and Nguyễn Quang Siêu but Trần Quang Trứ, also known as Phán Trứ, who worked at the French Provincial Office recognized right away the Emperor and rushed to alert the Resident-General. The Emperor arrived at Hà Trung village, stayed at a home of a member of Vietnam Quang Phục Hội, and waited for the time to issue the order by cannon in Huế. But waiting until three o'clock in the morning they still did not hear the order and knew that it was a failure. Trần Cao Vân and Thái Phiên tried to bring Emperor Duy Tân to Quảng Nam and Quảng Ngãi. On the morning of May 6, 1916, they were arrested.

The envoy in Huế Charles and Governor-General persuaded Emperor Duy Tân to return to the throne but he refused: *“You force me to be Emperor of Annam, then consider me as a mature Emperor and let me have freedom of action and especially the freedom to exchange information and opinions with the French government”*. The French wanted the Huế court to try him and Hồ Đắc Trung was commissioned to draft a judgment. Trần Cao Vân was detained in prison at that time and sent a letter to Hồ Đắc Trung asking to be responsible for all crimes and forgiveness for the Emperor. Trung blamed the crime on four people Thái Phiên, Trần Cao Vân, Tôn Thất Đền and Nguyễn Quang Siêu. All four were executed in An Hòa. Emperor Duy Tân was exiled to Réunion island in the Indian Ocean with Emperor Thành Thái in 1916.

On November 3, 1916, the families of Emperor Thành Thái and Duy Tân boarded the Guadiana ship in Cap Saint-Jacques (Vũng Tàu). On 20 November they arrived at Pointe de Galets station on La Réunion Island at 7:30 a.m. After refusing a luxury villa, the former royal family lived in a rented house of a resident of the city of Saint-Denis. He lived simply in a small house, eating, dressing like many ordinary people on the island. Duy Tân was dissatisfied with Father Thành Thái's un-cooperation or refusal to associate with the French on the island, so he cut off contact with his family. Duy Tân enrolled in radio telecommunication classes and opened a shop Radio - Laboratoire to sell and repair the machines. At the same time, he took the baccalaureate exam at the Leconte de Lisle High School and studied foreign languages and jurisprudence. Duy Tân had little relationship with the French and only had a relationship with a group of friends. He joined a music group, learned to ride horses, and won many races. Former Emperor Duy Tân also wrote many

poems published in the newspapers *Le Peuple* (People), *Le Progrès* (Progress) under the nickname Georges Dry. His “Variations sur une lyre brisée” (Variations of a broken lute) won first prize for literature of the La Réunion Academy of Science and Literature in 1924. Duy Tân also was a member of Freemasonry, Franc-Macon, and the local Society of Protection of Human Citizenship and Rights.

In the article “Destin tragique d'un Empereur d'Annam: Vĩnh San - Duy Tân” (Tragic fate of an Emperor of Annam: Vĩnh San-Duy Tân) published in the *Revue France-Asie*, 1970, the author EP Thébault, a close friend of Duy Tân, wrote that: “only once - once only - in the letter dated June 5, 1936, sent to Marius Moutet, Minister of Colonies, Duy Tân recalled the 1916 upheaval and about his role in that case and asked for permission to reside in France.” In many other letters sent to the French Government from 1936 until 1940, he asked for service in the French Army but he did not mention the chaos in Vietnam. All applications were rejected because the Department of Colonies noted in Duy Tân’s personal file (declassified later): “... parait difficile à acheter, extrêmement indépendant ... intrigue pour quitter la Réunion et rétablissement trône d'Annam ... ” (Seems difficult to be bribed, very independent, plotting to leave Island Réunion to re-establish the throne in An Nam ...).

On June 18, 1940, Charles de Gaulle made an anti-Nazi appeal. The defeat of France in World War II, its surrender to Nazi Germany, and later the overseas French resistance led by De Gaulle and established in England to return and recapture the French land had a great impact on the thinking of the Emperor. He saw De Gaulle as an idol and a role model to save the country. Although “free France” and colonial France that he opposed were the same, Duy Tân responded by radio and gathered outside news to pass on to the French Resistance. The incident broke down and the rulers of La Réunion (at that time part of the Government Vichy) sentenced him to six weeks in prison. After that, he served for three months as a radio corporal in the resistance troop of General Legentilhomme and Colonel Alain de Boissieu. Demobilized for health reasons, Duy Tân asked the Governor of La Réunion, A. Capagory (1942 - 1947), to intervene on his behalf for his enlistment in the French infantry under the command of General Catroux with the rank of private. Later he was promoted to Sous-Lieutenant and sent to Europe. On May 5, 1945, there was an order to bring Duy Tân to General Charles de Gaulle's headquarters in Paris. Duy Tân came to France on May 6, 1945, two days before Germany surrendered on May 8. On 20 July 1945, he was put into service at the General Staff of the 9th Division of Colonial Infantry (9ème DIC) based in Forêt Noire (Black Forest), Germany. On October 29, 1945, Charles de Gaulle signed a decree legitimizing his successive promotions in the French Army: Second Lieutenant since December 5, 1942, First Lieutenant from December 5, 1943, Captain from December 1944, and Major on September 25, 1945.

After the Japanese surrendered in August 1945, Bảo Đại sent a message to the French De Gaulle proposing to recognize the government of the Vietnamese Empire. However, De

Gaulle did not reply, because he was expected to support a monarchy in which the head was not Bảo Đại who had made a compromise with Japan to be "independent", but Vĩnh San who was referred to as a "Gaullist" (the proponent of de Gaulle). In September 1945, former Emperor Nguyễn Phúc Vĩnh San was approved by De Gaulle to return to Vietnam as Emperor. He demanded the unification of the three parts of Vietnam and the country's independence. De Gaulle had not made an objection. With the desire of the country to be unified and independent in a short time, former Emperor Duy Tân had direct talks with De Gaulle on December 14, 1945. In his war memoir, General de Gaulle said: "*I will receive the former Emperor [Vĩnh San] and will join him in considering what we will do what? He is a stubborn character. Despite being in exile for 30 years, his image never fades in the soul of the Vietnamese people*". In *Histoire du Vietnam de 1940 à 1952*, historian Philippe de Villers noted that Bảo Đại had abdicated and was severely criticized. But this time, the focus was on his predecessor, Duy Tân. Exiled at the age of 16, he was enlisted in the French Army and participated in battles in France and Germany. He presented his views to the French Government and a lieutenant of the French Army going to Indochina Bousquet, the former Chief of Staff of Minister Abel Bonnard.

However, many believed that former Emperor Duy Tân was used as a political card in the secret plan to recapture French Indochina. In his memoir "In the history line from 1940 to 1965", Father Cao Văn Luận recorded that in the winter of 1944 and in early 1945, along with some overseas Vietnamese and students, he got in contact three times with Duy Tân in Paris. For the first time, the former emperor explained: "*The French need our cooperation to retake Indochina. They can accept our becoming an autonomous nation in the French Union. That is not against national interests. Gradually we demand more power. What can we do more against the mighty French forces and the Western allies' support? We have seen anti-French examples and I am a victim of a hot-tempered and clumsy rebellion. Then our country suffered a cruel war, but the outcome is unknown whether to win or lose*". Duy Tân once confided: "*For my part, the love for my homeland Vietnam does not allow me to leave the door open for any internal dispute. What I want is all Vietnamese people to be aware that we are a nation and that consciousness will push them to build a Vietnam that deserves to be a nation. I thought I would fulfill my duties as a Vietnamese citizen, when I make farmers in Lạng Sơn, Huế, and Cà Mau aware of their brotherhood. That unification is done under any regime: communist, socialist, royalist or monarchist, it doesn't matter, the important thing is to save the people of Vietnam from the scourge of division*".

On December 24, 1945, Duy Tân took off on the French Lockheed C-60 aircraft from Bourget, Paris to return to La Réunion to visit family before new mission. At 13:50, the plane left Fort Lami to fly to Bangui, the next station. On December 26, 1945, around 18:30 GMT, the plane crashed near the village Bassako, in the M'Baiki subdivision, Central African Republic. All crew members were killed, including a major pilot, two lieutenant aides, two



soldiers (including former Emperor Vĩnh San) and four commoners. Immediately after the accident, De Gaulle told Palewski: *"It is true, it shows France has no chance."*

According to many, this could be an assassination. Emperor Duy Tan's return to Vietnam would make it difficult for Britain to hand over the colonies. Also in "Destin tragique d'un Empereur d'Annam", EP Thébault wrote: In December 17, 1945 - ten days before his death - Duy Tân had a premonition that his life was being threatened. As the two passed by - for the last time - the Tuileries garden, the former emperor holding Thébault's hand said: *"My old friend Thébault! Something told me I wouldn't rule. You know, Britain is against my return to Vietnam. They offered to give me 30 million if I give up that idea."*

On March 28, 1987, the remains of Emperor Duy Tan were taken by his family from M'Baiki, Central Africa, and returned to Paris for a ceremony at the International Institute of Buddhism in Vincennes. It was later re-buried in An Lăng, Huế, next to the resting place of Emperor Thành Thái, on April 6, 1987. When going to La Réunion Island, the Emperor was accompanied by his mother Nguyễn Thị Định, his wife Mai Thị Vàng and his younger brother Mệ Cưỡi, at that time 12 years old. Unfortunately, on the way, Vàng suffered a 3-month miscarriage. Local weather made her sick all the time, so after two years she had to ask the Emperor to return home. Although the former Emperor sent a letter to the royal council with a divorce note to Mai Thị Vàng (1925) to let her marry again, his wife remained true to her husband until her death in 1980 in Hậu village, Kim Long. While in La Réunion, he lived with 3 wives out of wedlock, because Mai Thị Vàng refused to divorce. His children born by his wives of European descent took the mother's surname and were baptized according to Catholic rites. His children did not speak Vietnamese and had little relationship with former Emperor Thành Thái. Neither did Duy Tan encourage children to learn Vietnamese and about Vietnam. By 1946, the court in the city of Saint-Denis allowed Duy Tân's children to take his surname. Andrée Maillot and Armand Viale kept their old surname. Five children Suzy, Georges, Claude, Roger, and Andrée changed to Georges Vinh San, Claude Vinh San and so on.

#### **Section 4.c. The Three Regents**

##### **Injustice suffered by Trần Tiễn Thành (1813-1883)**

He was formerly named Dưỡng Độn, and later changed to Thời Mẫn. After that, Emperor Tự Đức gave the name of Tiễn Thành. His nickname was Tôn Trai. He was born on February 14, 1813 in Minh Hương village, now in the commune Hương Vinh, Hương Trà district, Thừa Thiên province. His first ancestor in Vietnam was Trần Dưỡng Thuần who was originally from Fujian (China) and was a mandarin of the Ming Dynasty. When the Qing Dynasty took over China, he fled to Vietnam to settle in Hương Trà in the second half of the XVII century. The father of Trần Tiễn Thành was Trần Triều Dực, aka Bá Lượng. He was the District Chief

of Tân Bình (Gia Định) and died there when Thành was 11 years old (1824). In 1838 (year Mậu Tuất), under the reign of Minh Mạng, Trần Tiễn Thành passed the doctorate exam at the age of 25.

Trần Tiễn Thành studied extensively, was good at poetry and served as a mandarin for 45 years under four reigns of Emperors in many fields including administration, culture, diplomacy, construction, military ... In every field, he served in high positions, e.g., Minister of Military Affairs under Tự Đức and Regent under Dục Đức and Hiệp Hòa. He was a honest mandarin, actively encouraged reforms, and was very admired by Tự Đức but he was assassinated in the event of The Emperors in Four Months.

A few months after the 1862 Peace Treaty was signed in June and with the recommendation of Trương Đăng Quế, Trần Tiễn Thành became the Military Minister with the support of Nguyễn Tri Phương and Phan Thanh Giản. he also had the trust of Emperor Tự Đức as a subject compatible in the anti-French application of war-defense-talk strategy against foreign invasion and keeping the country independence and autonomy. Trần Tiễn Thành replaced Trương Đăng Quế to continue the anti-French campaign with reinforcement strategies to defend the coasts and the capital, as well as to advocate for innovation as the only way to save the country. When he was added to the Privy Council and then became the head of the court and very close to Emperor Tự Đức for 20 years, Trần Tiễn Thành had to face off with:

- foreign invasion with the military strength and determination of the French colonial rule;
- internal revolts in Tonkin and popular divisions because of religions and distrust in the leadership of Emperors and mandarins.
- The imperial court was full of divisions that created military weakness.

Since he took office as Military Minister, he replaced Trương Đăng Quế who retired in September 1862 and every time Nguyễn Tri Phương returned to Huế, Trần Tiễn Thành gave up his position of Military Minister and happily returned to the position of Minister of Public Works. Trần Tiễn Thành tried his best to help Emperor Tự Đức and led the Huế court for more than 20 years. He tried to reform the country to strengthen our diplomacy, military, and economy in confrontation with France. Sometimes temporary compromises were required to have enough time and resources for continuing the fight in one form or another. At the same time, Trần Tiễn Thành had mastered and was very cautious in implementing the policy of War-Defense-Peace of Emperor Tự Đức to maintain national sovereignty, not to bring the country into political or military adventures, but also not surrendering to or collaborating with France.

From 1881 at the age of 69, Thanh repeatedly asked for retirement, but the Emperor did not agree and reduced his workload to just manage the military.

His renovation campaigns and diplomacy, contact with the missionaries to act as mediators with the French expeditionary army as well as to bring the Catholic Nguyễn Trường Tộ to participate in the court matters since 1862 met opposition among the royal family and mandarins. In 1865 the group Hồng Tập, a cousin of Tự Đức, planned coups and riots and intended to kill Phan Thanh Giản and Trần Tiễn Thành because they thought to surrender to the enemy and oppose the anti-French movement. With a conservative mind, most scholars and mandarins opposed Thành because of his relations with Nguyễn Trường Tộ. Since he was a sponsor of Tộ, they did not hesitate to denounce him complicity with the French colonialists, Catholic clergy, and converts.

Although he was sympathized by Emperor Tự Đức, Thành was still misunderstood by the public opinion of wanting to surrender to France, because he was joined with Phan Thanh Giản in a failure to negotiate due to military weakness, as well as bringing lay Catholics and clergy to work at the court to implement the renewal program and communicate with the French. With a new spirit of modernization by self-reliance, Thành was ascribed to the pro-French group of Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ after these envoys returned from France (1864) and proposed to adopt Western civilization. Thành was one of the great mandarins of Minh Hương origin (Trịnh Hoài Đức, Phan Thanh Giản ...), had a broad knowledge about the world situation and the current situation of China, trusted by the Emperor because of his loyalty, had many great achievements for the Nguyễn Dynasty and the country, especially in coastal defense of the whole country.

Emperor Tự Đức himself asked Bishop Gauthier and Nguyễn Trường Tộ to go to France (1867) to find experts to open a technical school in Huế. Only Thành fully supported the new ideas of the two Phan-Phạm at the Court and Privy Council. He also tried to campaign incessantly with the Emperor to implement the renovation proposals of Nguyễn Trường Tộ. He submitted all of these modernization proposals to the Emperor. Through the reviews and critiques of Tộ's proposals and Thành's petitions, in his heart, the Emperor still believed that Tộ was not a traitor and Trần Tiễn Thành was also right.

When the three western provinces in Cochinchina were lost, public opinion blamed Nguyễn Trường Tộ, many scholars petitioned the court to kill Tộ and accused Trần Tiễn Thành and Phạm Phú Thứ as traitors. In diplomatic negotiations with the government colonial in Saigon, Trần Tiễn Thành asked Nguyễn Văn Tường to go with him in Saigon to work out a new treaty so that from 1873 Tường was in charge of all negotiations with the French. But Emperor Tự Đức still treasured Thành since he had promoted many talented persons and, therefore, was very prestigious with the Emperor.

After Nguyễn Trường Tộ passed away in 1871, he learned from the opposition to Tộ because the latter was a progressive Catholic, Trần Tiễn Thành immediately instructed and trained Nguyễn Lộ Trạch who was 20 years old and came from a scholarly family. Thành saw the son-in-law Trạch as continuing the reforms of Tộ through foreign newspapers, books, and innovation proposals. Trần Tiễn Thành was clearly sympathized and felt by Emperor Tự Đức when writing his Letter on 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Wishes dated November 20, 1882, only 8 months before the death of the Emperor and 12 months before Trần Tiễn Thành's assassination. The Emperor wrote as follows: "*Mouths of mundane world are wordy. It's really scary.*" Why was Trần Tiễn Thành criticized by the public? Because of his true patriotism with the wisdom of a politician "*the vision of a patriotic leader*" (comment of Emperor Tự Đức in 1878) in the most difficult conditions possible amid a backward court and simplistic public knowledge.

Trần Tiễn Thành had a deep love for the country and people (distributing rice to save famine victims in Hải Dương in 1865 without the Emperor's order). He deliberately opposed the French with a lot of experience, understanding the world situation, close following of the scientific advances of the West, recognizing the power of Western weapons and weaknesses in all aspects of the country, so he did not want to take the country on a military adventure and internal political chaos. A simple proposal to the Emperor, the Privy Council, and the court was to let Nguyễn Lộ Trạch go study abroad in Hong Kong but it was rejected in mid-1882 and this greatly disappointed him. His ideal of renewal to save the country was out of fashion and had no supporters. Thành felt lonely and sad. He sought every occasion and excuse to withdraw from the Privy Council and politics. After Tự Đức died, Thành with reformist thoughts had no guardian and patron anymore. Indeed, Thành was the only official chosen by Tự Đức over 20 years to take care of renewal from Nguyễn Trường Tộ to Nguyễn Lộ Trạch.

With the country fighting both foreign aggression and domestic rebellions, the court must use the strategy of "sometimes war sometimes peace" to retain sovereignty. From 1881 when Phạm Phú Thứ retired and Trần Tiễn Thành was less involved in politics because he was often sick and frail (69 years old), the war situation became darker and darker, so Tôn Thất Thuyết became Military Minister. The war faction became the majority in the court and adopted a military solution according to the tradition of «battle to build the nation» from ancient times. At the end of 1882, due to worsening dysentery, Trần Tiễn Thành again refused all work and was allowed to stay in his office for treatment then withdraw more and more from politics.

Through family business, often in contact with international traders at Phố Lở-Bao Vinh, Thành was up to date on world affairs through foreign news and publications. He was also an impartial, fervent official serving the common interests of the country. Therefore,

Thanh opposed the help request to the Qing Dynasty of Tôn Thất Thuyết since he did not believe in the strength of the Qing Dynasty. After the fall of Hanoi and during negotiation with Riviere at the end of May and early June 1882, Tự Đức sent envoy Phạm Thận Duật with tribute and request for help to the Qing Dynasty because the Emperor and the court thought that China was still strong enough to resist the French.

During an argument at the court, Thành said, "*I am of mixed race but I don't dare to believe that the Chinese can rival the French*". Tôn Thất Thuyết scolded: "*You are Chinese, yet you despise your own fellow citizens. Shameless*". "Shameless" because the whole court, especially Tôn Thất Thuyết, was not understanding the world situation, only relying on Confucianism and looking forward to help from China, a country that was being "torn apart" and "crushed" by Western powers. Receiving the official request of Emperor Tự Đức for help on July 29, 1882, 20000 soldiers of the Qing army crossed the border from August to October 1882 to assist the Nguyễn army and to declare war on the French with limited victories at the beginning and a dark mindset of occupying Tonkin.

In 1875, at the age of 62, Thành suffered from chronic colic. Emperor Tự Đức saw that Thành was old and weak but still a loyal and dedicated servant, so the Emperor exempted him from bowing at court. His health grew worse with age. From the end of 1880, Emperor Tự Đức reduced his workload and eased him with small chores. Thành wanted to apply for retirement from 1881 and had to stay at the request of Emperor Tự Đức as a duty to the Emperor and the country. The Emperor sent Lê Hữu Tá, and then Tôn Thất Thuyết to help him, and Thành only managed military affairs. Thuyết eventually replaced him as Military Minister.

From 1881, i.e. in the last two years of the Tự Đức reign, Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết held all powers while Emperor Tự Đức got increasingly sick. At the same time, they removed the influence of Trần Tiển Thành from the court. Moreover, the mandarins and Tự Đức still believed in the Chinese help by sending the delegation of Phạm Thận Duật in 1882 even though Thành protested because he knew very well the Chinese situation at that time. It was time he was sad knowing that he had to give responsibility to his juniors with a military policy. Nevertheless, he enthusiastically recommended Tôn Thất Thuyết with Emperor Tự Đức, as shown in his gratitude letter to Emperor Tự Đức dated May 11, 1882.

In late 1882 and early 1883, he repeatedly asked for retirement, but Emperor Tự Đức only allowed him to heal while at home or his workplace, did not have to be at court because he was needed while the Emperor was sick and the country was in critical condition. In a short time of 4 months from July to November 1883, when Tự Đức appointed him as First Regent, Thành was on long-term sick leave but must bear the responsibility until the time of his assassination under Emperor Hiệp Hòa. He voluntarily applied for retirement many times.

Emperor Hiệp Hòa relieved him from duties at the Privy Council and the Military Ministry. Thành only retained the position at the National Historical Archives and National Observatory, which were non-political positions without real power.

In the last days of July and the beginning of August 1883, after the events of "reading of omitted will", disapproval to condemn Dục Đức, arrest of Phan Đình Phùng at court, the imprisonment and starvation to death of Emperor Dục Đức, Trần Tiễn Thành refused the position of top mandarin Cần Chánh điện đại học sĩ (First Column of the Empire) and offered to resign and retire (2-3 times). It was not until the end of September 1883 after completing the burial of Emperor Tự Đức at Khiêm Lăng mausoleum, Hiệp Hòa approved his resignation. Thành finally retired completely around September 1883 for health reasons (at that time 71 years old), living in a private house in Chợ Dinh, Gia Hội and avoiding the political maneuvers of the two factions at that time.

Over a 4-month period from July 22, 1883 (the date of will reading) to November 30, 1883, when Thành was assassinated after noting: "I do not dare to participate", two facts must be clearly distinguished: the removal and death of Emperors Dục Đức-Hiệp Hòa and Hiệp Hòa's plot of treason, to find out why the war faction and the official history of the Nguyễn Dynasty (under the influence of the French and the pro-French peace faction) combined the two events into one to judge Thành, especially after he passed away.

Confucianism reached its peak during the Hậu Lê and Nguyễn dynasties with "loyalty to the emperor" as the highest teaching. Vietnamese Confucian scholars from ancient times valued highly the "loyal subject" and considered the crime of "killing the Emperor" as an act that «Heaven and earth cannot forgive». Emperor Tự Đức praised that Thành was a loyal subject and gained a reputation for filial piety and fairness to other court mandarins in his duty of top official for more than 20 years. In addition, Thành had a mission and responsibility that Tự Đức entrusted when he changed his name from Thời Mẫn to Tiễn Thành to «imitate the example of loyalty of past officials» (to imitate Tô Hiến Thành, the great mandarin of the Lý dynasty) with the message to «determine to complete the duty even facing death». Thành did not betray Emperor Tự Đức.

History recognized that reading the will was a staged fraud of Tường-Thuyết forcing Thành to accept the crimes of Emperor Dục Đức and lead to his removal from the throne. In fact, the two Tường-Thuyết did not like Dục Đức studying French and Western culture, reading Western books, choosing a Catholic priest as a private secretary, and often communicating with the French. Everyone knew the Emperors of Dục Đức as well as Thành Thái and Duy Tân as Grandfather-Father-Son, all had myopia and liked Western science and culture. Due to the progressive thinking of Dục Đức, Tự Đức had to force Thành out of retirement to serve as the First Regent, using the respect of old age and seniority to reconcile the power between two juniors Nguyễn Văn Tường (full of military and foreign tricks) and

Tôn Thất Thuyết (extreme warlord). As Emperor Tự Đức predicted: *“Power overshadows the respect and fine customs in times of trouble”*. When choosing Dục Đức (already 30 years old), Tự Đức must know well his character and mind liking to learn the Western culture. The Emperor desired to continue modernization but the majority of mandarins belonged to the war side with the policy of fighting the French army. Tự Đức's aspirations were only based on the fragile, unrealistic reputation of Thành at that time.

The anti-French stance of Tường-Thuyết was clear and Emperor Hiệp Hòa could not use them. But why did the Emperor not use First Regent Thành to take care of the 1883 treaty signing after the fall of Thuận An, if he was pro-French on the side with Emperor Hiệp Hòa and other princes? This must be the right thing to do, instead of summoning Trần Đình Túc out of retirement to do the signing. This meant that the Emperor had asked Thành and he refused to participate in the negotiations and signing of the 1883 treaty with France. Thành did not agree with the surrender to France against the will of Tự Đức. Before the command of the legitimate Emperor Hiệp Hòa who wanted peace with France, contrary to the anti-French will of Tự Đức who had entrusted him, Thành might have decisively refused, just as he did not participate in the removal of Emperor Hiệp Hòa with the other two regents a few months later. The successive removals of emperors must have offended the loyalty of a Confucianist, contrary to Thành's own morality and aspirations of Tự Đức, as well as the far-sighted vision of a politician hoping that the court would evaluate the consequences of these acts while the country was in peril.

Thành was very prestigious at the court and admired by his colleagues. By the comments of Emperor Tự Đức, Thành was commended and rewarded several times. Thành loved his country and was against the French through the nomination of Trương Đăng Quế and support by Nguyễn Tri Phương and Phan Thanh Giản. He also chose Tôn Thất Thuyết for the position of Military Minister according to the requirements of the situation. Taken from Tự Đức's Longevity Letter: *“You bring all your spirit and thoughts into finding an extensive plan with a serious defense on land and at sea. You are always fast and thoughtful and nobody can't say anything”*. Over the years as the head of the court, though falsely accused of "surrendering to the enemy" in the event of Hồng Tập in 1864 or "betrayal" when the Western Cochinchina fell in 1867, Emperor Tự Đức never doubted Thành's patriotism.

Because of his nature of self-esteem, he tended to obey rules and orders, DNTL wrote in 1898 that Thành met with the pro-French princes. These meetings could happen, because there must be an order of Emperor Hiệp Hòa that he was obliged to obey, perhaps reluctantly. In addition, they were his poetry friends, e.g., between Tuy Lý Vương and Trần Tiễn Thành, so it was natural for them to meet. However, his possible relationship with the French through these princes needed to be reviewed, because the official history did not have a clear statement. The official history always recorded the honors and merits of the dynasty. Some

historians in DNTL (volumes 4 and 5 under the influence of the French colonialists and pro-French mandarins) had intentionally contradicted some facts about Trần Tiễn Thành to bring him to the same side with Hiệp Hòa, i.e., pro-French peace faction when compared with the Trần family genealogy.

Thành resisted the war faction's policy of seeking help from the Qing Dynasty (June 1882). The whole court was still unaware of the "torn apart" status of China at that time. He was even scolded by Thuyết at the court: "rat-faced " and «shameless. » The direct cause was that within four months Trần Tiễn Thành had openly protested the removal of Dục Đức and Hiệp Hòa, arousing "the impatience ... brute force ... unusual temperament "of Thuyết (judgment of the Emperor Tự Đức) that history always referred to his inhumane nature, though without cause. Those were the "sins of" Thành under the eyes of Thuyết.

Tôn Thất Thuyết and especially Nguyễn Văn Tường and the mandarins must also know about Trần Tiễn Thành's opinion: do not want to commit the crime of killing the Emperor to create a political crisis with unforeseen consequences, knowing Trần Tiễn Thành never accepted killing the two opposing subordinates against the ideology and loyalty of an orthodox scholar, as well as the early advocacy of surrender to the French. A court representative was sent to bring the petition to collect the signed consent and support of Trần Tiễn Thành before submitting to Queen Mother Từ Dũ. Intending to suppress and destroy the opposition "selling the country", the two Tường-Thuyết did not need the consent of Thành, because it was not necessary to send a high official to "try out" Thành as the history books embellished.

A big question is raised as to why Thành was not accused of complicity with Hiệp Hòa if specific evidence was found when the court met at the Finance Ministry on the night of November 28 to the morning of November 29 to condemn the peace side and Hiệp Hòa's cooperation with France. According to DNTL, the fourth century, volume 70: "the two already knew" and DNTL volume 35, page 256 showed the petition of Hồng Sâm and Hồng Phi without the name of Thành. So, Tường-Thuyết already knew the contents of Sâm-Phi's petition and the secret letter of Hiệp Hòa to the French did not have any evidence related to Thành. Why not take the testimonies of the Emperor on the day of his demise or those of the princes at the time of their death sentences about the orders for Hồng Chuyên to kill Tự Lý Vương and Trần Tiễn Thành? Thus, we can conclude that the two Tường-Thuyết knew Thành was not involved in Hiệp Hòa's scheme when sending people to meet Thành on the morning of November 29 to seek his advice and before submitting to Queen Mother Từ Dũ. Probably many mandarins believed that Thành had nothing to do with this plan and his consent was used to easily persuade Từ Dũ. The court immediately sent a Vice Minister but Thành refused to sign the petition and, as a result, some mandarins opposed the Emperor's removal. Although he did not say it, Thuyết felt it. Thus, the accusation of Tường-Thuyết did not happen at the Finance Ministry on November 29 before Thành was killed. This was



just made up by people with prejudice against Thành and those of the war faction to conceal an immoral and unjust act.

Some history researchers claimed that the three princes Chuyên, Hàng and Tề brought troops by themselves to kill Trần Tiễn Thành and Tuy Lý Vương, but killing a prestigious mandarin and a high prince must have an order from above and cannot automatically do it on their own. Although Trần Tiễn Thành at that time had retired and was just a sick old scholar, he still was assassinated in the middle of the night on November 30, 1883, at his home in Chợ Dinh, Gia Hội, after courageously opposing the removal of Emperor Hiệp Hòa. After inscrutably writing in the petition of the Emperor's removal in the morning, his children and grandchildren were instructed to disperse and evacuate, while Trần Tiễn Thành was left alone at the residence with a concubine and a few servants. Such courageous act proved that Trần Tiễn Thành did not participate in the scheme with his poetry friends Hồng Sâm, Hồng Phi, and Tuy Lý Vương. In addition, if Thành conspired with the princes or was pro-French and when the scheme failed then, as the First Regent, he must know that was a serious crime and flee to Cửa Thuận by himself or with the princes.

The incident lacked concrete evidence to present to mandarins and objections of some mandarins, perhaps even Tường did not agree to impeach Thành, inciting the carelessness of Thuyết. In killing Trần Tiễn Thành, Tôn Thất Thuyết could use it as a "political warning" for those who do not accept or oppose the policy of the war group. There were many rumors with many different details were used to justify the assassination of Thành by the war faction. Due to the political situation and violent terror lasting until the early twentieth century, only a few contemporary people remembered the event, but still kept their name hidden (according to Đào Duy Anh). Maybe Tôn Thất Thuyết targeted Nguyễn Văn Tường and Queen Mother Từ Dũ for lack of determination in following Thuyết thoroughly (or consider the fact that Tường deliberately surrendered very early and Từ Dũ returned to Huế only a few days after the fall of the capital in the summer of 1885 as Hàm Nghi and Tam Cung were not consulted before).

The court never prosecuted or investigated Thành's crime of "peace" or "pro-French" until after he was killed in 1883, to conceal an unfortunate act of brutality. This accusation was tried again after he was assassinated on November 30, 1883, at the request of Tường-Thuyết, claiming that the previous judgment was too lenient and did not mention any connection between Thành and Hiệp Hòa. It only claimed his omission when reading the will. After the trial in December 1883, Emperor Kiến Phúc had to further punish him with a demotion to Military Minister and a loss of all ranks. (DNTH, fifth century, vol. 2, p 68).

Due to the investigation of Hồng Chuyên (a prince who was too aggressive against Catholics) on the crime of "robbery and murder" in the case of Trần Tiễn Thành and Nguyễn Văn Tường invited Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, a son-in-law of Thành, to become a mandarin in the

early months of 1884, and at the time when the war factions were at its strongest, they were actions to pacify unfavorable public opinion about the death of Trần Tiễn Thành.

Thành's accusations were tried by the court twice (the first trial with a light penalty and extra penalty in the second trial only a few months apart.). Thành was "only at fault" reading the will incorrectly under the accusations of Tường-Thuyết (a well-learned Emperor such as Tự Đức could not write errors and Thành could not fail to read correctly), and as such, officially or deliberately, the royal court denied that Thành cooperated with the French according to public opinion and rumors at that time. If the First Regent collaborated with France, he would be prosecuted for treason and cooperation with the enemy, that is he would be beheaded like Vice Ministers Hồng Sâm, Hồng Phì and Hồng Tu, or at least suffered demotion and punished by staff (though dead) or exiled as far away as possible such as Tuy Lý Vương. Thành was not prosecuted of the pro-French crimes Hiệp Hòa, Hồng Sâm, and Hồng Phì, but only condemned the second time for incorrectly reading the will of Tự Đức. This created a disturbing situation that he himself admitted and bore all proportionate penalties.

The second judgment was very important to Vietnamese history because it cleared Regent Thanh from the "peace with the enemy" from the decade of 1860s when he advocated and promoted the reforms to strengthen the country against the French in his position of the head of the court. Certainly, during the second trial, there must be objections from some mandarins about accusing Trần Tiễn Thành of cooperating with Hiệp Hòa because Tôn Thất Thuyết could not give any concrete evidence to the court even though everyone knew the violent nature of Thuyết in the middle of the court. Tường had been working with Thành for a long time, more than 16 years, so he understood Thành's political opinion and patriotic loyalty and stood with the majority of officials to defend Trần Tiễn Thành because after that the two men secretly fought each other (According to Bishop Puginier, AME Paris, vol 816-46).

Tường and Thành worked next to Emperor Tự Đức in the Privy Council for nearly 16 years so Tường knew his righteous views and ardent patriotism as well as his peaceful and moderate personality. Thành was admired and respected by the Emperor for over 20 years as a top mandarin and a confidant of the Emperor. In his mandarin life, Thành was very fair, righteous and not factional, so the Emperor and the court were respectful (DNTL, vol. 32). Perhaps Thuyết let Tường create a second trial to make history easier to judge the crimes in the murder of Trần Tiễn Thành, by reading incorrectly the will and creating an unstable situation. Clearly, Thành did not attempt to kill the regents and surrender to the French.

It was also possible that Tường-Thuyết tried the crime of incorrect reading the will for the second trial but not mentioning the connection between Hiệp Hòa and Thành, to cover up the crime of killing Thành due to opinion of the public and Confucianist scholars. As

shown above, Tường -Thuyết knew well about this, but no mandarin mentioned the issue of Hiệp Hòa-Trần Tiễn Thành, though terror and fear were everywhere. With disgruntled reactions of the people and in the oppressive and tense atmosphere full of terror in the capital and to create a good reason for the war faction to kill Trần Tiễn Thành, false rumors had been launched, after the pressure of the masses in terms of traditional Vietnamese ethics through words of Tự Đức: "You should have the right attitude at the court, go along the just way for subordinates to follow ”.

According to the official DNTL (the fifth chapter, volume 3), at the time when the war side was gaining ground at the court, in April 1884, the prince Hồng Chuyên was investigated for killing Trần Tiễn Thành by Justice Minister Phạm Thận Duật. In the trial of December 1883, it was said to be robbery and murder. Hồng Chuyên was sentenced to death by execution but was then exempted for obeying the order to kill the whole Catholic village in the south of Thừa Thiên during December 5-12, 1883. He also must change his name to his mother's surname (Phan). Hồng Chuyên was said to be "a pawn" to indict the underdog for atoning the superior directly, when there was an order of violence from Thuyết, through the special sentence reduction. Later, Chuyên was executed for escaping the prison.

On the other hand, the royal court dominated by the war faction of the two Tường-Thuyết had to treat him properly during the burial of a Regent to cover up nefarious actions and also to reduce public opinion of "violence" and "evil", in the oppressive and frightening political situation in the capital at that time. The Trần Genealogy and Đại Nam Chính Biên Liệt Truyện (Official Stories of Vietnamese Persons) stated: “On December 1883, the family received 700 piasters as a stipend for the funeral. In February 1884, the court participated in the funeral ceremony by sending three guard squads and a hundred troops, a large boat for the coffin carriage and four guard boats ”.

Another reason for misunderstanding Thành was that Nguyễn Hữu Độ and Phan Đình Bình came to power as regents and asked Emperor Đồng Khánh to restore his position and compensate him as a way to assimilate Thành with the pro-French faction, and give a little righteousness to their own action. In the decree, Đồng Khánh only mentioned the removal of Emperors as the principal cause of killing Thành. It also mentioned Trương Đăng Quế who recommended Trần Tiễn Thành to replace him in the position of Military Minister to pursue tough anti-French policies. At the same time, Emperor Đồng Khánh and Queen Mother Từ Dũ jointly declared their judgment against Tường-Thuyết.

By February 1890, Emperor Thành Thái with the court (Tuy Lý Vương, Nguyễn Trọng Hợp ...) issued an edict praising Thành: " *he spent many years of service, having recorded many achievements, greatly respected by Dục Tông Anh Emperor (Tự Đức), very faithful, then according to the custom has reached the degree of Đại Phu (Great Man); following the values of Xuân Thu, it is not possible to demote or resign* ”. Later when Emperor Thành Thái

was exiled in Reunion Island for anti-French charges by encouraging self-reliance and renovation for the nation, he made a card "Trung Hiếu Truyền Gia" (Family with Loyalty Tradition), when meeting Thanh's grandson named Dương in 1945 (according to the Trần Genealogy). Later, Prof. Hoàng Xuân Hãn noted: "*Reading his petitions lead to his admiration. Compared to Tôn Thất Thuyết, Trần Tiễn Thành was more careful and far-sighted*".

Thành's feelings were clearly seen and felt by Emperor Tự Đức when he wrote the Letter of Wishing for Longevity on November 20, 1882, which occurred only 8 months before the Emperor death and 12 months before Thành was assassinated: "*I see you increasingly sad*" and more: "*The mouths of the world are so wordy. It's really scary*".

Why was Thành "SAD" and the world "WORDY"?

"WORDY" just because of genuine patriotism with the wisdom of a politician and "the true vision of a patriotic leader" (the comment of Emperor Tự Đức in 1878) in the most difficult condition possible with the conservative court of outdated scholars and the people not awakened. Trần Tiễn Thành was like Phan Thanh Giản and Phạm Phú Thứ who were aware early of the western progress while the majority of backward mandarins only knew how to contend for petty titles, compete among themselves, learn by repetition and did not want to change for the sake of personal or group interests. Emperor Tự Đức appreciated the personality, opinion, and morality of Thành who suffered an injustice (pro-French? surrender?). Trần Tiễn Thành had an anti-French spirit of a thoughtful and mature official with extensive experience in all aspects. After 50 years as a mandarin under the reigns of four Emperors, he understood the world situation, having followed the progress of Western science and recognition of Western weapons advances. He also recognized the weaknesses in every aspect of the country, so he didn't want to take the country on a military adventure and internal political chaos.

"SAD" was probably because Thành felt lonely and helpless in a court as well as the scholarly world full of short-sighted extremists and an Emperor with supreme powers but weak, indecisive, and incapable. Phan Thanh Giản wrote after his return from France (1863): "no one believed in my pleadings". Even Emperor Tự Đức did not believe what he was told by Giản and Phạm Thận Duật. In a letter wishing for longevity to Thành (1882), Emperor Tự Đức had expressed his defense of Thành's efforts to modernize and criticized public opinion and affairs at that time. The Emperor and Thành shared mutual feelings of "weeping together" (1867) and "sadness" (1882) when the country was lost gradually and the modernization efforts unfinished. Was this a regret of Emperor Tự Đức at the end of his life when helplessly watching the country slowly fall into the hands of France?

Thành left behind a book of poetry called *Ứng Chế Cầu Di Tập*, A typical poem named “Hà Phòng” (River Defense) expressed his love for the country and people and his desire to modernize to enrich and strengthen the country.

Thành supported the request to the Emperor to allow Nguyễn Trường Tộ lead a group of youths going to and studying in France in 1871 (this request was canceled because of the death of Tộ) as well as the petition for Nguyễn Lộ Trạch to go abroad and study in Hong Kong in 1882 (it was refused). Thành had demonstrated the modernization policy by studying Western science and technology advances, expanding diplomacy and foreign trade, and taking advantage of the conflicts between Western countries in defense of the country’s sovereignty. These ideas started the Movement Duy Tân (Modernization) and Đông Du (Go East) later. Since Đào Duy Anh's article in 1944, there have been essays on Thành by many authors such as Hoàng Cơ Thụy, Thái Văn Kiểm, Nguyễn Thế Anh, and Vũ Ngự Chiêu, Nguyễn Xuân Thọ, Cao Huy Thuần, Nguyễn Cúc, Bùi Trân Phượng, Nguyễn Đắc Xuân, Trần Gia Phụng, Nguyễn Lý Tưởng ... who brought out the truth of the historic events of Trần Tiễn Thành objectively.

In summary, Trần Tiễn Thành was a moderate and patriotic official with a self-esteem within the framework of a patriotic anti-French Confucianist scholar. He did not want to lead the country on a military adventure and internal political chaos, but he had progressive thoughts with a heroic temperament before adversity. The unjust death of Thành was due to an unfortunate act of violence from internal politics. It was not because the surrender to France in times of turmoil between patriotic factions who differed in strategy to fight and preserve the national independence and sovereignty against foreign aggression.

Appealing to talented people to help the country, from 1861-1875 Emperor Tự Đức used both the ancient nomination system in parallel with the examination regime. Two co-regents Tường-Thuyết were juniors to Thành and he recommended them to Emperor Tự Đức. Trần Tiễn Thành recommended Nguyễn Văn Tường to join the diplomatic service in 1867 and Tôn Thất Thuyết entered the Privy Council in 1882. Thành was working with Tường from 1868 and Thuyết since 1881. Due to the recommendations of Thành, Tường and Thuyết advanced quickly. Thành served 45 years as a mandarin, 11 years older than Tường, and 26 years older than Thuyết. At that time, he was over 70 years old, suffering from dysentery and chronic arthritis. He was enthusiastically treated by Tường in addition to the royal doctors sent by the Emperor. Tường favored a military stance in support of diplomacy and was inclined to not believe in a direct war with France because of the weapons (different from Thuyết). It could be said that Tường's position was similar to that of Thành on diplomatic and military relations but different in modernization. There were also conflicts between two co-regents that the Emperor must intervene as in the case of Thuyết denouncing Tường for importing counterfeit Chinese money.

Because of good relations between Tự Đức and Trần Tiễn Thành and the promotion of both Tường-Thuyết to take care of the country together, Emperor Tự Đức was very confident in all three of them to help the new Emperor Dục Đức. However, the ink in the will was not yet dry, the two Tường-Thuyết created troubles while the country was fighting both inside and outside enemies.

### **Power Abuses by Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường**

**Tôn Thất Thuyết (1839 - 1913)** was born on March 29, Kỷ Hợi year, i.e., May 12, 1839 in Phù Mộng village, on the bank of Bạch Yến river next to the Citadel (Thuận Hóa), now in Phú Mộng village, Kim Long ward, Huế. Also known as Đàm Phú, he was the second child of Governor Tôn Thất Đính and Văn Thị Thu, the 5<sup>th</sup>-generation child of Lord Nguyễn Hiền Vương Nguyễn Phúc Tần. Thuyết was a Regent under the reigns of Dục Đức, Hiệp Hòa, Kiến Phúc and Hàm Nghi of the Nguyễn Dynasty in Vietnamese history. He removed three Emperors in a short period of history, causing a serious crisis inside the royal family and for the country.

Everyone knew that Thuyết was not social, gruff, and rough. According to DNTL, volume 34 page 370, Emperor Tự Đức had the following comments about Thuyết "he did not study well, narrow-minded, arrogant, suspicious of others..., bad temper often ... often find excuses to avoid responsibility ". According to Tự Đức, Tôn Thất Thuyết "has a knack for martial arts, but lacks honesty and sincerity and often avoids responsibility. Poor education, inconsistency, cowardice, suspicions, easy to offend others. He must learn more to become a gentleman". Therefore, the Emperor often gave instructions to teach Thuyết about character, style, and manners. The Emperor scolded Thuyết many times, as in 1872 for the merciless killing of an elephant-herding soldier, as well as the use of excuses of sickness to take leave from the military (3 times). Even with remarks like that, at the time of his death, the Emperor still believed in him and gave him the responsibility of Military Minister and Regent during the most volatile period of the country.

Trần Tiễn Thành worked with the father of Thuyết to encourage him to follow the instructions of Emperor Tự Đức. Due to his carelessness, many adverse events happened when Thuyết held all powers or every time someone opposed or disobeyed him (he killed even his colleagues who fled to China). Further, by this carelessness of Thuyết, Phan Đình Phùng was almost killed when he protested the removal of Dục Đức and the loss of the capital city occurred on July 5, 1885, when De Courbet challenged Thuyết directly.

The career of Tôn Thất Thuyết was noted for his skills in martial arts, his ardent but myopic patriotism, his opposition against the French and the Catholics, and his submission

to China. Thuyết was famous in crushing the rebellion of Văn Thân Ninh Bình, Nghệ An where he used psychological tactics with the appeal against the French in July 1874, winning the hearts of the people and Văn Thân soldiers disbanded before the arrival of the imperial army. He was reputable in military organizations at that time, using the model of the Qing Dynasty. After some convalescence time from 1878 to 1881, Thuyết returned to Huế to apologize to the Emperor for his quitting of his post without the Emperor's permission. He also gave up the responsibility of a general in the Northern battlefield. He did not go to Thái Nguyên to suppress the rebellion, but stayed in Bắc Ninh and then back Thanh Hóa to practice meditation. He also avoided his military duties after an argument with Hoàng Kế Viêm in 1876 that made Emperor Tự Đức angry. At that time, Tôn Thất Thuyết was present at the capital at the end of 1881 when Trần Tiễn Thành asked for retirement but could not obtain it. After the Emperor pardoned his sins with the following admonition: "You must be nursing and learn more to be a better person" and he was nominated by Trần Tiễn Thành, Thuyết replaced Lê Hữu Tá as Military Minister in February 1882. He also became a member of the Privy Council from June 1882, due to the military situation at the time requiring a competent general in the Council. Moreover, he was also a royal relative.

Thuyết was a battlefield general who was lucky to have the opportunity to take over the military in February 1882 and apprentice in the Privy Council under the guidance of Thành. However, Thuyết increasingly revealed his militaristic nature when he formed a private army to Phần Nghĩa Quân to consolidate his authority. That was also a big mistake when writing his will, Emperor Tự Đức was in serious pain and lacked insight in his decisions concerning the survival of the country. If the Emperor did not let Thuyết become co-Regent or agree to leave out the paragraphs about Dục Đức or even Phạm Thân Duật was still present at the court, the situation would certainly be different. There would be no tragedy of "Four Emperors in Three Months" or the event of May 23, 1885, when Huế fell and several thousand people were unjustly killed; every year the Huế people have to worship their death. Without Thuyết, the two Regents Thành and Tường would be able to help the Emperors succeed in steering the nation's destiny through the storm of colonial slavery.

In August 1883, Tôn Thất Thuyết was promoted to be the top general. Because he opposed the Harmand Treaty signed on August 25, 1883, Hiệp Hòa assigned him to be Rites Minister and then Interior Minister. He did not accept the surrender to France and organized a coup at the end of November 1883, eliminating Hiệp Hòa and bringing Kiến Phúc to the throne. He then returned to retain the position of Military Minister. He sought to eliminate the mandarins who had a close relationship with the French. He gathered power in his hands to prepare for the upcoming anti-French war. The enthronement of Hàm Nghi in early August 1884, after the death of the Emperor Kiến Phúc, also derived from Tôn Thất Thuyết's intention to guide the court to an anti-French policy.

Since returning to Huế, especially after the death of Emperor Tự Đức, Thuyết did his best to turn the court into the brain center of the French resistance. But due to the country weaknesses, Tôn Thất Thuyết suffered bitterly when Hiệp Hòa signed the Treaty of Quý Mùi (August 25, 1883) and Kiến Phúc signed the Treaty of Giáp Thân (June 6, 1884). After bringing Hàm Nghi to the throne (August 2, 1884), Tôn Thất Thuyết took over the court that had lost most of its powers and he did his best to get it out of the constraints that the French were establishing. The French had also recognized "The An Nam court expressed a not-so-cowardly attitude" and "this attitude was attributed to the Council of Regents" and Tôn Thất Thuyết became the top target for removal by the French. In the folk chant about Loss of The Capital City, the author praised him as a hero:

*Our country has a heroic general  
All mandarins dare not compare ...*

Thuyết ignored Tường's negotiating solution and planned to resign. He was mad when De Courcy refused to accept his resignation letter and forgot about the long-term resistance war plan at Tân Sở by ordering a surprise attack of Mang Cá and Toà Khâm where the French were stationed. Especially, he ignored the French plan of invading the whole of Vietnam as a colony and placing the yoke of slavery on the Vietnamese people. The French did not implement the Treaty of Protectorate in 1884, when the French expeditionary army was strengthened with additional budget and troops from France in March 1885. But in the early days of May 1885, after negotiations broke down between Tường and De Courcy over the latter's arrogant provocations such as refusing to accept gifts from Từ Dũ, demanding to pay war fees and refusing to accept the resignation letter from Thuyết, Tường told Thuyết: "*At this point, we cannot stand it and have to take a risk according to heaven will*".

Thuyết did not complete the deployment of troops to defend the capital, but then he decided to switch to a surprise attack. Regarding the battle at the Imperial City on the night of May 22, Ất Dậu year (July 5, 1885), the court was completely defeated. Thuyết decided by himself to launch a surprise attack on the occasion of the French gala dinner in Huế. The capital fell after only 6 hours between 1500 French troops and 20,000 Vietnamese. The reaction of Thuyết was not the same as the great Nguyễn Tri Phương and Hoàng Diệu in regard to his responsibilities to the country.

After he failed in a rebellion in 1885 and Huế fell, Thuyết brought Hàm Nghi to Quảng Trị and in the name of Hàm Nghi, he issued a famous anti-French appeal. After helping Emperor Hàm Nghi with building the leadership base of the French resistance movement and realizing the huge differences in military forces, in February 1886, Tôn Thất Thuyết ordered his two sons, Tôn Thất Thiệp and Tôn Thất Đạm, continue to maintain the "court of Hàm Nghi" against the French while together with Trần Xuân Soạn and Ngụy Khắc Kiêu he tried to seek help. He crossed Hà Tĩnh then Nghệ An and in March 1886 he arrived in Thanh Hóa.



He stopped in Cẩm Thủy for a while and with Trần Xuân Soạn and his younger brother Tôn Thất Hàm they discussed the uprising plan. Then he asked Soạn to stay behind to develop the resistance movement. After that, he went to Trịnh Vạn canton in Thường Xuân district for a meeting with Cẩm Bá Thước and stayed there until April 22, 1886. From there he passed upstream of the Mã River, to Quan Hóa Châu to meet the chief of the Mường ethnic group Hà Văn Mao. His longest stop was in June 1886 at the home of Thái tribal chief Đèo Văn Trị, because at this time he was very sick and unable to continue.

He then continued on his way to Yunnan and arrived in Guangdong in February 1887. He advocated asking for help from the Qing Dynasty to help Vietnam fight the French colonialism. In 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi was arrested because his subordinate Trương Quang Ngọc betrayed him. Tôn Thất Thiệp was killed when he attempted to kill Emperor Hàm Nghi to prevent him from falling into the French hands. Tôn Thất Đạm heard that the Emperor was arrested and committed suicide. But the help request was unsuccessful, Thuyết had to find exiled friends like Nguyễn Thiện Thuật and tried to contact the resistance in Vietnam. At this time in Thanh Hóa, the Ba Đình uprising was suppressed and Trần Xuân Soạn's base was lost, so Soạn crossed the border to China to meet Thuyết in Guangdong.

The help request of Tôn Thất Thuyết was unsuccessful, but he relied on his personal relationship with some anti-French Qing officials, so Tôn Thất Thuyết organized liaisons with the domestic anti-French movement, purchased weapons, and ammunition for the insurgent troops. Cattle and rice from Vietnam were transferred to China and exchanged for weapons. This supply route continued until 1894 when the Vietnam-China border was closed. Tống Duy Tân (1837-1892), after failing in Thanh Hóa, went to Guangdong to meet him but in 1888 returned to build an anti-French base in Hùng Lĩnh. In 1889, Tôn Thất Thuyết sent people to Hà Tĩnh and appointed Phan Đình Phùng to be a General. Most generals in the Northeast and Tonkin had contacts with Thuyết. He organized anti-French activities in the Đông Triều area continuously during the years 1891 - 1892. During 1892 - 1895, he lost contact with groups in Vietnam and he built up many armed troops that were mainly Chinese and from ethnic minorities. In early 1893, he directed Vũ Thái Hà to enter Bình Hồ in Móng Cái to attack the French in the name of Cần Vương (Assist the Emperor).

The armed resistance after the call of Cần Vương was responded by the people and the scholars, even though they have only primitive weapons, simple swords, lack of long-term strategy and coordination. The soldiers following Thuyết gradually defected, from a thousand down to a few dozens. Some of his comrades were killed by Thuyết himself and even the mandarins Phạm Thận Duật (1825-1885), Hồ Văn Hiến (1825-1885) and Trương Quang Đẻ abandoned Thuyết. Only his two children were left (Đạm was 17 years old and Thiệp 15 years

old) to protect Hàm Nghi. On the other hand, Thuyết maintained a virtual illusion of Chinese military might and did not see the dark conspiracy of the Qing Dynasty when he nominated Phạm Thân Duật in 1882 as envoy and in 1885 he still sent Nguyễn Quang Bích (1832-1890) to ask for help. When he escaped to China in 1887, Thuyết did not yet know the terrible situation of

Phạm Thân Duật

the Chinese host being torn apart by Western powers. He did not understand the treaty of Tianjin on June 9, 1885, forcing the Qing Dynasty to cut off relations with Annam. Therefore, Thuyết was under house arrest for 12 years from 1891 in Thiên Quan then Long Châu, and was disillusioned at the end.



In March 1895, he sent an army to invade Cao Bằng, occupying the Lục Khu but was repelled by the French. Since 1895, the Sino-Japanese war broke out, the Vietnamese-Chinese border was strictly controlled and the French requested the Qing Dynasty to control Tôn Thất Thuyết and Lưu Vĩnh Phúc, so his activities stopped. He was house arrested and not allowed to leave his residence. The Qing court gave him a monthly pension of 60 silver ounces for retirement. In the last years of his life, he often had madness crises and often swung swords at rocks in the garden. His erratic temperament during these years caused his followers to return to Vietnam. During these years, by loneliness, he remarried a Chinese widow in 1899. People of Longzhou, Guangdong, China called him "Old stone man" ("The old man who slashed stone"). Why Thuyết did not have enough courage and self-respect to accept the responsibility of his errors that caused harm to the country or to look for an honorable death than to live in misery, regret, and shame? He died in China on September 22, 1913, at the age of 74. At present, his grave remains in Guangdong China. His descendants have repeatedly expressed to the local government his wish to bring his remains to be buried in his village Vân Khê, Thủy Thanh commune, Hương Thủy district, Thừa Thiên Huế province. However, his grave has become an important tourist attraction in Guangdong, so the local government did not approve the relocation. Therefore, his descendants brought his tablet and his bronze statue to worship in the temple for Nguyễn Phúc Thuận in Huế. In exile, Tôn Thất Thuyết left a poem named "Sparrow in the Rain" mourning himself and Emperor Hàm Nghi.

As Military Minister for nearly the last 2 years of Tự Đức in 1881-1883 and 2 years later when Tự Đức died from 1883-1885, it was Tôn Thất Thuyết who directed the imperial army against the French with the assistance of Chinese troops. The Huế court became derelict after Tự Đức's death, with Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường removing four consecutive Emperors. The country suffered a turbulent situation and lost its independence in the hands of France (Treaties of Protectorate in 1883 and Colonization of 1884) to start the courageous struggle against colonialism in 1885.

Thuyết only manifested an extreme patriotism, persevering against the French of a commanding general who was holding the destiny of the country in his hands. The capital

was lost due to his lack of sense of national unity of a political leader who relied on foreign help. Because of his impatient nature and violent character in killing the two Emperors of Dục Đức and Hiệp Hòa, 40 princes and First Regent Thành. He even killed those who followed Emperor Hàm Nghi in the resistance war and many Catholics. In such a state, it was unavoidable that France quickly turned Vietnam into a colony. The sacrifices of Tôn Thất Thuyết were undeniable, e.g., his ardent patriotism and his children sacrifices to oppose the French colonialism, but they could not cover his mistakes that made Vietnam lose its independence and put it under the yoke of 100 years of domination as well as directly caused the fall of the imperial capital of Huế.

Nguyễn Nhượng Thị considered the removal of Dục Đức and Hiệp Hòa and the crowning of Kiến Phúc and Hàm Nghi of Tôn Thất Thuyết as the acts of someone who "forgets the teachings of ancient holy books", "no loyalty", "for self-interest", "a manipulative mandarin. "Journalist-writer Phan Khôi (1887-1959) said that it was because the personality of Tôn Thất Thuyết was not equal to that of Hoàng Diệu and Nguyễn Tri Phương made Phan Khôi think that Thuyết was not patriotic but "self-interested" and only knew himself. Further, when Thuyết left the Emperor who had just grown up with his two children of the same age to escape to China, such an act cannot be judged as patriotic or Emperor-loving but irresponsible, due to the nature of Thuyết according to the opinion of Emperor Tự Đức. Trần Trọng Kim saw his attitude of avoiding General de Courcy a cowardice and the attack on the morning of May 7, 1885, in Huế Citadel as "rioting". Phan Trần Chúc considered Thuyết as a brutal and tyrannical authoritarian who almost lost his humanity. Ch. Gosselin (France) classified him as hostile and ignorant and considered his going to China to seek help as an act of desertion. Recent history researchers after 1954 highly appreciated the personality of Tôn Thất Thuyết and cherished his fervent patriotism. But they still blamed him for not knowing how to rely on the people in the attack on the French army in Huế on July 5, 1885, criticized his mistake of asking the Qing dynasty for help against the French and considered his suppression of peasant uprisings for about 10 years before returning to Huế as pretty serious mistakes.

**Nguyễn Văn Tường (1824-1886)** came from a poor working family in An Cư village, Triệu Phong district, Quảng Trị province. He received the bachelor's degree, was a smart person, cunning, eloquent, and devoted to the country. The history book of ĐNTL actually recorded the clear trick of Nguyễn Văn Tường when he took the exam in 1842, deliberately used the surname Nguyễn Phúc of the Nguyễn Dynasty and was sentenced to military service for one year. In 1867 Trần Tiễn Thành knew the diplomacy skills of Nguyễn Văn Tường and used him as his deputy to negotiate with the French in Cochinchina in 1868. Indeed, after Nguyễn Văn Tường was promoted to Justice Minister and a member of the Privy Council for the diplomatic relations in North and South Vietnam in 1874, Thành was also promoted to the second rank in the four pillars of the Court.

After signing the 1874 treaty, Tường commanded the suppression of Văn Thân in Thanh-Nghệ provinces (Trần Tấn-Đặng Như Mai) with the cooperation of the French warship (Treatise on Vietnamese History, volume 6, p. 1231), numerous contacts with the French, and later on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1885 when the capital fell, asked again Bishop Caspar to surrender and complete cooperate with De Courbet (by secret order? with the argument "do not know"), whoever said Nguyễn Văn Tường was pro-French? It is also important to know that one of his sons married a sister of Ứng Đăng (Kiến Phúc) as arranged by Tự Đức. Hence, by all means, he advocated Ứng Đăng, 14 years old, to replace Hiệp Hòa (who was favored by Thuyết) for easy action against the French (set up Tân Sở) and then Kiến Phúc also suddenly died 8 months later because of a violent illness (poisoned by Tường?).

From 1874 to 1881, Tường was in charge of diplomacy with the positions of Finance Minister and a member of the Privy Council. In all contacts and negotiations, he always proved tough but clever in negotiating with the French. Tường gained a good reputation with the Emperor and the court after the negotiations to sign the Treaty with France returning the provinces occupied in the North in 1874. Tường was very intelligent, had a lot of tricks, had a talent for oratory in diplomatic negotiations and foreign trade. All negotiations of the later Vietnam-France or Vietnam-China treaties were outlined by Tường but they were not implemented to make it difficult and cause losses for the French expeditions to prolong the colonial invasion. Under French pressure, he had to resign and was in charge of communicating with the Qing Dynasty while Nguyễn Trọng Hợp took care of communicating with the French.

The events after Emperor Tự Đức died, e.g., 3 Emperors in 4 months or 4 Emperors in 2 years, were planned by Tường and executed by Thuyết. They led to the final consequences of the French colonial rule of our country. Violence at the court, homicides and the policy of killing Catholics of Thuyết as well as the political intrigues and tricks of Tường after the death of Emperor Tự Đức were the causes of the loss of the country and deep hate and injustice in many social classes.

In addition, the two Tường-Thuyết carried out economic reforms as in the West by cooperating with a French capitalist company in monopolizing the mining of Kế Bào-Hòn Gai coal mine in September 1884 but 20% of the interests were paid directly to the two regents at the expense of the royal court. While negotiating with the Chinese delegation from 1880 on the aid, Tường took the opportunity to approve illegal smuggling such as the monopoly of transporting rice and accepting bribes from Chinese merchants. He also allowed the import of fake money produced by the Chinese, with poor quality and form. He brought them in domestic circulation and forced their use by the public. These actions were clearly against the law but Emperor Kiến Phúc and the court dared not object. (NXT, p. 283)

The two Tường-Thuyết were united in totalitarianism but were not smart enough when they wanted to attack by surprise the French in Huế in 1885 as this completely failed. The Can Vương appeal on September 20, 1885, had a passage about Tường: *“On the day of the loss of the capital, Nguyễn Văn Tường followed me (the Emperor) out of the royal citadel but he unexpectedly hid in the Kim Long Monastery... From now on, he followed the enemy and deceived the people. He tried to arrest me and deliver me to the French to enrich himself... .Tường also imitated the words of Empress Dowager to lure me back to Huế... ”*. According to author Phan Khoang in “Vietnam, History of French Rule” (page 353), in front of Emperor Hàm Nghi and while in hiding, Thuyết sent a servant back to Huế to burn Tường's private house near Đông Ba gate on July 24, 1885. According to J. Morineau, “Bao Vinh, port commercial de Huế”, BAVH, T. II, May 4, 1916, (Bao Vinh - Huế commercial port), Thuận Hóa Publishing House, Huế, 1997, p. 210, *“right after the event of 1885, Bao Vinh market was on fire, many great stores and warehouses were burned, and the house of Nguyễn Văn Tường was only left with dilapidated walls in a deserted garden”*.

Bishop Puginier in a letter dated July 17, 1885, to Courcy had stated Tường as "the biggest crook in the country" and "the greatest enemy of France and Christianity." With the same ideas, in the report to his superiors issued on August 25, 1885, Rheinart wrote about Tường: "a formidable enemy of France". From historical documents, Tường was known as follows: taking the surname of the Emperor during the bachelor exam, voluntary surrender or because of command, between knowing or not knowing the action on July 5, 1885, between the anti-French attitude or change, between the enemy of France or surrender, between self-interest or the public interest, especially he put all the blames on Thuyết for no one (Courcy, Champeaux, Patenôtre, Thuyết, and Movement Cần Vương) could trust Tường's words and deeds.

According to Lô Giang's biography (Rites Minister Tiểu Cao Nguyễn Văn Mại 1858-1945) and Tiếng Sông Hương -1994 (Nguyễn Hương Nguyễn Cúc), the letter of Tường sent to the governor of Tahiti a few weeks before his death showed what was going on in the fall of the capital. It highlighted Tường's trick in his surrender to the French via Bishop Caspar, his lure of the Emperor and Queen Mother to return to the palace, and his putting all blames and condemnation of Thuyết.

But then there was a power struggle between Tường and Nguyễn Hữu Độ. Độ left Huế and went back to Hanoi. De Courcy sent Tường to exile to Tahiti on the pretext of not completing his duties within two months. Nguyễn Hữu Độ negotiated with the French side and asked for permission from two Queens Mother to depose Emperor Hàm Nghi and set up Prince Chánh Mông as Emperor Đồng Khánh.

After that, the French sent a boat to carry Tường, Phạm Thận Duật and Tôn Thất Đính to Gia Định for exile to the colony of Tahiti. Duật fell ill and died on board and his body was

dropped in the sea. After five months on the island of Tahiti, Tường died at the age of 64 from throat cancer. With the intervention of Regent Tôn Thất Hân, his coffin was brought back to Huế along with Tôn Thất Đính (father of Tôn Thất Thuyết). Before the burial, the coffin was whipped, a symbolic punishment for the crimes of killing the Emperors and causing riots in the court.

Before the French purpose of invading Vietnam, the courage of Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường's cunning manipulated the whole court. Together they directed all historical developments in the immediate aftermath of Tự Đức's death. It began with the conviction of incorrect will reading and then killing of Trần Tiễn Thành, the successive killings of Emperors, and the installation of a young man as Emperor with the aim of fighting against the French with weak and hopeless forces. Their lack of "pure care" of a leader, lack of solidarity, and lack of plan caused the country to lose sovereignty and independence. They also caused great losses in life and property in the Cần Vương rebellions which only showed the indomitable will as history highlights. But who would be responsible for the fight against powerful weapons with just patriotism and sacrifices? **(Until March 9, 1945, Japan defeated the French and returned the autonomy to Emperor Bao Dai who issued a declaration of independence on March 11, 1945. The Japanese surrendered to the Allies on August 16, 1945, and handed over the Southern provinces, followed by the resignation of Bảo Đại on August 25, 1945. Six months later during the Fall Revolution on September 2, 1945, the provisional government of Hồ Chí Minh issued the declaration of independence before the nation and the world).**

In Tự Đức's Letter for Wishing Longevity to Trần Tiễn Thành, there was a prophecy: *"Then who will be the winner, who will not?"*. There would be no winner. The Emperors who lost the throne also died tragically. The war faction failed. The peace faction could not have peace. Modernization was incomplete. The country lost sovereignty. The whole country lost. No unity. No faith in each other. Everybody was disappointed. Like a bird in a cage and fish in a bowl: Tôn Thất Thuyết lost, was lonely and died in anger in Long Châu, China; Nguyễn Văn Tường was exiled and died in Tahiti. Then after 100 years, history confirmed the testimony of Nguyễn Trường Tộ: *"If the modernization problem cannot be solved, the nation will be lost"*.

The verse of folklore at that time that referred to the four "sad heroes" at the end of the Tự Đức reign accurately evaluated Thuyết and Tường. Their reckless actions in a dire situation created much political turmoil leading to a disastrous military adventure that only favored the French invaders. Obviously, the ambitions for power have changed people's hearts, and the words of loyalty and morality are very difficult to keep instead. The karmic law of cause and effect applies without exception. The heaven net is sprawling but unavoidable. World history shows that many talented generals had great military achievements, but when entering the political realm, they failed due to ambitions for power.

Without a pure heart and strong morality, it is easy to become a military dictator, causing many crimes, and despised by the people, like in the case of Đổng Trác in the Three Kingdoms era.

Turning the pages of history for “reviewing the old to learn the new”, through the longevity wishes to Trần Tiễn Thành "*the people are wordy*", the comment on the character of Tôn Thất Thuyết "lack of purity and caution" and the wish for the three regents "must be in agreement", we can feel that Emperor Tự Đức saw what would be happening right after his death. But the Emperor was not wise and sick when he intentionally left some wrong words in his will about Dục Đức "*unable to undertake a great responsibility*". This unfortunate situation was abused for political purposes by the anti-French war faction. Historian Father Nguyễn Phương wrote: "*Loyal subjects are not equal to righteous ones. Loyal subjects serve the country and the Emperor their whole life. But they worship the Emperor more than help the country. Many times they become narrow-minded, sometimes they become blind, but because they are narrow-minded and blind in sacrifices, their career is always lofty and highly admired. The righteous persons still have that loyalty, but when needed, they think of the country more than the Emperor, they are less narrow-minded and not blind, and wiser in judgment to obtain maximum benefits to the Emperor and to the country. Before such persons, the people admire for their talents, virtues, sacrifices, and courage, because they know when to risk at the right moment*". All did not see the essential importance of having a modernization plan to protect the independence of Vietnam. All also missed the news on the political transformation of the world and the neighbors: China was torn apart and waiting for changes, Japan opened its doors to become a great power, Thailand made compromises to preserve their independence, but Vietnam was dominated for 100 years.

## **PART 4. Armed Resistance Movement Against the French 1885-1896**

From the beginning of the French invasion and according to the tradition of fighting foreign invasion to preserve the country, local people automatically rose up in coordination with the Court army as in Đà Nẵng in 1858 and the Southern provinces in 1859. After 1862, the popular uprisings in Cochinchina were independent of the Court such as Trương Quyền, Phan Tôn, Phan Liêm, Nguyễn Hữu Huân, Nguyễn Trung Trực. When arrested and about to be executed, Nguyễn Trung Trực courageously said: “ Only when the French manage to pick all the grasses then there will be no more Vietnamese against the French”. The uprising by Trương Định caused lots of problems to the French. Further, some scholars used literature and poetry for patriotic appeals such as Nguyễn Đình Chiểu and Phan Văn Trị or non-cooperation and establishment of anti-French bases by emigrants in Bình Thuận such as

Nguễn Thông and Phan Trung ... People in Hanoi and other Northern provinces also formed resistance bases with victories at Cầu Giấy in 1873 and 1883. Though the French had invaded and established a protectorate since 1883, the Annam people still resisted while Cochinchina had become a colony.

## Chapter 5. Hàm Nghi Resistance 1885-1888

On the morning of May 23<sup>rd</sup> Ất Dậu (1885), Huế fell after the French counter-attacked by crossing the Perfume River and with troops from Mang Cá the Forbidden City was occupied. Seeing the hesitation of the Emperor and the royal family, Thuyết had to use his sword to force the Emperor and the three Queen Mothers to flee. Emperor Hàm Nghi said: "*I have not fought with anybody, why do I have to run?*" Great Queen Mother Từ Dũ said disgustedly: "*A weak country loses to a stronger country, that is nothing strange. The previous Emperor still had to execute peace treaty, let alone today.*" General of Right Army Hồ Văn Hiến escorted the Royal Family to the southwest gate, rested a while at Trường Thi (Exam Academy) and then left for Quảng Trị. Thuyết kept up, with about a hundred people left. Thuyết did not respect the tradition of a brave general, "generals commit suicide following the city's fall", as the examples of Phan Thanh Giản in 1867, Nguyễn Tri Phương in 1874, Hoàng Diệu in 1882 and Trần Thúc Nhẫn in 1883 and many other unknown generals who sought honors in their noble sacrifice. Thuyết forced Emperor Ham Nghi to follow him as a "hostage". The Emperor always cried, complained, and pleaded to return to Huế with the three Queen Mothers. Thuyết must scare him "*If His Majesty wants to return to Huế, he must leave his head here first*". Thuyết brought Emperor Hàm Nghi to Tân Sở (Quảng Trị). The French announced rewards of 2000 silver taels for the head of Thuyết and whoever caught Emperor Hàm Nghi would be rewarded with 500 taels.

Here at Tân Sở, on July 13, 1885 (June 2, year Ất Dậu), Tôn Thất Thuyết issued on behalf of Emperor Hàm Nghi the "*Chiếu Cần Vương*" or "*Order to Support the Emperor*" which was drafted by Phạm Thận Duật and called on the scholars and the people to stand up and help the Emperor in resisting the French to save the country. The Order had sentences telling the crimes of the French: "*In the past, the strategies of dealing with the enemy were no more than the following three: fighting, defending and negotiating. There will be no chance for fighting, not enough strength for defense, and negotiation for peace requires long efforts. Recently, our country has suddenly encountered many difficulties. I ascend the throne while still young, and I do not stop thinking of self-reliance and independence. The Western envoy is hard-headed, more and more excessive in demands, forcing the impossible. If you know, you must participate, grind your teeth, raise your hair up, swear to kill all the enemies, and everyone should have such heart.*"

After reading it twice, the Emperor said, "*Now I understand why you do not want me return to Huế while it is still under the French occupation*". Thuyết asked "*So if the*



*resistance war requires going and living in the forest. Do you want to go? ”. The emperor replied “Wherever we go, we can live as long as we chase the French enemy out of the country ”. With time, Emperor Hàm Nghi matured and was aware of the resistance war against the French colonialists for independence. Từ Dũ wrote several letters asking him to return, but they were useless. From Central to North, the movement Cần Vương started.*

Since then, a patriotic anti-aggression movement had risen vigorously and lasted until the end of the nineteenth century, and it was called the Cần Vương (Assist the Emperor) movement. Responding to the Order Cần Vương, people everywhere under the leadership of patriotic scholars stood up against the French even though they only had crude weapons, simple swords, and spears. The vigorous movement of Cần Vương caused a lot of difficulties for the French and its leaders were pursued fiercely by the French, especially Emperor Hàm Nghi, Lê Trực and Tôn Thất Đạm. However, there were no results. The resistance movement after the Cần Vương appeals lacked a long-term strategy and coordination, remained localized, and lost its spiritual leadership, so it was easy to be defeated by the French.

When Regent Thuyết left Vietnam to cross the Chinese border in 1887, he went to China to ask for help. Emperor Hàm Nghi was arrested in January 1888 at the age of 17 because of the betrayal of two bodyguards, Nguyễn Đình Tình and Trương Quang Ngọc. When he was arrested, Emperor Hàm Nghi pointed straight in the face of Trương Quang Ngọc and said: *“You better kill me than you deliver me to the French”*. Two sons of Thuyết' were full of heroism: 18-year-old Thiệp was shot by French soldiers when he wanted to kill Emperor Hàm Nghi so that the latter wouldn't fall into the French hands, while 20 years old Đạm accepted full responsibility and committed suicide.

After this event, everything in the court was controlled by the French Resident. In the Order dated July 14, 1885, of Hàm Nghi (actually of Thuyết, drafted by Phạm Thân Duật) had patriotic advice to send a message to Tường: *“Now the great mandarin Tôn Thất Thuyết is close to me, and you are the regent and stay behind for negotiations. Everyone who either goes away or stays behind takes the love of the country and the people as the basis ”*. Two months later, the French dismissed Nguyễn Văn Tường and installed Emperor Đồng Khánh on the throne on September 14, 1885. In the middle of the day when Emperor Đồng Khánh stepped onto the throne, Tôn Thất Thuyết launched a notice on September 20, 1885, with a passage about Tường on the day of the fall of the capital as follows: *“At that moment, Nguyễn Văn Tường followed me out of the citadel, but unexpectedly he hid in Kim Long church ... From then on, Tường has followed the enemy, deceived the people, planned to arrest me to surrender to the French for personal gains ... He also impersonated the words of Empress Dowager to entice my return ... ”*. According to the Lô Giang biography (Minister Tiểu Cao Nguyễn Văn Mại) and Sông Hương 1994 (Nguyễn Hương Nguyễn Cúc, Houston), the letter sent by Tường to the governor of Tahiti a few weeks before his death showed what was going on after the fall of the capital. It highlighted the ruses of Tường in surrendering to the French

through Bishop Caspar, encouraged the Emperor and Mother Queens to return to the palace, and blamed Thuyết for everything.

## Chapter 6 . Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) Movement 1885-1896

On the morning of July 5, 1885 Tôn Thất Thuyết brought Emperor Hàm Nghi and his entourage from the Huế imperial capital to Tân Sở (Quảng Trị). Here, on July 13, 1885, Tôn Thất Thuyết, on behalf of Emperor Hàm Nghi, issued the Cần Vương appeal for the first time. In Quảng Trị for a while and to avoid the fierce pursuit of the French army, Tôn Thất Thuyết sent Hàm Nghi over Laos to Ấu Sơn Hamlet (Huong Khê, Hà Tĩnh). Here, Hàm Nghi issued the second Cần Vương appeal on September 20, 1885. These two appeals focused on denouncing the conspiracy to invade Vietnam of the French colonialists, and, at the same time appealed to the scholars and people of the whole country to stand up in resistance and help the Emperor protect the homeland. Although acting under the name Cần Vương, this was in fact a patriotic struggle movement against the French invasion of the Vietnamese people. During this period, the imperial military was not involved. Cần Vương leaders were not the generals of the Nguyễn Dynasty as in the early days against the French, but patriotic scholars who shared the same pain with the people, so they voluntarily sided with the people against the French invasion. The Cần Vương movement exploded after the loss of the Huế imperial city in early July 1885 and developed through two phases:

- The first period was from the time of the first Cần Vương appeal to the arrest of Emperor Hàm Nghi (November 1888)
- The second period lasted until the failure of the Hương Khê uprising (1896).



Responding to the Cần Vương appeal, people everywhere under the leadership of patriotic scholars rose against the French, even though they had only rudimentary weapons, swords, and spears, especially in Annam and Tonkin. The strong growth of the Cần Vương movement caused many difficulties for France. In the first period (1885 - 1888), the movement was placed under the command of Hàm Nghi and Tôn Thất Thuyết, with hundreds

of great and small rebellions broke out on the delta provinces of North and Central Vietnam. The command headquarters of the movement were in the western mountainous regions of Quảng Bình and Hà Tĩnh provinces. At the end of 1888, Emperor Hàm Nghi was arrested and the first stage ended. In Phase 2 (1888-1896), the movement continued to grow, gathering a large number of participants including peasants and scholars into greater rebellions. They were more qualified and organized and maintained the resistance against the French for many years. Against the fierce sweeping operations of the French, the rebellions in the delta increasingly narrowed and moved to operate in the midlands and mountainous regions. Some representative uprisings:

### **Ba Đình Uprising 1886-1887. Đình Công Tráng**

Ba Đình (the name of the base in Ba Đình commune, Nga Sơn district, Thanh Hóa province) was attached to two famous generals Trần Xuân Soạn and Đình Công Tráng responding to the movement Cần Vương. Ba Đình covered three villages: Mậu Thịnh, Thượng Thọ, and Mỹ Khê. Each village has a communal house and, from one village one can see the communal house of the other two villages, so it was called Ba Đình base.

**Đình Công Tráng (1842-1887)** was from Trinh Xá village, Thanh Liêm district (Hà Nam). As a canton chief, he left his hometown to join the army of Hoàng Kế Viêm that cooperated with Lưu Vĩnh Phúc's Black Flags to fight Henri Rivière. The Ba Đình uprising broke out under the main command of Đình Công Tráng and the retired mandarin Phạm Bành. In each village, at the site where the communal house was built a garrison. Ba Đình was one of the largest defensive lines of the period Cần Vương at the end of 19th century. In addition to Ba Đình, there were also supporting bases: the base Phi Lai of Tống Duy Tân and Cao Điền, the Quảng Hóa base of Trần Xuân Soạn, and the base Mã Cao of Hà Văn Mao. The Ba Đình insurgent force sometimes had twenty thousand people, recruited from three villages and Thanh Hóa, and from diverse races including Kinh, Thái and Mường. The base was surrounded by a dense bamboo ramp and a system of wide trenches covered with bamboo spools. Inside was a layer of earth wall 3m high, 8m-10m wide. On the citadel, the insurgents put bamboo baskets containing stable stowed soil and there were holes for gunners ready to fight.

The insurgents attacked many towns and intercepted North-South convoys causing the French a lot of damages. That was why the French were determined to fight it. By the beginning of 1887, Colonel Brissand with 76 officers and 3,500 elite troops attacked Ba Đình and besieged the base for several days. On the morning of January 21, 1887, they captured Ba Đình. Brutal revenge followed and three villages were annihilated. Đình Công Tráng ran back to Nghệ An. The French put a high price on his head. Greedy for money, the chief of Chính An village informed the French to arrest Đình Công Tráng in the night of October 5,

1887. He fell before enemy bullets in Trung Yên village, Đô Lương district, Nghệ An province.

**Trần Xuân Soạn (1849-1923)** was from Thọ Hạc village, Thanh Hóa province. After the defeat in the fall of Huế in 1885, he took over the task of organizing the movement Cần Vương to resist the French in Thanh Hóa. He stationed his troops in the Quảng Hoá district to support the Ba Đình base and keep the relationship between Ba Đình and Mã Cao. In early 1887, these two bases fell and he withdrew his troops to Diêm Lu, Châu Quan Hóa (now Bá Thước district) and rebuilt his forces. The French even had to dig up the grave of his father and burn his bones in the middle of the road but it was still not successful. Shortly after, he went to Long Châu (in Guangxi province, China) and met Tôn Thất Thuyết to discuss the reorganization of forces, but then he got stuck there. In Long Châu, with the help of some scholars, he had organized several groups and many times returned to fight in the border area. In 1923, Trần Xuân Soạn died in Long Châu at the age of 74.



On September 2, 1945, at Ba Đình Square, President Hồ Chí Minh read the Declaration of Independence that gave birth to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (now the Socialist Republic of Vietnam). Some people thought it was Uncle Ho who named the Ba Đình Square. Actually, the person who named it first was Dr. Trần Văn Lai, Mayor of Hanoi in the Trần Trọng Kim government.

### **Bãi Sậy Insurrection 1883-1892. Nguyễn Thiện Thuật**

He was also known as Tán Thuật. A descendant of Nguyễn Trãi, he led the Bãi Sậy uprising. After France occupied Bắc Kỳ (Tonkin) for the second time in 1882, Nguyễn Thiện Thuật (1844-1926) moved at the beginning of 1883 to Đông Triều, Quảng Ninh province today. There he raised troops and found the base Bãi Sậy against the French. Late 1883, after signing the Harmand treaty, Emperor Tự Đức ordered the withdrawal from Tonkin, but Thuật protested and went to Hưng Hóa, Tuyên Quang together with Nguyễn Quang Bích to continue the resistance. In 1884 Hưng Hóa city fell and he continued to withdraw to Lạng Sơn citadel in coordination with La Xuân Oai, Province Chief of Lạng Bình (Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng). He resisted the French until the fall of this citadel in 1885 and then fled to Long Châu, China.



In July 1885, Emperor Hàm Nghi issued the Cần Vương appeal and Nguyễn Thiện Thuật went back to Bãi Sậy, leading the Cần Vương uprising against the French. His troops applied guerrilla tactics, based on the support of local people and attacked the French camps on the road Hanoi - Hưng Yên - Hải Dương. They often relied on the muddy terrain with overgrown reeds to prevent the French from sweeping into Bãi Sậy. The Sậy uprising spread widely in Hưng Yên, Thái Bình, and Hải Dương provinces, and was linked with some other Cần Vương gatherings in Thái

Bãi



overgrown reeds to prevent the French from sweeping into Bãi Sậy. The Sậy uprising spread widely in Hưng Yên, Thái Bình, and Hải Dương provinces, and was linked with some other Cần Vương gatherings in Thái

Bình, Nam Định, ... formed a wide movement in the northern delta provinces, throughout the years (1885-1889). In 1888, the French asked Hoàng Cao Khải to bring the army to suppress. In July 1889 Thuật yielded to his younger brother, Nguyễn Thiện Kế, and his deputy Đốc Tít (Nguyễn Đức Mậu), then he went to China to find Tôn Thất Thuyết to discuss reinforcements but he was not successful. The French strengthened their forces and built a system of outposts to isolate insurgents at Bãi Sậy base. The troops were very brave but fell gradually into an isolated position. In July 1889, Hai Sông base was also surrounded. Đốc Tít fiercely resisted but was knocked off the Trai Sơn headquarters. Finally, he had to surrender to the enemy (August 12, 1889) and was exiled to Algeria. The remaining generals tried to maintain the uprising for a while. By 1892, they returned to the insurgent army of Đề Thám in Yên Thế. Tấn Thuật died of illness on May 25, 1926 and was buried on the hill of Quan Kiều in Nanning city, Guangxi province (China). In 2005, his grave was relocated to Vietnam and re-buried in Xuân Dục hometown, Mỹ Hảo district, Hưng Yên province.



Đinh Công Tráng

Trần Xuân Sọan



Nguyễn Thiện Thuật



Phan Đình Phùng

## Hương Khê Uprising 1885-1895. Phan Đình Phùng

Phan Đình Phùng was from Đông Thái village, La Sơn district (now Tùng Ảnh commune, Đức Thọ district, province Hà Tĩnh). In 1877 he was first in the court exam of doctorate. After the removal of Emperor Dục Đức and one year later in 1883, Phan Đình Phùng (1847-1895) was reinstated and appointed to the defense of Hà Tĩnh. Responding to the Cần Vương appeal and still in mourning his mother, Phùng still rose up to gather forces from all over the provinces of Thanh Hóa, Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh and Quảng Bình to fight the foreign invasion. Phan Đình Phùng was appointed by the Emperor to be leader of the insurgency bases in two districts of Hương Sơn (station Hà Tân) and Hương Khê (station Quy Hợp in commune Phú Gia, Hà Tĩnh). Helping him was a peasant general named Cao Thắng. Assigned by Phùng, Cao Thắng actively recruited soldiers, trained them, and built bases. With blacksmiths from villages Trung Lương and Vân Chàng (Đức Thọ), he successfully researched and manufactured rifles according to the French model.

The uprising headquarters was located in Vụ Quang mountain. During the ten years (1885-1896), despite all the dangers and hardships, the uprising led by Phan Đình Phùng fought many battles against the French and caused heavy losses to the enemy. Seeing that it was impossible to use military power to destroy the uprising, the French used all kinds of methods to seduce and bribe Phan Đình Phùng. In 1893, Cao Thắng died at the age of 29, causing Phùng to lose an effective partner. In 1895, the French sent Nguyễn Thân, the envoy Duvillier, and 3,000 soldiers to suppress the uprising at Hương Khê. In fierce fighting, Phan Đình Phùng was seriously injured then died on December 28, 1895. In early 1896, some remaining leaders

died of illness one after another, some were killed or captured, others withdrew to Siam or surrendered ...

The Hương Khê uprising led by Phan Đình Phùng was the highlight of the Cần Vương movement. It was the largest and longest-lasting resistance at the end of the 19th century. The uprising had brought into play the spirit of solidarity and the support of all the people, both in strength and material possessions. After Phan Đình Phùng passed away, the Hương Khê uprising also disintegrated. However, it deserved to be the pinnacle of the Can Vương movement. This was also the end of leadership by the Vietnamese scholars and feudal class against the French.

### **Yên Thế Uprising 1885-1913. Hoàng Hoa Thám**

Hoàng Hoa Thám was also known as Đề Dương, Đề Thám or Hùm Thiêng (Sacred Tiger) Yên Thế. He was the leader of the Yên Thế uprising against the French colonialists since 1885. Đề Thám revolt fight against the French of the Vietnamese people. After the peace agreement (1883) accepting the French protection in Tonkin, Emperor Hàm Nghi called on the people to rise up against France. Đề Thám responded to this movement and rebelled against the French by occupying the regions of Bắc Giang, Thái Nguyên, and Hưng Hóa. Hoàng Hoa Thám went to Nghệ Tĩnh to join the uprising of Phan Đình Phùng and expanded the range of activities such as contacting Đội Văn (one of the leaders of the insurrection Bãi Sậy), Kỳ Đồng, Phan Châu Trinh and Phan Bội Châu (1906) on operational plans as well as the support of Hoàng Hoa Thám for the Chinese revolutionary movement led by Tôn Trung Sơn (Sun Yatsen).

The French could not defeat him, so in 1894, they had to settle with him by letting him govern 22 communes in Yên Thế region and Thám established bases at Chợ Gò. But two years later, Thám rebelled against the French again. In 1898, the French had to sign another treaty to give him more benefits. Đề Thám lived in peace until 1905 when the rebellion fought the French again. In 1908, Đề Thám decided to attack Hanoi, so he conspired with many chefs to poison (datura powder) about 200 French soldiers, but because of weak dosage, the French soldiers were only staggered and not dead, and the conspiracy was unsuccessful.



In early 1909, the French army decided to launch a major campaign to attack Đề Thám in the cave. Thám lost, so he escaped into the forest. Since his wife Bà Cấn and his youngest daughter, Hoàng Thị Thế were arrested, the insurgency gradually declined and disintegrated in early 1910. Thám had to live in hiding in the mountain Yên Thế with two guards. France gave a prize of 25,000 piasters for his arrest or his killing. There were three Chinese who wanted the prize money. They faked joining Thám and then at night when he was sleeping, they cut off his head to receive the reward on lunar February 10 of 1913 (March 18, 1913),

ending one persistent resistance over a quarter of a century. There were many other uprisings throughout the country to fight against the French but the Cần Vương movement in both phases still did not overcome the sporadic situation, the lack of coordination and unity. Therefore, the uprisings in turn failed and lead to the end of the Cần Vương movement in 1896.

## **END OF VOLUME I**





# **THE STREAM OF VIETNAM HISTORY**

**1856-1996**

**Volume II**

**Struggle for & Regain Independence 1905-1975**



**English Translation by Trần Tiễn Khanh**

## Part 5. The Ideological Path 1905-1945

Responding to the Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) decree, people everywhere, under the leadership of patriotic writers and poets, enthusiastically stood up against the French. The uprisings had not yet gathered, gathered into a unified bloc strong enough to face the French army. Cần Vương leaders had prestige only where they come from, and a strong local spirit that made them resistant to any movement unification on a larger scale. When the leaders were captured or died, their troops either dispersed or surrendered, causing the movement to rapidly weaken and disintegrate. Each uprising was destroyed in turn. From the end of 1895 to the beginning of 1896, when the gunfire of the Hương Khê uprising of Phan Đình Phùng failed and was tragically crushed in Vụ Quang by Vietnamese traitors Nguyễn Thân and Ngô Đình Khả, the Cần Vương movement was considered over.

A few scholars among the silent majority of the population, as well as a very few court officials, were aware of the weakness and backwardness of Vietnam and understood the power of Western weapons, as well as the desire in seeking colonies (markets and resources). They exhorted to reform the country in all aspects from the day the French officially invaded the South after the naval battle of Đà Nẵng in 1856 to the day it lost its sovereignty and was colonized in 1885. Phan Đình Phùng had warned in 1883, *"If the foundation is shaken, the future of national affairs will not be known"* or as testified by Nguyễn Trường Tộ more than 15 years ago: *"if the problem of renewal is not resolved, the country will inevitably perish"*. Researcher Nguyễn Văn Xuân commented in the monograph "Duy Tân Movement" *"But all three of the brightest minds of the second half of the 19th century (Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Phạm Phú Thứ, and Nguyễn Lộ Trạch) were only approved by the people, admired but not accepted"*. It was not only a sadness for them, but perhaps for an entire generation of activists to open up and promote innovation, a knowledge beyond all theories of the times, but or not suitable. or being hindered by the stagnation and conservatism of the great powers in the court. After all, most of their proposals were still on paper.

After both the renovation efforts and the Cần Vương movement failed, with traditional patriotism, the sense of responsibility to fight against the French for independence now belonged to the entire people of all classes in front of an elite army with strong firepower. It was a completely new era of national salvation against foreign invaders for the Vietnamese people. Đại Việt (Great Việt) lost its sovereignty, but the Vietnamese people did not accept foreign domination even though the armed resistance had failed (1896). Vietnam was no longer an independent country, becoming a semi-colonial monarchy. France directly ruled Cochinchina, while "protecting" Tonkin and Central provinces where the Nguyễn court continued to "rule".

The independent country of Vietnam in the past was one, from north to south, now because of foreign invasion, it was divided into three parts: Tonkin (North), Annam (Central), Cochinchina (South), each period having its own political system, administrative apparatus, and system. different legal systems for the French colonialists to easily rule, exploit and profit. France maintained feudalism in Vietnam while the colonial government put French officials in local structures for control. The French controlled the activities of the Nguyễn court and even intervened in the appointment of mandarins. Most of the Vietnamese mandarins were corrupt, losing their character, worrying about flattering French officials to be henchmen, bullying the common people, and without real power, which made the majority of the people bored and lost faith in the court and ended their expectations of feudalism. The Nguyễn Dynasty lost its political prestige, and the Emperor was no longer a factor of national unity.

Then, under the French colonial rule, the Huế court turned into a tool of the French colonialists and the late Nguyễn Emperors became puppets with the Monguillot agreement on November 6, 1925. The French protectorate had turned the Vietnamese officials into low-level administrative staff who could only act passively and lack creativity, while the leadership was in the hands of the French. In the colonial government, knowledge, talent, and morality were not valued as much as loyalty and submission to the French. They restricted the political freedoms of the indigenous people such as freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of association. They maintained a political secret police system to control the population and set up many prisons to imprison anti-French persons. The French turned a blind eye to all requests for reform by the natives. Cultural and social movements to raise people's knowledge and social reform of the Vietnamese people were monitored and suppressed.

After consolidating the ruling apparatus in our country, the French capitalists played the role of colonists, while our country became a colony. The French monopolized all economic-political-military powers in Vietnam. Transportation, healthcare, and financial systems were improved: Huế Central Hospital in 1894, Trường Tiền Bridge Huế in 1897, Long Biên Bridge Hanoi in 1899... Research institutes were also established such as the School of the Far East in 1898, Nha Trang Institute of Oceanography, and Nha Trang Pasteur Institute in 1896 directed by Dr. Yersin... French became the official language in the education system and administrative records. The Vietnamese language was also affected, the most important being the reception of Quốc Ngữ script as the official Vietnamese language. The use of Quốc Ngữ script next to Chinese characters created favorable conditions for literature and newspapers written in Quốc Ngữ script to develop, and the spread of knowledge and culture became easier. Changing educational content, abolishing the traditional examination with Confucianism as the center made Confucianism gradually lose its influence on social life and sink into oblivion. However, the educational system did not match the promises of the French to "civilize" the colonies. Ngô

Đức Kế (1878-1929) said that "*European studies have not yet reached the top, but Confucian studies have broken their roots*" along with the decadent social moral foundation. Western ideas such as freedom, democracy, human rights, nationalism, socialism, communism... were disseminated through books and the colonial education system. In that context, leftist revolutionary ideas imported from the West were widely disseminated.

The concept of "war is to preserve the country - peace is to surrender" was instilled in the national character of Vietnam, and at that time the idea of "*renovating to help the Emperor keep the country*" before the fire of Western weapons had just flared up, then it was suppressed, turned off, was also falsely accused more than a hundred years because of the history of fighting against foreign invaders (Trần Tiễn Thành, ...). Patriotism, courage, and an indomitable spirit could not compensate for the backwardness of Confucian thought. The Western colonial government and the puppet court accused and deported the Emperors who had progressive, neo-liberal and self-reliant ideas: Thành Thái-Duy Tân succeeded their father-grandfather wish, Dục Đức, so that the people's movement would automatically take over the responsibility of expelling the colonialists to regain the country's sovereignty.

## **Chapter 7. "Commentary on the World Affairs" and Liên Thành Company**

After Trần Tiễn Thành was assassinated, the renovation measures were all abandoned since 1883 and the Cần Vương Movement starting from 1885 was waning by 1892. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch still urged with great enthusiasm to save the country. Ten years after the "World Affairs II", he wrote the last thesis with great resonance at the time. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch again sent the third and final petition to Emperor Thành Thái, titled: "*Thiên hạ đại thế luận*" (Commentary on the great world affairs). Although he did not participate in the doctorate exam that year, before the question about "The Great World", the essay presented the "great position" of the world in general and focused on analyzing the powers of the empires in Asia. He pointed out that: "*Western countries do not have to command troops to control from "seven thousand miles beyond the ocean" as before, but they already have military bases and logistics facilities on Asian lands that they captured, so China and Asia are both within the control of the Western powers. China is huge, but it is also being torn apart by Western countries like a school of sharks*".

He wrote this essay to inspire Emperor Thành Thái and the top officials to hurry to revive the country, but when it was published, it resonated widely and was loved by a large number of scholars and progressive people. Although he didn't take the exam, the essay "Commentary on the World Affairs" was popularized among scholars at that time such as Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, Chu Mạnh Trinh, Vũ Phạm Hàm, and Trương Gia Mô who all read Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's articles.

This essay has had a great and profound influence on Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's longtime friends as well as later scholars who continued on the path of renovation, looking for new thoughts or strategic policy to defeat the enemy, to chase away foreign invaders, in an attempt to ignite a movement to go abroad to learn new innovations.

After a long period of seclusion, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch alone started a tour to associate with people who were dedicated to creating a strong movement among the masses to reform the country like Trương Gia Mô, Nguyễn Trọng Lợi, Nguyễn Thượng Hiền. In 1895 Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was on his way to visit Trương Gia Mô (1866-1929) (son of Trương Gia Hội) at the Phan Thiết "refuge center" of the Nam Trung scholar group following the renovation policy from 1867 and not cooperation with the French. Through poetry and literature, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch found in Trương Gia Mô a heart of agreement and the two men together found a way to go abroad for revolutionary activities since 1895 but failed. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch got sick and died in Bình Định in 1898 (only 46 years old). Currently, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's remains have been reburied in Ké Môn village cemetery, Điền Môn commune, Phong Điền district in Thừa Thiên Huế.

Just like Trần Tiễn Thành alone in advocating for national renewal with the Emperor and the Privy Council, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch alone restarted the neo-reformist thought in the late 19th century. It was not until the beginning of the 20th century (1903-1911), modernist scholars such as Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, Trương Gia Mô, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, especially Huỳnh Thúc Kháng...were influenced and accepted the doctrines in "Commentary on the World Affairs" by Nguyễn Lộ Trạch. In 1903, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng read the article by Nguyễn Lộ Trạch and all expressed their admiration. These activists started the campaign to awaken the patriotic masses (without the failed effort of Cần Vương) in seeking to regain the country's sovereignty in the hands of the French colonialists through renovation and overseas study that Trần Tiễn Thành and his son-in-law Nguyễn Lộ Trạch outlined nearly 30 years ago.

Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was a feudal intellectual who had little direct contact with Western culture and science and technology, but he studied and researched on his own to improve his understanding under the supervision and instructions of his father-in-law Trần Tiễn Thành. Through the documents "World Affairs I", "World Affairs II", and "Commentary on the World Affairs", he showed a novel way of thinking, clear vision, far-sighted vision, and patriotic enthusiasm. Through the recommendations of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, it can be seen that in the context of Vietnamese society's severe crisis in many respects, under the influence of the renewal movement of some Asian countries, in the face of the obvious danger of losing the country appeared in the hands of the French colonialists, in the second half of the nineteenth century. In Vietnam, there had appeared a line of innovative ideas with many outstanding faces such as Bùi

Viện, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, Phạm Phú Thứ, Đặng Huy Trứ, Nguyễn Tư Giản, Trần Đình Túc... They were the "new intellectuals" who absorbed Western scientific and technical advances, thereby proposing a series of actions to renew the country to the Huế court. The renovation work was not successful because Emperor Tự Đức was too conservative, cautious, and lacked the insight of Emperor Minh Trị (Meiji) of Japan at that time (1852-1912). It is a fact that: "conservatives", "fighters" or "pacifists" also need to open up to the truth about the weakness of the defense and economic system to reform the country for its preservation. If you want to innovate, you must make temporary peace, actively open the door to external communication to have enough time to renew.

Trương Gia Mô continued the path of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's travel to the South to make friends with anti-French patriots through the path of modernization and non-violence. Trương



Gia Mô returned to Phan Thiết to join Nguyễn Trọng Lợi (1881-1911), Nguyễn Quý Anh (two children of Nguyễn Thông), Hồ Tá Bang, and many comrades to establish Liên Thành Association from 1905. This year and at Nguyễn Quý Anh's private library, the Trương Gia Mô group met with Phan Châu Trinh's group in the Nam Du campaign for renovation.

Responding to the 3-point action program "Raising people's knowledge - Support people effort - Ameliorate people lives" of the Duy Tân movement at that time, Liên Thành Association (Société de Liên Thành) or Liên Thành Company was established with the name implies the preservation of tradition which means "becoming a lotus" literally and figuratively including 3 organizations with cultural-political-economic functions linked together :

- Liên Thành Publishing House was established in 1905 to spread books and newspapers with patriotic content.

- Liên Thành Trade Shop was established in 1906 to trade in fish sauce to raise funds for activities, and at the same time create jobs for people.

- Dục Thanh School was established in 1907 to teach the children of patriots and poor workers according to patriotic and progressive content according to the model of Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục pursuing an education that is half Confucian, half Western European, with the political orientation of the republican and nonviolent ideas of Phan Châu Trinh.

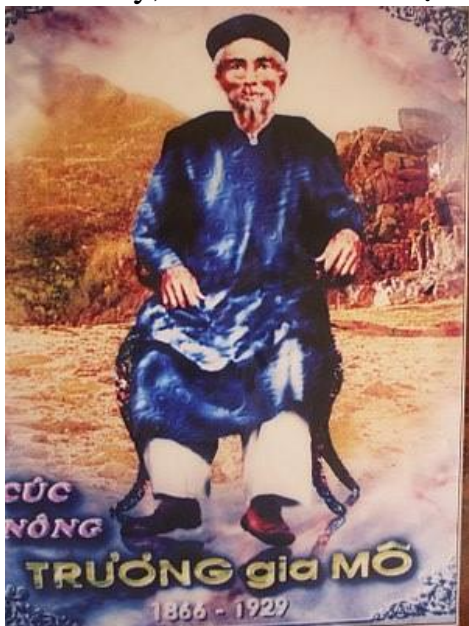
Due to the actions of Trương Gia Mô, the Confucian scholars at the end of the 19th

century (Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh...) gradually became aware of the new and innovative plans to study abroad and mobilize diplomacy



of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch-Trần Tiễn Thành as an essential activity to save the country, regain independence and self-reliance after the failure of the bloody armed resistance against the colonialists.

Based on the noble sacrifice and indomitable traditional spirit, many scholars began to abandon the concept of the middle class based on Confucianism to seek other strategies and thoughts to liberate the nation and regain independence. Unification for the country started with Liên Thành Company in 1905. The essay "Commentary on the World Affairs" had made a great and profound influence on Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's long-time friends as well as later scholars who continued the path of renovation to improve self-reliance to repel "foreign invaders from the sea". Through Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, Phan Bội Châu from 1897, Phan Châu Trinh and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng since 1903 had pondered the timely thought of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch. Phan Bội Châu, after reading this essay, wrote in Phan Bội Châu Poetry (Chương Thâu-1985): *"I began to understand more or less the seeds of modern thought"*.



Huỳnh evaluated this essay as having a profound influence on Confucian scholars at that time: *"all of them awakened and opened their eyes to the ideas that paved the way for the renovation movement in the early 20th century"* (Tiếng Dân Newspaper, No. 424 of October 3, 1931). These conceptions marked the renewal of our nation's thinking at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. It can be said that the trend of social reform was the inevitable trend set for the Vietnamese people in this period.

Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's testimony and documents were drafted more than a century ago, the issues they raised have been surpassed by time, but no one doubts that they still retain its great value in the context of contemporary social history. Reading Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, we are proud and admire the resilience and deep understanding of intellectuals. Nguyễn Trường Tộ was a Christian who felt a responsibility to his homeland in the period of "national danger". Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was a patriotic scholar who did not care about fame and financial gain, did not like academic studies - he is truly a scholar of great talent, advocating reform.

The great successes of the reform movements in Japan and China had awoken up other Asian countries. Especially after 1868, Japan reformed against the forces that hindered domestic

development, followed the capitalist path, and was able to resist Western countries. This had affected the patriotic elite in Vietnam. The scholars saw that Japan was also a yellow people, had the same situation as our country, yet Japan had successfully renovated, why could we not succeed?

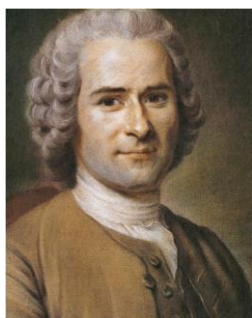
## Chapter 8. Nationalist-Democratic Thinking in the Early 20th Century

Absorbing the ideas of late 19th century innovators, some early 20th century thinkers, such as Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Nguyễn An Ninh, etc., continued to develop those ideas by action. They gradually abandoned the Song Confucian system, boldly searching for new ideas and strategies for the nation. From criticizing the feudal system, thinkers have absorbed the idea of civil rights through "Tân Thư" (New Books or New Literature), which had existed for a long time in Europe but were very new to Asia and Vietnam. The main new books are the works of CS Montesquieu (1689-1775) and JJ Rousseau (1712-1778); and later books published by Khang Hữu Vy (1858-1927), Lương Khải Siêu (1873-1929). It is thanks to reading the "new books", the intellectual Confucianists suddenly awakened, enlightened as if stepping out of the darkness into the light.

The biggest change was that they realized the backwardness of Confucianism, had to shake it off to absorb a different ideology that Tân Thư (New Literature) introduced to start building national salvation structures such as the nation's independence and freedom, multi-party liberal democracy, one-party proletariat socialization to launch revolutionary movements to fight for the whole country, regain independence and defeat the French colonialists.



Montesquieu



Rousseau



Khang Hữu Vy



Lương Khải Siêu

JJ

However, it can be said that the transition of Vietnamese political thought at the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century was a fundamental, long-term, difficult, and extremely complicated transition of thinkers. Political thought focuses on the important content of national self-reliance, raising the people's intellectual level, fostering the people's strength, and spreading the ideology of democracy and civil rights. Independence and freedom



is the ultimate goal with the spirit of *"always immutable, improvised"* (as President Hồ Chí Minh said to Huỳnh Thúc Kháng). This political thought is the absorption of values, the quintessence of the East and the West, especially democratic thought. The content of democratic thought of the thinkers has made an important change on the ideological level: from the emergence of innovative ideas within the framework of feudal ideology to liberal democratic thought and move closer to Marxist-Leninism. Since then, two revolutionary groups have emerged with two opposing doctrines: nationalism and international communism.

### Section 8.a. Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940)

**Phan Bội Châu**, aka Phan Đình San, according to his autobiography, was born in December of the year of the Đinh Mão (early 1868 or late 1867) in his maternal hometown, Sa Nam village, Đông Liệt commune, Nam Đàn district, Nghệ An province. He got the nickname Sào Nam, which is taken from the sentence "Việt điều sào nam chi", which means "Vietnamese



Phan Bội Châu

bird nests in the South". Phan Bội Châu was famous for his studies from a young age, but the exam road was difficult. During the exam year Đinh Dậu (1897), he was accused of bringing documents to the exam hall and banned for life from taking the exam. From there he wandered to Tonkin, then into Huế to work as a tutor in the house of Bachelor Võ Bá Hạp. In the capital, Phan Bội Châu interacted with many famous figures such as Hoàng Giáp Nguyễn Thượng Hiền (1865-1925), Tăng Bạt Hổ (1858-

1906), Phan Châu Trinh... Thanks to the intervention of the Governor-General of Nghệ An Đào Tiên, Phan Bội Châu was able to take the Hương (Bachelor) exam and got the first place in the Nghệ An School in 1900. But because of his father's mourning, he was not allowed to take the 1901 doctorate exam.

In two years 1901-1902, he opened a teaching school in his hometown, Đan Nhiễm village, Nam Đàn district, Nghệ An province. He had two friends from the same hometown named Nguyễn Sinh Sắc (with a bachelor's degree in 1894) and the Confucianist Vương Thúc Quý. Quý was a Hán teacher for a son of Sắc, Côn (official name Nguyễn Tất Thành) who was



Nguyễn Sinh Sắc

11 years old at that time. After losing his mother (1901), Côn had to live with his grandmother in Hoàng Trù village, Nam Đàn district. Nguyễn Sinh Sắc (or Huy) passed the doctorate exam (Phó bảng degree) in 1901 in the same year as Phan Châu Trinh and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng but did not become a mandarin. Sắc then returned to his hometown to open a teaching school just a field away from Phan Bội Châu's house. They often met to discuss literature and life affairs.

Phan Bội Châu then went to Huế to study at Quốc Tử Giám (National School) to prepare for the doctoral exam, but the main purpose was to find comrades through

Cường Đê (1882-1951) and Nguyễn Thành (1863-1911). In 1904 he officially established **Duy Tân Hội (Modernization Association)** to carry out revolutionary activities in secret. In



*Cường Đê*

February 1905, Phan Bội Châu was led by Tăng Bạt Hổ (Lý Tuệ) to cross the border to South China. After interacting with some exiled leaders such as Tôn Thất Thuyết, Admiral Trần Xuân Soạn, Tán Trùng Nguyễn Thiện Thuật, etc. From Sa Hà, Triều Châu Phan Bội Châu went to Japan in May 1905 where he met Lương Khải Siêu (Liang Qichao) (1875-1929). Lương fled China after Empress Dowager Cixi canceled the reforms of Emperor Quang Tự (Guangxu) in the Mậu Tuất Reformation of 1898, which was known as the Hundred Day Reform. He was the chief editor of Dân Báo [People's Newspaper, Ming Pao] in Yokohama (Hoành Tân) and helped Phan Bội Châu publish the volume

Vietnam Vong Quốc Sử (Vietnam: History of a Lost Nation) to promote the spirit of resistance to the French. Lương also introduced him to some key people in the Japanese government, but they expressed their intention not to help fight the French and only accept Vietnamese students.

When Japan continuously won two great wars with China in 1895 and Russia in 1905 after the 1868 renovation of Emperor Meiji (1852-1912), and China was starting to reform with Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and Lương Khải Siêu (Liang Qichao) (1873-1929), Vietnamese scholars opened their eyes and determined to modernize the country. In 1905, Phan Bội Châu started the **Đông Du Movement** (Go East to Japan) to send young people to study abroad and then return to save or reform the country. Many students responded to the Đông Du movement, so the French negotiated with the Japanese to expel Phan, Cường Đê and other young people studying abroad in 1909.

Phan Bội Châu immediately traveled to Southeast Asian countries and Hong Kong or returned home to raise money to buy guns from Japan to send to Hoàng Hoa Thám (Đê Thám 1862-1913) but failed (these weapons were donated to the Chinese revolutionary group of Sun Wen in 1910). Duy Tân Association was disbanded, Đông Du movement also waned. Fortunately, in 1911 the Tân Hợi revolution succeeded and China switched to democracy... This was the inspiration for Phan Bội Châu in the middle of 1912 to form a new association. Still fighting with "iron blood", he replaced the goal of constitutional monarchy with democracy. It was **Vietnam Quang Phục Hội (Vietnam Restoration Association)** to be headed by Prince Cường Đê. But it was him who was the soul of the Association to start armed revolutionary parties. Many young men went back to fight in the country, most famously poisoning the French by native soldiers in 1913, the uprising of Emperor Duy Tân with Trần Cao Vân-Thái Phiên in 1916, Thái Nguyên in 1917 with Lương Ngọc Quyến (1890-1917), Trịnh Văn Cấn (?-1918).

In 1918, Phan saw that the riots did not bring the desired results, the movement declined and was difficult to revive. He heard that in the country Governor-General Albert Sarraut implemented many reforms, then he changed his way of fighting, turning to "moderate". He wrote an open letter to the French and compatriots, accepting to cooperate with France, jointly implementing social reforms to fight against Japan. It was a text in Chinese characters, 20 pages, called Pháp-Việt Đề Huề Chính Kiến Thư (another name is Pháp-Việt Đề Huề Luận – Commentary on Franco-Vietnamese Cooperation). "Đề Huề" means solidarity, cooperation, and development. From "hoping for Japan" and when his group of Đông Du was expelled by the Japanese, and the Japanese occupied Goryeo (Korea), Phan thought that Japan would implement the imperial policy, of which Indochina would be the object. Japan was near, and France was far away. It was impossible to keep Indochina without allying with the French, carrying out social reforms to gain popular support to oppose the Japanese. This thinking made him accept the French-Vietnamese cooperation. The French were very happy with Phan's new policy. The Governor-General sent someone to meet and negotiate with Phan but failed.

Seven years later, Phan was kidnapped on June 30, 1925, brought back to his country, tried in a Hanoi court, and pardoned by Governor-General Varenne under pressure from the press and public opinion in France due to an article by Nguyễn Ái Quốc in October 1925, especially the massive strike nationwide. Phan Bội Châu was put under house arrest and forced to live in Bến Ngự, Huế and to stop all anti-French activities. There should have been a sentence, the French just had to execute the trial (in absentia) in 1913, and that was it. But in the previous trial, he did not have a defense and did not enjoy the right to have a lawyer. On the other hand, since 1913, there were many new events. It was his Association that continued to be violent (criminal), but when he wrote French-Vietnamese Cooperation (public), the Association also stopped the violence. Right before being arrested by the French, Mr. Phan found it impossible to maintain the Quang Phục Association. He drafted a project to establish the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (following the model of the party of Tôn Trung Sơn-Sun Yatsen) and gave it to Hồ Tùng Mậu to bring back to the country for propagation. French secret police captured this document. His new Party platform completely advocated a peaceful struggle.

In the text written before his death ("A few words before eternal goodbye"), he regretted his violent stance about the needless loss of life caused by violent struggle and indirectly confirmed the peaceful path: *"Now that I'm nearing death, I would like to say a few words of courage to express my last hope to our compatriots: Our compatriots have over twenty million, that's how many brains we have, so many eyes, so many limbs. If we don't know how to love each other, unite to do our national duty to the Fatherland... Otherwise, on the earth's surface in the future, there will be no national silhouette. Then for this Bội Chau, even if he escaped from debt, was lucky enough to die before his brothers, I consider it a happy thing. With the above*

*words, I would like to say goodbye and thank my compatriots...Dear, Phan Bội Châu is determined to say goodbye.”*

At the end of his life, under house arrest for 15 years, Phan Bội Châu, known as the Old Man of Bến Ngự, was eager to translate his revolutionary and research literature into Nôm. He constantly propagated patriotism through poetry and encouraged the use of the national language script. Phan Bội Châu once wrote a research book with more than 50 pages of Socialism during the period 1928-1934 to introduce Marxism, introduce the main content of Marxist theory such as value surplus, class struggle, dictatorship, economics, revolutionary social methods, capitalism. Phan Bội Châu concluded: " *Among sociologists, he (Marx) is truly a teacher, the reason why we study socialism, we just need to study Mã Khắc Tư (Marx). That means it's over* ". Phan Bội Châu also wrote "A Brief Story of Liêm Ninh (Lenin), the great man of Red Russia" written in Military magazine, Hangzhou, China in 1921. Phan Bội Châu died on December 29, 1940 in Huế,

In the Literary Dictionary, published in 2004 after introducing him and his literary career, it was also concluded that: In the history of Vietnamese literature, it is not easy to have many writers that can move the masses to the great revolutionary struggle like the literature of Phan Bội Châu. Today in that literature, in terms of thought and concept, this point or other may no longer be relevant, but the author's enthusiastic heart is still valid. He is one of the great writers of Vietnamese literature in the first half of the 20th century.

### **Section 8.b. Phan Châu Trinh (1872-1926)**

**Phan Châu Trinh** was born in 1872 (September 9, 1872, in the application for French naturalization) in Tây Lộc, Tam Kỳ, Quảng Nam, including a developed area of foreign trade, Đà Nẵng. He passed his bachelor's degree in 1900. The following year, he passed the Phó Bảng.



*Phan Châu Trinh*

After that, he received a scholarship under the Post-Department program at Quốc Học Huế, waiting for the appointment date. In 1905, he held the position of secretary at the Rites Ministry for a short time, then resigned from it. Around the years 1902 - 1903, in the Huế citadel, Phan Châu Trinh had the opportunity to have access to many new books in the family bookcase of some Confucian intellectuals such as Đào Nguyên Phổ, Thân Trọng Huề... Phan Châu Trinh absorbed the enlightening ideas of Khang Hữu Vi, Lương Khải Siêu, Rousseau and Montesquieu. Among the new books, Phan Châu Trinh carefully studied two books that had a deep impression on his neo-modern thought later: the Chinese translation of two books “De l'esprit des lois” (On the Spirit of Law, 1748) by Montesquieu and “Contrat Social” (On the Social Contract, 1762) by Jean Jacques Rousseau.

It can be said that thanks to knowing-and reading the new books, Phan Châu Trinh had grasped the very fundamental factor capable of changing the country's fate at that time, the issue

of democracy/civil rights, and soon became “ *the first person to organize civil rights in the South*” (mentioned by Nguyễn Sinh Sắc at the funeral of Phan Châu Trinh in April 1926). Phan Châu Trinh was the first Vietnamese politician to promote democracy and civil rights in domestic politics. His comrades included Lương Văn Can, Nguyễn Quyền, Lê Đại, Đào Nguyên Phổ (Bắc Kỳ), Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Ngô Đức Kế, Nguyễn Thượng Hiền (Trung Kỳ), Trần Chánh Chiếu, Nguyễn An Hưởng (Cochinchina).

In 1904 together with Huỳnh Thúc Kháng (1876-1947), Trần Quý Cáp (1870-1908) he openly and non-violently worked in various forms of reform through **the Duy Tân (Modernization) Movement**, which started in Quảng Nam, Central Vietnam: Expanding people's mind, reforming society, promoting the national language, promoting civil rights through poetry, the press, or speaking in trade associations and schools, and popularizing the values of Western civilization such as legal rights - civil rights - human rights - democracy - freedom - equality - fraternity, reform in all fields. In 1905, the Nam Du (Go South) group started to mobilize for renewal with the Liên Thành Company.

It quickly became a revolutionary movement nationwide, first of all in the central coastal provinces. It can be said that the political and cultural vision of the Renovation Movement is much broader thanks to the conditions of international relations. With the East, they learned about the reality of Japan's renovation efforts. With the West and through the new books, they had early access to the idea of democracy and civil rights. One of the popular ways that the Renovation Movement in the early twentieth century promoted Western culture was through new books that were transmitted to Vietnam by way of China. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, Chinese reformers had selected a number of Western books and articles containing new knowledge of the natural and social sciences to be translated into Japanese or Chinese characters, sometimes just to summarize the main content and call them new books. For the Vietnamese people who were not fluent in any foreign language other than Chinese, like the leaders of the Duy Tân Movement and many contemporary patriotic scholars, reading the new books through these translations was the best and only option.

Bùi Trần Phương, the president of Hoa Sen Private University in Hồ Chí Minh City, also commented: *"It is admirable that the generation of scholars at the beginning of the century was trained in the spirit of Confucianism, in the spirit of academics but they realize that there must be a reform in education in depth. Realize that Vietnam is a part of the vast world, not just the Sinicized world."* The intellectual Confucianists of Phan Châu Trinh's generation had got innovative ideas by coming into contact with the new books, which were translated into Chinese from the writings of the European Enlightenment authors, along with works written by Japanese modernists, and another very important part was observing that the opponent who was ruling

Vietnam at that time. i.e. the French. It is worth mentioning that, as Bùi Trần Phương commented, *"Despite being trained in a traditional environment, they were alert enough, thinking independently enough to ask questions, and then opened their mind to new values."* Therefore, Phan Chu Trinh was aware that the problem was not simply national independence, but according to writer Nguyễn Ngọc, *"Phan Chu Trinh put the issue of national independence in a larger context than that, was to develop the nation called Chân Dân Chí, that is, to raise the people's knowledge and spirit."*

In early 1906, Phan Châu Trinh secretly went to China. He met Cường Đễ and Phan Bội Châu at the residence of Lưu Vĩnh Phúc in Guangdong, but when invited to join Duy Tân Hội, Trinh refused. During these conversations, Trinh also expressed opposition to the monarchy by attacking documents signed by Cường Đễ. After visiting Tokyo (Đông Kinh) to survey the renovation, Trinh returned to Hong Kong and then returned home. Returning to Quảng Nam, Phan Châu Trinh asked a missionary to introduce him to Resident Jean Charles in Faifo (Hội An), clearly explaining his trip. In early November 1906, Phan Châu Trinh also sent Governor General Beau a letter asking for cooperation. In the letter, Phan Châu Trinh vehemently criticized the corruption of contemporary Vietnamese mandarins, and the current education system, promoting the policy of *"worshiping the French as teachers to seek progress."* Beau sent a French translation by Edouard Huber to the Bulletin de L'Ecole Francaise d'Extrême-Orient, commonly known as the Proceedings of the French School of the Far East.

Similar to Phan Châu Trinh's peaceful patriotism, **Huỳnh Thúc Kháng** advocated "haste makes waste", wanting to follow an open revolutionary line consisting of three elements: developing schools, expanding the press, and operating action in parliament. But then it was Huỳnh Thúc Kháng who also realized that: *"there cannot be a way of public revolution by means of schools, newspapers, and parliament"*, even though these three places were all battlegrounds for patriots. The group Phan Châu Trinh - Huỳnh Thúc Kháng - Trần Quý Cáp on the occasion of Nam Du campaigning for political and cultural reform met Trương Gia Mô in Phan Thiết to promote the Dục Thanh school at Nguyễn Thông's house in 1907. The school recruited children of patriots and working poor to mobilize reforms among the masses under the financial sponsorship of Liên Thành trading company.

The Quảng Nam trio was also deeply aware that it would be difficult to access the core of the new books but also of Western culture - the issue of civil rights/democracy - if it did not seek to raise the intellectual level of many scholars and people, of which the most urgent but also the most basic was opening a school with new teaching and learning. Their slogan is: *"Open the people's mind, Strengthen the people's spirit, Improve the people's life."*

Within only two years from 1906 to 1907, modern schools were opened in many places, becoming famous in Quảng Nam such as Diên Phong, Bảo An, Phú Bông, Quảng Huế, La Châu, Lạc Thành, Quảng Phước, and Phước Bình, Phú Lâm..., Dục Thanh in Phan Thiết and Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục in Hanoi. This is the Northern Duy Tân Movement, a complete model in terms of teaching organization - formal education that was much more methodical than modern schools in Quảng Nam. It can be said that in order to create the capacity to assimilate Western culture through the new literature, the Duy Tân Movement in the early twentieth century must thoroughly resolve the relationship between democracy/civil rights and people's intellectual levels: improving people's intellectual levels is a prerequisite for raising awareness about democracy/civil rights. Along with the independent spirit of the nation since the 15th century, the Duy Tân (Modernization) Movement also popularized and encouraged learning Vietnamese, Nôm and Quốc Ngữ.

The formation of **the national language script (Quốc Ngữ), aka modern Vietnamese,** was associated with Western Jesuit missionaries in the first half of the 17th century, although the



Nôm script was still used. Quốc Ngữ script is a type of script built on the principle of writing in Latin letters. This type of script has been used for a long time in Europe. In the seventeenth century, some Western missionaries used this principle to record Vietnamese, creating an easier and more favorable script for missionary purposes. In the next few centuries, Quốc Ngữ was used only in Christian scriptures. The imposition of the French colonial regime led to the abolition of old schooling and

examinations, and the use of Hán (Chinese) and Nôm (a Vietnamese derivative of Hán) characters that led to the victory of the national language script despite the encouragement of learning to speak French. At first, the people were cold to Quốc Ngữ, although some "Western learning" intellectuals tried their best to promote it. That cold attitude had changed after the formation of politically significant cultural struggle movements such as the Duy Tân and Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục movements in the early twentieth century, popularizing modern education and spreading patriotic ideals. The leaders of the movements put the use of the national language first in the six measures of the strategy called "New Civilization" (1907) and called on the compatriots for the future of the country to use it. Cultural documents in the national language script published by these movements had been widely disseminated. On the other hand, contact with the French language and French culture led to the formation of Vietnamese journalism in the national language script, modern Vietnamese prose, innovation in poetry, the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar.

The formation of the national language script has greatly contributed to the improvement of the Vietnamese language. Since 1945, the mother tongue is considered as the official language

of the Vietnamese people and the national script has been elevated to the status of a national script. In schools, Vietnamese was used, so the majority of Vietnamese people spoke the Vietnamese language correctly and wrote it correctly. Today, there are still a few young students still pursuing learning Hán-Nôm.

On the one hand, **Lương Văn Can (1824-1927)** opened the Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục School in 1907 in Hàng Đào Street, Hanoi, creating a forum for promoting moral revival, expanding people's knowledge, advocating democracy, and reforming education and culture,



Lương Văn Can

denouncing Confucianism (called obsolete), abolishing bad customs and practices, developing industry and commerce. The birth of the school Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục in Hanoi can be considered an extension of the Duy Tân movement. Here, Lương Văn Can, Nguyễn Quyền with the support of Hoàng Tăng Bí, Dương Bá Trạc, Lê Đại, Võ Hoàng, Phạm Duy Tốn... learned from the experience of Japan and opened a private school in March 1907. The school advocated teaching in a new way, focusing on natural science, learning in Quốc Ngữ, Chinese and French characters.

These thinkers proposed two methods of operation: violent revolution and peaceful struggle. First of all, regarding the revolutionary purpose, all thinkers agreed that the goal was to save the country, save the people, and regain national independence. Phan Bội Châu said that the French colonialists were the archenemy of our nation; they did not allow our nation to develop its economy, expand its culture and education, and brutally suppress all protests, even the most peaceful ones. Therefore, it was not possible to use the peaceful path to gain national independence, but the only option was the violent method.

Phan Châu Trinh, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng... were moderate. According to Phan Châu Trinh, violence is death, because the people " *have no shelter, no weapons to use, no money to spend, etc.*" Phan Châu Trinh advocated using the method of peaceful struggle for people's livelihood and democracy openly. He wrote: " *So my party's campaign is all about gathering people on the main road, giving lectures, press conferences, and researching current politics*".

The method of peaceful struggle has the advantage that it does not cause loss of people's lives and material things, makes the people wake up and rise to revolution. However, the effectiveness of this method is not high and not thorough, because the essence of colonialism is to use counter-revolutionary violence to invade and oppress the peoples and the working people. The violent revolutionary method is basically suitable for the struggle for independence, but it takes time to prepare and cannot be rushed. It can be said that



Huỳnh Thúc Kháng

Phan Bội Châu's point of view was correct in the



strategy, while Phan Châu Trinh 's point of view met the actual requirements of society at that time.

About the role of the people, Phan Bội Châu emphasized: *"Our people are the masters of the new country."* Phan Châu Trinh - the originator of democratic thought in Vietnam, clearly defined his purpose as overthrowing the feudal system and leading the nation to follow the path of liberal democracy. At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the view that the people are the rulers of the country, and the country is the country of the people is a fundamental shift of thinking from monarchy to democracy. This is a new development in contemporary political thinking, a great step forward compared to feudal political thinking. In order to exercise democratic rights, the thinkers advocated: opening people's wisdom, restoring people's wills, and supporting people's lives! According to Phan Châu Trinh, opening people's wisdom is to give up the frivolous way of learning from the ancients, to open a school to teach the national language, scientific knowledge, and to eliminate extravagant customs. In order to expand people's knowledge, Phan Bội Châu said that education must be developed, because *"education is the root to build politics"*. The thought of opening people's mind really makes the nation change its old way of thinking to rise to a new higher level of awareness, in line with the development of the times. Restoring popular wills is to make people awakened to the spirit of self-reliance, to realize their rights, to be freed from the grip of the tyrannical monarchy.

In the political ideology of democratic thinkers, the concept of a model regime has also been formed. Phan Châu Trinh considered that the root cause of the people's happiness or disaster is in politics. Phan Bội Châu believed that the monarchy must be abolished, and a republican democratic government consisting of three chambers, owned by the people, determined by the people and governed by the people through representatives. Everything is to be determined by the people. He wrote: *"Everything is decided by the public. The Senate must wait for the Central Assembly's approval, the Central Assembly must wait for the House of Representatives to agree before it can be implemented. The House of Representatives is where the majority of the public has jurisdiction over the affairs of the Central Assembly and Senate. All the people of our country, rich, poor, big or small, have the right to vote."* It can be said that democratic thinkers were aware of the importance of political institutions, considering it a decisive factor that governs all areas of social life and directly affects the interests of the people.

Reformist Lương Khải Siêu (Liang Qichao, 1873-1929) once advised Phan Bội Châu: *"Your country should not worry about not having an independence day, but only worry about the people not having enough independence... the powers of your country are in the spirit of the people, their energies and talents"*. In the sincere advice and almost also derived from contemporary Chinese conditions, it can be seen that Lương Khải Siêu has a fairly

comprehensive approach to the issue, paying attention to both the masses – the people, modern scholars - talent; both the people spirit and energies. According to Phan Bội Châu, in three important issues: studies, talents, and people spirit, restoring people's spirit is the first task, serving as the basis for raising talent and academic change. To support the people, it is necessary to make people know how to develop the economy, expand the professions, and make their lives full and happy.

The two Phans met three times (1903, 1904, and 1906). The two were not different in patriotism. In terms of enthusiasm, how passionate and emotional Châu was, and Trinh was determined and rational. But about how to do it, the first time they met, the two men disagreed because of the difference in the "patriotic religion". And they even more disagreed when they last met (1906). When Trinh was about to return home from Japan, he earnestly advised Châu: 1) You should stay in Japan (don't go back to the country to implement the policy of "refusing the French"; 2) Taking care of yourself and staying healthy; 3) Focus on writing books on people's enlightenment, not "proclaiming anti-French". And finally, "*Only civil rights should be promoted. People who already know they have rights can take care of everything else gradually. Thus, one way to improve people's knowledge is to let them know what rights they have*".

In their longest meeting, they were living together for months, first in Guangdong, then in Japan, to discuss the way to save the country. Châu was criticized by Trinh for not reading and understanding when he was in contact with Japanese society; he only realized that material power was in the hands of the ruling elite (in 1905, they defeated "white" Russia). Châu hoped that the power "with similar yellow skin" would help us. He wrote a lot, but rarely argued, analyzed the situation, but mainly appealed and incited anger at the enemy (now a colonialist).

Phan Chu Trinh, on the other hand, found that Japan's strength was due to the high intellectual level of the people who accepted the renovation; at the same time, he saw the Japanese rulers very greedy, brutal - about to annex Korea (also yellow skinned). They were no different from the French invaders who had annexed Vietnam, so they couldn't be trusted. When the two were visiting Japan, Trinh said: "*The Japanese national level is like this, but our national level is like that... how can we not be slaves? People's knowledge was low, even with independence, the people were still just slaves to the local rulers - no different from feudalism*". Trinh once wrote: "*If you do not have the status of an independent nation, even if you rely on foreign countries (for independence), it is still only playing the game of "changing masters to become a servant for the second time, nothing good...*". Therefore, Trinh advocated reform. The disagreement deepened when Trinh was shown the action plan of *Duy Tân Association* that Phan Bội Châu was establishing. In fact, this was a secret society (hidden commune), advocating violence. Despite being dissuaded, he still insisted on doing it. *The Duy Tân Movement was*

*initiated* by Trinh, in order to improve people's knowledge, eliminate outdated customs, learn to do business, apply science and protect their own legal rights. Therefore, Phan Châu Trinh always encouraged the expansion of agriculture, industry, and trade thoroughly, and always called for extensive vocational training. He mercilessly disparaged the way of literary learning, getting a degree to earn a living, and being corrupt, but he encouraged the analytical and synthetic learning of the West. The Duy Tân Association of Châu, on the other hand, was a secret organization (thus called a secret commune), which advocated building up forces to fight against the French by violence.

Both (Movement and Association) worked in tandem. At the same time, people in the Central provinces, due to high taxes, fought more and more fiercely, and the trend of violence became more and more obvious. Understandably, the leaders of the Duy Tân movement do not approve of such a way of fighting, but those of the Duy Tân Association (who are abroad) are very encouraging. When the French suppressed the "anti-tax case", those in the Duy Tân Movement were affected, but those in the Association were safe. Trần Quý Cáp and many others were tried according to Gia Long law (death penalty, slashed across the back). Phan Chu Trinh, who was in Hanoi (participating in Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục), was also charged by the court (death sentence). He disapproved of the violent struggle, because it would inevitably fail, but also lead to the needless death of many people.

Regarding the historical roles of two elderly Phan Bội Châu and Phan Chu Trinh, and the relationship between these two living at the same time, they are very similar: They come from the same Confucian background, have 20 years of struggle, and carry the same death sentence on their heads. They were very understanding of each other's policies, arguing but still friendly and respectful of each other. The difference is only a side-by-side but contrasting way of fighting: Violence and moderation. The argument between the two men had a great influence on the choice of path and the way of acting of the contemporary patriotic intellectuals. Gradually, they automatically split into two factions. The patriotic scholars still "keep" a narrow worldview, not properly aware of the nature of capitalism in general and French colonialism in particular.

Phan Bội Châu and his comrades at first believed in Japan and asked for help to fight the French for independence. He fell in love but later regained consciousness, and Phan Châu Trinh was fascinated until the end of his life when he wanted to rely on the French to advance, carry out civilized reforms, and oppose the corrupt monarchy. Because he did not set a goal to overthrow the French colonialists, Phan Châu Trinh's policy of "reliance on the French" was to oppose revolutionary violence, not need to revolt, but just study well, then the West would respect as peers, eventually returning the independence.

Thus, patriotism at the end of the 19th century, when independence was threatened, only innovation could maintain independence. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the development was strong, rich, diverse and unique even though the country was lost. For 30 years, every armed struggle to regain independence has failed. Phan Bội Châu continued to pursue violence for another 20 years, making the lesson even more expensive. There is only one way to innovate, but innovation must also be different from before. Innovating for the sake of independence at this time must be aimed at the people's intellectual level, the people's energy, and the people's livelihood. A great lesson has been taught by Phan Chu Trinh: Even if independence is achieved, if the people's knowledge is still low and the people are still weak, the risk is that the ruling elite will become the new boss. The fate of the people still depends on the goodwill of the ruling elite.

However, all patriotic movements have failed because they have not fully identified the causes of the loss of the country, have not found the right way to save the country and have not built up a core force among the masses to liberate the nation. It can be said that the two Phans were the agents that created two main trends in the patriotic movement of intellectuals in the early 20th century: violence and moderation, related to the two revolutionary tasks of national independence and cultural reform. socialization. This difference in direction (violent and peaceful) has led to serious conflicts that divide to the point of criticism, condemnation, discrimination and even more extreme contradictions (Bùi Quang Chiêu 1873-1945, Tạ Thu Thâu 1906-1945, Phan Văn Hùm 1902-1946... were killed). The irony is that they both love the country, but cannot accept each other, do not distinguish between friends and enemies.

It can be said that in the process of assimilation of Western culture by the Modernization Movement in the early 20th century, the honoring of commerce is the most spectacular change in culture for a society with a tradition of respecting peasants and suppressing traders for thousand years like ours. Focusing on economic development, establishing trade associations (the largest are in Hội An, Phan Thiết with the famous Liên Thành trade shop), trading in textiles, forest products (cinnamon, tea), agricultural products (rice, corn, cassava), seafood... trade with foreign countries.

The most active activities were in the fields of thought and activities, with the slogans of white teeth, short hair, and new clothes, they came to harshly criticize the symbols of feudalism such as tearing grey clothes, snatch ivory pieces ... From the hair-cutting movement that spread to the countryside, it gradually turned into a peasants' tax resistance movement. Since then, social groups have begun to expand their understanding of the radical tendency to accept changes in customs and practices through participating in the anti-tax movement and cutting short hair or contributing money to the Quang Phục Hội.

A first publishing house of Tonkin was in charge of publishing a series of useful books for raising people's knowledge and promoting the national spirit. Dozens of books translated or written by trusted authors of the school including history (Vietnam and the world), geography, literature... have been published since the first months of operation.

The hatred of the people because of the colonial and feudal yoke for a long time, was now molded by the patriotic and revolutionary songs of progressive dignitaries. Just in time when the Renovation Movement issued slogans that were in line with the people's aspirations, which was to demand a reduction in taxes, tens of thousands of the masses seemed to be in peril, and of course had to stand up. Although the uprising was spontaneous, it broke out extremely violently...Although the protesters did not carry any weapons, but fearing that the government apparatus would be shaken, the colonialists were left with only guns to suppress.

### **Section 8.c. The 1908 Tax Resistance Movement**

The movement erupted violently in Central Vietnam and many people were killed during nonviolent demonstrations and in prisons in Thừa Thiên, Quảng Nam, Quảng Ngãi and Bình Định. The Trung Kỳ anti-tax collection movement lasted from the beginning of March to the end of May 1908. The movement was really an open and spontaneous struggle of the poor and oppressed people to demand that the colonial government implemented democratic reforms.

After 1897, the French colonialists began to exploit the colony. People from the cities

to the countryside paid heavy taxes, dug rivers, built roads, making the people complain of the extreme hardship and injustice.



*Trần Cao Vân*

Then, because the people could not stand the exploitation anymore and the higher officials took bribes, the uneven division of labor made the majority of the people dissatisfied, so many tax resistance demonstrations broke out in many places. The movement started with the struggle of the people of Quảng Nam and then spread to Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định and other central provinces. In early April, Thừa Thiên people protested. The French envoy in Thừa Thiên province was Gariod and his Deputy Boudineau sent soldiers to open fire to stop them. Being thwarted, the oppressed group rushed to fight with the soldiers, then tied up the deputy leader and forced the Province Chief to lead the protest (April 11). On the way to Huế Citadel, some places have arranged for hair cutting and short clothes for those who still have their hair in a bun and wear áo dài (long robe). To support the movement, students from schools in Huế also came to read poems and chants with patriotic content. Concerned, the French colonialists had to bring Emperor Duy Tân (then 8 years old) to comfort the crowd, but

it did not work. Finally, they had to send soldiers to suppress. A big scuffle took place at the head of Trường Tiền bridge, causing many people to be arrested and hit by bullets.



The movement of "cutting hair" and "cutting nails short" took place enthusiastically among people everywhere in the central provinces. This campaign gradually turned into a protest movement that demanded tax reductions, making the colonial government worried. The uprising of the poor people in Central Vietnam for a long time has paralyzed the colonial and feudal government apparatus in many places. For urgent pacification, the authorities sent soldiers to search everywhere, arrest and shoot people who cut their hair short. By mid-April, many companies of local soldiers from Tonkin came to suppress. Two companies of European soldiers were also brought in to show their prestige. In addition to that, they also ordered the dissolution of trade associations, closing schools formed by the Duy Tân (Renovation) movement.

At the end of May 1908, the anti-tax movement in the Central region was extinguished by the French colonialists. After that, many people were sentenced to death, including: Trần Quý Cáp (1870-1908), Lê Khiết, Nguyễn Bá Loan, Ông Ích Đường, Trịnh Khắc Lập, Nguyễn Hàng Chi... Hundreds of people were exiled to Côn Đảo, including: Phan Châu Trinh, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Phan Thục Duyên, Trần Cao Vân (1866-1916), Đặng Nguyên Cẩn, Ngô Đức Kế ... Hundreds of others were exiled to Lao Bảo, Quảng Trị. Duy Tân reform movement subsided from the end of 1908, after the anti-tax movement.

Emperor Thành Thái (1889-1907) set an example for himself by reading new books, cutting his hair short, going out the imperial city to visit the people, driving a car, and did not actively cooperate with the French protectorate, even the French government, even Vietnamese treasonous officials... Emperor Duy Tân (1907-1916) succeeded, revolted against the French in 1916, and was also deposed. The Vietnamese could not hope for French reforms nor could they gain autonomy by legal means. The Vietnamese realized that the colonial regime could not be reformed, but could only be overthrown by force. They did not see a future for themselves and the country other than revolutionary work to gain independence to pave the way for national development.

According to the report of the French secret police at that time, Nguyễn Sinh Sắc (1862-1929) was suspected of complicity with Phan Bội Châu and was guiding **Nguyễn Tất Thành** to follow Phan Châu Trinh in his activities. Student Tất Thành was on the way to escape from the French secret agent to the South in September 1910, on the advice of Mr. Sắc, visited Trương Gia Mô in Bình Thuận. With the new name Nguyễn Văn Ba, Tất Thành began to teach the national language and Chinese characters for 4th grade students at Đức Thanh school of the refugee group through the introduction of Trương Gia Mô. The images of Phan Bội Châu and Phan Châu Trinh always accompanied Tất Thành because they were close family members. In 1911, Nguyễn Tất Thành was helped by Hồ Tá Bang and Trần Lệ Chát of the Liên Thành Association from Phan Thiết to Saigon with a passport named Văn Ba, and at the same time arranged for Nguyễn Tất Thành to stay at the branch office in Chợ Lớn. In addition, Liên Thành Company also provided financial support for Nguyễn Tất Thành before boarding the boat to France.

In 1908, after the anti-tax movement in Trung Kỳ, Phan Châu Trinh was sentenced to 3 years in prison in Côn Đảo. Phan Châu Trinh was on the island for two years, at the age of thirty-eight. During this time, Annam public opinion was boiling. The Hanoi Human Rights Association, trade unions, trade associations, press, students, intellectuals... continuously organized demonstrations, strikes, lectures, signed petitions... to demand the release of Phan Châu Trinh and friends. The situation stirred up the whole of France, friendly politicians in France and the French Human Rights Association also joined the fight to petition the French government to release Phan Châu Trinh.

Under public pressure, the French had to free Phan Châu Trinh in August 1910 and put him under house arrest in Mỹ Tho. Then, realizing that Phan Châu Trinh's prestige was getting higher and higher, he was afraid of life and death, so he was forced to go into exile in France, and this news was known to many people. In early 1911, thanks to the intervention of the French Association for Human Rights, Phan Châu Trinh went to France with his son, Phan Châu Dật, with the Indochina Education delegation in April 1911. When he got there, his first job was to give the French Association for Human Rights a hearing on the suppression of tax collectors in 1908. According to Mr. Phan, it was only the people who were extremely hungry because of the tax yoke, and begged the authorities for help. Thus, they did not commit any crime... However, the envoys ordered the soldiers to shoot hundreds of people, and immediately deport hundreds of others... At the end of the hearing, Mr. Phan accused the Indochinese government of taking advantage of the people's request for tax reduction, "slaughtering the people, terrorizing the people, destroying schools and trade associations"... Next, Phan Châu Trinh also wrote a memoir named *Trung Kỳ dân biểu tụng oan thi*, and sent it to the Minister of Colonies and the Governor-

General of Indochina. This memoir had the same content as the above hearing, but longer, more detailed, and with calmer language. Both versions were indictments filled with his hatred.

### **Section 8.d. Nguyễn Tất Thành and Paris Group**

According to Phan Thị Minh (granddaughter of Phan Châu Trinh) and Phạm Văn Đồng (1906-2000), Nguyễn Sinh Sắc and his friends promptly took Nguyễn Tất Thành to meet Phan Châu Trinh in Mỹ Tho to discuss his plans to go abroad. Tất Thành went to France (according to Daniel Hemery and Thu Trang Gaspard). On June 2, 1911, Captain Louis Edward Maisen of the Admiral Latouche Tréville ship sailing on the Hải Phòng-Dunkerque line of the Chargeurs Réunis company recruited Văn Ba, 21 years old, as a kitchen assistant on the ship. On June 5, 1911, Nguyễn Tất Thành followed the ship to leave Nhà Rồng Wharf. After more than a month, the ship arrived in Marseilles. According to Ms. Phan Thị Minh, after that, when Nguyễn Tất Thành called at Le Havre port for about 40 days because the ship needed repair, Tất Thành returned to Paris (about 100 kilometers away) to visit Mr. Trinh.

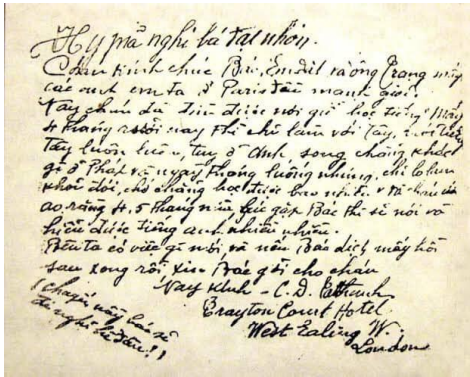
He met Bùi Kỳ (1888-1960), whom he had known since childhood and who was studying at the Colonial School, and Bùi Kỳ suggested applying for boarding in this school. Nguyễn Tất Thành immediately sent an application from Marseille on September 15, 1911 to the French President and the Minister of Colonies. The letter contained lines that clearly reflected Phan Châu Trinh's policy: to learn the enlightened and democratic culture of France to reform the country. After not being accepted into this school, Tất Thành went by ship here and there, and stayed in New York for a while until the end of 1912, but concerns about his father still made Tất Thành uneasy: not only did he send money to help, but also intended to ask the colonial government to restore his position or find a job for his father, as in the letter to the Huế Emissary asking for money to be sent to Mr. Sắc written on December 15, 1912. From late 1913 and during World War I, Tất Thành lived in London, working many jobs including a kitchen assistant at the Carlton Hotel.

The two different policies (violence or non-violence, and monarchy or democracy) of the two Phans dominated most of the neo-revolutionary thought in the country at the beginning of the 20th century. Thanks to the prestige created in the country, when he first came to France, Phan Châu Trinh found the cooperation of lawyer Phan Văn Trường (1868-1933) to continue the previous struggle and promote France-Vietnamese reconciliation. Phan Châu Trinh's main job was to mobilize to force the French colonial government to free his comrades. The article "*Overview of the peasant uprising in Central Vietnam*" condemning the heavy repression of the French colonialists against the peasants who participated in the struggle for tax reduction was translated into French by Jules Roux (an activist in the direction of social democracy, who



intervened and represented Phan Châu Trinh when he was imprisoned) to publish in newspapers in Paris. Two other theses condemned the evils of French colonialism in Vietnam with "*Political Indochina*" and presented the political views of the Franco-Vietnamese union in "*France and Việt Nam with a new letter of reconciliation*".

A handwritten letter that Coong (Nguyễn Tất Thành) sent to Uncle Phan Châu Trinh (Hy Mã):



*"I wish Uncle, Dật and Mr. Trọng (Trường), our brothers and sisters in Paris are all strong and good. Now I have found a place to learn language. For the past four and a half months, I have only worked with the French and spoke French; although in England, it is no different from France, and the days are only worrying about hunger, but not learning much. But I wish that after 4 or 5 months, when I meet Uncle, I will speak and understand a lot of English. If you have something new on our side and if Uncle finished translating a few chapters, please send them to me.*

*Respectfully, C.D. Tattanh*

*Drayton Court Hotel, West Ealing, W. London*

*[P.S.] Where will you go on vacation this time?"*

Phan Châu Trinh and Phan Văn Trường founded the Friendship Association in 1912, bringing together very few Vietnamese people in France at that time. Phan Văn Trường was arrested at the beginning of the world war in 1914 for supporting and cooperating with the uprising movement against the French colonialists in Indochina. Phan Châu Trinh was also imprisoned on suspicion of participating in rebel plans in Indochina and having contacts with the Germans. After Phan Châu Trinh and Phan Văn Trường were freed by the French government in July 1915 because there was not enough evidence to convict them of receiving money from Germany to fight the French. It was not until the last years of World War that the two formed a new Vietnamese group called the Vietnamese Patriotic Association. They were always monitored by secret agents, difficult to operate, so maybe that's why the two men dragged Nguyễn Tất Thành back to France at the end of 1917 to actively participate in the activities of the Patriotic Association in Paris.

Immediately after the end of World War I, the Versailles Peace Conference was held in the first 6 months of 1919 with the 14-point program on peace by US President Woodrow Wilson. These principles of the right of peoples to self-determination gave hope to the colonial peoples. The group Phan Châu Trinh, Phan Văn Trường and Nguyễn Tất Thành made a petition for the Vietnamese people with the "*Demands of the Annam People*" (*Revendications du Peuple*

Annamite) signed by **Nguyễn Ái Quốc**. In fact, the claims were contributed by the entire group: Phan Văn Trường wrote the French language, Phan Châu Trinh translated it into Chinese and Nguyễn Tất Thành translated it into the Vietnamese national language. The demands included 8 clauses with the main requirements of: legal reform, freedom of the press, freedom of association, amnesty for political criminals, and Franco-Vietnamese equality.



“Nhóm Paris” từ phải và trên xuống:

Phan văn Trường, Phan châu Trinh, Nguyễn thế Truyền  
Nguyễn tất Thành và Nguyễn an Ninh.

In June 1919, Nguyễn Tất Thành brought this request to the conference at Versailles, and tried to submit it to President Woodrow Wilson, but it was unsuccessful. These claims were then published in the Vietnam Soul newspaper, brought back to Vietnam and shocked the public opinion in Vietnam. On June 18, 1919, the French Socialist Party's newspaper L'Humanité published this claim, prompting the

French Security Service to ask Nguyễn Ái Quốc to present himself. The two Phans agreed to let Tất Thành represent the group to meet the French authorities. The position of Secretary of the Association has helped him to be accepted as a member of the Union of Human Rights and Civil Rights, join the French Socialist Party, attend the party's National Congress, and get to know a number of key leaders of the Left such as Jacques Doriot, Marius Moutet, Paul Vaillant-Couturier, ... (according to Prof. Nguyễn Thế Anh). Tất Thành often represented the group using the name Nguyễn Ái Quốc to communicate with the media and the political world, and gradually Tất Thành used the pen name Nguyễn Ái Quốc as his own name. Then, the group's anti-colonial activities in France were reinforced by Nguyễn An Ninh (1900-1943), a law student from 1920, and Nguyễn Thế Truyền (1898-1969), a chemical engineering student from 1921.

Since 1920, Phan Châu Trinh had denounced the monarchy, the corrupt Nguyễn Emperors and mandarin regime, sold out the country, harmed the people, and advocated the idea of democracy even though it was still influenced by traditional folk ideology. On the basis of inheriting the tradition of reform and renewal of the country, he proposed the policy of opening the people's mind, restoring the people's strength, and promoting the people's livelihood. He said that if the monarchy cannot be broken, even restoring the country will not be happy for the people. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on civilizing the people rather than rioting and then going to failure, the people are persecuted and their morale is low. The thought of "moderate" struggle that appeared in Phan Châu Trinh also stems from his assertion that the cause of the loss of the country lies in the loss of morality and ethics. Therefore, in order to save the country and

the people, it is necessary to correct morality, ethics, education, and exclude revolutionary violence from patriotic thought. Therefore, Phan Châu Trinh advocated relying on the French to fight against the outdated monarchists, relying on France for gradual progress, gradually demanding reform until they are equal with the French.

From the beginning of the 20th century, young Vietnamese, especially in Cochinchina, were allowed to go abroad to study in France relatively easily, creating a new element in society: the Western educated with leftist views and western freedom. They had a radical political vision due to the influence of the concept of patriotism that accompanies the nation and the fatherland, which has appeared since the 18th century in Western Europe. These international students found a free world filled with progressive philosophical movements behind the new political and social institutional settings of the American Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution of 1789, Japanese Revolution 1868, Chinese Revolution 1911 and Russian Proletarian Revolution 1917.

**Nguyễn An Ninh** returned home in 1923 to carry out the policies of Phan Châu Trinh to continue his efforts in anti-colonial activities with *La Cloche Fêlée* (Ringing Bell) newspaper in Saigon and guide the masses in the sense of liberation and spread the ideology of independence, ideas about freedom and democracy and urges young people to go abroad to learn about science and exchange knowledge to prepare for the future of the country. The issue of April 21, 1924: *"For the country of Annam, it is not just about regaining independence soon, an independence can be lost immediately after victory due to lack of a sense of discipline. and political education"*. The newspaper opened the door for the press to openly oppose the government due to the press freedom law enacted in colonial Cochinchina on July 29, 1881 (applicable to newspapers in French only).

Because of this press freedom law, communist theory through the French press was widely spread very early in Cochinchina, so the number of students studying abroad from the South infected with leftist ideology, almost all joined the French Communist Party. Some of these students were sent to the Soviet Union to receive training under the Third International Communist (the Third International, also known as the Communist International or the Comintern to fight to overthrow the capitalist regime, support the national liberation movement to build a socialist regime, to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) and the Fourth International Communist (the Fourth International, also known as the Fourth Communism, is the international coalition of Trotskyists founded in 1938 in Paris, following the trend of "permanent revolution" introduced by Trotsky after Lenin's death (1924) to oppose the line of "proletarian revolution in one country" of Stalin). Most of the Soviet-trained cadres who returned to Vietnam to operate were arrested and died in the 1940s after the "Cochinchina uprising" by the Cochinchina Party Committee or purged by the Third

International in 1945 (Bùi Quang Chiêu, Dương Văn Giáo, Nguyễn Văn Tạo, Dương Bạch Mai, Tạ Thu Thâu, Phan Văn Hùng, Trần Văn Thạch...).

In early 1925, Nguyễn An Ninh went to France to study for a doctorate in law and gave a speech at the Franco-Indochinese Federation. On May 28, 1925, he returned to Saigon with Phan Văn Trường and Phan Châu Trinh. It was not until this year, when Phan Châu Trinh's health was weakened, that the French authorities allowed him to return home. Between 1919 - 1925, Phan Châu Trinh's thought matured, he wrote a lot and sent it back to the country. His reputation in the three periods was all-time high, many young people awakened, renewed themselves, learned about democracy and human rights, the intelligentsia and the public were all aware of Phan Châu Trinh.

In 1925, after fifteen years in exile, fifty-four years old Phan Châu Trinh was repatriated by France. Previously, in his hometown of Quảng Nam, his wife and eldest son had died from illness, his two daughters were married, the sage returned to find loneliness and homelessness. He continued to speak and write to spread the idea of democracy and human rights, criticize the dictatorial monarchy, encourage agriculture and industry, and gain the support of young people and intellectuals. Around this time, he wrote the book *Indochina Politics*. Although seriously ill, Phan Châu Trinh tried to lecture on two more topics: *East-West Ethics and Morality*, *Military Rule and Democracy*. These two articles have had a significant impact on the young generation and scholars throughout the three regions. The three men were at the forefront of the public battle with the French colonialists and educated the masses about independent nationalism, freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. Phan Châu Trinh promoted a social organization on the basis of civil rights, the rule of law, justice and upholds the foundation of human morality, benevolence, mutual respect, reasonableness, and mutual affection. Nguyễn An Ninh continued to lash out at the French colonial rule with the cooperation of leftist young writer André Malraux through two newspapers *L'Indochine* and *L'Indochine Enchaînée*.

While Phan Châu Trinh was lying on his hospital bed, he heard that Ninh had just been arrested by French agents at home at 11:30 am on March 24, 1926. That same night, at 21:30, he died, at the age of 54. Phan Châu Trinh's last words were reported as, "*Our nation's independence later depended on Nguyễn Ái Quốc.*" A committee to organize the national funeral ceremony of

scholar Phan Châu Trinh, consisting of many members who were dignitaries and intellectuals, was formed immediately. More than 60,000 people came to Saigon, regardless of politics, party or religion to attend, and brought Phan Châu Trinh's coffin to the cemetery of the Gò Công association. Huỳnh Thúc Kháng's eulogy had the sentence: *"Alas, a handful of golden earth, the dream of thousands of autumn, the heroic career, today is over. We only hope that in the future, the successors of your ideals will make our Vietnamese nation glorious. Then your soul will be*



*Funeral of Phan Châu Trinh*

*at peace and smile in the golden stream"*. Despite the resistance of the colonial government, the movement to commemorate Phan Châu Trinh was widely held in all three regions, becoming a political event promoting Phan Châu Trinh's thoughts at that time. Hồ Chí Minh wrote: *"In 1926 there was a nationwide awakening following the death of the nationalist Phan Châu Trinh"*. They held many meetings, peaceful demonstrations,

public speeches in memory of the old man, and spread the spirit of democracy and the sense of human rights. The number of participants was extremely large, in all three regions, peaceful democratic activities took place so wildly that the French authorities went crazy, had to use deceitful and dictatorial tricks to force Western schools in banning students from participating in the movement (if participating, they were expelled), arrested some activists, laid off workers, fired civil servants...

In 1926 Nguyễn An Ninh went to prison after founding Thanh Niên Cao Vọng Đảng (Youth Party), and Phan Văn Trường replaced the newspaper Tiếng Chuông Rè (Sound of a Broken Bell) and expanded the editorial board with Tạ Thu Thâu (1906-1945) to change it to L'Annam newspaper. After leaving prison, Nguyễn An Ninh had to go to France and work again with Nguyễn Thế Truyền (1898-1969). Returning to the country, Nguyễn An Ninh and Phan Văn Hùm (1902-1946) caused a worker-peasant movement in the south in 1928 and arranged for two southern communist groups to join forces to publish La Lutte (The Struggle) newspaper. They also nominated candidates to the Saigon City Council and the Colonial Council.

From the beginning of 1923 **Nguyễn Thế Truyền** had definitely stopped collaborating with Nguyễn Tất Thành and the French Communist Party. Nguyễn Thế Truyền was still fighting according to the policy of Phan Châu Trinh through the semi-monthly magazine "Soul of Vietnam" (L'âme Annamite) since 1926, specializing in publishing news about new events happening in Vietnam, especially the market strikes to protest against the colonialists and demand political freedom, the right to form trade unions and the right of people to self-determination. On June 14, 1927, Nguyễn Thế Truyền officially established the Vietnam

Independence Party in France, operating with the Phục Quốc newspaper, replacing the Vietnamese Soul newspaper, which was later followed by Tà Thu Thâu (1906-1945). After 10 years of working in France, Nguyễn Thế Truyền with his family and Nguyễn An Ninh returned home in 1928.

The Vietnamese had a very low standard of living, and poverty was widespread throughout the country, especially in the North and Central regions. The economic system that the French invested in Annam such as rubber plantations, coal mines, big cities, railways, seaports to serve their colonial exploitation, not to serve the interests of the native population. Entering the period of the world economic crisis of 1930, the recession in Vietnam started in the agricultural sector. Peasants were subject to high taxes, and their agricultural products must be sold at low prices. Land was acquired by landlords and peasants impoverished on a large scale. In the countryside, there was a contradiction between landlords and tenants, and in urban areas there was a contrast between the bourgeoisie, the high officials and the ordinary citizens. In industry, import and export stagnated, goods were scarce, and prices became expensive. Workers were fired or starved to death on low wages. Small merchants, small owners, handicrafts were bankrupt, laid off, unemployed, small shops closed. Social conflicts were becoming more and more acute. In which, there were two basic contradictions: the Vietnamese people with the French colonialists and the peasants with the feudal landlords. The workers' movement and the patriotic movement developed, involving many classes. For Indochina, France sent a delegation to investigate the situation, appointed a new Governor-General, pardoned political prisoners, expanded freedom of the press, etc. facilitating the Vietnamese revolution.

The influence of Phan Châu Trinh and the Paris Group to promote nationalist sentiment against the French was still very widespread among overseas Vietnamese and students at that time in terms of patriotism and perseverance in promoting civil rights. After World War I (1914-1918), the majority of Vietnamese "**combatants**" (about 100,000) and World War II with over 93,000 workers and combatants in the French army absorbed some freedom air from the modern civilization of Europe. Therefore, when they returned home, they had an influence on the domestic political scene when they participated in the armed resistance war for national independence.

The communication through literature, poetry, and the press in the national language has played an important part in expanding people's knowledge about literature, society, and later on politics: Gia Định Báo 1869 (Trương Vĩnh Ký 1837-1898), Indochina Magazine 1913 (Nguyễn Văn Vĩnh 1882-1936), Nam Phong Magazine 1917 (Phạm Quỳnh 1892-1945), book Vietnam History 1920 (Trần Trọng Kim 1883-1953), Tiếng Dân newspaper 1927 (Huỳnh Thúc Kháng 1876 -1947), Phong Hóa newspaper 1932 (Nguyễn Tường Tam 1905-1963), ....The level of

political understanding was thus slowly developed enough to start paying attention to the difference in ideology between nationalism and international communism, so that young people in the South and the masses soon became aware of the dangers of communism to the country when the censorship of the national language press was abolished in 1935.

### **Section 8.e. Two Groups of Revolutionary Ideologies**

During the first decades of the twentieth century after Phan Châu Trinh died in 1926 and Phan Bội Châu was arrested and detained in Huế in 1925, the revolutionary movement was divided into two main groups:

1/ Those of the mandarin families, the great landlords or wealthy households educated under Marxist-Leninist communism (Karl Marx - Vladimir Lenin) that Hồ Chí Minh brought into Vietnam: Trần Phú and Lê Hồng Phong, Hà Huy Tập (1906-1941), Trần Văn Giàu (1911-2010), Phan Đăng Lưu (1902-1941), Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai (1910-1941) belonged to a political organization trained from Russia. These people belonged to three groups: the group following Hồ Chí Minh from China, the group in the country from the time of Trần Phú and the group from the Soviet Union who went directly to Vietnam with communist parties such as Vietnam Thanh Niên Đồng Chí Hội, Tân Việt Cách Mạng Party, Indochina Communist Party, Annam Communist Party, Indochinese Communist League.

Cao Xuân Dục School was the first French-Vietnamese primary school of Vinh city and Nghệ An province. In the 1920s, it was considered the cradle of revolution with Trần Mộng Bạch (principal), Trần Phú and Hà Huy Tập (teacher)... became the nucleus of the Tân Việt (New Vietnam) Party, the predecessor of the Indochinese Communist Party. Trần Mộng Bạch was the drafter of the Tân Việt Party program, the soul and leader in connecting patriotic forces from the Confucian elite (Lê Huân, Nguyễn Đình Kiên, etc.) to the young intelligentsia (Trần Phú, Hà Huy Tập, Phan Kiên Huy, Ngô Đức Diễm, Đào Duy Anh, Đặng Thái Mai, Tôn Quang Phiệt, Phạm Thiều, Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai, Phan Đăng Lưu, Nguyễn Chí Diểu, Nguyễn Sĩ Sách, Lê Duy Diễm...). Most of these neo-bourgeois intellectuals became the core force in building, forming and developing the Indochinese communist party with Trần Phú who studied abroad at Oriental University in Moscow as the first General Secretary and next...Hà Huy Tập. These armed organizations, which had bases in the country since the 1930s, all followed the Communist Third International movement against the colonialists under the guise of national liberation under the influence of Lenin, Stalin and Mao Zedong who were full of crimes, killed fellow human beings and relatives. In addition, there were Tạ Thu Thâu, Phan Văn Hùm, Phan Văn Chánh, Trần Văn Thạch and other comrades following the 4<sup>th</sup> International Trotskyist movement.

2/ Those who follow **the liberal nationalist** stance included domestic elements: college students, patriotic dignitaries, middle class and small businessmen through a number of forces that initially lacked organizational structure and system, unprofessional, frequent power struggles, were again manipulated, persecuted, and betrayed since the 1940s. Peaked in 1927 Vietnam Nationalist Kuomintang Party with Nguyễn Thái Học and Vũ Hồng Khanh (1898-1993) had a clear organization and line influenced by the 3-democratic ideology of Tôn Văn (Sun Yat-sen) (1866-1925) with the participation of Vietnamese soldiers in the French army.

All nationalist political parties were born during the French colonial period, so they were forced to operate in secret even after 1945 in the North and the South after 1954. They operated in the open only briefly. They therefore have almost no experience of openly political struggle. Their mode of operation is still conspiracies and tricks in the dark to usurp the government by force. The tendency of political parties to diverge from their secret origins is the biggest obstacle to political consensus. This division is further exacerbated by local independence from each other, not acting according to a common program and under a unified command. This polarization makes political parties without the power they need. Therefore, trusting each other to work together for an ideal and a common goal is never possible among national political parties due to the excessive pride and self-esteem of the leaders, making them, in many cases, no longer see the common interests of the country, but only the interests of their faction or their own.

Since then, the purpose and leadership role of the anti-French movement has changed from the "central patriotic" monarchy helping the Emperor to save the country of the Confucianists to the democracy "self-determined and independent nation" of Western-educated intellectuals with leftist organizations or parties at home or abroad that know how to put the interests of the country first.

Before 1945, the Communist Party of Vietnam and other Nationalist parties had different ideologies, but still had the same struggle, often cooperated, and sometimes had the same blood or marriage relationships ... During the period 1924-1927, in Southern China, diverse groups of Vietnamese anti-French colonialists interacted with each other, with Chinese, Korean, and other ethnicities. From 1941-1944 in southern China, the Indochinese Communist Party, Vietnam Quốc Dân Đảng (Việt Quốc) and Vietnam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Việt Cách) joined in the anti-Japanese front, sometimes denouncing with the Chinese authorities, but not to kidnap or assassinate each other. It was the competition for membership, aid and patronage from the Chinese, rather than ideological differences, that caused tension among the exile organizations to increase. Domestically, the Indochinese Communist Party also cooperated with the Trotskyists in Cochinchina in the period 1933-1937. The parties then criticized each other, such as members



of the Third International (the Indochinese Communist Party) and the Fourth International (the Trotskyists) accusing each other of serving imperial interests.

Initially, the struggle was only within the scope of the press and media. By 1945, the factions had used force to attack each other. The National People's Congress of Tân Trào, organized by the Việt Minh on August 16, 1945, before the Việt Minh took power, identified 10 major policies, of which the first policy was *"Against aggression; Eliminate Vietnamese traitors; Establish a completely independent Democratic Republic of Vietnam."* During a particularly difficult time in need of solidarity between political forces in Vietnam, the Việt Minh and other parties and religions such as Vietnam Nationalist Party, Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng, Vietnam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội, Trotskyists, Bình Xuyên, Hòa Hảo, Cao Đài... were seriously divided, revolving around disputes over how to respond to the Chinese and French armies.

## **Part 6. Vietnam in the 20th Century**

### **Chapter 9. Religious Influences**

Religion is a form of social consciousness, born and developed for thousands of years. The process of existence and development of religion profoundly affects political, cultural, social life, psychology, morality, lifestyle, customs and practices of many ethnic groups and countries. Religion in Vietnam has a connection with Chinese and Indian civilizations, but Vietnamese people also incorporate elements of their national moral tradition into it to form a religion with its own identity. In Vietnam, there are religions originating from the East such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism; have religions originating from the West such as Christianity, Protestantism; have religions born in Vietnam such as Cao Đài, Hòa Hảo Buddhism. There are complete religions (with systems of doctrine, canon law, rituals, and ecclesiastical organization), and also primitive forms of religion. There are religions that have developed and operated stably, and others are still unstable. The religions that have existed for a long time in Vietnam are Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism (collectively referred to as the three religions).

Due to its historical characteristics of being constantly invaded from the outside, Catholicism - a religion associated with European civilization in evangelization and later Protestantism exploited war conditions in the South to evangelize are understandable. During the monarchy in Vietnam, Confucianism was encouraged by the government, considered the foundation of the academic system, and many temples were built throughout the country. However, in the Lý and Trần dynasties and Nguyễn lords Buddhism also played an important role in the court.

Christianity came to Vietnam from the early Lê Dynasty through Roman Catholic missionaries, and developed quite strongly. However, nowhere has there been as much Catholic influence as in the south since the Nguyễn Lords were generally more tolerant of Catholics and valued them. Meanwhile, Lord Trịnh in the North had suspicion and even discriminated against Christians. Therefore, Christians often migrated to the south and created a great influence in southern society later. However, Christianity began to be suppressed from the Tây Sơn Dynasty, when this Dynasty accused the laity of collaborating with the Nguyễn Lords against the movement. The persecution increased under Emperor Cảnh Thịnh, and stopped after Emperor Gia Long established the Nguyễn Dynasty. Gia Long himself was deeply indebted to Christians because of their loyalty, and he contributed in defending Christians. However, Minh Mạng reverted to a conservative policy, persecuting the laity again and it continued until 1858 when the French invaded Vietnam, forcing Tự Đức to end his policy of Christian persecution. Protestant groups came to Vietnam in 1911 by American missionaries, but were mainly strong in the Central Highlands.

After 1954, when the communists took power in the North, they considered spiritual issues as an object of ideological struggle. They tried to eliminate superstition to the point that everything related to spirituality was destroyed. Hùng Temple was also demolished because it was considered superstitious. In the North, from 1954 until the early 1980s, there was almost no religious practice, but in the Central and South regions, it was still maintained. Meanwhile, in the South, Ngô Đình Diệm, a Catholic who was supported by the US with the belief that he would build a compatible, strong and multicultural Vietnam. However, he displeased all the expectations when carrying out the policy of persecuting Buddhism and increasing Catholic influence. Ngô Đình Diệm incited conflict when basic Buddhist rights were not respected by his radical Catholic government. This led to the Buddhist incident in 1963 that overthrew the Catholic government and created animosity between Buddhists and Catholics in the South until 1990.

The hiatus for a long time, from 1954 to the early 80s, caused the festival system to break down. From 1986 until now, the ruling Communist government has admitted its previous mistakes and nearly 8,000 festivals have been restored and formed, with the most attention being folk festivals. The restoration of the festivals is being reflected in the cultural and spiritual perspective, forgetting about the performance, the ritual display, the people's expression towards the gods, a problem that the restoration efforts is still happening.

## **Section 9.a Confucianism**

**Confucianism was introduced** into Vietnam from the beginning of the Common Era. It was not the original Confucianism, but rather the Hán and Song Confucianism in the parallel development and interaction with Buddhism and Taoism and having to go through quite a while to take root in the political and spiritual life of society. Confucianism is considered an ideology that has had a profound and long-lasting influence on Vietnamese society, is the moral foundation for human education, makes great contributions to the organization of the state, maintaining social order, economic development and literary creation during the Lý, Trần, Lê and Nguyễn monarchies that were suitable and harmonized with Vietnamese life, forming Confucianism with Vietnamese identity roughly called Việt Confucianism. Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam in parallel with Chinese characters, gradually Sinicizing the Vietnamese language as a foundation for the acquisition of knowledge about society, literature, history, philosophy, astronomy and medicine from ancient Chinese civilization.

The philosophical foundation of Humanism is the human value of Confucianism. Early Confucianism focused on establishing a practical ethical system for social activities rather than promoting a cognitive philosophy or a religion. It was not until old age that Confucius took the I Ching as the philosophical basis for a practical way of life. He holds that the root of all things is an absolute reality with properties similar to the Tao of the Lão family. That absolute reality is called the Absolute. But in the silent and pure state of Tai-Chi, it already contains two mutually opposing forces called Dual Doubt: That is Yin (negative) and Yang (positive). Those two principles of Yin and Yang are interrelated to give birth to the Four Statues (4 seasons) and then continue to differentiate like that into countless phenomena of this universe. That is the Confucian conception of the method and schedule of phenomenology (also known as Translation). The I Ching has gradually gathered the Transformation of Yin and Yang into 64 hexagrams, each representing a state of correlation between HEAVEN, EARTH and PEOPLE. This correlation represents the harmony between the Human Small Self with the Universal Self, also known as the THÁI HÒA ideal (both static and dynamic). Therefore, Confucianism introduces the theory of "Heaven and Human are the same" as the basic concept.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Confucian ideal of harmony between man and the universe was systematized by Philosopher Kim Định in the doctrine of the Three Talents of Việt Nho or Confucianism (different from Hán Confucianism), clearly defining the value and position of people. The cosmology of Việt-Nho holds that in this universe there are three great powers, having equal value and coexisting with each other. Therefore, Việt-Nho considers man as a microcosm, the convergence of heaven and earth. The "position" of man is to stand between and equal to Heaven and Earth. This position according to An-Vi's Structural Discourse is THÁI HÒA position, the harmony between spirit and matter, between love and reason, between more and less, between right and wrong, between individual and community interests, that is, between

two polar opposites. In this position man has reached a state of dynamic equilibrium, a state of spirituality. But in order to reach the position of Thái Hòa, each person must go through a persistent self-improvement. These people have inculcated discipline, have fulfilled the virtues of Nhân, and Confucius calls them “sages”. Therefore, the ideal of harmony or peace of the Việt-Nho is ranked among the highest in the history of the human mind by An-Vi philosophy.

Historically, Confucius advocated that an Emperor must be a talented and virtuous person; but in his time, the transmission had existed for a long time and could not be abandoned; he could only improve the regime, train talented scholars, to help the aristocrats and gradually replace them to rule the country. Those soldiers were all recruited from the people, and from the Han and Tang dynasties onwards, the Chinese monarchy was dignified, without the hereditary aristocracy holding all the major positions in the in the court, outside the district as well. Confucianism includes the teachings of the Confucian sages, which are instructions on how to live in accordance with morality so that people are happy and society is strong. These teachings are not considered to be God's revealed words like in the Christian or Muslim Bible, depending on the circumstances of each country, there will be different interpretations but do not conflict with each other and all direct people to exemplary morality. Thus, there have been no wars for religious reasons in the history of China, Vietnam, Japan, or Korea. It is something that Western scholars highly praise in the countries of East Asia.

The Chinese people have been invaded many times by foreign nations (Mongols, Manchus...) but their civilization cannot be destroyed by any sword; on the contrary, they also assimilate those who have conquered them, that is thanks in large part to the profound ideas of Confucianism that have forged a class of Confucians who are well versed in history and rich in moral qualities. Confucianism is an enlightening philosophical system. Thanks to Confucianism in the Middle Ages, China reached a world-leading level of civilization, surpassing the West at that time, which was engulfed in the "long medieval nights". The West overtook China only when the emergence of knowledge movements such as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution based on the knowledge discovered by these movements. Thanks to Confucianism, no one in China does not attach importance to education. When the Han Dynasty established the country, the national policy had eight words: "Building a peaceful country, education first". "Cultivate the body, keep the family, rule the country, and pacify the world", completely using educational methods.

Therefore, China has experienced more than 2,000 years, although its rises and falls at different times, but their country has not failed, while other empires such as Rome, Persia... keep appearing one after another then falling. This is even praised by foreigners. It's not China's politics, it's not China's force, it's not China's science and technology, but it's China's culture that

is its most powerful weapon, helping their country survive. But building that culture, the first work belongs to Confucianism. American historian Will James Durant has praised the sage education system advocated by Confucius. He wrote: *"A society that thinks it must try to govern the country people trained in philosophy and classical studies, that is also admirable. That regime and all civilizations are the basis for it to be overthrown, destroyed today because of the fierce force of progress and of history, that would be quite a calamity for mankind... if Plato had known about that regime, he would have like it very much."*

By the 10th century, after Ngô Quyền's Bạch Đằng victory, when the Vietnamese entered the era of independence and self-reliance and began to build the Đại Việt civilization within the framework of a centralized monarchy state. At this time, the Vietnamese discovered the needs for the development of Confucianism in Vietnam to build a centralized monarchy and maintain social order. Confucianism in Vietnam left a huge mark in the history of nation building in the medieval feudal dynasties. In 1070, the Lý Dynasty built the Temple of Literature. In 1075, the first Confucian exam was opened. In 1076, the Lý Dynasty established Quốc Tử Giám in the middle of the citadel. From here, the first Vietnamese university was born. In 1156, the Lý Dynasty established a separate temple to worship Confucius (before that, the Temple of Literature worshiped both Chu Công and Confucius). That shows "the tendency to want to make Confucianism a unique teaching, to bring Confucius from a teacher like the Chu Tử to a Saint Confucius".

Confucianism as a political-moral doctrine has gradually penetrated into the field of cultural thought in social life, creating the necessary prerequisites to continue to develop strongly under the Trần dynasty and other generations and in the next centuries. During the Trần Dynasty, Buddhism developed quite well, was revered by the state and chosen as the national religion, but Buddhism was not a political doctrine. Buddhism is positive, but its entire system of teachings offers no adequate answers to issues related to governing the nation and maintaining social order. Confucianism is a political-moral doctrine that advocates building a harmonious relationship between the ruler and the people. At the same time, it also provides ethical standards for human behavior, requirements for the relationship between Emperor - subject, father - child, husband - wife, for self-cultivation, ... It had a great effect in helping dynasties consolidate their rule, concentrate power in the central government, and stabilize the social order that Buddhism and Taoism could not match. Basically, the Trần Dynasty still respected Buddhism, but in order to maintain power and organize social management, these dynasties chose Confucianism. At the end of the Trần dynasty, Confucianists became increasingly prominent in society and powerful enough to dare openly oppose certain privileges of the aristocracy, and also openly opposed Buddhism when it was also the religion of the Emperor.

In East Asia, Buddhism faced Confucianism and Taoism. However, these three religions do not oppose or conflict with each other, but gradually integrate with each other. The fusion lasted from the 1st to the 13th century, when the Three Religions had completed the process of interweaving, self-adjusting, and forming new trends – and the three factions all identified their own social roles, assigning zoning to each other in social and cultural life. Confucianism governs the organization of the state and society, education and exams, and has a decisive effect on morality. Buddhism and Taoism dominate in people's daily life and agricultural economic activities. People believe in Heaven, worship Heaven and ancestors, Buddha and the sages of Confucianism. Both Buddhism and Taoism promote good, but the "good" of these two religions is filial piety to parents, respect for superiors and loyalty to the Emperor and country, love, help, and avoidance of evil to others. In other words, doing good also means respecting Confucian institutions and moral codes. Therefore, Buddhism and Confucianism coexist and complement each other, not creating religious conflicts.

Traditional beliefs of Vietnam have adopted Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism to create the "Three Religions of the same origin" (all three religions have the same root) and "Three religions have the same goal". These three religions have helped each other: Confucianism takes care of social organization, Taoism takes care of the human body, and Buddhism takes care of people's spiritual life. For centuries, the image of "The Three Patriarchs" with Shakyamuni Buddha in the middle, Lao Tzu on the left, and Confucius on the right have been deeply imprinted in the minds of Vietnamese people.

Confucianism teaches people to "be loyal to the emperor and patriotic", "when the nation is in peril, all citizens should be responsible for its protection", so it has contributed to creating an indomitable tradition of fighting against foreign invaders. In the history of Vietnam, there have been many examples of Confucian patriotism and sacrifice for the nation. Nguyễn Quang Bích once wrote in response to a letter from the French: *"If you rely on the good and the good of your country, we won't give up on our inferiority and loss either; if we win and live, we are noblemen of the court, and if we lose and die, we will become holy ghosts killing the enemy. It is better to be guilty with your noble country than to be guilty with the Emperor. It's better to be guilty for the moment than not with ten thousand generations. A single word "surrender" from now on, please don't repeat it again. We are willing to die for the sake of the Emperor. Please take care of your noble country."* In a letter replying to a letter from the Vietnamese traitor Hoàng Cao Khải, when the Cần Vương movement against the French was compared with *"the body of a mantis wants to stop the carriage"*, the revolutionary Confucian scholar Phan Đình Phùng replied: *"... for thousands of years, our country is not large, the army is not strong, the people are not rich, the support to build the country is thanks to the origin of the Emperor and his subjects, the father and his sons follow the five moral principles only. In the past, the Han*

*Dynasty, the Tang Dynasty, the Song Dynasty, the Yuan Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty, how many times they wanted to take our land as their district, but in the end, they still couldn't take it..."*

With Confucian thought as the foundation, the education and examination system under the Nguyễn Dynasty was built with the purpose of training mandarins to serve the court. The type of person that Confucian academic education promotes is not an expert but a mandarin, capable of meeting the recruitment requirements of the state, attaching his interests to the dynasty, and absolutely loyal to the Emperor. The knowledge of teaching and learning is therefore often unrealistic, cliché, and stereotyped. The inadequacy of Vietnamese education is revealed in the teaching content (emphasizing only the sage morality, not interested in understanding the objective world, away from reality) and in the educational goals (training young people not to learn more about the world but to serve the dominant interests of the Nguyễn Dynasty)

The maxim "Tiên Học Lễ, Hậu Học Văn" (First learn the rites then study the literary texts" has been deeply engraved in the Vietnamese people for thousands of years. Thanks to Confucianism, Vietnamese people attach great importance to learning, creating a tradition of eagerness to learn, a tradition of respecting teachers and the educated. From there, the learning knowledge is accumulated, has the conditions to maintain and develop. In addition, it also helps people to know how to live, to care about others, to live with culture and morality. It helps create a mechanism to recruit talented people through exams. Regardless of the background (peasant, worker, soldier...), if an ordinary person studies well and passes the exams, he can work as an official to help the country (in the West during this period, court positions were only transferred internally within the aristocratic families, commoners are almost impossible to get a position). It attaches great importance to the responsibilities and obligations of the educated before the country.

In the nineteenth century, before the development and penetration of capitalism and Western civilization into Asian countries, the Vietnamese feudal system under the Nguyễn Dynasty became obsolete. The feudal state of the Nguyễn Dynasty became a hindrance to the development of Vietnamese society, making the country unable to resist the invasion of imperialism. Confucianism, as the dominant ideology of the Eastern feudal system, is of course seen as going against the development trend of history. At this time, Vietnamese Confucianism has clearly revealed its weaknesses. Reform advocates in Vietnam, led by Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Phan Châu Trinh... have criticized the backward aspects of Confucianism in many aspects of politics, state organization, national defense and economy, finance, especially in terms of culture and education.

After the French colonialists invaded Vietnam, Vietnamese society became a semi-feudal colonial society. Along with that, Western culture and bourgeois democratic ideology flooded into Vietnam. Confucian education was abolished and Confucianism in Vietnam continues to decline and break down. Vietnamese Confucian education only produced a class of mandarins with a Confucian background, while the key intellectual types of a real intelligentsia appeared sparse, faint, or completely absent in some fields such as ideological philosophy. However, the French colonial rule still wanted to maintain in Vietnam elements of the feudal ideology to strengthen the colonial regime. Therefore, the French colonialists used Confucianism to govern the indigenous people. But the biggest limitation is the practice and cult of saints, dogma and machinery of Vietnamese Confucianists. This makes the development of Vietnamese Confucianism limited in thinking. It has only reached the level of absorbing some dogma from Confucianism in China, has not yet created its own theory, and has not yet appeared in different schools.

In the modern period, many prominent Vietnamese revolutionaries such as Nguyễn Thái Học, Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Hồ Chí Minh, Võ Nguyên Giáp, Ngô Đình Diệm... all came from Confucian families with a scholarly tradition. However, Phan Bội Châu chose to ask for help from Japan, Phan Châu Trinh chose to appeal to the French, Hồ Chí Minh chose communism, Ngô Đình Diệm chose Christianity combined with the idea of personalism. French historian Pierre Brocheux believes that revolutionary Hồ Chí Minh was a Confucian who always tried to combine traditional Confucian ideas with European lines of thought, from Marxism to Leninism, and to put into practice the humanity and social justice of the nation in the Confucian style.

Right from the French colonial period, capitalism and Western lifestyle in favor of individualism began to develop, especially in urban areas where intellectuals learned Quốc Ngữ script instead of Confucian characters, which further weakened Confucianism. Confucianism gradually lost influence, was forgotten, even attacked when Vietnam came into contact with Western civilization under the French protection and especially when the Confucian-centered academic system was abolished and Confucianism was excluded from the educational program. In the North during the 1954-1975 period, due to the influence of the anti-Confucian movement from China, Confucianism was eliminated (Mao Zedong also considered Confucianism as a feudal ideology, supporting the aristocracy, contrary to Communist values of equality and community). In the South during the 1954-1975 period, there were still many prohibitions and strict penalties for violating marital obligations, divorce settlement, and even the 1959 Family Code forbidding husbands and wives from divorce... All three laws in 1959, 1964 and 1972 abolished polygamy but still recognized the principle of inequality between husband and wife,



discrimination between children, and patriarchal rights of the husband continued to be maintained. After 1975, the 1959 Law on Marriage and Family of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam took effect across the country; at this time the principles of Confucianism for the family ceased to be legal throughout Vietnam.

The August Revolution in 1945 caused the complete collapse of Confucianism in Vietnam along with the collapse of the monarchy. From here, Confucianism is no longer the orthodox ideology of the social leadership. Confucianism no longer exists, but it still has a lasting influence in social relationships, in behavior between people, in customs and traditions, and in worshipping rituals and traditional beliefs of the Vietnamese people.

Since the end of the 20th century, Vietnam's transition to a market economy and international integration has created great risks for Vietnamese culture. The inner danger is the erosion and destruction of traditional cultural values. The external danger is that Western culture and lifestyle encroach on indigenous culture, creating the destruction of national cultural identity. If the Vietnamese people were "dissolved" by a foreign culture, it would be a great disaster and also a kind of destruction, as terrible as the loss of the country. Faced with that risk, many Vietnamese people seek to preserve traditional values, creating opportunities for Confucian rebirth. Confucianism is the most important component that has created the cultural identity of Vietnam, so protecting Vietnamese cultural traditions will be impossible if what belongs to Confucianism is ignored.

### **Section 9.b Christianity**

One of the main pretexts that the French relied on to invade Vietnam was the Nguyễn Dynasty 's policy of suppressing **Christianity** (mainly Roman Catholicism). The issue of religious rituals in terms of political culture was the main reason for the prohibition of religion in the 17th-18th centuries. Until the Nguyễn Dynasty, the national security problem in the face of threats from the West through missionary relations and Colonialism created struggle against invaders but few religious conflicts. Hence, after achieving the goal, the colonial government tried its best to absolutely support the Catholic religion to spread everywhere, but the most specific and direct measure was to destroy Confucianism and Buddhism in many other ways. After the 1862 Nhâm Tuất Treaty was signed, Christianity had conditions to develop in Vietnam, especially in Cochinchina. This condition became more and more obvious when the French colonial government in Cochinchina provided material support from the Paris Missions Society, for example: paying wages not only to French missionaries but also to Vietnamese pastors and teachers, providing money to build teacher training schools, building new churches and chapels, supporting some Christian communities, providing financial support for social charity activities

organized by the Paris Missionary Society, etc. However, the Christian support of the French colonial government during this period was only for the West Cochinchina diocese. The remaining dioceses in the French colonial region of Indochina such as Cambodia (Cambodia), Annam (Trung Kỳ) and Tonkin had to fend for themselves thanks to locally obtained financial resources and aid from the Congregation for the Faith.

On March 15, 1874, the Huế court signed with the French colonialists the 1874 Giáp Tuất Treaty. Article 9 of this treaty created many new privileges for Christianity. The Church was almost no longer restricted to buying and selling and inheriting property. The laity were protected from harassment by the Nguyễn feudal state. The insults against Christianity in the Instruction of the Ten Commandments of Emperor Nguyễn must be removed. The dignity of indigenous lay clerics must be protected. Bishops and missionaries are allowed to freely enter the country and travel within the dioceses with a passport issued by the Governor of Cochinchina and approved by the Secretary of the Congregation for Ceremonies or the Governor of each province. They were allowed to preach Christianity everywhere. Bishops, missionaries and priests will be able to buy or rent land and houses to build churches, hospitals, schools, orphanages and any other structure for worship. Property that has been confiscated by Christians for religious reasons will be returned to them. When the Huế court signed the 1884 Patenôtre Treaty with France, recognizing the French protection, then Vietnamese Catholics were truly free and openly active. Religious facilities such as churches, monasteries, schools, nursing homes, orphanages... were built everywhere.

After the 1874 Giáp Tuất Treaty, missionaries focused on exploiting the newly improved religious and political advantages. In Trung Kỳ, they persuaded the authorities to allow lay communities to become tax-exempt "autonomous communities". Meanwhile, Bishop Puginier in the diocese of West Tonkin asked the Huế court to allow the missionaries to directly contact high-ranking officials in the province in all disputes related to the laity. In Tonkin, Vietnamese officials were given less supervision by French envoys and allowed them greater freedom of action and more initiative in managing local administration. The prestige as the Emperor's envoy in Tonkin was also strengthened. This, along with a number of other appeasement tactics, such as the Governor-General's subsidy to Buddhism and attendance at official Buddhist ceremonies, was "an insult to Christianity" (words of Bishop Puginier at the podium of the Hanoi Cathedral).

The above examples show that, in the early stages of the invasion of Vietnam, thanks to the cooperation and effective assistance of the French colonialists, Christianity was increasingly developed. However, after Vietnam was pacified, and especially when the radical Republican group took power from 1891 to 1914, in France as well as in Indochina, there was a strong movement against Christian clergy. Within the Indochinese region, this movement started from

the time the government of Governor General Lanessan (1891) to the government of Prime Minister Combes.

Thus, it can be seen that the religious policy of the French colonial government in Vietnam and in Indochina in general in the late 19th century and early 20th century was strongly and directly influenced by the religious policy of the ruling government in France. If the ruling government favors, then religion, mainly Roman Catholicism, is supported and assisted. On the contrary, if the ruling government is anti-religious, especially since the first decade of the 20th century with secular institutions, Christianity in the country as well as in the French colonies will be rejected and restricted from being active at different levels.

When attempting to carry out an anti-Christian campaign, the French colonial government had some rather lenient policies towards other religions, notably Buddhism, especially for a brief period in the late 19th century. But overall, it can be affirmed that the religious policy of the French colonial government was to give priority to Christianity, to restrict Buddhism at will and to discourage any religion that was not conducive to the colonial rule. A Western researcher once observed: *"Under the French colonial regime, from 1860 until the outbreak of the Second World War, Christianity was encouraged and Buddhism was not allowed to develop"*.

From after the World War I until 1930, the French colonial government prohibited the establishment of associations and all organized political activities of the people. In that context, the French colonial government did not want the Buddhists to gather and get involved in the political activities of the nation. That is probably the main reason why the Vietnamese Buddhist community has carried out very active revival activities, including campaigning for the unification of the Sangha in the country since the early 20th century but was still not allowed by the French colonial government to establish the Association. But before the strong development of the revolutionary movement in the years 1930-1931 led by the Indochinese Communist Party, the French colonial government was forced to allow Buddhist Associations/Buddhist Studies to be established in each region that publicly operated but under tight control. When returning to invade for the second time (1945-1954), the French colonialists strongly enforced the policy of discrimination against religion, especially since 1948, when the resistance movement of the Vietnamese army and people was growing stronger throughout the country.

The culmination of the policy of religious discrimination was the issuance of **Decree No. 10** by the French colonial government on **August 6, 1950**. Accordingly, with the exception of Christianity, the remaining religions in contemporary Vietnam are considered as ordinary associations in society. Article 44 of this Decree prescribes a special regime for Christian

missionary associations. Meanwhile, with other religions, Article 7 of Decree 10 allows the colonial government "to have the right to refuse, not to allow association without clearly stating the reason". The content of such Decree No. 10 clearly showed the religious discrimination of the French colonialists and the puppet government. Only Christianity is prioritized and promoted, while other religions in Vietnam, first and foremost Buddhism, are treated in the opposite way.

Some Vietnamese Catholics actively supported Vietnam's independence, especially when the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed in September 1945. Vietnamese Catholics opposed colonialism, the French return to Indochina, and they became deeply involved in the national independence movement. The Vietnamese government sent senior leaders to attend the ordination ceremony of Bishop Tadeo Lê Hữu Từ and the founding of the Catholic Federation in Phát Diệm. As a fierce anti-French, Bishop Lê Hữu Từ accepted the invitation of President Hồ Chí Minh to be the government's supreme advisor.

During this initial period, contact between Catholics and communists in the North was direct and at the highest level, while in the South, which was soon recaptured by the French, these contacts were less formal. The Catholic anti-French movement in the South was also active, many of whom supported the Việt Minh. Many Vietnamese missionaries upheld the spirit of nationalism and anti-colonialism while trying to keep their followers from being caught up in the war between the French colonialists and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The two dioceses Phát Diệm and Bùi Chu were armed into a Catholic self-defense zone. During the late 1940s, the area retained its independence from both the French colonialists and the Việt Minh. Many Christians and non-Christians had flocked here to avoid the tense war situation.

During the Indochina War, the Vatican was not willing to support the French colonialists to entice Vietnamese Catholics. The problem is that the nationalist movement in Vietnam is led by the Communist Party. The Vatican believed that the communist ideology with its atheist policy had wanted to eliminate religions since 1945. In June 1948, the Vatican commented that Vietnamese communists "bit by bit" revealed their non-patriotic nature but an anti-religious party that conducts the "systematic persecution" of Vietnamese Christians. On July 1, 1949, when the Communist Party was gradually taking control of all of China, Pope Pius XII issued a decree banning Catholics around the world from collaborating with the communist movement.

The DRV became attached to the international communist bloc, while the Vatican condemned all cooperation with the communists, and the resurgence of the US-backed non-communist State of Vietnam, leading to Vietnamese clerics leaned towards anti-communism but

they did not abandon nationalism and anti-colonialism. In 1951 in Hanoi, the Indochinese church issued a joint letter expressing its harsh anti-communist stance: *"Not only are you not allowed to join the communist party, but you can't cooperate in any form to help them take power."* The letter urges patriotism and charity: *"Patriotism is love for the country. It is love for the homeland that our ancestors encouraged and cultivated as the Christian virtues. Charity is patience, tolerance and sincerely want to do good to others."* The 1952 joint letter promoted affection for the national culture, and the 1953 joint letter outlined specific principles for national or secular activities.

From 1950, both the French colonialists and the DRV wanted to control the Phát Diệm–Bùi Chu Autonomous Region. From 1951, the French colonialists controlled administratively and militarily over the Phát Diệm–Bùi Chu area, ending its autonomy. The political attitude or political neutrality of Vietnamese Catholics shows diversity: they are not a homogeneous mass. The majority were followers of the bishops' line, the minority were supporters of Bảo Đại, or were followers of the Việt Minh. In the Diocese of Hanoi, Bishop Joseph Maria Trịnh Như Khuê handled the balance between both sides. According to the overseas Vietnamese website VietCatholic, recent studies have shown that the Holy See and Vietnamese Catholics did not cooperate with the French colonialists as often propagated.

From 1954, according to the Geneva Agreement, Vietnam was temporarily divided into two military gathering areas: the North with the DRV regime and the South with the forces of the French Union. According to the Geneva Agreement in 1954, Vietnamese people north or south of the 17th parallel would be allowed to move across the temporary demarcation line for a period of 300 days. By the beginning of 1956, there were 927,000 people migrated from the North to the South, including 794,000 parishioners, accounting for 85.6%, 619 priests and 5 bishops (leaving only about 375 priests, 4 Vietnamese Catholic bishops and 2 foreign bishops in the North). This 1954 exodus radically changed the proportions of Christians in the North and South. In many Catholic communities during the French colonial period, priests took on the role of civil and spiritual leadership. In many rural areas, Christians are very obedient to the clergy, so they leave because of the priest's influence. Before that, Christians made up about 10% of the population in the North and only 5% of the population in the South. After 1954, the numbers reversed. As a result, the Church in the North was disturbed and the structure changed in the South. At this time, Cần Thơ diocese was established, separated from Nam Vang diocese; Nha Trang diocese was established, separated from Quy Nhơn diocese.

After the 1954 exodus, the number of priests remaining in the North was about 28%, the remaining parishioners were about 60%. There were dioceses such as Thái Bình, Bùi Chu, Bắc Ninh, Phát Diệm, Hải Phòng... where parishioners emigrated in large numbers to the South. The

Catholics in Hanoi and Hải Phòng were nationalists, rejoicing at the defeat of the French. The main activities of Northern Christians were keeping their religion instead of evangelization because of the lack of leaders, plus the DRV government's policy of suppressing religion, especially Christianity. All seminaries, schools and most Catholic monasteries were confiscated by the state. Some priests and parish dignitaries were arrested and imprisoned during the land reform policy (1955-1956). With the exception of the Redemptorists and Saint Paul remaining in the North, the other religious orders retreated to the South. Because of the need for more priests, many bishops had to ordain some people to be priests.

In 1957, the Church of Vietnam (South) asked the Jesuit priests to return. On September 13, 1958, Jesuit priests took over the responsibility of directing the Pontifical Academy of Pius X in Đà Lạt, and at the same time promoting various activities in the field of socio-cultural in South Vietnam. In particular, they established the Đắc Lộ TV channel with the goal of educating the people, instead of evangelizing. During the First Republic of Vietnam, President Ngô Đình Diệm - a devout layman - had policies to create conditions for the Catholic Church to commit to serving society widely and operate many educational institutions including university and high school systems. In May 1963, there was a Buddhist incident that led to the overthrow of Ngô Đình Diệm's government. Diệm and his brother Nhu were assassinated on November 2 of the same year.

In the North, there were many positive contributions to the construction of socialism and the struggle to liberate the South and reunify the country. In addition, some reactionary elements taking advantage of religion still conducted many activities against the state such as forcing parishioners to migrate to the South, causing insecurity and disorder in areas where there are parishioners, inciting followers against the guidelines of building cooperatives in agriculture, distorting the guidelines and policies of the Party and the State, etc. When promulgating the 1959 Constitution, the State continued to affirm the protection of the right to freedom by the beliefs and religions of the people. Article 26 of the Constitution stipulates that “Citizens of the DRV have the right to freedom of belief, to follow or not to follow a religion”. But the reality is different.

In September 1960, at the Third National Congress of the Vietnam Workers' Party, the Party's tasks and guidelines emphasized the duality of both ensuring religious freedom for the people and fighting the enemies taking advantage of religion in both the South and the North. Thus, compared with the period 1945-1954, legal documents for the period 1954-1975 were supplemented and completed more fully, marking a new step forward in the promulgation of legal documents regulating the beliefs and religions in Vietnam. In addition to the Constitution, the State has issued many Decrees, Directives and Circulars regulating religious activities of

sects. The law on religion for the period 1954 - 1975 is really an important tool for management of religious activities, bringing this work into a unified order from the central to the local.

Through the missionary history, the spread of Catholicism into Vietnam has changed the traditional relationship between the former feudal court and the present State and the Church in the event that the Vatican canonized saints on 19-23 June 1988 for 117 martyrs in Vietnam during the late 18th to mid-19th centuries, many of whom were involved in politics against the Huế court to the detriment of Vietnam's sovereignty and independence. Therefore, the current state for this event is political in nature and the Church of Vietnam did not send a representative to attend.

### **Section 9.c Cao Đài**

It is a monotheistic religion founded in the South of Vietnam at the beginning of the twentieth century (in 1926) and is considered the "youngest" religion in Vietnam. Cao Đài quickly grew in size and number of followers. In order to have official status with the colonial government, on October 7, 1926, the followers sent to the Governor of Cochinchina Le Fol a proclamation in French. In less than 100 years of establishment and development, Cao Đài has shown itself to be a new religion with the integration of major religions in Vietnam, mainly the Three Religions. Many concepts as well as forms of major religions can be found partially expressed in Cao Đài. Unlike most religions with long origins that often deny other religions, Cao Đài followers accept other religions and those religions form the Cao Đài religion.

However, among the followers, there were disagreements on how to practice, to organize the church, or because of personal purposes, which gradually separated to form independent Cao Đài branches. Some branches establish ecclesiastical organizations (church), others operate independently, nor establish ecclesiastical organizations. In addition, there are a number of organizations of Cao Đài followers of a mass nature were also established.

Explaining this phenomenon, Cao Đài followers believe that the formation of different branches of Cao Đài was prophesied by God from the very beginning, not officially established as Cao Đài religion, will form 12 branches of Cao Đài. However, for researchers, including believers, the number of Cao Đài branches varies from time to time, not fixed at 12. Over time, Cao Đài branches took place many splits and mergers; in history there are more than 30 different sects. Many active efforts to unify the church have been unsuccessful due to criticism and obstacles from many sides, including among believers.

The division of sects did not slow down the growth of believers, on the contrary, the number of believers rapidly increased. Cao Đài quickly became a religion with great influence in Cochinchina, even developing in Central Vietnam, Tonkin and even Cambodia. Cao Đài leaders are educated people, have social status and have great influence on the people. Therefore, Cao Đài has always been the object of either manipulation or lashing out at the powers that be in power.

The French made the first move. An organized religion and the ability to manipulate the masses threatened the rule of the colonial government. Under pressure from the French colonialists, edicts banning religion in Tonkin, Trung Kỳ, Cambodia and Laos were issued. At its peak, on June 28, 1941, fear that a religion active in Saigon and its vicinity might fall under the influence of the Japanese, then infiltrated Indochina and tried to entice religious groups. Vietnamese religious and political supporters supported the Great East Asia Policy; the French colonial government suddenly attacked Cao Đài followers, arrested Phạm Công Tắc (Supreme Protector) and exiled him to Madagascar. Many other Cao Đài dignitaries were also arrested or put under house arrest. Tây Ninh Holy See was occupied. Many other Cao Đài shrines were also occupied or destroyed.

Both the Japanese and the Việt Minh tried their best to entice Cao Đài groups. Due to the mobilization of Việt Minh cadres, a group of Cao Đài dignitaries, at the core of the sects Tiên Thiên, Bao Chính Đạo and Minh Chơn Đạo, secretly established **the Cao Đài Salvation Association**. The association operated mainly in remote areas in the Southwest region, secretly gathering forces on the basis of the Youth Moral Union under the leadership of Cao Triều Phát, an advisor to the Southern Administrative Resistance Committee against both France and Japan.

After taking power at the end of August 1945, many Cao Đài dignitaries were invited by the Việt Minh government to participate in politics. In Tây Ninh, a Cao Đài follower of the Tây Ninh Holy See, Trương Văn Xương, was invited to be the Vice Chairman of the Provincial Administrative Committee; another Cao Đài dignitary of the Tây Ninh Holy See was Professor Thượng Chử Thanh (Đặng Trung Chử) was invited to act as an advisor.

When the French re-occupied the South, groups of Cao Đài armed forces of the Holy See of Tây Ninh participated in the battles at the 1st and 2nd fronts, fighting in the East and North of Saigon. After entering the South, special envoy of the Central Committee Nguyễn Bình held a conference in An Phú Xã, unified the organization of armed units into branches of the National Guard. Cao Đài Armed Forces of Tây Ninh Holy See was organized into 2 detachments: No. 7 led by Nguyễn Thanh Bạch and No. 8 by Nguyễn Hoài Thanh.



Understanding this contradiction and to enlist more allies in the war against the Việt Minh, the French government allowed the protector Phạm Công Tắc to return to the Tây Ninh Holy See, in return the Cao Đài followers would not attack the French and be sponsored by the French army. The French government even allowed the territories controlled by the Holy See of Tây Ninh to have autonomy. The Tây Ninh Holy See Cao Đài armed forces were sponsored and armed by the French government, led by Lieutenant General Trần Quang Vinh as Commander-in-Chief, Major General Nguyễn Văn Thành as Chief of Staff, acting as a supplementary military force, supporting the French in their campaigns against the Việt Minh.

After 1954, the Cao Đài Save the Nation announced its dissolution. The former union factions returned to live separately. A number of dignitaries went to the North, forming the Only Church with pure religious activities under the direction of the Communist Party of Vietnam. In the South, the Tây Ninh Holy See, with the support of the French, has become the largest Cao Đài Church, representing the whole Cao Đài religion, has its own army, has strong political influence and became the great thorn in the Vietnamese Nationalist government under Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm. To remove obstacles to power, Prime Minister Diệm bribed, caused internal divisions, and eventually attacked Cao Đài military forces, forcing Phạm Công Tắc to exile himself to Cambodia. until the day he died.

The Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ Holy See Church of Tây Ninh was only re-recognized in the South since 1965 under Decree No. 3 on July 12 of the National Leadership Committee. During the Second Republic of President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, the followers only engaged in religious activities and did not interfere in politics, so Cao Đài organizations no longer had a strong influence on politics and society as before.

The Cao Đài followers were once again put to the test when the Communists took control of all of Vietnam. Many dignitaries of Tây Ninh Holy See Cao Đài Church were accused by the new government of collaborating with the enemies and even taking part in opposing the new government. In 1979, a Board of Governors of the Đại Đạo Tam Kỳ Phổ Độ Church was established to represent the church, and placed under the control of the government. Other Cao Đài organizations and sects were also attacked when the new government accused them of superstition. Religious activities were completely restricted, limited to activities in small groups of believers.

## **Section 9.d Hòa Hảo Buddhism**

It is a Buddhist sect founded in 1939 by Huỳnh Phú Sổ, also known as "Monk Hòa Hảo", "Master Huỳnh", then less than 18 years old. He took the name Hòa Hảo village where he was born to name his new religion. He composed many poems, which were collected into the book Prophecies for the teaching of literature and doctrine, the content of which was the teaching of Buddha Shakyamuni, and was somewhat close to mystical thought and folk beliefs in the South at that time. When the Japanese entered Indochina, the French were concerned that the Japanese would take advantage of the Hòa Hảo sect, so they detained Huỳnh Phú Sổ in Châu Đốc, Bạc Liêu, and Cần Thơ. In 1942, the Japanese mobilized him to return to Saigon. Here, he mobilized many pro-Japanese political figures to join the Hòa Hảo religion to gain prestige, and at the same time, many young Hòa Hảo followers also joined Japanese organizations. In 1944, Hòa Hảo Buddhists established an armed force under the name of Bảo An Troop.

In order to implement the policy of great national unity, the People's Committee of the South, newly established after the August Revolution, invited Huỳnh Phú Sổ to hold the position of special member of the Committee. According to Archimedes LA Patti, Hòa Hảo opposed the Việt Minh's policy and wanted to negotiate with the Allies, so they organized demonstrations to demand mass arming against the British and French troops landing in Cochinchina. On September 8, 1945, the leaders of Hòa Hảo Buddhism organized a march in Cần Thơ with slogans against French colonialism and anti-dictatorship. On September 9, 1945, the Việt Minh surrounded the Hòa Hảo Buddhist headquarters in Saigon to capture Huỳnh Phú Sổ, but he escaped. After the demonstration in Cần Thơ, Hòa Hảo was persecuted and suppressed by the Việt Minh. Hòa Hảo believes that in 1945 about 10,000 followers and their cadres were murdered by the Việt Minh.

With the policy of great national unity, on February 6, 1946, the Việt Minh, and the Hòa Hảo Dân Xã group signed an agreement to put aside all old animosities and misunderstandings, and unite against the French colonialists. In June 1946, Hòa Hảo reorganized the armed forces under the name Nguyễn Trung Trực Union Army of Revolutionary Guards Corps. On September 21, 1946, Hòa Hảo established the Vietnam Social Democratic Party.

On November 14, 1946, Huỳnh Phú Sổ joined the Southern Resistance Administrative Committee as a special member. Although accepting the invitation to join the Administrative Committee of the Resistance, Huỳnh Phú Sổ still secretly worked against the DRV government. On April 20, 1946, Hòa Hảo and a number of other organizations in the South established the United National Front to organize themselves against the French in South Vietnam. The Front elected Huỳnh Phú Sổ as Chairman. This front took a stance against the DRV government. The Front decided to support the government of the Autonomous Republic of Cochinchina supported by the French so as to establish a unified government in Vietnam.

On April 16, 1947, Huỳnh Phú Sổ suddenly disappeared when he went to Tân Phú, Đồng Tháp Mười to reconcile the conflict between the Việt Minh and Hòa Hảo Buddhists. Hòa Hảo believed that the Việt Minh had harmed him. He was 27 years old when he disappeared. Western documents and the Republic of Vietnam said that the Việt Minh killed him. Vietnamese police documents admitted that Huỳnh Phú Sổ was captured by the Việt Minh and executed on December 22, 1947 in Long Xuyên.

After Huỳnh Phú Sổ disappeared, Hòa Hảo - Việt Minh relations completely broke down. The anti-Việt Minh in the Hòa Hảo religion cooperated with the French and were supported with equipment and money by the French. Hòa Hảo Buddhism established many new armed units in addition to other armed units established in 1944, occupying some areas in the Southwest region. Hòa Hảo armed forces divided into 4 groups controlling different areas in the Southwest region: Trần Văn Soái (Năm Lửa), Lâm Thành Nguyên (Hai Ngoán), Lê Quang Vinh (Ba Cụt), Nguyễn Giác Ngộ.

In June 1947, in order to attract Hòa Hảo followers to form a uniting bloc of anti-French forces, the Việt Minh established the Hòa Hảo Banquet at Chợ Mới - Nhà Bàn, focusing on activities in Long Xuyên and Châu Đốc regions, declaring the policy of great national unity and mobilizing Hòa Hảo believers and the whole people to fight against the French invasion. Hòa Hảo's Huỳnh Văn Trí was the commander of an armed unit in the resistance war who made a great contribution to mobilizing Hòa Hảo followers to join the resistance.

The government of the Republic of Vietnam, after its establishment in 1956, launched operations "Operation Đinh Tiên Hoàng" and "Operation Nguyễn Huệ" to pacify the sects in order to unify the army. Wanted, Trần Văn Soái surrendered and Lê Quang Vinh was arrested, then executed. In 1964, after the First Republic was overthrown, Hòa Hảo Buddhism had the opportunity to restore its organization, build and expand religious, cultural and social facilities.

In 1972, Lê Quang Liêm separated from the old faction of Lương Trọng Tường and established a new central governing board. At this time, Hòa Hảo religion had up to 3 central governing boards that co-existed until the unification of the country. Despite the division, Hòa Hảo Buddhism continued to develop during the Second Republic, in which a major event was the establishment of Hòa Hảo University in 1972 in Long Xuyên. By the time the Republic of Vietnam fell, Hòa Hảo groups operated a total of six high schools, a university, and two hospitals. All these facilities were later nationalized by the new government. Up to now, Hòa Hảo Buddhism has developed mainly in the Mekong Delta.

## Section 9.e Buddhism

Since its introduction into Vietnam, for more than 2000 years, **Buddhism** has gradually entered the consciousness and greatly influenced the way of thinking and living of the majority of Vietnamese people. Although there are many ups and downs due to internal and external reasons, Buddhism has long played an important role in Vietnamese life, making a significant contribution to the historical and cultural heritage of Vietnam. In Vietnam today, Buddhism is the national religion of our country. All major sects of Buddhism such as Zen Buddhism, Pure Land Buddhism, Tantric Buddhism, and Theravada Buddhism are practiced by the people.

After establishing a nationwide domination, the French colonial government tried to absolutely support Christianity to be spread everywhere, and the most specific and direct measures were to destroy Buddhism in many different ways. Many temples were destroyed, many of which later became the Christian churches. For example, Notre Dame Cathedral in Hồ Chí Minh City, and La Vang Cathedral in Quảng Trị were the locations of two temples destroyed by the French and handed over to a new religion following them into Vietnam.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the world began to find and study the heritage of Buddhism. In Vietnam, besides the discriminatory policy of the French, before that, under the Nguyễn Dynasty, due to its monopoly on Confucianism, Buddhism was not of interest. Before that situation, a revival and reform movement were necessary. Many Buddhist associations and schools were established. Many publications such as books, newspapers and magazines written on Buddhism were born. Even many people from Confucian backgrounds such as Trần Trọng Kim and Bùi Kỷ also participated. Buddhism in the Central region, with its center in Huế, initiated the reforms that marked the transformation into a modern Buddhism, a model for the whole country. About Buddhism in Central Vietnam, starting from the 1930s, it is impossible not to mention Huế as the Buddhist center.

It should be recalled that it was not until the 20th century that Huế became a center of Buddhism. From the 17th century to the early 20th century, Buddhism in Huế - Thuận Hóa was once known for the penetration of two Chinese Zen schools, Lâm Tế (Linji) and Tào Động (Caodong), with the appearance of Chinese Zen masters from the early 20th century from Viên Cảnh to Thạch Liêm, and here also formed a lineage of Vietnamese Zen: Thiền Liễu Quán (named after Zen master Liễu Quán, 1667 - 1742). This is the second time in the history of Vietnamese Buddhism that there is a separate Zen sect from the Vietnamese Patriarch after the Trúc Lâm Tradition under the Trần Dynasty.

In the south, the development of Buddhism was divided into two periods under the Governments of the Republic of Vietnam. The government of the First Republic of President Ngô Đình Diệm was accused of discriminating against Buddhism. Because of the policy that Buddhist leaders considered to be favoring Christianity by the Diệm government, South Vietnamese Buddhists took to the streets to support Buddhism in large numbers in Huế, Đà Nẵng, and Saigon. The climax was the event that monk Thích Quảng Đức set himself on fire in 1963 to protest this discrimination. Despite this, Buddhism still flourished. In the book "Buddhism in Vietnam", Mai Thọ Truyền said that when Diệm came to power, the number of pagodas in the South was 2206. Under Diệm, the number of pagodas increased to 4776.

Under the Second Republic of President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, Buddhism had more favorable conditions to develop. There were many Buddhist movements that developed during this period, both pro-government and pro-Communist. In particular:

- The College of Buddhist Studies was established on March 13, 1964, with the authority to grant Bachelor of Buddhist Studies, Master of Buddhism and Doctor of Buddhist Studies.
- The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (GHPGVNTN) was founded by 11 Buddhist sects and associations on January 4, 1964. The Church was formed in the struggle for religious equality in 1963 under the First Republic in South Vietnam.
- The Sixth Peace Association of Buddhists (president Thích Thiện Hòa) was established in the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam.

As early as the mid-1960s, the Buddhist Church in the South had a rift in leadership. The hierarchy was divided into two blocs: the "Ấn Quang bloc" (consisting of three groups) and the "Việt Nam Quốc Tự bloc" (with eight groups). The Ấn Quang bloc (led by Venerable Thích Trí Quang and Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh) had a left-leaning bias, so the government of the Republic of Vietnam issued Decree 23/67 on July 18, 1967 recognizing the Việt Nam Quốc Tự bloc instead of Ấn Quang bloc.

In the North, then the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, by pursuing Marxism-Leninism, the government restricted people's religious activities, strictly controlled Buddhism as well as other religions, including the Vietnamese traditional ancestor worship.

In March 1958, the Unified Buddhist Association was established in the North. Most Venerable Thích Trí Độ was the Patriarch and held this position continuously until his death in 1979. He also founded the Central School of Buddhist Studies at Quảng Bá Pagoda (Hanoi) in

1970, the predecessor of the Vietnamese Higher School of Buddhist Studies. Since 1976, the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam continued to implement the policy of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Harmony restricts religious activities with Buddhism as well as many other religions. After the events of April 30, 1975, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and other Buddhist movements in South Vietnam were restricted from operating. A series of monks went overseas with refugee status, such as Thích Nhất Hạnh, Thích Tâm Châu, Thích Mãn Giác.... All religious churches are required to join the Vietnam Fatherland Front, under control of the State and the direction of the Communist Party of Vietnam, although the Constitution stipulates the people's right to freedom of religion.

## **Chapter 10. Southeast Asian Wars**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, capitalism developed due to the need to expand markets and find resources, sending armies of expeditions to colonize less developed countries. C. Marx was the first to raise the point: "*How unhappy a nation will be when enslaving another nation*". In the early years of the twentieth century, especially after the success of the Russian October Revolution of 1917, the movement for national liberation of the colonial peoples was on the rise. The object of these struggles was also imperialism.

### **Section 10.a. The Third International**

It is also known as the Communist International (Comintern) and is an organization of communists, founded in March 1919 in Moscow and disbanded in 1943, reborn in 1947 and disbanded in 1956, after the XX Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The Communist International argued for the necessity of bringing the workers' movements in the capitalist countries into the movement for the liberation of the colonial peoples during the period of the proletarian revolution. International III is not only an organization of the working class in the developed capitalist countries but also an organization of the public and peasant masses in the dependent colonial countries.

The operating platform of the Third International is the struggle to overthrow the capitalist regime, build a socialist regime, and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. Under the leadership of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the Third International held 7 congresses, thereby drawing out strategies and tactics to direct the international communist and workers' movement, the national liberation movement and propose measures to fight against fascism.

In the process of finding a way to save the country, in July 1920, Nguyễn Ái Quốc read the "first draft on national and colonial issues" by Vladimir I. Lenin. The thesis correctly

answered the problems facing the young Quốc about the way of national salvation and national liberation, clearly recognizing the stance of Lenin and the Communist International on the colonial issue. Since then, Quốc had absolutely believed in Leninism. In the spring of 1930, the Communist Party of Vietnam was established, and from April 1931, becoming a branch of the Communist International. The nature of the Vietnamese revolution is a nationalist-democratic proletarian revolution, the goal of which is to overthrow the colonial and feudal empires, liberate the nation for independence, and conceal the path to building socialism.

From 1943, Washington began to pay attention to Southeast Asia against the Japanese troops stationed there. Hồ Chí Minh realized that the US was wanting to play a bigger role in the Pacific region, so he did all he could to establish a relationship with the US in Côn Minh (Air Force Major General Chennault) through the rescue of pilots crashed during the war with Japan, providing intelligence for the US, and propaganda against Japan. In return, the US intelligence agency OSS (US Office of Strategic Services) provided medical assistance, weapons, communication facilities, advice and training for small-scale troops in the Tân Trào war zone.

On February 28, 1946, President Hồ Chí Minh sent a letter to US President Harry Truman calling for the US to intervene urgently to support the independence of Vietnam, but was not answered because the US considered Hồ Chí Minh as "spy of the Communist International" and should ignore his calls for support. At the end of September 1946, after Lieutenant Colonel Peter Dewey was killed for being mistaken for a Frenchman during the tumultuous days between France and Vietnam in Saigon, the US withdrew all intelligence officers in Vietnam, ending contact with the Hồ Chí Minh government.

### **Section 10.b. Cold War**

As early as 1946 the US diplomat George F. Kennan formulated a US foreign policy of preventing Soviet expansionism and in 1947 with the introduction of the Truman Doctrine, the noun **The Cold War** (1946-1991) was used because there was no direct combat between the two great powers, but they advocated interstate conflicts as proxy wars. This was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc and the US and its Western allies after World War II. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe when the member republics of the Soviet Union declared their independence.

The Berlin blockade (1948-49) was the first major crisis of the Cold War. With the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War and the outbreak of the Korean War, the conflict spread. The Soviet Union and the US had never been directly involved in an all-out

armed war. However, both are heavily armed in preparation for a possible all-out nuclear war. In addition to the nuclear arsenal developments of both sides, and their deployments of conventional military force, the struggle for dominance is demonstrated in proxy wars across the globe, psychological warfare, massive propaganda campaigns, espionage, embargoes, sports rivalry at tournaments and technology shows like the Space Race. The USSR (short for the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) and the USA (the USA) competed for their influence in the Latin American countries and independence colonies in Africa and Asia. The Soviet Union crushed the Hungarian revolution. The expansion and escalation resulted in major crises such as the Suez Crisis (1956), the Berlin Crisis of 1961, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, which almost caused a nuclear war.



*The fall of Berlin Wall*

Just like in the Vietnam war, American scholars criticized the Chinese KMT and the RVN for being corrupt to lose the country without ever admitting their responsibility and not seeing the catastrophe caused by the Communists. The Sino-Communist war 1946-1949 in China showed that Russia did not bring in troops, while the US sent in 50,000 troops and still failed. The US ceded Eastern Europe to Russia in 1945 to ask them to fight the Japanese was a disastrous mistake, losing both Eastern Europe and China. The Americans abandoned Chiang Kai-shek because his anti-Japanese role was over. They also abandoned China because they did not see its importance, did not see the great consequences immediately followed by the bloody wars caused by the Communists.

### **Section 10.c. America's Domino Theory**

After the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, followed by the outbreak of the Korean War, the US government introduced the **Domino Theory**, according to which the US held that



if one country followed Communism, neighboring pro-Western countries will be "threatened". From that argument, the US began to aid France in its war against the Việt Minh (referring to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam), an organization/government they considered to be related to the Soviet Union and China. However, before 1950, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was not recognized by the Soviet Union and China and received no support from these two countries.

President Eisenhower took office after the end of the Korean War. The US aided the French in re-invading their colonies in Indochina, including Vietnam. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam fought fiercely and finally defeated the French. With the Paris Agreement France officially withdrew from Vietnam. After France's defeat, the US stepped in to replace it, establishing the Republic of Vietnam regime to divide Vietnam. The Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries aided the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North and the National Liberation Front (NLF/VC) of South Vietnam in the South to wage a war of reunification.



The US from 1950 began to taste the consequences of abandoning China. Simultaneously with the Korean War, from 1950 China moved close to the southern border of Vietnam and China to plot aid and training for the Việt Minh and established many regular divisions (304 and 308, 312, 316, 320...) in 1950 and 1951. With China as the world's most populous country becoming communist, the cold war turned bitter and the US decided to block the communist advance into Southeast Asia. The US stepped in to stop the international communist movement, initially increasing funding for French troops in Vietnam.

To carry out the anti-communist policy, the US established many inter-national military organizations such as (NATO, CENTO, SEATO), bilateral and regional defense organizations and treaties. In addition, there is a system of dense military bases to surround socialist countries. In areas with high geostrategy, the US is ready to use military measures, even without the consent of the United Nations, such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia (1954–1975), Cuba (1961), Dominica (1965). Despite failures in many places, especially in Vietnam, Laos, and Cuba, the US continues to implement this policy but with other forms. Since the 1980s, the US has switched to the policy of "Beyond containment", which means direct intervention in the internal affairs of socialist countries.

Under a fierce anti-communist policy known as the Reagan Doctrine, Reagan and his government provided both overt and covert assistance to anti-communist movements around the world especially in Africa, Asia and Latin America with the goal of overthrowing the communist governments backed by the Soviet Union in these regions.



The result in 1989 was a revolutionary wave that overthrew all the states of the socialist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union itself lost control and was suspended after a failed anti-

Gorbachev coup attempt in August 1991. This led to the official collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991 and the collapse of the socialist bloc states in other countries.

### **Section 10.d. The Indochina Battlefield (1945-1989)**

It was a "hot" war in the cold war period between two ideologies (communism and anti-communism) or two blocs (Communist and Free World). The battlefield is divided by world historians into three stages as follows:

- **First Indochina War (1945-1955).** This is the first stage in the "30-year resistance war" of the DRV with the goal of gaining independence for Vietnam. The real conflict broke out on September 23, 1945 when the French followed the British into South Vietnam to disarm the Japanese. The fighting took place throughout Vietnam and spread to neighboring Laos and Cambodia, but the main fighting took place mainly in North Vietnam. The war officially started on December 19, 1946 when Hồ Chí Minh ordered the National Resistance, and officially ended on July 20, 1954 when the Geneva Accords were signed. Since 1947, the US started to aid France to continue fighting in Vietnam. In the document NSC51 of the US State Department sent to the US National Security Council (July 1, 1949) it was confirmed that in 1948 about 100,000 French troops with American equipment were in Indochina. After 9 years of being bogged down and with the defeat at the Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, France was forced to accept the signing of the Geneva Agreement recognizing Vietnam's independence and territorial integrity.

- **The Second Indochina War or the Vietnam War (1955–1975)** began on November 1, 1955 when the US Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Vietnam was established. It ended with the events of April 30, 1975 when President Dương Văn Minh of the Republic of Vietnam surrendered to the NLF. The Vietnam War was the fiercest period of the War on the Indochina battlefield (1945-1989). The US government wanted to prevent the spread of communism in Southeast Asia (the Domino Theory) and to cover the costs of the war, and in the period 1965–1973, the US military directly fought on the battlefield. In the view of advocates of

American policy, this was a war to keep South Vietnam and Southeast Asia from the communists. Meanwhile, the goal of the DRV-NLF/VC is to carry out the national democratic revolution and gain independence, but in fact, completely unify the country to build socialism under the DRV leadership which takes advantage of the Việt Minh guise.

This is a war between two sides, one side is the US, the Republic of Vietnam in South Vietnam and a number of other US allies such as Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Thailand and the Philippines directly participating in the war. On the other side, the NLF-Republic of South Vietnam coordinated with the DRV to receive aid and experts from socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union and China. Although this war was called the "Vietnam War" by the US and its allies because the war took place mainly in Vietnam, it spread throughout Indochina, drawing into the war both neighboring countries, Laos and Cambodia to varying degrees. Therefore, the war was also known as the Second Indochina War and because the main opponent was the US, the war was often called the Resistance against the US by the North Vietnamese in these three Indochina countries.

The Vietnam War in the 60s and 70s was large and destructive for a long time and 10 times more destructive than the Korea war; the number of bombs and bullets dropped in Vietnam and Indochina since the 1960s was more than the number of bombs dropped in Europe during World War II. The bombing of Linebacker from May to September 1972 and the bombing of Linebacker II at the end of 1972 in Hanoi and Hải Phòng used about 200 B-52s each, or half of the US B-52 fleet. Particularly, the bombing raid at the end of 1972 in North Vietnam in 12 days and nights is considered the largest in the world since the Second World War. The NVA crossed the DMZ line and entered the Battle of Red Summer in 1972 with 14 divisions, 26 independent regiments and 300 tanks, while the ARVN had 13 divisions and 15 Ranger groups. For the attack on Saigon in April 1975, the NVA sent here all its forces about 15 divisions (equivalent to 5 corps) and over 10 independent regiments, totaling 20 divisions. The ARVN had 13 divisions but had run out of ammunition and was abandoned by the US.

- **The 3rd Indochina War (1975-1989)**, including 3 conflicts in the southwestern border of Cambodia, the northern border of Vietnam and the East Sea. After the fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh in April and May 1975 and the communist takeover of Laos five months later, Indochina was dominated by the communist regimes. The Third Indochina War was a series of conflicts and wars between three communist countries, namely Vietnam, China, and Cambodia, due to the changes in policies of the major powers. Laos and Thailand were also involved in some armed conflicts. When China publicly demanded the withdrawal of Vietnam from Cambodia, Deng Xiaoping privately told Japanese Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira in December 1979: "*China needs to keep Vietnam in Cambodia because it will suffer more and more damages.*"

During the final stages of the Vietnam War and occupation of Cambodia, Moscow was Hanoi's main source of support. In the long run, the Soviet Union also had to adjust its strategy to improve with the US and China and M. Gorbachev in July 1986 said in Vladivostok: *"Solving the Cambodia issue is determined by the normalization of Sino-Vietnamese relations"*. Moscow deliberately did not want to continue to support Vietnam to confront China anymore because of internal difficulties; it also had to solve the problem of Afghanistan (Russian troops withdrew in 1989).

At the Malta Summit, on December 3, 1989, Gorbachev and George HW Bush declared the end of the Cold War. The war of the Free World bloc against the expansion of communism has brought humiliation to the Vietnamese people. However, this is not clearly shown because it is nested within the guise of "gaining national independence and unifying the country". And also, thanks to this cover, the communists through the Việt Minh movement had won and also caused confusion for later generations.

## **Part 7: Struggle for Independence 1945-1975**

### **Chapter 11. Nationalist - Communist War**

When France turned into a colonial ruler, Phan Châu Trinh saw that the French regime was more advanced than ours, and advocated "relying on the French for progress". And Phan Bội Châu called the French "barbarian", so he had to fight fiercely. Entering the 20th century, in addition to the capitalist system, there was also a socialist regime that made a difference between human rights to private property and civil rights. Ideologies spanning the decades range from feudalism-civil rights, abolitionist-radical, pacifist-warlord, violent-moderate, capitalist-proletarian, and finally multi-party-one-party in the nationalist-communist pincer.

#### **Section 11.a. Nguyễn Ái Quốc and Communism**

In Paris, Nguyễn Tất Thành, shortly after becoming **Nguyễn Ái Quốc**, became a member of the French Socialist Party and often accompanied Phan Châu Trinh at meetings organized by the party. The eight-point claim was still used by Nguyễn Ái Quốc in propaganda. Quốc was a contributor to two left-wing newspapers: L'Humanité by Marcel Cachin and Le Populaire by Jean Longuet (grandson of Karl Marx 1818-1883). In the last months of 1919, perhaps realizing that the Phan Châu Trinh-style movement had been so peaceful so far, Quốc began to lean towards the more violent solutions of Phan Bội Châu's struggle. France actively participated in fundraising activities to relieve the terrible famine in Russia in 1920 (5 million people died) after

the proletarian revolution of 1917, distributing leaflets against the armed intervention of the French government in Russia. In addition to collecting material to write against colonialism, Quốc also became interested in communism. In Soviet Russia after the October Revolution of 1917, Lenin issued a decree providing for equality between peoples, granting independence to the colonies of the former Russian Empire. This pushed Nguyễn Tất Thành's beliefs to communism.

A report by the secret agent "Edouard" dated December 20, 1919, clearly stated that there were many disagreements about the way of fighting between Phan Châu Trinh and Nguyễn Ái Quốc. Phan Châu Trinh supported Nguyễn Ái Quốc for a long time, although he showed disapproval on many points, he still maintained an open attitude and close relationship through uncle-nephew friendship. In Edouard's report, Nguyễn Ái Quốc said that the colonial people would never get anything if only by making claims and waiting for the mercy of the French colonialists: "*Why 20 million of our compatriots could not do anything to force the colonial government to return human rights? We are all human, so we should be treated equally. Those who refuse to treat us as equals should consider them enemies.*" Phan Châu Trinh turned around and rebuked: "*So you want our compatriots without any iron in their hands to confront the Westerners with advanced weapons?*", he continued, "*Why do you keep pushing people to death? meaninglessly with no results?*"

Nguyễn Ái Quốc quickly abandoned Phan Châu Trinh's view on the method of claiming civil rights. Nguyễn Ái Quốc's activities during the period from 1920 to 1923 (before going to Russia) aimed to find the way to communism in the national liberation movement. In July 1920, Nguyễn Ái Quốc first encountered the work of Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) called "*First draft on national and colonial issues*" published in L'Humanité of the Socialist Party (June 16, 1920). The article had the effect of deciding the entire political choice of Nguyễn Ái Quốc from then until the end of his life. Right from reading Lenin's "Thesis" on national and colonial issues, Nguyễn Ái Quốc took the initiative in unifying between nation and class, nation and international, national independence and socialism.

During the Tours Congress at the end of 1920, Nguyễn Ái Quốc fell to a part of the French Socialist Party to vote in favor of becoming the Communist Party. The Party appointed him to the division in charge of propaganda in the colonies. Even after joining, Nguyễn Ái Quốc always used Lenin's "Thesis" to criticize and call on the French Communist Party to pay practical attention to the colonies through the Union of Colonial Peoples; together with Nguyễn Thế Truyền he was publishing the newspaper Người Cùng Khổ (Le Paria) to denounce the policy of oppression and exploitation of imperialism in general and French colonialism in particular. His work "The Judgment of French Colonization" in French (Procès de la colonization française)

written by him, published in 1925, denounced the brutal French colonial policy and mentioned the struggle movement of the French colonialists. Dissatisfied with the French Communist Party, Nguyễn Ái Quốc secretly swore an oath to join the anti-communist organization French-mason (Masonry) on June 14, 1922 at the recommendation of Boulanger.

Fearing that Nguyễn Ái Quốc might go to Moscow, Phan Châu Trinh in a letter dated February 18, 1922, wrote: *"As straight as Mr. Phan Bội Châu's method, if it succeeds, the nation and compatriots will still remain the horse's back, only replacing the rider."* As well as his recommending not to rely on foreigners and should return to live with the people to propagate liberation ideas: *"In my opinion, don't use the foreign cooking method to ring the bells and beat the drums, but have to return to live in the rural areas, exhorting the nation and compatriots to join forces to overthrow the oppressive power will be successful. That's why I advise you to arrange and return."* Trinh meant to send a message to Nguyễn Tất Thành-Nguyễn Ái Quốc that our nation would not change but only Japan or the Soviet Union would replace France.

In October 1922, D.D. Manuilsky, the representative of the Russian Communist Party, traveled from Moscow to Paris to attend the 2nd Congress of the French Communist Party and encouraged Nguyễn Ái Quốc to go to Moscow to participate in the International Peasant Conference in 1923. Nguyễn Ái Quốc first came to the Soviet Union in 1922 to attend the Fourth Congress of the Eastern Bureau of the Communist International, where he met Lenin and became a member of the Southeast Asia Committee. In July 1923, Nguyễn Ái Quốc began training at the Eastern Communist University of Labor, becoming a loyal student (alias Linov) of Lenin in the career of class struggle and liberation war movement of the Communist International (Comintern). Here Nguyễn Ái Quốc attended the First International Conference of Peasants (meeting from October 12 to 15, 1923), and he was elected to the Executive Committee and Presidium of the International Peasants. At the 5th International Congress (meeting from June 17 to July 8, 1924), he was appointed as a member of the Oriental Committee, in charge of the Southern Department. In 1924, in Moscow, Nguyễn Ái Quốc wrote and submitted to the Third International a report on the situation of Tonkin, Trung Kỳ and Cochinchina with the remark that the class struggle movement in Vietnam was different from the contemporary Western class struggle movement.

As a member of the Orient Ministry in charge of the Southern Department of the Third Communist International, Nguyễn Ái Quốc took the name Lý Thụy in October 1924 and returned to China after an advisory delegation of the Soviet government led by Mikhail Markovich Borodin who was the head of the advisory group next to the government Tôn Văn-Tường Giới Thạch-Mao Trạch Đông and crept into the radical youth group Tâm Tâm Xã (Tân Việt Youth Union) newly founded in 1923 in Guangzhou and led by Phạm Hồng Thái, Lê Hồng Phong

(1902-1942), Lê Hồng Sơn (1899-1933), Hồ Tùng Mậu (1896-1951)...According to the instructions of Mikhail Borodine, Nguyễn Ái Quốc established the nationalist-communist alliance **Việt Nam Thanh Niên Cách Mạng Đồng Chí Hội** (Vietnam Revolutionary Youth Association) with Hồ Tùng Mậu, Lê Hồng Phong, Trần Phú (1904-1931)... that took the guise of national liberation against the French in Guangzhou 1925 to spread Marxism-Leninism into Vietnam. The book “Đường Kách Mệnh (Road to Revolution)”, which Mr. Quốc was the author of, was a collection of lectures given at political training classes of the Revolutionary Youth, and was published in 1927. As a result, the Association attracted all young people who were revolutionary activists in China at that time after Phan Bội Châu was arrested for being pointed out and secretly sent back to Hanoi (by Nguyễn Thượng Huyền, Lý Thụy, Lâm Đức Thụ selling information to the French). Some students were sent to the Soviet Union or to China (Huangpu) for training to become core cadres.

### **Section 11.b. Communist Party of Vietnam - Việt Minh (communist)**

Due to the internal disputes of the Revolutionary Youth Association, Lý Thụy gathered to unify the 3 Communist parties in the 3 regions of South, Central, North and Indochina, which had just been established with separatist groups in China. **The Communist Party of Vietnam** (including the Indochina and Annam Parties) in early 1930 in Hong Kong accepted its first political program, but still operated in secret in China and in the country in the name of the nation (later to be renamed "Communist Party of Indochina", then "Vietnamese Labor Party" and now "Communist Party of Vietnam"). Nguyễn Ái Quốc always affirmed a motto: “to save the country and liberate the people, there is no other way than the proletarian revolution with workers and peasants as the base.”

In the spring of 1930, the Communist Party of Vietnam was established. From April 1931, it became a branch of the Communist International. Also in this year, the Nghệ Tĩnh Soviet uprising led by the Communist Party broke out but failed. The Communist Party of Indochina was banned from operating, and Nguyễn Ái Quốc was executed in absentia. However, at this time, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was not a leading member of the Party because he was performing the duties of the Third International operating in Thailand, Malaysia and Burma. In March 1930, Nguyễn Ái Quốc returned to Siam for a short time, then he returned to China.

During 1931 international communist cadres in Shanghai and Hong Kong were arrested for their leaked activities. On June 6, 1931, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was arrested by the police in Hong Kong under the name Sung Man-ch'o (Tống Văn Sơ) due to the testimony of Communist International Officer Joseph Ducroux who was arrested by the Singapore police. (Nguyễn Thế Anh, *L'itinéraire politique de HCM*, New Street, Paris 1990, ANOM document, NF 326/2639).

The Hong Kong government intended to give him to the French government in Indochina. The L'Humanité (Humanity) newspaper of August 9, 1932 reported that Nguyễn Ái Quốc had died of tuberculosis in a prison clinic in Hong Kong, and denounced this as a conspiracy by the French colonialists to conspire with the British colonialists to assassinate the leader of the Indochinese Communist Party. After that, thanks to the defense and dedicated help of lawyer Frank Loseby (*in 1960, Mr. and Mrs. Franck Loseby went to Hanoi to visit Hồ Chí Minh*) with an important support of Sir Stafford Cripps, legal advisor of the British Government, Tổng Văn Sơ was secretly released on December 28, 1932 after 9 trials. The newspaper Le Monde/History, special edition on Vietnam «Hồ Chí Minh, La figure de l'Indépendance retrouvée», March 1, 2015, Paris, in the biography of Hồ Chí Minh, wrote: « In June 1931, Hồ Chí Minh was arrested by British colonial police in Hong Kong, locked up, hospitalized, then put on a ship to Shanghai; in January 1933, he escaped. He went to Shanghai and then secretly returned to the Soviet Union organized by Madame Tổng Khánh Linh and Vaillant Couturier. Nguyễn Ái Quốc arrived in Moscow in the spring of 1934. Under the alias Lin, Nguyễn Ái Quốc entered the Lenin International School (1934–1935).

Then, under the name of Linov, he attended the Seventh International Congress (July 25 to August 20, 1935) as an observer of the Dalburo Secretariat. During this time, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was accused of being mainly responsible for the arrest of more than 100 members of the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth Association by the Overseas Leadership Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party to the Communist International. He was forced to stay in the Soviet Union until 1938, under house arrest on suspicion of the reason he was released by Hong Kong authorities. The Comintern established an Inquiry Committee because it doubted Nguyễn Ái Quốc's political loyalty, but could not find any evidence for this, so the case file was decided to be destroyed by the Inquiry Committee. After that, he joined as a graduate student at the Communist International's Institute for National and Colonial Affairs.

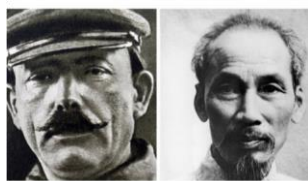
During the years 1931–1935, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was criticized by Trần Phú and later Hà Huy Tập for his *"alliance with the bourgeoisie and small and medium-sized landowners"*, which was not in line with the class struggle of the Third International. In a letter sent to the Third International in March 1935 with the content of the revolutionary movement in Indochina, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was heavily criticized. This letter recorded the *"remnants of revolutionary nationalism mixed with reformism and party idealism of the comrades of the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth Association and of comrade Nguyễn Ái Quốc"*. The letter also reads: *"Those remnants are very powerful and constitute a serious obstacle to the development of communism. The uncompromising struggle against these opportunistic doctrines of Comrade Nguyễn Ái Quốc and of the Youth Party is very necessary (...). We suggest that Comrade Lin write a book to self-criticize past shortcomings"*. The reason for this criticism was due to disagreement between



Nguyễn Ái Quốc and some comrades about the forces involved, which should be enlisted in revolutionary activities, leading to the thought that Nguyễn Ái Quốc prioritized the liberation of the people rather than class struggle.

At that time, the Communist International, under Stalin's leadership, placed the struggle for national liberation alongside the class struggle. However, in response to the domestic situation, Nguyễn Ái Quốc advocated mobilizing the strength of the entire people, enlisting all forces and classes outside the proletariat for the liberation work, so he was criticized by some comrades not grasping the situation of class division in Vietnamese society, not grasping the aspiration for national liberation of the whole people, and suffering from the "leftist" disease, so that they disagreed, even accused him of wearing a "people ideology hat". During this period, Trần Phú, Lê Hồng Phong, and Hà Huy Tập, respectively General Secretary of the Communist Party of Indochina, were trapped by the French government after 1938, while Hồ Chí Minh was only in charge of communication between the Communist Party of Vietnam and the Communist International and other communist parties in Southeast Asia. **It was not until May 1941 that Hồ Chí Minh's thought and the perception of the Communist Party were completely unified.** From here, under the helm of Hồ Chí Minh, the August uprising was successful.

The Communist Party of Vietnam was strong because it was good at propagandizing mass mobilization, close infrastructure, and long-term aid from the communist bloc, especially the Chinese Communist Party. That is the path of national independence associated with socialism framed by Mao. This road to save the country follows the trend of history, thereby gathering the strength of the nation and of the times. Immediately after its birth (1930), the Communist Party propagated and built up its forces through the pro-democracy movements: Soviet Nghệ Tĩnh Province 1930-1931, Indochinese Democracy 1936-1939 and Cochinchina Uprising 1940 to unite the masses, forge them in the revolutionary struggle, and prepare for the opportunity to regain the power, independence and freedom for the Fatherland.



Borodin      Lý Thụy



Trần Phú



Lê Hồng Phong



Hà Huy Tập

At the end of 1940, Nguyễn Ái Quốc was active in Yunnan under the name Hồ Quang with the rank of major of Eighth Army of the Chinese Communist Party and re-launched the **Việt Minh-nationalist** movement of Hồ Học Lãm (1884- 1943) who was in severe pain and had

to be hospitalized in Guilin. **The Vietnam Independence Campaigning Association, or Việt Minh for short, was founded in 1936 in Nanjing, China,** led by Hồ Học Lãm as chairman. According to Hoàng Văn Hoan (1905-1991), Nguyễn Ái Quốc advocated re-establishing the name of this association and invited Hồ Học Lãm to remain as chairman because the families knew each other and fought together before under the platform "Independent Vietnam with freedom and democracy" for communist party members to rely on when operating in China in a form of national political front. The Indochinese Communist Party also admitted the Phùng Chí Kiên group (1901-1941), Hoàng Văn Hoan (1905-1991), Võ Nguyên Giáp (1911-2013), Phạm Văn Đồng (1906-2000) as members of the Việt Minh group. Lãm's family house was a rendezvous point, a base to welcome Vietnamese revolutionaries to discuss national salvation and liberation, although Lãm was a cadre of the Chinese Kuomintang, but actively supported the revolutionary movement of Nguyễn Ái Quốc. The descendants of Lãm's brothers and sisters were either annihilated or disappeared, leaving only one young daughter who survived until now (Mrs. Hồ Mộ Lan lives in Hanoi).

At the beginning of 1941, with the changing situation in the Pacific and Asia, after 30 years of leaving at the age of 20, Nguyễn Ái Quốc sought national salvation thoughts through advanced civilized countries in the West and Marxism combined with Eastern culture. Hiding in the mountains, going in and out of prison, taking on dangers, Nguyễn Ái Quốc returned to directly join the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam to lead the Vietnamese revolution with a luggage consisting of a small suitcase made of bamboo and a portable typewriter.

Nguyễn Ái Quốc came to stay at Cốc Bó cave, Pác Bó village, Cao Bằng province with the alias Già Thu. The large stream that flows through here is called Lenin stream, and the high rocky mountain is called Karl Marx mountain. There, Nguyễn Ái Quốc opened staff training classes, printed newspapers, participated in daily activities... The training and propaganda materials were mainly books translated and written by him on many topics. At the end of such a book, he recorded the prediction "*Vietnam's independence in 1945*". He established many people's associations for national salvation such as Women's Union, Father's Union, Peasants' Union, students, intellectuals,... After a period of preparation, Nguyễn Ái Quốc called on behalf of the Communist International to summon The Central Conference of the Communist Party of Indochina, held from May 10 to 19, 1941, at Lán Khuổi Nậm, Pác Bó (Cao Bằng), Trường Hà commune, Hà Quảng district, Cao Bằng. He decided to officially establish the **Front for Vietnam Independence Alliance**, also known as **Việt Minh (communist)** on May 19, 1941 with the slogan: "*anti-French, anti-Japanese, pro Chinese, independent*" and determined the revolution for the liberation of the people. The nation, the union of all classes of people, the

revolutionary parties, the patriotic mass organizations, are fighting together against Japan and France.

On August 13, 1942, he used Hồ Học Lãm's passport under the alias "Hồ Chí Minh" to go to China as the representative of the Việt Minh-nationalists to enlist the support of the Republic of China. This is the first time in his personal documents that he used the name Hồ Chí Minh to declare his identity as "Vietnamese-Chinese overseas" of "Tân Văn reporter" but these papers were out of date. After being identified Nguyễn Ái Quốc - Hồ Quang, the local government of Túc Vinh town, Điền Đông district, Guangxi province of the Republic of China suspected him of being a spy, so they arrested him on August 27 while traveling with a Chinese guide (Đương Đào was killed). He was detained in many places for more than a year until Hồ Học Lãm's family members found his place of detention. He wrote "Diary in Prison" during this time (from August 1942 to September 1943).

### **Section 11.c. Involvement of US Intelligence OSS**

On October 25, 1943, the International Anti-Aggression Society in Indochina sent two letters, one to the US Ambassador to China, the other to Marshal Chiang Kai-shek, asking for intervention to free "Hồ Chí Minh", and representatives of the Communist Party of China in Chongqing secretly contacted OSS (Office of Strategic Services, predecessor of Central Intelligence Agency, USA) and SACO officers in Kunming to suggest that it was possible to make "Ho Chí Minh" cooperated with the Allied faction. After discussing with the US Embassy in China, the OSS and the US diplomatic service negotiated with the government of the Republic of China to free "Hồ Chí Minh" from prison and persuade him to cooperate with the OSS.

At the same time, Trương Phát Khuê, the KMT's general in charge of Guangdong and Guangxi, also pressured Mr. "Ho" to work for the Kuomintang. "Hồ Chí Minh" was released on September 10, 1943, at the request of the US and the direct intervention of Vũ Hồng Khanh (1898-1993) on Chiang Kai-shek. Another source said that General Trương Phát Khuê decided to free "Hồ Chí Minh" in order to take advantage of him and a number of Vietnamese nationalist politicians in southern China to fight the Japanese fascists. Trương Phát Khuê hoped that "Hồ Chí Minh" could unify and reorganize the groups of Vietnamese exiles in southern China into a homogenous pro-China bloc whose divisions and opposition over methods of struggle for power between the leaders of these groups obscured the goal of Vietnam's struggle for national independence. At the same time, Khuê hoped to rectify **Vietnam Revolutionary Allies Association (Việt Cách)** by Nguyễn Hải Thần that China sponsored.

Soon after, "Hồ Chí Minh" Nguyễn Ái Quốc joined the Central Committee of Vietnam Revolutionary Allies Association. Previously, the Việt Minh issued a statement supporting this organization. He also tried to enlist support from Trương Phát Khuê, but failed. After the nationalist revolutionary Hồ Học Lãm died in early April 1943, Nguyễn Ái Quốc took Lãm's alias, Hồ Chí Minh (HCM), in order to use the existing prestige of the Việt Minh-nationalists to act against the Japanese (HCT, VSKH). According to Hanoi historian Trần Quốc Vượng in the book "In the Realm" published in the US (Hundred Flowers Publishing House, California, January 1993), Chapter 15 has a passage *"Among oral talks about the misfortune of some Confucian intellectuals (field experience) is the story that HCM's father, Nguyễn Sinh Huy, is not actually a descendant of Nguyễn Sinh in Kim Liên village (in the official history) but "a son of another person, from another village."* According to the author, *"These are oral traditions, so at best, they can only be considered anecdotes that, if not too difficult, we can also call historical anecdotes! "*, in which the part related to President Hồ Chí Minh's lineage has caused a lot of public opinion. Accordingly, the biography of President Hồ Chí Minh has an additional part not mentioned in official history books: *the father of President Hồ Chí Minh was originally a biological but unrecognized son of Hồ Sĩ Tạo, a member of the Hồ family in Quỳnh Lưu, Nam Đàn, Nghệ An. When operating abroad, President HCM was famous with the name Nguyễn Ái Quốc, his name at birth was Nguyễn Sinh Cung, his name on birth certificate was Nguyễn Tất Thành, but from 1945 until his death in 1969, he was known by the Vietnamese and the whole world as Hồ Chí Minh.*" This incident brought up the differences lacking evidence of two families Nguyễn Sinh and Hồ Sĩ based on the book of the Đại Nam Thực Lục through rumors of Kim Liên village residents and the genealogy of Hồ Sĩ. About the real life of Nguyễn Ái Quốc - Hồ Chí Minh, there are too many question marks, most of them are myths or deifications, not just a name!

Hồ Chí Minh immediately mobilized Nationalist and Chinese officials to cooperate with the Allies and the US OSS intelligence in Kunming from March 1944. The OSS Deer team was formed on 16 May 1945 by the US Office of Strategic Services to attack and intercept material on the railway line from Hanoi in Central Vietnam to Lạng Sơn in Northeastern Vietnam in the hope of preventing Japanese military units from entering China. They sent intelligence reports to OSS agents based in China.

At the end of September 1944, Hồ Chí Minh returned to Vietnam. From March to September 1944, the OSS provided some weapons and trained the first Liberation Army team in the Việt Bắc Liberation Zone consisting of 34 members led by Major Archimedes LA Patti and Lieutenant Fenn of Deer Team. Medic Paul Hoagland was said to have saved Hồ Chí Minh's life with quinine and sulfa drugs through forest malaria while taking herbal medicine. On December 22, 1944, on behalf of the Việt Minh Headquarters, Nguyễn Ái Quốc issued a Directive to

establish the Vietnam Liberation Army Propaganda Team, commanded by Võ Nguyên Giáp (the predecessor of the Vietnam People's Army today). That was the main armed forces of the Việt Minh Front. From May 1941, Nguyễn Ái Quốc - Hồ Chí Minh officially led the Việt Minh and the Communist Party from Pác Bó, Cao Bằng (1941 and 1944) and then Tân Trào, Tuyên Quang from May 1945, attracting the masses with the guise of the Việt Minh "supported by the Allies".

On September 2, 1945, at Ba Đình Square, Hanoi, a meeting took place to welcome the Provisional Government of the DRV with the presence of the American "Deer Team" of OSS. On behalf of the Provisional Government, President Hồ Chí Minh (1890-1969) read the Declaration of Independence, declaring the birth of the DRV. As for the US, Hồ Chí Minh tried to convince the US to continue its anti-colonial policy and tried to make the US believe that he was not an envoy of the Communist International but a Nationalist - Socialist who wanted to free the country from foreign domination. Hồ Chí Minh told the OSS commander in the North, Major Archimedes LA Patti, that he was a Leninist, participated in the founding of the French Communist Party, and asked to join the Third International because these were the only individuals and organizations most interested in colonial issues. He saw no other choice. But for many years afterwards these organizations also did nothing for the independence of the colonial peoples. In the immediate future, he put more faith in American help before he could hope for Soviet help. Hồ Chí Minh explained that Americans saw him as an international communist, "a puppet of Moscow" because he had been in Moscow for many years, but he insisted that he was not a communist in the way that the US understands, and he was a revolutionary who worked for national independence. However, the US government did not respond to Hồ Chí Minh's wishes.

In his memoir, Archimedes LA Patti wrote: *"After meeting Mr. Hồ in April, I studied the Việt Minh movement closely, I am convinced that this is a really dynamic movement and will definitely win. With a solid base, I determined that the Việt Minh had the support of the people, so in the reports sent to my superiors at the US Military Command and to the US Ambassador to China, I vehemently denied the French claims that Indochina had no real movement for independence and that these were just a handful of "disorganized communists" or that "natives" remained loyal to France, people still expect the French to return. Through the Vietnamese in Kunming, I learned that Mr. Hồ spent 25 years abroad. During that time, he absorbed Marxism-Leninism and became the leader of the task of bringing together different groups into an association of Vietnam Independence allies. Knowing well the socio-economic poverty of Vietnam, Mr. Hồ first suggested setting aside local interests*



*and class aside, to focus on the task of fighting for independence and freedom, against colonialism...”*

The turmoil in Saigon spread to the whole South after the French army followed the British army to disarm the Japanese and the South started the resistance. On September 26, 1945, OSS Major A. Peter Dewey was mistakenly shot by Vietnamese forces because they thought he was French. At the end of September 1946, the US withdrew all intelligence officers in Vietnam, ending contact with Hồ Chí Minh's government. On the other hand, Stalin did not know much about Hồ Chí Minh and thought that he was the **"Eastern Tito", that is, a nationalist communist, not an international Stalinist communist**. Mr. Hồ said that before coming to communism, he followed patriotism (a more moderate ideology than a nationalist one). However, in terms of strategy, he advocated *"launching indigenous nationalism in the name of the Communist International... in the process of revolutionary struggle. Indigenous nationalism, i.e., traditional nationalism, has remnants of feudal ideologies ”*.

With specific guidelines and goals in the Declaration and 44-point Program, the Việt Minh Front met the aspirations of the people of all classes to liberate the nation from the oppression and slavery of the French colonialists and the Japanese fascists. Every citizen should have the right to live in an independent, free and democratic country, building a prosperous and happy life. During the period from late 1941 to early 1942, the Việt Minh Front grew rapidly throughout the country. Along with the political struggle movement, the armed struggle movement of the Việt Minh also broke out everywhere. From July 1942 to early 1943, at the base of Bắc Sơn - Võ Nhai, some militia conducted a guerrilla war.



OSS Deer Team members pose with Viet Minh leaders Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap during training at Tan Trao in August 1945. Deer Team members standing, l to r, are Rene Defourmeaux, (Ho), Allison Thomas, (Giap), Henry Prunier and Paul Hoagland, far right. Kneeling, left, are Lawrence Vogt and Aaron Squires. (Rene Defourmeaux)

### **Section 11.d. Việt Minh (Nationalist) - Việt Quốc - Việt Cách**

At this time, the nationalist faction of freedom, equality, and non-communism against the French was mostly active in China, but it lacked strength, unity, campaigning and promotion among the domestic masses. Expressed in the form of a party with active activities, there was the Vietnam Quang Phục Hội (Vietnam Restoration Association) founded by Phan Bội Châu in 1912 then changed to the Vietnam Nationalist Party in 1924 under the influence of Chiang Kai-shek. With the effects of the proletarian revolutionary movement, democratic thinkers at that time came close to Marxism-Leninism when the Russian October Revolution was successful. Phan Bội Châu wrote an article praising V. I. Lenin, writing about socialism, calling for reading

Marx's theory and expressing his belief in the proletarian revolutionary path chosen by Nguyễn Ái Quốc. He wrote: *"Nowadays, there are other people who are much better than our class who are taking on the job to complete the work that our class has not done. Have you heard of Nguyễn Ái Quốc? ... If he remains, our country will definitely be independent"*.

Phan Châu Trinh studied the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and in a letter to Nguyễn Ái Quốc in 1922, he wrote: *"I know that you have absorbed the ideology of Karl Marx and V. Lenin, so I have to explain to you clearly"* and he advised Nguyễn Ái Quốc: *"Therefore, I sincerely ask you to change the old method to plot great things"*. Nguyễn An Ninh, although following the trend of democratic revolution, was very sympathetic to Marxism. In the article to oppose Nietzsche philosophy, he highly appreciated the thought of Marx: *"The works of Marx are monumental, like great arms that want to embrace the whole of life and raise it higher and higher according to the desires of mankind"*. He was the first person in Vietnam to publish "The Communist Manifesto" by K. Marx and F. Engels in La Cloche Fêlée newspaper. But when Mr. Châu was arrested and sent back to Vietnam in July 1925, there was no leader, so he followed the communist group of Lý Thụy.

It was not until December 25, 1927, in Hanoi when another **Vietnam Nationalist Party** was established and led by Nguyễn Thái Học (1902-1930) as its leader. Starting from a group of young people who grew up in the country, former and new students founded Nam Đồng Thư Xã, specializing in publishing all kinds of books about world revolution and democratic nationalism, warming the enthusiasm of young people in the country. The new generation of young people coming from domestic colleges is determined to fight against the French for independence. Although the organization has not been completed, because of the circumstances, the leaders of the Kuomintang decided to revolt in order to "if not successful then become a man" and promote the national liberation revolution. The Kuomintang was brutally suppressed after the Yên Bái armed uprising in February 1930, so the nationalist trend was paralyzed and divided, creating a political vacuum for the national trend for a long time. Some Party members escaped to China and Burma to continue their activities but lacked the capacity and funding. The uprising had resonated greatly in France and Vietnam, affecting the future of Vietnam. It was also a favorable opportunity for the development of the Communist movement.



Nguyễn Thái Học



Nguyễn Hải Thần



Lý Đông A

Nationalist-oriented organizations operating in the south of China were undermanned and poorly organized in the infrastructure among peasants, workers, and the common people in the country: **Vietnam Independence Movement Allied Association, abbreviated as Việt Minh (nationalist)**, was established in 1936 in Nanjing, China by Hồ Học Lãm, whose alias Hồ Chí Minh was the president, was granted a license to operate by Chiang Kai-shek and was successful in the unification of the Vietnamese nationalist forces against the French that had been operating in South China since 1936, including the communist group of Nguyễn Ái Quốc-Lý Thụy-Hồ Quang. Hồ Học Lãm and Chiang Kai-shek attended the Japanese Chấn Vũ military school and the Hà Nam Baoding School and participated in the 1911 Tân Hợi Revolution. Lãm was a senior officer of Chiang's army stationed in Nanjing. In 1940 Lãm and Phạm Văn Đồng were Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Việt Minh Department of Justice in Guilin. He died on April 12, 1943. He always carried the Vietnamese nationalist spirit and supported Nguyễn Ái Quốc's revolutionary movement, but refused to join the Communist Party and did not join the Chinese Nationalist Party either.

In 1932, the last Emperor of the Nguyễn Dynasty, **Bảo Đại** returned to the country at the age of 19, wanted to reform the country in the form of a constitutional monarchy, but was blocked by the French despite the cooperation of Ngô Đình Diệm (1901-1963) and Phạm Quỳnh (1892-1945). In Cochinchina, two sects, Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo, were established to fight against the French demanding independence. At the same time, a number of patriots belonging to the



educated middle class gathered to form revolutionary parties at home or abroad with a democratic national orientation to lead and guide the masses against foreign colonization and to clarify the socialist nature of communist dictatorship.

In addition, Cường Để (1882-1951) founded Việt Nam Phục Quốc Đồng Minh Hội in 1938. By 1942, the nationalist non-communist parties (Vũ Hồng Khanh, Nguyễn Hải Thần 1878-1959, Trương Bội Công, Nghiêm Kế Tổ ... ) had to rely on the Chinese Nationalist Party for survival through the combined establishment of the Việt Nam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Việt Cách) by the Chinese general Trương Phát Khuê on the orders of Chiang Kai-shek. From 1944 Việt Cách had to reform under the pressure of Chinese general Tiêu Văn to cooperate with the Việt Minh-communist (Hồ Chí Minh) to fight the Japanese and provide intelligence for US troops in Asia. On March 12, 1945, the Standing Committee of the Communist Party issued a Resolution and announced the Directive of the Việt Minh Front to vigorously promote the "Resistance to the Japanese, save the country".

At the end of 1936, Nguyễn Thế Nghiệp (1906-1945) and Nguyễn Tổng (1904-1949) re-established the Việt Nam Nationalist Party; Trương Tử Anh (1914-1946) with Đại Việt Quốc Dân Đảng with the doctrine of "national survival" 1938; Nguyễn Tường Tam (1905-1963) with Đại Việt Dân Chính 1940 ; Lý Đông A (1921-1946) with Đại Việt Duy Dân 1941...

In 1943 nationalist parties including Vietnam Kuomintang, Đại Việt, Đại Việt Dân Chính and Đại Việt Duy Dân met together in Liuzhou, and agreed to become the **Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam** based on Lý Đông A's idealism of the people as a guideline for activities. The signed document was prepared by Nguyễn Tường Tam with 5 signatures of Vũ Hồng Khanh, Nghiêm Kế Tổ, Nguyễn Tường Tam, SH (Trương Tử Anh?) and Lý Đông A.

### **Section 11.e. Japan granted Independence to Emperor Bảo Đại. Trần Trọng Kim**

From 1885 when the country was completely lost to the French to 1940 when the Japanese army from China broke into Vietnam during World War 2, all uprisings or armed oppositions from the Emperor to Văn Thân, Confucian scholar or Western intellectuals with peasants and workers failed tragically but heroically before the military powers of the French Empire in Indochina.

When France surrendered to Nazi Germany on June 22, 1940, Japan asked the puppet government of Vichy France and French Admiral Decoux, Governor-General of Indochina, to

accept Japanese troops stationed in Indochina and blocked the supply lines in Indochina for Chiang Kai-shek's army. The purpose of Japan was to cut off one of the main US aid routes to China during the Sino-Japanese war (1937 - 1945) through the Hải Phòng port and the Hải Phòng - Yunnan railway. In September 1940, the Japanese army began to advance from China into Indochina after the French lost the battle of Lạng Sơn and had to sign the Tokyo Treaty of 1940. Since then, Indochina was occupied by Japan until the end of Second World War.

Since 1940 Japan controlled Indochina militarily, but the French protectorate still held administrative powers. When Paris was liberated, General De Gaulle returned to Paris in August 1944 and the US landed in the Philippines in October 1944, the Japanese in Vietnam immediately mount a coup to disarm all French troops and Vietnamese soldiers on March 9, 1945 and independence was handed over to the Huế court. **Emperor Bảo Đại announced the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam on March 11, 1945**, ending dependence on France and joining the Great East Asia bloc of Japan (a declaration prepared by Japan). But the countries in the Allies bloc did not recognize it. In early 1945, Vietnam fell into a state of turmoil.

War had exhausted the economy, the Japanese took over rice and other products, forced the people to destroy rice to plant jute to serve the war, plus natural disasters and famine (the 1945 Ất Dậu Famine) occurred. in the North and the Central Region. It is estimated that about two million people died from this famine. It was the cumulative war events since the early 1940s, along with Allied bombing raids, blockades, and natural disasters that had led to the terrible famine.

The government of **Trần Trọng Kim** (1885-1953) was established by Bảo Đại and Japan on April 17, 1945 in Huế. Joining his Cabinet were all famous intellectuals: lawyers, doctors, engineers and genuine patriotic journalists who wanted to contribute their talents to the rebuilding of the country.



*Trần Trọng Kim Cabinet*

Launched for only 4 months, on August 5, 1945, members of Trần Trọng Kim's cabinet asked to resign because they were Japanese puppets and had no diplomatic autonomy, no army, no financial independence... They could not do anything without the consent of the supreme advisor of Japan. This government only existed for a short

period of about five months, but had made remarkable achievements, including:

- save hunger in the North,
- promulgate basic freedoms for the people such as freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of association, etc. and efforts to realize independence, democracy and freedom for the country through the slogan "Dân Vi Quý " of Emperor Bảo Đại,
- establishing and planning **a national humanistic education in the use of Vietnamese at all levels of study by Professor Hoàng Xuân Hãn, Minister of Education,**
- the establishment of nationwide youth movements,
- especially the recovery of Cochinchina for Vietnam

This government was denounced as pro-Japanese. Minister of Youth Phan Anh (1912-1990) established Tiền Phong Youth Union and Social Youth Union to carry out policing and protection work. The Japanese Army established the Cochinchina Council, led by Trần Văn Ân (1903-2002) as a consultant. The National Independence Party of Vietnam was founded by Hồ Văn Ngà (1901-1945).

Due to direct contact with US intelligence, Hồ Chí Minh had a good grasp of the world situation, especially about the Japanese army on the way to defeat in the Pacific. On June 4, 1945, following the directive of leader Hồ Chí Minh, the Việt Minh Headquarters convened a cadre conference and announced the official establishment of the Việt Bắc Liberation Zone, consisting of two large bases located in the territory of 6 provinces: Cao Bằng, Bắc Cạn, Lạng Sơn, Hà Giang, Tuyên Quang, Thái Nguyên and some regions in the provinces of Bắc Giang, Vĩnh Yên, Phú Thọ and Yên Bái. On April 16, 1945, the Việt Minh Headquarters established the Committee for National Liberation and organized training and rehearsal classes for the people to take power.

On August 14, 1945, Japan surrendered to the Allies and returned independence to Emperor Bảo Đại and remained motionless. The meeting of the General Civil Service Union to welcome the government of Trần Trọng Kim with the Yellow Flag with three red stripes hanging



in front of the Opera House in Hanoi suddenly turned into a demonstration of the Việt Minh Front. Excerpt from "Memoirs of a Coward" by Tô Hải about the August Revolution: *"On August 17, 1945, we went together to Hanoi Opera House square to hold a meeting to welcome the government of Trần Trọng Kim. The meeting started for a few minutes, suddenly a series of red flags with yellow stars were launched, the hexagram flag was pulled*

*down, and on the podium appeared a man calling for the people to follow the Việt Minh for fighting the French, chasing the Japanese, reclaiming their rice, freedom, removing the shackles... The slogans were just released and thousands of people shouted in response. Not a single shot. There was no resistance from anyone, from anywhere, even though the Japanese barracks were only about 300 meters away! The uprising succeeded so quickly.”*

While the nationalist parties in Hanoi-Saigon were passively bewildered, they did not know the world situation so they could not foresee the opportunities. The Việt Minh, with its action plan prepared and mobilized in advance, easily and peacefully overthrew the government of Trần Trọng Kim from the central to local levels, which were busy with fighting the famine from 1944-1945 and did not have time to establish an army. Security soldiers - Green soldiers also responded to the mass climax. People at that time only knew that the Việt Minh was a revolutionary organization that took power to overthrow the feudal system, fight against the French colonialists and the Japanese fascists, and that the Việt Minh was supported by the Allies, China and Russia.

## **Chapter 12. Democratic Republic of Vietnam**

### **Section 12a. The August Revolution**

The Việt Minh Headquarters convened the National Congress at Tân Trào Communal House (Sơn Dương District, Tuyên Quang Province) for two days, August 16 and 17, 1945, to find ways to respond promptly to the rapidly changing situation of Indochina. At the national conference in August 1945, the Party clearly pointed out that the Allies were about to enter our country and the French colonialists were plotting to restore their dominant position in Indochina. The Congress approved the policy of General Uprising proposed by the Communist Party, approved the General Uprising Order and 10 major policies of the Việt Minh, taking the red flag with a yellow five-pointed star (the flag of the Việt Minh Front) as the national flag, took the song "Tiến quân ca" (by musician Văn Cao) as the national anthem and appointed the **Committee for National Liberation** of Vietnam led by Hồ Chí Minh as Chairman and a Standing Committee of 5 people: Hồ Chí Minh, Trần Huy Liệu, Phạm Văn Đồng, Nguyễn Lương Bằng and Dương Đức Hiền.



Hanoi Government Takeover 19-8-45

Within two weeks, the General Uprising was successful on a national scale. The Việt Minh Front had great merit in having gathered all classes of people, patriotic parties and national salvation organizations to unite and mobilize the entire people to rise up to seize power, and bring the August Revolution to victory, establishing the **Democratic Republic of Vietnam**. The "August Revolution" was successful only because the patriotic desire for independence and freedom of the people of all sections of society overcame the fear of power and violence and lies of the Communist Việt Minh movement.

Beginning with the rallies and marches consecutively from August 17, 1945, there was a meeting in Hanoi led by skillful communist cadres in controlling the crowd in support of the Việt Minh front, who resolutely demanded the overthrow of the Trần Trọng Kim cabinet, in order to completely control the situation in Hanoi on August 19, then spread to the provinces, to Huế on August 21 and Saigon on August 25, and took over the government after days of demonstrating.

Responding slowly to the Japanese surrender in August 1945, non-Việt Minh political groups and sects in Saigon gathered in a political alliance of the United National Front to instigate a patriotic movement but lack the action plan program and was disbanded within a few days of its inception to either follow or oppose the Việt Minh. When the August Revolution broke out, due to realizing the puppet nature of the Vietnamese Imperial government, the Young Pioneers left the United Front ranks, turned to support the Việt Minh forces, the movement which they believe will actually gain independence for Vietnam. Frontline Youth School had trained many DRV generals and officers later. Phan Anh became the first Minister of Defense of the Việt Minh government.

After the coup d'état that overthrew the French, on August 16, 1945, the Vietnamese took over Saigon. This was welcomed as a revolution in Saigon. Japan transferred weapons to the Vietnamese government led by the Việt Minh. At the meeting on August 22, 1945 of the United National Front, the parties in the Front transferred power to the Việt Minh because the Front could be viewed by the Allies as a pro-Japanese organization while the Việt Minh were still fighting and cooperated with the Allies (US military intelligence OSS) against Japan. On August 23, 1945, the United National Front decided to withdraw, ceding leadership to the Việt Minh to establish the Southern Provisional Administrative Committee, chaired by Trần Văn Giàu. The Provisional Administrative Committee of the South issued a declaration that they were the southern part of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

On August 23, the Trần Trọng Kim government dissolved itself. Due to the request of the Việt Minh, Emperor Bảo Đại, after refusing the help of the Japanese army through Ambassador Yokoyama, officially abdicated on August 30, 1945 to maintain national unity, "*happy to be a citizen of an independent country*" and the Nguyễn Dynasty (1802-1945) ended. The Emperor gave the royal seal and national treasure to the Việt Minh representatives, Trần Huy Liệu and Cù Huy Cận.

On August 25, 1945, President Hồ Chí Minh returned to Hanoi from the war zone. The National Liberation Committee changed to the **Provisional Government** with an expanded membership in order to realize the broad solidarity of all classes of people, patriotic parties, intellectually progressive individuals and even petty bourgeois joined the government, but gradually when the government was stable, that class was gradually eliminated from the government.



**On September 2, 1945**, at Ba Đình Square, Hanoi, a meeting took place to welcome the Provisional Government of the DRV with the presence of the American OSS "Deer Team". On behalf of the Provisional Government, President Hồ Chí Minh (1890-1969) read the **Declaration of Independence**, declaring the birth of the DRV.

This declaration of independence was drawn up by Hồ Chí Minh from the Constitution of the USA and the French Revolutionary Declaration on human and civil rights and drafted: "*O compatriots of the whole country! All people are born created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*"

When the DRV was founded, most people only knew that Hồ Chí Minh had just returned from abroad and was the head of state, but did not know his background as well as the communist tendencies of the Việt Minh. They also had no understanding of communism. However, the people felt proud and happy that Vietnam had won its independence. Most people wanted change. They felt more comfortable being ruled by the Vietnamese than by the French. But Hồ Chí Minh's government had not been recognized by any country. After gaining independence, the fledgling revolutionary government had to simultaneously face dozens of domestic opposition factions and more than 300,000 foreign troops occupying from North to South. He felt he had to find a way to bring the Allies to his government's attention before their troops entered Vietnam to disarm the Japanese army. At the same time, Bảo Đại also sent the Allied leaders a call to recognize Vietnam's independence. That worried Hồ Chí Minh because this appeal strengthened Bảo Đại's legal status. According to Hồ Chí Minh, Bảo Đại had not been in power for a long time, so the Provisional Government was the only legitimate government.

As for the US, Hồ Chí Minh tried to convince the US to continue its anti-colonial policy towards Indochina. He sought to convince the US that he was not an envoy of the Comintern but a Nationalist Socialist who wanted to free the country from foreign domination. Through the OSS, President Hồ Chí Minh sent nine telegrams to the US Government, including four handwritten letters directly to US President Harry S. Truman asking the US to establish diplomatic relations with the Provisional Government. At the same time, he proposed that the US and Allied countries recognized the Provisional Government as the sole and legitimate representative of Vietnam in matters related to Vietnam's sovereignty. Then Hồ Chí Minh also sent a letter to Stalin asking the Soviet Union to help the Vietnamese revolution and recognize the DRV. But there was no response from the US and the Soviet Union.

In 1945, a massive hunger occurred in the North, killing over one million people. It was partly caused by the limited rice production imposed by the Japanese. Immediately after declaring independence, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the DRV held a ceremony to launch the hunger relief movement at the Hanoi Opera House. The government also sent a committee to the South to organize the transportation of rice to the North. The government also called on trade associations and people to participate in transporting food from the South to the North. The transportation of rice from the South to the North was only possible in September 1945 with the quantity not exceeding 30,000 tons due to the outbreak of war when France sent troops into Cochinchina. In a letter to compatriots nationwide published in *Cứu Quốc* (Save the Nation) Newspaper on September 28, 1945, President Hồ Chí Minh wrote: "*When we raise a bowl of rice to eat, thinking of the hungry, we can't help but feel moved. I would like to suggest to my compatriots across the country, and I would like to do it first: Fast 1 meal every 10 days, 3 meals a month. Bring that rice to save the poor*". The government also spent the budget to

repair broken dykes, strengthen the dyke system, and add some new dykes. By early 1946, the dyke system in the North had been repaired.

To solve the root of hunger, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the DRV called on the people to increase production. The government also lobbied the private sector to lend empty gardens around the house to increase production. Each locality set up a sub-committee to mobilize human resources and organize production, and the food produced was used for relief purposes. From the end of 1945 to the beginning of 1946, there was no time to plant rice anymore, so the government set aside most of the land to plant two consecutive crops (sweet potatoes, beans, corn...) to make up for the shortage of rice. As a result, the yield of crop had increased 4 times compared to the period before 1945. In just 5 months from November 1945 to May 1946, 614,000 tons, equivalent to 506,000 tons of rice, were reached, enough to cover the shortage of rice in 1945. In 1946, the basic famine was resolved. On September 2, 1946, Minister of Home Affairs Võ Nguyên Giáp declared: *"The revolution overcame the famine, what a feat of democracy"*. Economics professor Đặng Phong assessed that solving hunger was the reason why the vast majority of people believed and followed the Việt Minh.

Another achievement of the fledgling DRV government was eradicating illiteracy. In 1945, 95% of the Vietnamese population was illiterate. Faced with that situation, in order to eliminate illiteracy, from September 8, 1945, President Hồ Chí Minh issued decrees: Ordinance No. 17 established a literate population in the whole of Vietnam, Decree No. 19 made for Evening classes for peasants and workers, Decree No. 20 stipulated that learning the national language was now compulsory and free of charge. To serve the campaign to eliminate illiteracy, People's Learning Academy was established on September 18, 1945. On October 4, 1945, President Hồ Chí Minh issued a call to fight illiteracy to the whole people: *In order to maintain independence, to make the people strong and the country rich, all Vietnamese must understand their rights and responsibilities, must have knowledge, and be able to participate in the construction of the country and must first be able to read and write the national language. Those who are already literate should teach those who cannot.* " Popular classes were opened everywhere in all three regions, attracting the participation of all ages and all walks of life. The literate taught the illiterate. By September 1946, the Popular Academic Movement had organized 75,000 classes with over 95,000 teachers, over 2,500,000 people were taught to read and write by the movement.

According to the Government's Resolution, on September 4, 1945, Minister of Home Affairs Võ Nguyên Giáp, on behalf of the President of the Government, signed and promulgated Decree No. 4 establishing an "Independence Fund" with the purpose "to collect money and things of the people willing to donate to help the Government to support the independence of the



Nation". Then, within the framework of the Independence Fund, the Government proposed a measure to organize "Golden Week" from September 17 to 24, 1945. President Hồ Chí Minh sent a letter to compatriots nationwide on the occasion of "Golden Week", stating that the purpose of the fund establishment was "to collect the gold from the people and especially the rich to use for our urgent needs and the most important thing right now is the national defense". The government had raised a total of 20 million piasters and 370 kg of gold. The national budget required hundreds of millions of piasters. In Hanoi alone, during the "Golden Week" people contributed 2,201 taels of gold, 920 kilograms of rice, money and other artifacts, totaling 7 million Indochinese piasters. This money was used to buy Japanese military weapons confiscated by the Republic of China army and to bribe Chinese generals stationed in North Vietnam. The enthusiastic contributions and support of the people had contributed to solving the financial difficulties of the DRV.

The DRV respected private property rights, eliminated the old political and administrative hierarchical mandarin system of the Vietnamese Empire, disbanded the Councils of Notables and replaced them with People's Committees elected by local people ... The DRV implemented some reforms but was careful not to create resistance from the middle classes and the big landlords. The redistribution of land was limited to public lands, abandoned land and land confiscated by the French and those considered to be collaborators with the fascists. From September 22, 1945, small landowners of 5 acres or less were exempt from land tax. Restrictions on Japan's food trade were abolished, and the state's monopoly on the sale of alcohol and salt ended. Industry and trade taxes and licenses were abolished. Opium, gambling, prostitution and other forms of hard labor were prohibited. Workers were entitled to work 8 hours a day. Along with that was disbanding trade unions to control the economy, unifying youth organizations into the Vietnam National Salvation Youth Union. However, at the local level, there were still political purges or elimination of "fascist capitalism", distribution of land to peasants, confiscation of the assets of the rich, beyond the wishes of the Vietnamese central leaders like Hồ Chí Minh when founding the party said *"Vietnam will be moved slowly towards socialism through the teaching and practice of democracy"*.

According to Archimedes LA Patti, Hồ Chí Minh and other leaders of the Việt Minh repeatedly expressed to him doubts about whether communism was the right form of politics for Vietnam. Hồ Chí Minh did not believe the Vietnamese were politically mature enough to accept communism, but a modified form of socialist democracy might be more appropriate. Hồ Chí Minh advocated that Vietnam would freely trade with all countries in the world, not just limited to France or China to create a prosperous economy. He also thought about the issue of building a Pan-Asian community including independent Asian countries, contributing to world peace and developing economic and political programs for the common good.

## **Section 12.b. Resistance Coalition Government**

During World War II, the Communist International had to be disbanded on May 15, 1943 in order for the Allies to help the Soviet Union fight the Nazi invaders who were moving towards Moscow, so the Communist Party of Vietnam had to change its policy by disbanding on the form of November 1945 (changed to Vietnam Labor Party 1951). In the North, the Vietnamese nationalist party leaders (Việt Quốc and Việt Cách) followed the Chinese army Chiang Kai-shek to disarm the Japanese from September 14, 1945. After the Communist Party announced its dissolution on 11-11-1945, the Chinese Kuomintang generals (Trương Phát Khuê, Lữ Hán, Tiêu Văn) pressured the DRV to establish in early 1946 a coalition government of Nationalist-Communist resistance in Hanoi led by Hồ Chí Minh. The government included former emperor Bảo Đại (1913-1997), Nguyễn Hải Thần (1878-1959), Huỳnh Thúc Kháng (1876-1947), Nguyễn Tường Tam (1906-1963), Vũ Hồng Khanh (1898-1993). They did not have real power, so the division became even more divided while confronting the French reinforcements preparing to recapture Tonkin to replace Chiang Kai-shek's retreating army (March 3-1946).

Hồ Chí Minh made concessions with France through the Preliminary Treaty of 6-3 and the Provisional Treaty of September 14, 1946 to accept a free Vietnam within the French Union as well as an agreement for French troops to be stationed in the North to replace the army of Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975). After signing the Vietnam-France Agreement, Hồ Chí Minh was criticized by Việt Quốc and Việt Cách for betraying and cooperating with the French. At that time, many Vietnamese were confused about the agreement that paved the way for the French to return to the North. In a meeting of the National Assembly, Hồ Chí Minh explained that the purpose of this agreement was to quickly remove the larger and more permanent threat from Chiang Kai-shek's 20,000 ROC troops. According to Professor S. Suryanarayan of the Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, University of Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India, President Hồ Chí Minh said: “But if the Chinese stay now, they will never go. As for me, I prefer to sniff the French shit for five years than to eat Chinese shit for the rest of my life”.

On January 6, 1946, the Provisional Coalition Government led by President Hồ Chí Minh held a national general election which for the first time elected the National Assembly. The two opposition parties in the government, the Vietnam Nationalist Party (Việt Quốc) and the Vietnam Cách Mạng Đồng Minh Hội (Việt Cách), did not participate in the election. The majority of elected delegates were not Việt Minh members. After the National Assembly was elected, on 2 March 1946, the Resistance Coalition Government was established to replace the Provisional Union Government. In the localities, all levels of coalition government were established in 1946.

Under the agreement with the Việt Minh, the opposition included a number of organizations such as Việt Cách and Việt Quốc, which were supported by the Republic of China, although not participating in it. They still held 70 National Assembly seats (Việt Quốc 50 seats, Việt Cách 20 seats) and a number of positions in the central government due to the Government's policy of harmonizing the parties. At this time, the National Assembly was divided into groups: Marxist,



*Coalition Government*

Việt Minh, Democratic, Socialist, Việt Quốc, Việt Cách, General Confederation of Labor and non-partisan. After that, the first democratic constitution was born, which was the Constitution of November 8, 1946, defining the legal birth of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, guaranteeing democratic freedoms. At the 2nd session of the 1st National Assembly, the National Assembly of the

DRV ratified the Vietnam-France Agreement and voted for Hồ Chí Minh's confidence. Due to the war situation, the 1946 Constitution was not been officially published and never legally enforced.

During its operation, the Government continued to implement measures and policies to maintain the independence of the fledgling democratic Vietnam. The Provisional Union Government was very fragile because of the internal contradictions between the Nationalists and the Communists, in the context that the French colonialists were returning to re-colonize with the help of pro-French Vietnamese. The opposition of the parties displeased Võ Nguyên Giáp because it hindered the Government's efforts to deal with the French, as well as caused the government to constantly be on the lookout for the Chinese military and the risk of a coup d'état ...

The United Resistance Government existed until the event of a fake criminal case at Ôn Như Hầu Street, Hanoi, the Kuomintang headquarters occurred in July 1946 after Chiang Kai-shek's troops withdrew to China. In this incident, Võ Nguyên Giáp (1911-2013) commanded Việt Minh forces to attack the base of Vietnam Nationalist Party, with the aim of killing many VNQDD party members and arresting Nghiêm Kế Tổ and Phan Kích Nam. Also, during this time resistance bases of Nationalist parties everywhere were attacked in order to eliminate parties opposing the Việt Minh such as Việt Quốc, Việt Cách, Đồng Minh Hội, Đại Việt, the Trotskyists, Catholic soldiers... Võ Nguyên Giáp suppressed all these parties with police force and army controlled by the Việt Minh with the help of the French authorities while Hồ Chí Minh was negotiating in France.

Đại Việt leaders Trương Tử Anh (1914-1946), Đại Việt Duy Dân Lý Đông A (1921-1947) were annihilated. Nguyễn Hải Thần and Nguyễn Tường Tam escaped to China. The United Nationalist-Communist coalition ended. This was the first time in the history of independence,

patriotic parties had to use violence to destroy each other. From then on, the communists completely took control of the government, continued to lead the resistance war against the French, build socialism in the North, launch and direct the resistance wars in the South and Central Vietnam.



Nguyễn Tường Tam



Nguyễn Văn Xuân



Trần Văn Hữu

## Chapter 13. France's Plot to Re-colonize

After World War II, the United Nations advised colonial countries to return the independence to colonized countries. The United Nations established the Trusteeship Council proposed by US President Roosevelt to help the colonies regain their independence without bloodshed. However, after World War II, the world entered a period of Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US. Therefore, President Truman changed his strategy and accepted the return of France to Vietnam in order to prevent the Communist wave from spreading to Southeast Asia. According to the Potsdam Conference 2-8-1945, the disarming of Japanese troops from Quảng Nam to the south by the British and to the north by the Chinese. French Prime Minister De Gaulle (1890-1970) privately lobbied with Britain and China (after compromising with Hồ Chí Minh) in order to return to Vietnam to re-establish sovereignty in Indochina.

Immediately after Japan announced its unconditional surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945, the Viet Minh Front immediately seized power and took control of Saigon on August 25. On September 6, just a few days after President Hồ Chí Minh declared the independence of Vietnam, following the British army to Saigon to disarm the Japanese, a company of infantry belonging to the French army of De Gaulle set foot back to Saigon. Six days later, two more companies arrived in Saigon. Arriving in Saigon on September 12, British General Douglas D. Gracey on the one hand banned the Vietnamese from carrying weapons, demanded the disbanding of the revolutionary armed forces, and on the other hand released thousands of French soldiers (who had been detained by the Japanese since March 9, 1945) and armed them. Gracey also imposed martial law, ordered a night curfew, and closed all Vietnamese-language newspapers. French expatriates armed to defend themselves and hunted down Saigon youths. The riots between the French overseas and the Vietnamese occurred in Saigon, causing several hundred deaths and spreading to the provinces.

With British help, on the night of September 22 and 23, the French re-occupied Saigon on September 23, 1945 and the "Southern resistance" of Trần Văn Giàu (1911-2010) broke out. On

September 26, 1945, Major A. Peter Dewey of OSS was mistakenly shot by Vietnamese forces because they thought he was French. This news spread around the world, worsening the image of the DRV. OSS Major Archimedes L.A. Patti, who was working in North Vietnam, commented: "They killed their only friend in Cochinchina and this news certainly will not promote their ideals before the American people." On October 3, 1945, 10,000 French troops led by Leclerc landed in Saigon. On October 9, 1945, France and Britain signed an agreement in London confirming that Britain fully supported France in governing all of Indochina below the 16th parallel.

On the night of October 10, 1945, Vietnamese troops attacked Tân Sơn Nhất airport. Vietnamese forces fought with British and French troops at all the gateways to Saigon. The British asked Japan for help. Reacting to the British use of Japanese troops to attack the Viet Minh forces, American General Douglas Mac Arthur said: *"If there is anything that makes my blood boil, it is the fact that I see our Allied countries in Indochina and Java used the Japanese to oppress these small peoples that we had promised to liberate. It was the most disgusting betrayal."*

The French army gradually expanded the control areas to the provinces and traced to Central Vietnam, so the people evacuated from the cities. In the early months of 1946, French High Commissioner D'Argenlieu established an "autonomous Cochinchina" by Dr. Nguyễn Văn Thinh (1888-1946) (a few months later, he hanged himself because he knew he was being taken advantage of by the French) to create political pressure with the plot to reestablish the colonial separation of Cochinchina from the reunified Vietnam.

The DRV Government faced difficulties with the French troops replacing Chiang's troops to disarm the Japanese, but sought every way to save the peace, prepare the resistance to delay the war through the Preliminary Agreement of March 6, 1946 and President Hồ Chí Minh went to France to negotiate the Vietnam-France Temporary Agreement on September 14, 1946. Phạm Văn Đồng and Nguyễn Lương Bằng went to Việt Bắc to prepare to build a resistance base. Immediately after signing the Preliminary Agreement (March 6, 1946) and the Vietnam-France Temporary Treaty (September 14, 1946), the French colonialists broke the treaty. The encroachment operations of the French army took place continuously in the South and the South Central.

### **Section 13.a. The Việt Minh Nationwide Resistance**

The French side had caused many conflicts both politically and militarily south of the 16th parallel and even north of the 16th parallel in Hanoi and Hải Phòng. On November 20, 1946, Hải Phòng people protested against French customs officers. On the 23rd, the French army, by order of Colonel Dèbes, mobilized 3 warships parked in Cửa Cấm River to shell Hải Phòng, killing

6000 people (reported by Paul Mus and Admiral Battet). Then, on December 18, French general Molière demanded to disarm the Vietnamese soldiers and defend themselves in order to take control of the city. After the failed peace negotiations between the Việt Minh and the French, in December 1946 armed riots broke out in the South, spreading to Hải Phòng, Hanoi, and after seeing that the French did not honestly return independence to Vietnam. and began to re-establish the colonial regime, Hồ Chí Minh's government decided on a nationwide resistance war against the French on December 19, 1946. On December 20 at Hang Trầm (Chương Mỹ District, Hà Tây), the Voice of Vietnam radio broadcast President Hồ Chí Minh's appeal to the nation for resistance. This was considered an order to launch the resistance and the Indochina war began.

At the end of December 1946, after the outbreak of the nationwide resistance war, the DRV central government in turn left Hanoi to the southwest, moved to the provinces of Hà Đông, Sơn Tây, then (in early 1947), moved to the territory of the provinces of Việt Bắc, Thái Nguyên and Tuyên Quang bases, which were selected as the Central Revolutionary Bases. From Việt Bắc, the contact point was gradually connected with regions and localities. From here, the Việt Bắc base became the capital of the country's resistance.

The fighting took place fiercely in the cities north of the 16th parallel (Đà Nẵng). During this war, the Vietnamese Army (National Guard) simultaneously attacked the French positions in the northern cities of Indochina, besieging the French army for many months to allow the government agencies to retreat. The Việt Minh retreated into the mountains and forests to the countryside during the national resistance war against the French with guerrilla warfare. But the Việt Minh was determined to destroy the opposing nationalist elements to monopolize the revolution, so many non-communist revolutionaries gradually separated from the Việt Minh, ending the political union. Simultaneously with the "moving" activity at the beginning of the resistance war was the "scorching earth" activity for the resistance; campaigning and organizing "evacuations" to ensure the lives and property of the people ... The sabotage work for the resistance war took place in the hot revolutionary atmosphere of the masses who destroyed houses, factories, and mines, digging trenches, embankment, erecting obstacles on waterways and roads.

After occupying the Northern Delta and major cities in the North, according to the strategy of "Strike quickly, win quickly", the French launched an autumn-winter offensive in the Việt Bắc war zone in order to destroy the headquarters of the Việt Minh resistance stationed there, completing the recapture of Indochina as well as locking the Vietnam-China border, preventing the Việt Minh from contacting China and excluding all external reinforcements. Việt Minh troops broke this French attack. After this defeat, the French had to switch from the policy of "fighting quickly to win quickly" to fighting long-term with the strategy of "yellowing the war"

- establishing a pro-French government to "use the Vietnamese to fight the Vietnamese, take the war to feed the war". Meanwhile, Việt Minh forces became stronger because they captured a large amount of French equipment. The Việt Bắc Autumn-Winter 1947 campaign was considered the first major victory of the Việt Minh in the war, overturning the French plan of "fighting quickly and winning quickly", forcing France to fall into a passive position.

### **Section 13.b. Anti-Communist Solution: Bảo Đại**

When the war broke out, France used the slogan of "anti-communism", even though they themselves had accepted the Việt Minh not long before. According to historian William Duiker, the French "anti-communist" slogan was actually used to building an indigenous Vietnamese government to counterbalance the Việt Minh to reduce economic and military pressure on France, ensure the interests of France as well as persuade the US to aid so that France can continue to stay in the country. Initially, it was France who negotiated with the Việt Minh and recognized Vietnam as an autonomous country in the French Union by the 1946 Franco-Vietnamese Preliminary Agreement and the Vietnam-France Temporary Treaty. But really, from the very beginning, the French did not intend to respect these Agreements for a long time. France just wanted to retake Indochina as a colony like before. Immediately after signing the Agreements, the French colonialists broke the treaty to establish the "Autonomous Cochinchina Government" (June 1, 1946) led by Nguyễn Văn Thinh, in order to separate Cochinchina from the unified Vietnam. The encroachment operations of the French army took place continuously in the South and the South Central. At the end of 1947 the French re-occupied most of the cities and suspended negotiations with Hồ Chí Minh to establish administration in the Regions with some Vietnamese collaborators

In 1948, national revolutionaries including Nguyễn Tường Tam, Nguyễn Tường Long, Vũ Hồng Khanh, tried to contact Bảo Đại to come up with a solution to build an independent, non-Communist democratic Vietnam. But this attempt was unsuccessful. Bảo Đại refused to cooperate with the national revolutionary parties and this was truly a historic failure. Bảo Đại's cooperation with the pro-French Nguyễn Văn Xuân was a continuation of the unorthodox of Bảo Đại and the Huế court, and created a historical paradox for the later South.

When the guise of Cochinchina failed, the French thought of Bảo Đại's solution to establish a new pro-French government consisting of political groups called "nationalist elements" against the Việt Minh's resistance movement for independence. There were political or religious organizations that once joined the DRV government or cooperated with the Việt Minh against the French, but because the Việt Minh were actually Communists, they switched to support Bảo Đại to establish an anti-communist Vietnam.

On December 7, 1947, at a meeting on board a French warship in Hạ Long Bay, Bảo Đại and France negotiated and signed the Preliminary Treaty of Hạ Long Bay. The Treaty represented the consensus of the two sides on the establishment of the State of Vietnam on the basis of the principle of independence and unity of Vietnam in the French Union.

On June 5, 1948, the Hạ Long proclamation was officially signed, whereby France recognized the independence of Vietnam, including three Regions under the leadership of Bảo Đại (1913-1997) but the Vietnamese State did not have economic, diplomatic and military autonomy. The nation of Vietnam joined with France against the Việt Minh. Since then, the symbol of the free nation is "Yellow Flag with Three Red Stripes" and the national anthem "Citizen's Call" was adapted from the song "National march" by Lưu Hữu Phước, a Cần Thơ native and a student of Hanoi University who composed in mid-1941 in Hanoi.

## **Chapter 14. Vietnam - France Battle with Việt Minh 1946-1955**

The multi-party Nationalist government in Saigon with many cabinet changes in association with France was recognized by the Anglo-American aid. Up to the beginning of 1950, there were 35 countries that recognized Vietnam. The Việt Minh Communist Party's government in the war zone was supported by the recognized Soviet-Chinese bloc. Since 1950, in addition to the massive military aid from the Soviet Union, the Việt Minh became stronger when it was supported by Mao Zedong in all aspects after the victory over Chiang Kai-shek in early 1949 and captured the mainland. After World War II, colonialism began to end. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, born in 1948, guarantees human rights, and the United Nations advocates the dissolution of colonial rule and guarantees the right of national self-determination.

The nation of Vietnam at its inception (December 7, 1947) was very weak because important military and diplomatic rights were dominated by the French and the highest authority was in fact the French High Commissioner. The independence of the state was questioned as much of its maintenance was financed by French aid, as the army had no senior Vietnamese commanding officers. The French simply put the newly recruited soldiers into the French expeditionary corps, which were commanded by French officers. The two most important issues, diplomacy and the military of this government, were still held by France.

### **Section 14.a. Communist Region – Nationalist Region**



At the end of June 1949, Vietnam was officially unified under the management of the State of Vietnam, but in reality, many regions of Vietnam were under the administration of the DRV. But opposing ideological disputes created two parallel governments that took the rural-urban boundary and were based on two nationalist-communist regimes with two different lives, material and spiritual. Việt Minh areas belonged in mountainous and remote areas, far from urban centers. The remaining regions, including urban centers and traffic arteries, were controlled by France. In the contested areas, "the day belongs to the Republic of Vietnam and the night to the Việt Cộng (VC)."

Although all state functions were transferred by France, the Vietnamese nation still had to depend on aid and protection from the French army to maintain operations. The French deliberately delayed the implementation of the Élysée Compromise with the State of Vietnam. The French army continued to be present throughout the narrow alleys and participated in the war in Vietnam with administrative staff continuing to work at all levels of government; The State of Vietnam was not given any real power, as it was then said, the State of Vietnam was only a disguise for French rule.

France's plan to re-colonize was thwarted because of the new world order that emerged after World War II and the end of world colonialism. Meanwhile, France was exhausted by World War II and France's opponent in Vietnam today was no longer a lowly 19th-century Vietnam, but a Vietnam armed with a high degree of patriotism with communists who had been trained by Stalin since the 1930s. In addition, the war situation in Vietnam changed after Mao Zedong finished occupying the mainland in 1949. The Việt Minh used southern China as a rearguard base for troops, training soldiers by Russian-Chinese advisors as well as the logistics corridor to the Việt Bắc war zone and the contact line for international support that received the most aid from the Soviet Union. From then on, Việt Minh forces consisting of 6-7 divisions received military training in China before returning to fight in Vietnam and were augmented with Chinese military advisers (led by General Trần Canh next to Hồ Chí Minh) directly participated in the battlefield.

Domestically, from 1948 to the autumn of 1950, the resistance war continuously won great victories in all aspects. The guerrilla war movement was spreading. The armed groups propagated and independently advanced into the French occupied areas, together with local cadres and people to build resistance bases. The armed forces had been completely built up, including main forces, local troops and guerrilla militia. The people's struggle movement developed strongly, especially in cities and towns.

Along with the growth of the socialist countries, the national liberation movement continued to develop. The movement for peace and democracy is also spreading. In France, the movement against the French colonial war in Indochina was growing stronger.

### **Section 14.b. Financed by the US**

Facing that situation, the French colonialists found it difficult to continue the war without the help of the US. Therefore, despite the conflict with the US, the French colonialists were still forced to rely on the US and beg for aid to pursue the war of aggression in Indochina. After the French failed at the order front, the US increased aid to France and intervened more deeply in the Indochina war, in order to prevent the communist movement from spreading to Southeast Asia, step by step replacing France and monopolizing Indochina.

General Navarre, former commander of Indochina, commented: *"Through the painful experience of China and especially Korea, the Americans realized the danger of Communist expansion in Southeast Asia, but they knew it was 5 years late"*. With China as the world's most populous country becoming communist, the Cold War turned bitter and the US decided to block the communist advance into Southeast Asia. The US stepped in to stop the international communist movement, which initially increased funding for French troops in Vietnam. The French government began to want to find an acceptable peaceful solution to end the war, but on the other hand wanted to maintain its interests in Indochina.

France appointed General Henri Navarre Commander-in-Chief to Indochina to seek a military victory for a peaceful discussion based on strength. The French economy at that time was barely able to bear the costs of the war in Indochina and France had to resort to both economic and military help from the US. By the end of 1953, the Indochina War had lasted 8 years, the French army was in a passive position and was sinking deeper and deeper into defeat on almost all battlefields. Meanwhile, the DRV had established extremely solid control over large areas in the Central Highlands, Central Vietnam, the Cao-Bắc-Lạng provinces... and many areas in the Northern Delta.

On July 24, 1953, Prime Minister Nguyễn Văn Tâm was invited to the US by President Dwight D. Eisenhower. At the end of July, Eisenhower decided to spend 400 million USD for Indochina to organize an army. The US provided \$385 million in aid to France for the year 1953. The US promised in 1954 to double its aid to France in Indochina. As a result, by 1954, 73% of France's war expenses in Indochina were paid for by the US. At this time, at all levels in the French expeditionary army there were American advisers. France's too much dependence on America caused General Henri Navarre to complain in his memoirs: *"Our position has changed*

to that of a mere mercenary for America". Navarre also wrote: "*The French war of aggression against the French Communist parties is a dirty war. For others it is a humiliating war, a war that cannot be named.*"

### **Section 14.c. Điện Biên Campaign**

By 1954, the war situation was too overwhelming, the military collapsed, the French army was besieged at Điện Biên Phủ and failed everywhere. On January 1, 1954 in Berlin during a meeting to discuss German reunification by Britain, France, Russia, and the US, Russian Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov (1890-1986) offered to help France arrange an armistice in Indochina, in return for France's withdrawal from NATO. Russia requested the participation of China in the second round of negotiations to take place in April 1954 in Geneva with the Indochina agenda added. Thus, the offensive began in mid-March. It was from this time that Beijing increased its maximum aid to the Việt Minh so that Zhou Enlai reached Geneva with the



*Võ Nguyên Giáp and Vị Quốc Thanh at ĐBP*

upper hand. Therefore, after being bogged down at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954, France had to decide to end its colonial dream in Indochina. The French colonialists were unable to pacify Vietnam despite years of fighting and with growing US support, and they were no longer able to continue fighting in Vietnam.

The war entered the 8th year proved that France had only one way to find an "honorable exit", otherwise it would give Indochina to the US and lose all its rights. Bảo Đại had to choose people from the Huế court to steer the country. In January 1954, Prince Bửu Lộc was chosen as prime minister to replace Nguyễn Văn Tâm, and in June 1954, Ngô Đình Diệm, a former minister and dissident under the French colonial rule, was chosen to serve as prime minister, replacing Bửu Lộc due to pressure from the American Catholic community itself (Cardinals Francis Spellman, Senator Mike Mansfield, and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles) as well as the activity of nationalist factions of sects and parties in Saigon (National Solidarity Congress and Conference in 1953) led by Ngô Đình Nhu of the National Trade Union Movement. Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm returned to the country and launched the New Government on 7th July 1954. Two weeks later, the Geneva Conference ended with the Armistice Agreement in Indochina signed on July 20, 1954.

Around mid-1992, during a talk by Bảo Đại at a school in France, journalist Phan Văn Trường recorded and translated from French as follows: " *Mr. Diệm is a person I trust. At that time the French power had failed. The communist side was actively supported by the Soviet*



*Bảo Đại*

*Union in all aspects, so I advised Mr. Diệm to seek the support of the US to be able to stop the expansion of the communists. His flipping me was due to political pressure. Diệm is a patriot. When giving power, I asked him to commit to me two things before the altar of God, because he was very religious, that he had to hold on to the South, and if he couldn't do that, he had to give the power back to me. But then he died in the line of duty. Anyway, he tried to keep those promises but couldn't."*

Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm took charge of the State of Vietnam in 1954 with the full support of the US in the context of the world's transition from antagonism between the colonial regime and the independence movement to antagonism between Freedom and the Communists.



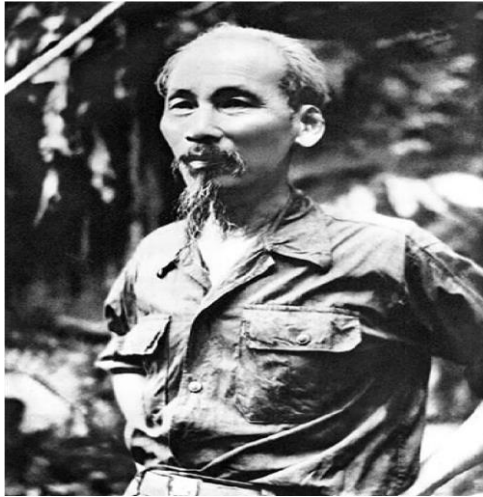
*Ngô Đình Diệm*

The battlefield between the Việt Minh (communist) and Vietnam-France (nationalist) was fierce, with terrorist attacks, assassinations, and bloody accusations occurring frequently, so the population consisted of the majority of intellectuals and experts who participated in the resistance and migrated to urban areas and national regions. Non-communist nationalist patriots, bourgeoisie and village officials were killed by the Việt Minh every day, scaring and appalling the people. Since then, people had always come to the nationalist areas for refuge or relief. The battlefield spread to Laos and Cambodia and became more and more fierce. The issue of Vietnam was

internationalized, abandoning the Vietnamese people's autonomy and wishes. Việt Minh leaders said that it was only a matter of time before the US directly intervened in the Indochina war. The Việt Minh also predicted that, if the Korean situation temporarily stabilized, the US would focus on anti-Communist efforts in Indochina.

In order to maintain the initiative on both fronts across the country and all of Indochina and to step up guerrilla warfare in the regions behind the enemy, the Việt Minh's 1953 - 1954 Winter-Spring strategic offensive was promoted in order to prepare the material and spiritual conditions for the Điện Biên Phủ campaign. After failing to achieve a plot to protect the Northwestern and Upper Laos battlefields and also failing to prevent the Việt Minh's offensive

plan in the Winter-Spring 1953-1954, the French Army Command in Indochina decided to accept the fighting with the main force in the forest battlefield in the northwest of Vietnam. Therefore,



*Hồ Chí Minh*

from the beginning of December 1953, General Navarre advocated to build Điện Biên Phủ into a stronghold that became a strategic decisive point between the Việt Minh and the French. Here, Major General De Castries hoped to hold off the Việt Minh to destroy them, rest assured that due to the bumpy mountain road, the Việt Minh could not deliver heavy artillery. Then after 48 hours, the trap set in Điện Biên Phủ against the Việt Minh returned to close the French Union army.

During the Berlin conference in January-February 1954 between the US-Britain-France-Russia discussing Goryeo, French Foreign Minister Bidault proposed to discuss the Indochina issue further and was agreed by all four countries to welcome both Korea and Vietnam during the next meeting in Geneva (Lake Lemman) on April 26, 1954 while the battle of Điện Biên Phủ was taking place. Before that, in March 1954, Mao decided to reach an armistice in Vietnam, but did not tell the Communist Party of Vietnam but gave the impression to the Communist leaders to continue fighting to put political pressure on the conference in Geneva.

Since the end of March 1954, the White House had been studying a plan to rescue the North Vietnamese by massive bombing with nearly 100 B-29 heavy bombers, each carrying 9 tons of bombs and 400 fighter planes. The plan got the code name Vultures. President Eisenhower wanted to consult Congress because the Truman government's experience in the war in Korea did not bring it to Congress, which was criticized.

This plan was reported by historians Bernard Fall and Philippe Devillers in the 1960s. On Saturday, April 3, 1954, eight representatives of US Congress were invited to the US State Department for a secret conference with the government representatives. Senator Lyndon Johnson (Texas) demanded a military coalition, and the other representatives of Congress agreed with Johnson, so it was considered that he played the main role in preventing the rescue operation by bombing in the area when the situation was extremely dangerous and there was no time to form a military alliance. On the morning of April 23, French Foreign Minister Bidault gave US Secretary of State Dulles a new letter from Navarre, saying that Điện Biên Phủ (ĐBP) was about to collapse. To prevent that disaster, the only way was to massively bomb (including the use of nuclear bombs), could the US reconsider the plan of the Vultures?



General Henri Navarre



Major Gen. Christian De Castries

The final tragedy was the meeting of President Eisenhower, Admiral Radford, Chairman of the General Staff and some senior officials on April 29 in Washington, when they reviewed the whole situation again. In the military community, only Admiral Radford still fully supported even unilateral intervention (without the need for Congress approval) to save ĐBP. The Commander of the Navy, Admiral Carney, and General Twining, Air Force chief, were not enthusiastic about this plan. General Ridgway, the US Army Commander completely opposed the plan, and finally President Eisenhower decided not to help the French. ĐBP fell on May 7.

The ĐBP battle lasted from March 13 to May 7, 1954. France surrendered after the US President rejected Navarre's plan to rescue it. The PAVN forces were commanded by General Võ Nguyên Giáp with the support of Mao's army led by Senior General Vĩ Quốc Thanh. China had provided substantial human and material resources immediately after the Korean armistice in May 1953. It was Vĩ Quốc Thanh who personally gave Hồ Chí Minh the top secret "Navarre plan" obtained from France. Because of this intelligence coup, the French army at Điện Biên Phủ had to surrender on May 7, 1954 after 2 months of fighting. 11,721 prisoners were captured, including 3,091 Vietnamese soldiers.

This was the biggest military victory in Vietnam's resistance war against the French (1945-1954). The next day, May 8, 1954, President Hồ Chí Minh sent a letter of commendation: "The victory is great, but it is just the beginning. We resolutely resist the war to fight for independence, unification, democracy and peace. Any struggle, military or diplomatic, must be long and arduous to achieve complete victory..." Then, President Hồ Chí Minh came to meet and congratulate the General Staff and General Võ Nguyên Giáp. Here, with political experience, he said a congratulatory sentence with an accurate prediction: "Congratulations to Uncle [Võ Nguyên Giáp] on winning the battle. But don't be subjective, we still have to fight the US. Sooner or later, we will fight against the US who will also jump into Indochina to replace France". Indeed, as President Hồ Chí Minh said, it took less than a year for the US to officially jump into Vietnam to replace France.

The victorious Việt Minh put pressure on the Conference on Lake Lemman, which was then meeting to discuss a ceasefire in Indochina. This conference was initially probed by French Foreign Minister J. Bidault with Russian Foreign Minister Molotov after the breakdown of the

US-Russia-France-China quartet in the early months of 1954 in Geneva. Then, both sides, Russia and the US, responded to the call for peace from the international public, representatives of the Việt Minh, China, and Russia met with representatives of Britain, France, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Laos. On June 23, Zhou Enlai met with French Prime Minister Pierre Mendès to discuss an armistice plan. Zhou Enlai expressed that if Vietnam wanted to continue fighting, they must rely on their own strength, the CCP would not help anymore. Hồ Chí Minh had to accept and Phạm Văn Đồng had to sign with tears in his eyes. On the night of July 20, 1954 at dawn on the 21st, France and the Việt Minh came to the conclusion of a cease-fire agreement, which is now known as the Geneva Agreement. Since then, the Communist Party of Vietnam no longer believed in the Chinese Communist Party. And France began to expand its embargo on China and out of NATO.

Thereby, the victory of the People's Republic of Vietnam in the Điện Biên Phủ Campaign is also considered a milestone marking the complete failure of France in its efforts to rebuild Indochina colony in particular and their colonial empire in general after World War II. The French government was forced to negotiate and withdraw from Indochina. With the conviction strongly encouraged by this victory, the French colonies in Africa also rose up in unison. In 1960 alone, 17 African countries gained their independence, and by 1967, France was forced to give independence to most of the former colonies.

## Part 8. The 17th Parallel (Hiền Lương River) divided North and South



*17th Parallel and Hiền Lương River-Bến Hải Bridge*

The political struggle full of tricks and the fierce war between the two groups of Nationalist - Communist was led from the capitals of France - Russia - China and ended up with the Geneva Accord to stop the hostilities on July 20, 1954 with the signature of Tạ Quang Bửu (1910-1986) and Henri Delteil. But the US and Vietnam (foreign minister Trần Văn Đổ) did not

sign and issued a declaration of protest after the French surrendered to the Việt Minh at Điện Biên Phủ. Germany and North Korea were both in the same situation before.

## **Chapter 15. Geneva Agreement 1954. Migration**

The agreement to divide Vietnam in half took the 17th parallel of the Hiền Lương River and the Bến Hải Bridge as the boundary. The Geneva Agreement resulted in Vietnam being temporarily divided into two military gathering zones. North of the 17th parallel was the gathering place of the Vietnam People's Army, and south of the 17th parallel was the gathering place of the French Army and the Vietnamese National Army (at this time the Vietnamese National Army was still under the command of France). According to the Geneva Agreement, the military forces of each party to the war would withdraw from the territory of the other side. The initial division was temporary, and a general election was planned in 1956 to unify the two regions under one government. The North was under the jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the leadership of President Hồ Chí Minh (1890-1969) and the Labor Party. The South was under the jurisdiction of the State of Vietnam under the leadership of the Head of State Bảo Đại.

The army of the French Union gathered in the South to withdraw to the country. The First Indochina War 1946-1954 was a war between the Việt Minh and France with the support of the National Government of Vietnam, led by the Head of State Bảo Đại and shaped by the French. When the French lost the battle at Điện Biên Phủ, they gave independence to the Bảo Đại government.

With a two-way parallel migration in about 10 months, when the war in Indochina had just ended, it is a rare event for about 1/3 of the total population to move in such a short time in the history of Vietnam and the world. There were more than 1 million people from the North to the South, including those in the French government and military system in the North, the vast majority of Catholic parishioners, some businessmen, some civil servants, engineers and doctors. ... For university students, the French High Command reserved 12 flights on August 12 and 13 bringing about 1200 students from the North to the South. It is estimated that only about one-third stayed and two-thirds chose to migrate.

For Ngô Đình Diệm's government, the migration of a large number of people to the South was a great success, considered as proof of resistance to the DRV government, convincing evidence of the Americans, and this force would support his government. In fact, the CIA and

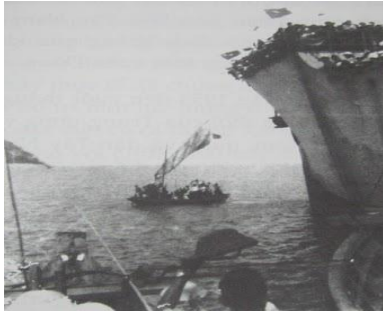


the Ngô Đình Diệm government took advantage of religious beliefs and instilled fear to increase the number of people entering the South. After that, the migrants received American aid even more than the local population (100 USD, higher than the average annual income of the Southerners). Among those who migrated from the North to the South in 1954, the Catholics had received maximum privileges. As a result, migrants must declare themselves Catholic in order to receive government help.

Edward Lansdale, commander of the US psychological warfare campaign in Vietnam, described it as follows: *“If in the years 1949-1953, the priests turned the gentle laity into passionate soldiers thanks to the slogan "Destroy the Communists", they did not have any difficulty in creating the "Great Exodus" in the years 1954-1955. It is obvious that Vietnamese peasants are much more attached to the land of their ancestors, to the house, to the garden, to the church and to the village than peasants in other countries. But they dared to give up everything to defend their faith, especially when their pastors assured them that in the South there was a Catholic prime minister (Ngô Đình Diệm) waiting for them and will give them fertile lands to work in. And once the masses are gone, nothing can stop them.”*. In fact, Lansdale and his subordinate Lucien Conein tried to create a force to support Prime Minister Diệm at the moment, the strongest being Catholics from the North.

After nearly a million people in the North migrated and crossed the line into the South to seek freedom, the Northern society was closed with a very small number of Southern militiamen who officially gathered to the North because of their exposure (less than 1/10 of the number of people from the North migrated to the South). After consolidating power in the previous coalition government, the Vietnamese Communists began to destroy opposing forces. In the North, after the country was split in two, the Vietnam Kuomintang (KMT) was considered an enemy of the revolution and was aggressively pursued. After that, the entire VNKMT in the North was completely annihilated. Many Việt Minh participants who were falsely accused of belonging to the Kuomintang were also executed during the Land Reform. During that time, in the South, the Trotskyist intellectual group also did not escape through the local Third International Communist Party members. The Fourth International Patriotic Revolutionaries and many other Nationalist leaders were assassinated and annihilated by the Communist Party of Vietnam, respectively.

Polish Ship Kilinsky carrying Lê Duẩn, soldiers and children left the wharf at Ông Đốc river bank, Cà Mau, (Later Lê Duẩn returned)



The American ship migrants to the South

"Open Mouth" carried

## Chapter 16. North: Democratic Republic of Vietnam 1954-1976

After the Geneva Agreement on July 20, 1954, dividing the country into two halves, in the North, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the communist regime applied the proletarian revolution, land reform, class struggle, and extermination of dissent and antagonism. The Workers' Party, despite the Hồ Chí Minh government's promise to respect private property rights in the 1946 constitution, began to bring the proletarian revolution of Stalin and Mao Zedong into society.

### Section 16.a. Land Reforms (1953–1956)

The land reforms were planned in the letter dated October 30 and 31, 1952 by Hồ Chí Minh asking for instructions from Stalin. The Law on "Land Reform" was officially signed and promulgated by the President of the DRV, Hồ Chí Minh, on December 19, 1953 and lasted for



Children denounced Parents during Land Reform

3 years until 1957. This was a campaign aimed at correcting the party forces, which were in their infancy at that time, it was co-composed by Mr. Hồ himself and two Chinese comrades Liu Shao Shi and Văn Sha San.

Karl Marx once said: "The *land revolution is a condition for national liberation*". The revolution, described as "extremely violent day and night", was a catastrophic

failure of the policy of applying the dictatorship of the proletariat to reform a society that had just escaped the yoke of French colonial slavery. Many months after the campaign to reduce rent was launched, the program of land restitution officially began, with a similar form but in a larger area, and the landowners' families with history of resistance, including the Party members, cadres and soldiers serving in the resistance war were also denounced. Denunciation was a program to destroy the feudal social order causing many serious injustices. In total, there were five rounds of land reform from 1953 to 1956 in 3,314 communes.

The first person accused of dying in land reform was a woman, Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Nam of Thái Nguyên, a patriotic resistance landowner who had made great contributions to the Vietnamese revolution through an article published in Nhân Dân newspaper on July 21, 1953



*Mrs. Nguyễn thị Nam and children*

"Evil Landowner" by C.B. (Hồ Chí Minh) about the exploitation of Mrs. Nam. Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Nam, owner of Cát Thanh Long shop in Hanoi, was the adoptive mother of Lê Đức Thọ, Phạm Văn Đồng and Trường Chinh, whose only son was a regiment commander of a regiment of the Vietnam People's Army. During the Golden Week, her family also donated 100 taels of gold to the newly established government. Nguyễn Thị Nam's patriotic

actions were considered "false to go deep and climb into the ranks of the revolution to sabotage it". And she was condemned with the crime of "evil bourgeois landowners" and told her crimes as "killing 32 families including 200 people + killing 14 peasants + torturing and beating dozens of peasants...". Accordingly, Mrs. Nguyễn Thị Nam "colluded with France and Japan to sabotage the resistance". She was shot and killed on July 9, 1953 in Đồng Diệm, Thái Nguyên province.



*Nguyễn Mạnh Tường and Hoàng Xuân Hãn*

Lawyer Nguyễn Mạnh Tường, a former member of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, reiterated the basic principles of action with the slogan *"It is better to kill ten innocent people than to leave one enemy"*.

On October 30, 1956 at a meeting of the Fatherland Front in Hanoi, Nguyễn Mạnh Tường, as a member of the Fatherland Front, gave a speech that deeply analyzed the mistakes in land reform and set out directions to avoid making mistakes again at the request of Tố Hữu, Trường Chinh and Xuân Thủy. Because of this statement, Professor Nguyễn Mạnh Tường was stripped of all his positions and professional titles and had to live in poverty as an "excluded person" (the title of his autobiographical book published in 1992 in France). Thanks to Professor Hoàng Xuân Hãn's intervention, Lawyer Tường's life was completely spared (according to Hòa Khánh - Motherland).

The Communist Party's main directive proposes to completely exterminate all landowners. Accordingly, the landlord class is the enemy of the Party and the people, and must be destroyed. Therefore, the landowners can be shot on the spot or sentenced to prison and die in prison. When accused of being landowners, many people committed suicide because of resentment or to avoid corporal punishment. As a result, hundreds of thousands of victims were deprived of their property, thousands of people were executed for their possessions, and many patriots were killed for being falsely accused of being the Kuomintang, and being treasonous, traitor activists, fraudsters, strongmen... The total number of people who were victims in the Land Reform was 172,008 people; the number of people being wrongly accused was 123,266 people, accounting for 71.66% (according to Communist Party documents).

On August 18, 1956, President Hồ Chí Minh wrote a letter of apology to the people. Trường Chinh Đặng Xuân Khu (denounced his mother until she committed suicide) was dismissed. On October 29, 1956 - a big meeting at the Hanoi People's Theater, General Võ Nguyên Giáp on behalf of President Hồ Chí Minh and the Party Central Committee officially acknowledged serious mistakes in the Land Reform. Prime Minister Võ Văn Kiệt commented: "In the end, although fighting and reforming land has brought *some benefits to peasants and poor peasants, but the price to pay is very high, strongly affecting the prestige of the Labor Party as well as the politics and economy of the country.*"

The Land Reform Campaign has distributed 810,000 acres of arable land among 2,000,000 farming families in the lowlands and midlands, or 72.8% of farming families. However, peasants' private ownership of land was only temporary, because in 1958, the Party Central Committee decided to collectivize the whole according to the rural development plan: the 1959 Constitution established collective ownership. In the 1980 Constitution, the private property rights of farmers completely disappeared, and the State took ownership of land throughout Vietnam.

### **Section 16b. Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm (1955-1958)**

Next, the Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm (two magazines Humanism and Fine Art) case aimed to silence the voices of the intelligentsia and the artists for democracy. In February 1955, about 30 artists in the Vietnam People's Army wrote a "Draft proposal for a cultural policy" that included giving artistic leadership to artists. The semi-monthly magazine "Humanism" of which Phan Khôi was the Chairman, and the journal "Fine Art" by Hoàng Cầm and Lê Đạt published in Hanoi the articles "Criticism of cultural leaders" and "We interview Lawyer Nguyễn Mạnh Tường on the issue of expanding freedom and democracy", "Remarks on the guarantees of freedom and democracy in the 1946 Vietnamese Constitution". The poem "Definitely Victory" by Trần Dần in Giai Phẩm Spring was more than 300 sentences long; the poem depicted the

scene of the North being taken over by the communists for more than a year, but it had been melancholy, dark, and infinitely miserable. People migrated to the South in droves. Those who remained suffered so much pain.

The political tendency of "Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm" went from criticizing the mistakes and shortcomings of the Party and Government in implementing land reform, economic management, political security, and freedoms on democracy, on culture and art, to deny the leadership of the Party on the cultural and artistic front, the Party's sole leadership in politics and the State. By the end of 1956, some of the leaders of "Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm" had expressed their anti-Party and anti-regime tendencies more and more openly. Nhân Văn Newspaper No. 6 has an article calling for people to take to the streets to protest. On December 15, 1956, the City Administrative Committee issued a decision to suspend and ban the circulation of Nhân Văn newspaper. Facing the failures of policies in the North, the Communist Party's internal affairs were in danger of division. Hồ Chí Minh, Lê Duẩn (1907-1986) and Lê Đức Thọ (1911-1990) quickly annihilated reform voices through the "Revision Case". The operation of "Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm" was terminated. In total, Nhân Văn had published 5 issues and Giai Phẩm 4 issues (March, April, October and December 1956) before they had to be discontinued.

The document titled "The gang of Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm before the court of public opinion" published by Truth Publishing House (now the National Political Publishing House), printed in June 1959, in Hanoi, is a collection of articles or speeches denouncing, condemning, accusing Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm. The book has a small chapter reprinting the "confessions" of the members of Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm, and the whole is devoted to the prosecution's "detection of guilt", with extremely rude words that are hard to imagine from the mouth or from the pen of the so-called "literary and artist" world to their colleagues and friends who have participated in Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm. It records a period when human personality has reached the depths of alienation.

In the renovation period after 1996, when the wartime situation had passed, a number of artists who had participated in Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm but had little relevance or wrote a review to admit their mistakes, were awarded important prizes but some have died of old age. In fact, from 1958 to 1996, the case of Nhân Văn-Giai Phẩm was "resolved", because before that from the Đổi Mới era, everything was restored but not publicly: musician Văn Cao, painter Bùi Xuân Phái, philosopher Trần Đức Thảo, Lê Đạt, Nguyễn Hữu Đang, Trần Dần, Phùng Quán, Hoàng Cầm...

In September 1953, Khrushchev was elected first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's pacifist approach was opposed by

China, under Mao Zedong, and called it "Revisionism". After the 1954 Geneva accords, the Peace View was a détente strategy of the socialist camp led by the Soviet Union. The communists were divided into two groups:

- **“pro-Soviet”**: Hồ Chí Minh and Võ Nguyên Giáp (accepting Khrushchev's revisionist policy (advocating peaceful living with the Republic of Vietnam))
- **"pro-China"**: wants to pursue the tough policy of Mao Zedong (organize immediately the war to liberate the South). General Nguyễn Chí Thanh once made a speech criticizing the Soviet Union and the "peaceful" group. Faced with that need, in October 1954, the Southern Party Committee was established by Lê Duẩn - Politburo member as Secretary.

In January 1959, the 15th Conference of the Party Central Committee (Term 2) affirmed that the basic development path of the southern revolution was the way of using revolutionary violence to liberate the South, completing the people's democratic national revolution. Since 1960, after it became certain that the Geneva accords could not be enforced, armed struggle became the predominant form of struggle. The conflict between Lê Duẩn's group and its critics peaked at the Ninth Plenum in 1963 and then accelerated with the arrests of many people in Hanoi in 1967. Most of the key figures were arrested. They were all secretaries of Hồ Chí Minh or effective assistants of General Giáp. Since 1964, the resolution on "international issues and anti-modern revisionism" with the Campaign against "judgmentalism modernist" and “revisionist elements” within the Labor Party in 1964 through the Anti-Party Revision Case:

- Lê Duẩn and Lê Đức Thọ wanted to use "revisionist danger" to bring down General Võ Nguyên Giáp - "because it is too dangerous to attack Giáp personally, Lê Duẩn targeted the general's supporters, especially the closest and most loyal people in the senior ranks of the Party and the government.”
- Lê Duẩn, Lê Đức Thọ or Nguyễn Chí Thanh thought that their Việt Minh comrades who remained in the South were being persecuted, so they did not accept the idea of peace, because that would be to abandon their comrades.

It is a competition between the aspiration for national reunification on the one hand within the framework of a patriotic alliance and the revolutionary aspirations of the masses on the other side and the power of violent revolution. Initially, fearing the loss of Soviet support, Lê Duẩn's team was careful not to make public statements that reflected anti-Soviet and pro-Mao attitudes. However, Khrushchev lost his position as General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1964, American troops landed in the South, and the North began to be bombed

in 1965 – developments that brought Hanoi and Moscow closer together. Since then, Lê Duẩn and his allies had felt confident enough to pursue their campaign to eliminate revisionism more openly and vehemently. Besides, in order to reverse the mistakes, the Communist Party of Vietnam must once again raise the national flag, build a war machine, and wage a war of reunification with the support of the Soviet Union and China. The DRV sent many experienced cadres with battlefield knowledge to the South to lead the Việt Minh movement to secretly organize in the south or operate in the enemy's ranks (Nguyễn Văn Linh, Nguyễn Chí Thanh, Phạm Hùng ...).

### **Section 16c. Logistics for the Southern Battlefield**

After the war, the country was divided in two, the economy was devastated by war, natural disasters occurred continuously, the political and social situations were complicated. The North embarked on economic recovery, overcoming the consequences of war and reforming the economy according to socialism. After 6 years (1954-1960) of restoring and renovating, the North's economy was relatively recovered, hunger was repelled, and people's living standards were gradually improved.

In January 1959, when the hope of implementing the Geneva Agreement was gone, at the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo and Việt Minh cadres had just come out of the South (led by Lê Duẩn) issued Resolution 15. The Politburo allowed the remaining resistance cadres in the South to organize armed activities concurrently with mass political mobilization. General Võ Nguyên Giáp decided to establish the 559th Group to open a trail along the Trường Sơn Range to respond to the revolutionary movement of South Vietnam. Thanks to the opening of the Trường Sơn road, the revolutionary movement and guerrilla activities in the South developed very strongly. After 4 years, the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam had established a number of regimental level units and then the divisions (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th, 7th Division) was replaced by the North main force.

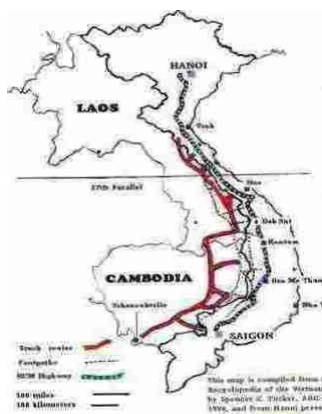
In September 1960, the Third Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam of the Vietnam Workers' Party identified two strategic tasks of the Vietnamese revolution during the period when the country was temporarily divided into two regions: building socialism in the

North and struggle for reunification of the whole country. Since 1960, the Northern war machine has swallowed up a whole generation of young people under the party's flag, the national flag, and the socialist national flag in the name of the National Liberation Front (NLF) with



unconditional aid from Russia and China. The North sent troops to invade the South determined to "born in the North and die in the South" to "resist the US to save the country", "liberate the South" and fulfill its "international duty" "fighting the enemy for Russia-China" through the Laos-Cambodia corridor. In 1964, with the approval of the Politburo, General Võ Nguyên Giáp secretly sent Nguyễn Chí Thanh and Lê Trọng Tấn to the Southeast battlefield to command the South Vietnamese Liberation Army.

To increase its logistical capacity, the DRV attempted to organize the production of parts of weapons and vehicles on its own. They had been doing this since 1957 to reduce dependence on aid. During the three years from 1973 to 1975, the DRV produced 3,409 tons of weapons and ammunition, 1,863 tons of vehicle and machine parts and 26,074 tons of other military equipment. Relying on aid and on their own, by mid-1974, the DRV-RSVN had rebuilt its economy with a total amount equal to the level of 1965.



During the 30 years of national liberation struggle, the Việt Minh, the People's Army of Vietnam and the people of the North had built an increasingly strong system of bases and rear areas throughout

the country with different levels, including: the country's large rear, direct rear in key strategic directions and bases on each battlefield, with a communication and transportation network connecting the rear with the front lines, connecting the rear with the battlefields. It is a service system consisting of 5 ways:

1/ **Trường Sơn Road or Hồ Chí Minh Trail**, also known by soldiers during the war as the Fire Route. Some parts of the Trường Sơn Road have existed for centuries in the form of primitive trails for regional trade. The area that the system passes through is already one of the most rugged terrains in Southeast Asia: high mountains, few people, tropical jungle.

At the end of 1959, the North secretly conducted exploration and development of a strategic supply route on the Trường Sơn mountain range. This would be a strategic transportation route to ensure that war needs would be expanded later in the South. During the



early years of the Indochina War, the Việt Minh used this trail system as a link connecting the North to the South, one of the routes to bring cadres to move between the two regions to avoid the sweep of the French army. In order to live up to the intention of invading the South by force, in May 1959, the Communist Party of Vietnam set up the 559 Corps to transfer people and weapons to the south. The mission of Group 559 is to build and maintain a system of infiltration roads in Laos, extending from the Mụ Già pass (and then from the cross-border passes in Quảng Bình and Vĩnh Linh) down to the provinces in the northeastern part of Cambodia (about Katum, Bù Gia Mập, on the RVN side).

From 1959 to 1965, the means of transport on the way to infiltrate the Hồ Chí Minh (HCM) Trail were human power, bicycles, elephants, or buffaloes. But in the dry season of 1965 (the dry season in Lower Laos started in October and lasted until the end of April), the Communist Party of Vietnam decided to mechanize the means of transport — using vehicles to transport and the communist road system spread out everywhere in Laos. The road passes through 20 provinces from North to South; run through Laos and Cambodia; from the East Trường Sơn to the West Trường Sơn, from the Central Highlands to the East and Southwest. The Trường Sơn strategic transportation route was built step by step reaching west of Trị Thiên, west of Military Region V, through the Central Highlands and to the Southeast.

Since then, this road has continued to be expanded, developing into a strategic transportation system, including 16,000 km of motorways with many vertical and horizontal axes connecting the battlefields and nearly 1,400 km of the petroleum transport pipe. On this arterial road, millions of soldiers and young people from the North went to the South to fight the enemy; millions of tons of materials and technical weapons were sent to the battlefields to support the resistance war in the South and the liberation war in Laos and Cambodia. This route is not only a transportation route, but also a strategic direction to the West with the scale of a military zone, a battlefield - a construction site that continuously fights and builds day and night. With the spirit of "fight the enemy and go, open the way to advance", despite millions of tons of bombs and bullets of the US.

The Trường Sơn road system developed into a complex network of dirt roads (some places paved with stones or wooden planks) about 5.5 m wide, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and truck parking lots ... There are also warehouses, storage yards, barracks, hospitals, and other facilities. All are concealed from aerial view by a system of natural and man-made camouflage that is constantly expanding and reinforcing.

To stop the Trail, the US had Agent Orange and a number of other herbicides sprayed in many forest areas on Trường Sơn Road to strip the leaves and kill the plants. Rain-making projects and mud-forming chemicals were also used by the US. Agent Orange is the name for a type of herbicide and defoliant used by the US military in Vietnam during Operation Ranch Hand, part of US chemical warfare during the Vietnam War. In South Vietnam, Agent Orange and other herbicides began to be tested by the US military in 1961. In 1961, US President John F. Kennedy gave the green light to chemical warfare. This was originally called "Operation Trail Dust" later changed to "Operation Ranch Hand". Agent Orange was widely used in high concentrations during the war in the years 1967 - 1968, then decreased and stopped in 1971.

Agent Orange is in the form of a colorless powder and is stored in orange barrels. This substance was used on a large scale by the US between 1961 and 1971, causing severe poisoning in many parts of South Vietnam. Health authorities in Vietnam estimate that 400,000 people have been killed or disabled, and about 500,000 children are born deformed by this toxic chemical. The Vietnam Red Cross estimates that about 1 million Vietnamese victims have been disabled or sickened by Agent Orange. Agent Orange also hurt the health of American soldiers as well as allied soldiers of the US (Australia, Korea, New Zealand, ARVN) who were exposed to this substance, as well as their descendants. Up to now, veteran organizations of the US, Australia, and South Korea have sued and been compensated, but Agent Orange victims in Vietnam have lost the lawsuit.

According to US regulations, poisons left in the containers are sorted by color depending on the toxicity: the most toxic is red, the lower is orange and then yellow. The US Army also has several other codes to refer to the herbicides used during this period: "green matter" (Agent Blue, cacodylic acid), "white matter" (Agent White, mixture 4:1 of 2,4-D and picloram), "purple substance" (Agent Purple) and "pink substance" (Agent Pink). By 1971, Agent Orange was no longer in use; 2,4-D is still used as an herbicide. 2,4,5-T has been banned in the US and many other countries due to its toxicity to the environment and organisms.

According to a group of authors published in the journal Nature, it can be said that the chemical campaign in Vietnam is the largest chemical war in the world. During that 10-year period, the US military and the South Vietnamese army sprayed 76.9 million liters of chemicals into the forests and fields of South Vietnam. Of these, 64% are Agent Orange, 27% are white, 8.7% are blue, and 0.6% are purple.

Up to the date of liberation of the South to reunify the country, Trường Sơn road has existed for nearly 6000 days and nights. The forces of engineers, young volunteers, and civilians

on the Trường Sơn line, including about 120,000 people, have created a solid and continuous road network with 5 systems of vertical and 21 horizontal roads, connecting the East with the West of Trường Sơn., reaching the battlefields, with a total length of nearly 20,000 km of motorways, 1,400 km of oil pipelines, 3,140 km of "closed roads" for daytime vehicles and thousands of bridges, culverts and underground.

From 1969 to 1972, the US deployed a series of measures to prevent all sources of external supply from entering the South, raiding the Trường Sơn road system with modern weapons and dropped nearly 4 million tons of bombs and bullets on the Trường Sơn road. In 1971, when the ARVN drafted a plan to attack logistics bases on that strategic road, HCM Trail was no longer a "road", but a system of horizontal, vertical and interlaced roads in Laos. Documents of the Communist Party of Vietnam said that the system of Hồ Chí Minh Trail had a total of 17,000 km. But according to the estimates from the Republic of Vietnam and the US, the total system of HCM Trail had no less than 10,000 km. A detail that both sides recognized: the system of Hồ Chí Minh Trail included six vertical lines (running from north to south); 21 horizontal lines (from west to east, leading from Laos to the border of the Republic of Vietnam); and a number of uncountable detours (the detour was used to hide from bombs, or run around a main road that was being destroyed by bombs).

Weather in Southeast Laos played an important role both in the logistical efforts and also in the efforts of the US and South Vietnamese troops to break the road. During the Vietnam War, American forces and Saigon troops ravaged this transport system with a series of ground and air campaigns. Millions of tons of bombs were dropped by the US. An electronic system, commonly known as the McNamara Electronic Fence, was used to help guide bombers. Since 1964 the ARVN and the US had devised various plans to prevent or limit the intrusive traffic on HCM Trail. But in Lower Laos, with its rugged terrain, old forests covering the ground, mountains and hills, all plans of raiding and stopping had not yielded the desired results.

**2/Petroleum Pipeline:** with 5000km of pipelines transporting 5,500,000m<sup>3</sup> of gasoline and oil from the North rear, the Vietnam-China border and ports to the frontline. Petroleum was transported from the Soviet Union by large ships. docked at Phòng Thành port in China... From the North, the two-branch pipeline section through East and West Trường Sơn had a length of 1,450 km. In the whole system, there were 316 pumping stations, 101 warehouses with a capacity of over 300 thousand m<sup>3</sup>.

At the end of 1968, US intelligence made a shocking discovery, which was the discovery of a petroleum pipeline system running southwest from Vinh. For camouflage, pipes, pumping

stations and storages were buried underground or made in caves. When crossing rivers, the pipeline went underground, but there were sections of rivers and streams with many rocks and strong currents, so a suspension bridge must be built (the Srepok river). In 1970, the Vietnamese Communist Party completed the oil pipeline system from Quảng Bình through the pass Mụ Già (The Old Lady), rounding west of Tchepone and south, entered the valley of A Shaw. The oil pipeline system was not large (the pipe had a diameter of 20 centimeters), but it was enough to fuel more than 60 transport battalions and two tank regiments stationed in Central and Lower Laos.

3/ **The Hồ Chí Minh Sea Route** was born during the anti-French period, active in the first 7 years with unnumbered ships in the East Sea until 1966, and was limited because of the activities of the Vietnam-US Navy. During more than 3 years of operation (from 1962 to 1965), the Hồ Chí Minh Sea Route provided aid to the coastal provinces in the battlefields of Zone V, the South and the southernmost Central Coast with 89 boat trips carrying nearly 5,000 tons of material, mainly weapons and ammunition.

In addition, the port of Sihanoukville, Cambodia contributed a significant part. Until 1970, nearly 80% of cargo transported from North to South was via the Hồ Chí Minh Sea Route, unloaded at the port of Sihanoukville in Cambodia, and from there to South Vietnam. After the coup d'état of General Lon Nol in Cambodia in 1970, and the closure of Sihanoukville port for ships from North Vietnam, the Trường Sơn road had to do more of the duties of the Hồ Chí Minh Sea Route. This new road turns west from Trường Sơn Street at Muong May in Southern Laos, paralleling the Se Kong River to enter Cambodia.

4/**The secret way of transferring money** through Western banking systems to Saigon to the revolutionary forces was only by a secret code that was not detected through 20 years by any government.

5/**The air route** through the official route of Phnom Penh-Hongkong or Guangzhou-Hanoi of generals from south to north or vice versa, transporting millions of dollars to the Việt Cộng financial collaborators in the South.

From 1965, the US expanded the war to ravage the North by air and naval attacks. In the rains of bombs and bullets, the people of the North continued to build socialism, and at the same time effectively responded to the enemy's raiding campaigns with the aim of destruction. In the midst of difficulties and hardships, the North still fulfilled its revolutionary rear obligations

towards the Southern frontline. More than a million soldiers from the North set out to fight the US in the South. In the whole North, there was no locality where there were no people fighting in the ranks of the National Guard and there was no locality where there were no martyrs who died on the battlefields of the South.

During the strategic general offensive that made a great victory in the spring of 1975, completely liberating the South, the North's support of human and physical strength reached the highest level. The Politburo determined that in order to ensure complete victory for this historic decisive battle, it was necessary to mobilize the entire country's forces to meet all requirements for key battlefields. The Party Central Committee decided to establish a Council for Battlefield Support led by Phạm Văn Đồng and Lê Thanh Nghị. On Trường Sơn Road - "Hồ Chí Minh Boulevard" during the anti-American era - the main army and artillery of the People's Army of Vietnam entered the South, joined forces with the Liberation Army and compatriots on the big front lines to make the General offensive and uprising in the spring of 1975, gloriously ending the cause of liberation of the South with the historic Hồ Chí Minh campaign. That great event surprised America and the world.

During the anti-American era, the North was the revolutionary rear of the whole country, a place to store the potential of revolutionary war in terms of politics, economy, military, culture, society and technology; it was a source of human and material aid, a spiritual support, encouragement to the victory of the front lines and a decisive factor in the success or failure of the war. The Northern youth generation was pushed into the Southern battlefield with the dream of liberating the South to save the country. Class after class of young people set out for the South armed with propaganda messages about a starving South writhing under the heels of American imperialism's invasion, giving all of their young age to the party in the absolute belief that the Communist Party will lead the country to a socialist paradise. They were not fortunate enough to live until the day the country was unified, like writer Dương Thu Hương crying on the side of Saigon's road when she saw a "falsely prosperous" South, becoming "reactionary", leaving the Party and leaving the country to take refuge in France.

The North created all conditions and contributed all resources to build and protect the routes, ensure their smooth operations, always ready to transport resources to supply the southern battlefield. In order to fulfill that great responsibility, the North was consolidated in all aspects, becoming the foundation and base for the struggle for national reunification. It is impossible for a strategic transport route to go down in history as a legendary road; there can be no victory of the resistance war against the US, to save the country without the North having to do two strategic tasks at the same time: ready to sacrifice everything and ready to provide the last material lines for the South.

## Chapter 17. The South: Republic of Vietnam 1956-1975

The resettlement of migrants from the North became an urgent requirement for Ngô Đình Diệm's government. The fact that there were only 300 days to migrate while the number of migrants was very large forced the Ngô Đình Diệm government to build 42 temporary settlement centers. These stations used available public facilities such as French barracks, churches, some schools. By December 1955, the Saigon government had established 257 resettlement areas. The establishment of resettlement sites was to avoid cultural and economic conflicts between migrants and indigenous peoples, while also reducing the pressure of population growth on the pre-existing service system. Bùi Chu parish (Nam Định) was resettled by Bishop Pierre Phạm Ngọc Chi and paramilitary forces in Xuân Lộc and Biên Hòa. Phát Diệm parish (Ninh Bình) advocated by Bishop Thaddeus Lê Hữu Từ and paramilitary forces to bring them to Gia Kiệm. Resettlement areas were often arranged in strategic locations, gateways to the cities or big towns. In particular, to keep the Central Highlands, the Mekong Delta region and the Saigon belt. This was the opening step for strategic hamlets with outposts around the village.

At the time of their arrival in the South, the status of Northern migrants in their new place of residence was determined by their relationship with the Diệm government. The overwhelming presence of Christians in the military and civilian forces of the Diệm government was always one of the themes in debates about the role of Northern migrants in 1954. The excesses of these Christians had a profound effect on the political process of the Republic of Vietnam both during and after the Diệm era.

With the abundant aid of the US, the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) has risen to develop. Economically, in the 50s and 60s, the RVN was the leading rice producer in the world, with a higher GDP than many Asian countries in the region (According to UN Statistical Year Book for Asia 1969, 1957 GNP per RVN capita was USD\$158 while South Korea was USD\$46.12). The stability and achievements of the South were beginning to be shaken by the war machine in Hanoi and controlled remotely by Moscow and Beijing. However, the truth was that Diệm's reforms entailed repressive measures. He took power when, apart from Saigon and its environs, South Vietnam was divided into lands controlled by the Việt Minh and domains of "theocratic" sects such as Cao Đài and Hòa Hảo. He resisted dissent, and demanded absolute personal loyalty to top officials. American documents also indicated that Ngô Đình Diệm was a conservative Catholic.

Ngô Đình Diệm was initially greeted warmly by some former Việt Minh members. The RVN implemented social development and reform programs in many fields such as illiteracy

eradication, resettlement, land reform, rural development, infrastructure construction, and industrial development., administrative reform, legal system building,... The RVN had a number of important achievements: economic recovery and development, health and education systems at all levels were built., culture developed, people's life improved. During the Agrarian Reform campaign, Ngô Đình Diệm avoided using methods he saw as expropriation such as the Land Reform movement in North Vietnam, instructing local officials to pay for excess land beyond the limit, not confiscated.

### **Section 17a. Referendum. Republic Background**

As early as 1954, the US began to support the State of Vietnam. On June 1, 1954, the US sent Colonel Lansdale, the head of the CIA intelligence team, to Saigon with the guise of "helping the Vietnamese" in training against guerrilla warfare. The Geneva Agreement on Indochina had just been signed (July 20, 1954), the US National Security Council approved the Memphis Plan *"to turn the 17th parallel into a line of defense against communism"*. In January 1955, the US officially provided direct military aid to the Vietnamese National Army. In August 1955, Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm publicly rejected the general election to unify Vietnam in the spirit of the final announcement at the Geneva Conference with the consent and support of the US government. From April 28, 1956, the US MAAG delegation participated in training the Saigon army.

After a period of political turmoil in the transition period, by the end of 1955, Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm was able to stabilize the partisan war in the South. At the same time, after the Geneva Agreement, the French army also completely withdrew from Indochina in April 1956 and the South was completely independent. The independence of the South was a historical surprise. An independence by international advocacy in the changing context of the post-World War II world. A bloodless independence empowered the pro-French and then pro-American Nationalist forces to lead the South against the Communist International's expansion into Southeast Asia.

In order to turn southern Vietnam into an independent country, separate from the French Union, and remove all French colonial and privileged influences in Vietnam, on October 23, 1955, Ngô Đình Diệm held a "referendum" to depose Bảo Đại as Head of State with the promise of bringing the country into a period marked by a democracy, self-determination of the nation and guarantee of the rights of all citizens.

After a referendum that turned out to be fraudulently arranged, Head of State Ngô Đình Diệm declared the State of Vietnam established in 1947 as a Republic. That's why President Ngô

Đình Diệm promoted the election of the Constituent Assembly. This National Assembly was elected on March 4, 1956 and opened on April 17, 1956 with 123 deputies to help draft a new constitution. After several negotiations between the National Assembly and the President, the 1956 Constitution was passed in July and promulgated on October 26, 1956. Ngô Đình Diệm declared the establishment of the Republic and became the first President of Vietnam. The Republic of Vietnam was supported in all aspects by the US. These events shed light on how Diệm changed the political nature of the South by steering the country from its traditional past to a modern future to confront the communist regime in the North. Diệm combined the Confucian moral system with Western ideas on democracy and freedom to justify the removal of the Emperor and to replace the 1956 general election regulated by the Geneva Accords with a national election to be organized in early 1956.

Since Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm (1901-1963) took office in 1954 and became President in 1956, revolutionary parties and patriotic organizations such as Hòa Hảo Buddhism, Cao Đài, Đại Việt, and Quốc Dân Đảng were also politically controlled and crushed by Diệm's government. Master Huỳnh Phú Sổ's disciple, Ba Cụt Lê Quang Vinh (1923-1956), was sentenced to death, and the protector Phạm Công Tắc (1890-1959) of Cao Đài was forced to flee to Cambodia and died there.

### **Section 17b. Personalism. National Revolutionary Movement**

After becoming president, Diệm retained all authority to govern the country with his brother Ngô Đình Nhu (1910-1963) as an advisor and both of them used tough methods against the Việt Minh supported by the DRV government in the North. While the DRV state was built on the socialist doctrine, the Diệm brothers built personalism or Person Dignity Theory as a doctrine that underlies the ideology of the state in South Vietnam with the core Cần Lao Nhân Vị political party for the National Revolutionary Movement. The Cần Lao Party was a national political party that existed in the RVN from August 8, 1954 to November 1, 1963, founded by two brothers Ngô Đình Diệm and Ngô Đình Nhu at the end of 1954 in Vietnam. It was based on the combination of the political theory of Personalism of French philosopher Emmanuel Mounier and Confucianism of Confucius. Ngô Đình Diệm's government quickly purged the ruling apparatus, placing his loyalists in important positions. The state of the Republic of Vietnam, at that time bearing the expression of a form of centralization, the politics of the country depended heavily on the personal characteristics of Ngô Đình Diệm and his family.

### **Section 17c. The policy of Denouncing and Destroying the Communists**

Ngô Đình Diệm's government responded to political struggles for the implementation of the General Election to unify the country by launching a campaign to denounce the communists



in order to eliminate secret Việt Minh cadres. Ngô Đình Diệm's government always considered communism as the main enemy, showing its determination to fight Communism to the end. The policy of denouncing plus destroying the communists was the policy of the Vietnamese nation under Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm and continued to be deployed under the First Republic of Vietnam in South Vietnam starting from 1955 with the aim of tracing and destroying the resistance cadres or those associated with the Việt Minh during the Vietnam War in the south. Some of the old resistance fighters were forced to adopt the Catholic religion in order to be left alone, "adopt the Catholic religion for having rice to eat". In January 1959, at the 15th meeting of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party, it was decided to "allow the revolutionary forces of the South to use violence to overthrow the US-Diệm government".

With Law 10-59 promulgated in May 1959, putting "communism out of law", Ngô Đình Diệm's regime organized campaigns "Denounce and destroy the Communists", join forces to defend, gather people and establish the strategic hamlets ... fiercely swept across the South, killing a series of cadres and soldiers who had participated in the Việt Minh's resistance war against the French and who was killed on suspicion of being related to the Việt Minh, causing outrage among many South Vietnamese people who pushed the resistance fighters (Việt Minh) into the forest to set up a war zone according to a pre-planned plan of the Labor Party. According to the advice of Edward Lansdale, in order to erase the prestige of the Việt Minh among the people, the Ngô Đình Diệm government stopped calling them Việt Minh but used a new name, Việt Cộng (VC), sometimes called "Communist".

During the time of the Republic of Vietnam, many political organizations were established by dissidents to operate openly, run for election to the National Assembly, participate in politics, publish newspapers, and demonstrate (such as Reporters as Beggars Day), the Social Democracy in Vietnam, the third-party forces ( Dương Văn Minh, Vũ Văn Mẫu, Nhất Linh, Ông Đạo Dừa...), Đại Việt Party and Quốc Dân Đảng (Vietnam Kuomintang) also openly opposed. Especially during the First Republic of Vietnam, Ngô Đình Diệm's government sought to limit opposition, so many opposition organizations organized demonstrations such as during the Vietnamese Buddhist national crisis. At that time, Thích Quảng Đức set himself on fire at a busy intersection in Saigon on June 11, 1963 to protest the persecution of Buddhism by Ngô Đình Diệm's government. Photographs of the monk's self-immolation were circulated around the world and brought special attention to the policies of the Ngô Đình Diệm regime. Buddhist female Nhất Chi Mai also set herself on fire to protest the Vietnam War.

According to a special report in 1973 of Amnesty International (AI) confirmed that the RVN government suppressed dissidents, including the abuse of vague laws to arbitrary arrest, torture, and trial by military courts. Ordinary citizens detained by the RVN were considered

political prisoners by Amnesty International, as most of them were detained for dissident reasons. Many were arrested despite having no connection to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (RSVN/VC) or the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam (NLF/VC). According to AI, the Republic of Vietnam has four types of prisoners: criminal prisoners, those who are closely related to the RSVN-NLF-VC, and dissidents. Dissidents were called by the NLF "the third political force" in the South.

The AI believed that the RVN held about 200,000 political prisoners, but the RVN believed that they only held about 37,000 people. A typical case of AI mentioned is Congressman Trần Ngọc Châu, a close friend of President Thiệu but a dissident who was labeled as a communist by Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's government. After the Paris Agreement, Mr. Châu was handed over to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam, but he refused because he thought he was not a communist. The fact proved that when after 1975, he crossed the border to the US to settle down. According to AI, the Republic of Vietnam arbitrarily arrested and detained dissidents in the South through vague anti-Communist laws and prisoners were denied international status. Many political prisoners considered particularly dangerous were held without trial. Many trials of military courts lasted only five minutes. According to AI, political prisoners were also subjected to torture, forced confessions, and corporal punishment in prisons, especially at the National Police Headquarters in the city of Saigon. The report said solitary confinement, shackles, brutal beatings and keeping prisoners in tiger cages left some prisoners permanently disabled. A number of prisoners died in prison or were hemiplegic, and patriots such as Vũ Tam Anh, Tạ Chí Diệp, Hồ Hán Sơn, Ung Bảo Toàn, Trương Tử An, Nguyễn Tấn Quê... were killed.

Since 1972, the Red Cross was banned from contacting and supporting political prisoners. Most of the people accused of committing these political crimes were detained indefinitely without being brought to trial. Pursuant to Article 4 of the 1967 Constitution on the elimination of Communism, the RVN government often arrested people for the reason "dangerous to national security", "causing a breakdown in the spirit of the army", gathering people detrimental to national security, promoting communism, pro-communism, pro-communist-neutralism. Military laws were used by the government in political cases.

### **Section 17d. Southern Liberation Front 1960-1977**

The National Front for the Liberation of the South (NLF-VC) was established in Hanoi on December 12, 1960 and only blinded the public with its official launch on December 20, 1960 in Tân Lập commune, district Châu Thành (now Tân Biên) in the base area in Tây Ninh province, with the main component being the Việt Minh forces that remained after the

Geneva Accords, secretly operating in the South, and politicians "opposed" to the regime. The first Congress opened on February 16, 1962 in Tân Biên (Tây Ninh) officially elected Lawyer Nguyễn Hữu Thọ (1910-1996) as President, the NLF or the Việt Cộng (a noun used to refer to



the NLF by the RVN and the US since 1960) was a left-wing nationalist, political alliance organization that worked against the intervention of the US and its allies during the Vietnam War.

This was the organization that inherited the Vietnam Fatherland Front (Front of the whole country from North to South) in the South (recognized by documents after 1975) to fight against the US and the Republic of Vietnam and was born

from the **Đông** Khởi movement from Southerners. The Fatherland Front was under the direct



*Huỳnh Tấn Phát*

direction of the Central Bureau of the Labor Party (Communist Party) of Vietnam. The first Secretary of the Central Committee was Nguyễn Văn Linh (1915-1998). In October 1964, the military demand increased, Nguyễn Chí

Thanh (1914-1967) moved to the South to work as Secretary of the Central Department and Secretary of the Regional Military Commission. From 1967 to 1975, the Central Bureau of the South was under the control of Phạm Hùng

(1912-1988). All three were members of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Vietnam. This organization was established with the backing and support of finance, equipment and personnel by various segments of the population in South

Vietnam as well as by the government and army of the DRV.

In addition, the Communists in the South also established on January 1, 1962, the People's Revolutionary Party of Vietnam (the branch of the Vietnam Workers' Party in the South) to operate openly and prevent repression from the Saigon government. The party was also a member of the Front. The Central Department for the South, formerly the Country Committee of Cochinchina, became the representative organization of the Labor Party in the South (because

the Geneva Agreement did not require political gathering, this political force was still allowed to stay in the South). Due to the suppression of the Ngô Đình Diệm government, the Central Bureau operated openly but was subject to the repression of the Ngô Đình Diệm government. DRV placed representatives in the bases of the NLF and the



Republic of South Vietnam (RSVN) and vice versa.

In 1960, the NLF, chaired by lawyer Nguyễn Hữu Thọ, was a broad coalition representing many organizations, unions, ethnic groups, religions, patriotic individuals of many different backgrounds at home and abroad, officers and officials including high-ranking ones in Ngô Đình

Diệm government. With a foreign policy of "peace and neutrality", the Front had enlisted a large number of peace-loving and justice-loving forces around the world, including the anti-war movement in the US, including those who love peace and justice, creating an unprecedented world people's front, united with the struggle against the US. Governments of socialist countries and many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America had officially recognized the NLF in terms of government. The Southern Revolution gained more and more big victories, and the Front had more and more conditions to expand and gather more forces.

After the General Offensive of Tết Mậu Thân, on April 20, 1968, in the area under the control of the NLF in the South, the Peace Coalition was founded by Lawyer Trịnh Đình Thảo (1901-1986), former minister of justice of the government of Trần Trọng Kim and a famous patriotic intellectual in the South as Chairman. The Coalition manifesto had the same general objectives as the Front, but its policies were geared toward issues that could be discussed between the US and the DRV



government during peace talks. The Coalition emphasized the issue of peace and neutrality, and wanted to act as a bridge between opposing political factions to help the US communicate with the Front. Moreover, the Coalition helped to link up with elements of the people in the South that had no ties to the NLF but wanted a peaceful solution based on the establishment of a three-part coalition government that the North Vietnamese government at the time proposed at the Paris negotiating table. Therefore, the Coalition can become a representative of the "third party". In the summer of 1968 Wilfred Burchett said that the DRV and NLF governments thought that the Coalition could play an important role in the peaceful resolution through negotiations.

The strategic victory of the 1968 Tết Offensive and uprising forced the US and the Saigon government to accept to sit at the negotiating table at the Paris Conference to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam. Before 1969, this was just an organization against the Government of the Republic of Vietnam; after 1969, the Front and this Union established their own polity named Republic of South Vietnam (RSVN) with military aid as well as the direction and direct influence of the North (the Vietnamese Workers' Party and the DRV or "Hanoi government") in the preparation of the Paris Agreement negotiations. On June 6, 1969, this Coalition combined with the NLF and the RSVN to establish the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. Later, the Coalition and the NLF merged with the Fatherland Front in 1977.

## **Liberation Army – North Vietnamese Army 1961-1975**

The Politburo of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Vietnam issued a directive to establish the Liberation Army or the Liberation Army of South Vietnam on February 15, 1961 in war zone D. In 1964, there were 10,000 forces from the North, by the end of 1973, only the regular troops transferred to the South were 100,000. Since the 1973 Paris Agreement was signed, the Agreement allowed the Liberation Army to replace weapons on the principle of one-for-one. According to a document on the regular forces in December 1974, there were about 290,000 people, of which about 90,000 were from the southern provinces. The proportion of southerners on the payroll of the regular army gradually decreased during the war due to the addition of more northern troops marching in. The local army forces and guerrillas were still mainly Southerners or Việt Cộng (VC).

American and Western documents often used the word "Việt Cộng-VC" to refer to the armed forces recruited in South Vietnam to distinguish it from the People's Army, the troops fighting in the South that they often called "the North Vietnam Army-NVA." American documents during the war refer to this People's Army as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) fighting alongside the Việt Cộng (VC), almost entirely North Vietnamese with the symbol of this force being "NVA" or "PAVN". Also known as the Việt Cộng with the symbol "PLAF" is the army established and trained in the South, the first members were the people residing in the South.

According to intelligence documents on forces participating in the war in the South, the US distinguished from 1968 mainly the Liberation Army or Việt Cộng, and after 1968 to 1975, it was mainly the People's Army or the North Vietnamese Army who entered Vietnam to replace the Liberation army that suffered heavy losses in the years following the 1968 Tết Offensive. Towards the end of the war, the North Vietnamese Army became more and more open with many tactical operations from guerrilla to combined forces even with many PAVN units directly crossing the 17th parallel to openly attack and occupy the territory of Republic of Vietnam.

After the signing of the Paris Agreement, all the Liberation Army (regardless of whether the forces formed locally or moved from the North) were under the management of the Ministry of Defense of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam (PRGRSVN). According to Vietnamese state documents published after the war in 1965, the South Vietnamese Liberation Army consisted of 80% of Việt Cộng and 20% of North Vietnamese troops. By 1975, 80% of North Vietnamese troops and 20% of South Vietnamese troops. After the Vietnam War ended, the Liberation Army officially merged with the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).

## **Section 17e. Buddhist Movements in 1963 and 1966**

Although President Diệm tried to build democracy, he still demanded an unquestionable submission when working with the opposition. The policy of Ngô Đình Diệm almost guaranteed that political challenges to the government would be left outlawed. In 1955 Đại Việt Party established Ba Lòng war zone, Quảng Trị province. Dr. Nguyễn Tôn Hoàn was persecuted and had to flee to Cambodia as a refugee. The Nationalist Kuomintang Party established the Nam Ngãi war zone. Many revolutionaries in the South were sentenced to prison in Côn Đảo. An opposition figure, Harvard University graduate Dr. Phan Quang Đán, despite winning the election to the National Assembly, did not accept the position because of allegations of election fraud. President Diệm was assassinated in Ban Mê Thuột on May 21, 1957. In March 1958, the Diệm government shut down the largest newspaper in Saigon. In the spring of 1960, a group of non-communist nationalist leaders came together and promulgated the Caravelle Manifesto to organize a protest against the Diệm regime. The coup of the paratroopers on 11-11-1960 (Colonel Nguyễn Chánh Thi) failed. The bombing of the Independence Palace by two air force officers on February 27, 1962 (Nguyễn Văn Cử and Phạm Phú Quốc).

Then there were uprisings from forces in South Vietnam such as the communist armed forces and religious sects. Since 1960, the war situation increased when Hanoi established the NLF and Southern society began to be disturbed over religious issues. By 1958, about one-third of provincial governors were military officers; by 1960, that had increased to nearly two-thirds; in 1962, 7/8 of all provinces were led by officers. Diệm argued threats from the communists to justify his focus on internal security. Americans were also aware of the weakness of the government of the Republic of Vietnam, especially among the intelligentsia and military officers: *"the regime's efforts to ensure internal security when it believes that a dictatorship is required to handle the country's problems will lead to a constant pressure of potential opposing factors over a long period of time, the accumulation of grievances among different groups and individuals may lead to the development of a national resistance movement"*.

The 1963 Buddhist Movement was an event that fought for Buddhist freedom and equality in South Vietnam. This event lasted for 6 months leading to a political crisis from which the coup d'état took place, overthrowing the government of President Ngô Đình Diệm. This was an event that resonated greatly in Vietnam and internationally and had a great influence in the Vietnam War as well as in the religious and political history of Vietnam.

Immediately after the outbreak in Huế, the movement quickly spread into Saigon and throughout the South, from urban to rural areas, attracting millions of people regardless of trends,

political opinions, from bourgeoisie, from ethnic minorities to intellectuals, students, working people to radical Catholics. Even a large number of civil servants, officers and soldiers in the Ngô Đình Diệm government apparatus actively participated in the struggle. Reports from the police and Military Security throughout the four military regions emphasized the breakdown of military morale at all levels. As for Military Region I, the majority of officers directly or indirectly supported the Buddhist struggle against the government. The wide participation of people from all walks of life was not only for their support of Buddhism but also for their sense of resistance to the dictatorship and undemocratic regime.

Diệm's government established an Inter-ministerial Committee to address the Buddhist aspirations, but it was still unable to stabilize the situation. Every act of the government was seen by the Buddhist leadership as a plot against their religion. Therefore, the two sides could not find a common voice to resolve the crisis. In the end, Diệm's government used a brute force solution by sending troops to attack and blockade the temples, arresting monks, Buddhists and people related to the Buddhist struggle movement.

These actions did not end the crisis, but led to division in the government apparatus and the struggle of monks and Buddhists spread to other social classes such as intellectuals, industry and trade, and students. The Diệm government was no longer acceptable in the eyes of many South Vietnamese social classes, losing the support of its US ally. Facing that situation, a number of generals in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam, with the consent of the US embassy and the US CIA, made a coup to overthrow the Diệm regime, ending the First Republic in South Vietnam.

Public opinion believed that, since coming to power, Ngô Đình Diệm and his subordinates have promoted discriminatory policies against Buddhism in all fields from ideology - politics, economy - society to culture - education in order to carry out the conspiracy to reduce the influence of Buddhism from the religious and belief life of the people in the South. Under the Diệm regime, social contradictions manifested themselves through "religious lenses" very strongly. Although the US and Ngô Đình Diệm propagated a republican government in which freedom of belief and religion, public opinion believed that the Diệm regime carried out a tacit policy of supporting Christianity and discriminating against other religions: a government based on Catholicism in both ideology and political force. While promoting Catholicism, the Diệm government was criticized for discriminating against other religions, mainly Buddhism. This event was mentioned by Nguyễn Hiến Lê in his memoirs (page 121, volume II). He recounted: "*Diệm-Nhu followed the three-D policy: the Đảng (Party Cần Lao), Đạo (Catholic) and Địa phương (Locality Central region). Only civil servants who have enough three D can be trusted,*

*so the number of Catholics has skyrocketed, especially in the Central region; there are churches that baptize hundreds of people at once.”*

Directive No. 10 of the Presidential Palace (Diệm), taking back the Decree of the Vietnamese Nation, stipulated: “All religious, cultural and physical associations have only the right to possess, create, and administer, standing as the owner of real estate that is necessary to achieve the goals of the association”. The directive exempted the Catholic and Catholic Missionary Association, the overseas Chinese and the Lý Sự Hội, and other religions, including Buddhism, were considered associations. This was considered a discriminatory policy of the Diệm government.

Ngô Đình Diệm used Edict No. 10 to treat religions as associations. Edict No. 10 was originally signed by "former emperor" Bảo Đại on August 6, 1950, but Venerable Trí Quang lobbied Madame Từ Cung, mother of Emperor Bảo Đại, so that the edict was not implemented. Although Ngô Đình Diệm deposed Bảo Đại, the Decree No. 10 was still retained. Until Ngô Đình Diệm's time (1955-1963), there was still no holiday for Buddha's birthday, but Christmas was off. On January 9, 1956, Ngô Đình Diệm's government issued Decree No. 4 to cancel Vesak Day from the list of holidays for schools, civil servants and soldiers. This caused indignation in public opinion in general and in Southern monks and nuns and Buddhists in particular. The book *History of Buddhism in Huế* by Thích Hải Ấn and Hà Xuân Liêm wrote: “*For the folk from 1954 to 1963, the Ngô Đình Diệm regime killed, imprisoned and tortured Buddhist followers; seduced converts and forbade Buddhists from going to pagodas*”.

Because he wanted to be a Cardinal, in the spring of 1963, to prepare for the upcoming 25th anniversary of his ordination as a bishop, Ngô Đình Thục asked the Vatican to become a Cardinal because “*80% of the people in Huế diocese are Christians*”. The Vatican sent an investigative mission to Central Vietnam in early May 1963. Although half-yellow and half-white Christian flags were hung everywhere during the delegation's stay in Vietnam, the Vatican delegate also noted that Buddhists were preparing five-color flags, banners and gates to welcome Buddha's 2507<sup>th</sup> birthday. Therefore, the Vatican delegation initially concluded that only 20% of the people in the Central region are Christians, not 80% as reported by Thục. To conceal the truth, Thục implicitly ordered local officials to ban flags on Vesak celebrations. According to General Lê Văn Nghiêm, Ngô Đình Thục once declared to his faithful followers that “*Buddhism must be defeated by all means, otherwise Buddhism will be stronger than Christianity,*” and “*even the life of Catholics will be threatened.*”



The Diệm Government stipulated that religious flags could not be hung outside the premises of religious establishments (church, pagoda, sanctuary...) but all religions did not strictly comply with this regulation. Before the Buddha's birthday crisis, the government did not pay attention to the problem of religions violating flag regulations. Ngô Đình Thục wanted to organize a solemn ceremony to celebrate his Ngân Khánh (25 years of ordination), so the flags of the Holy See were hung, but the number of Christians was small. A few days later, on the occasion of the Buddha's birthday, the whole Huế city hung the Buddhist flag, and Thục complained to President Diệm.

On May 6, 1963 (two days before Buddha's Birthday), the Presidential Palace sent Official Letter No. 5159 to the provinces asking localities to force religions to strictly comply with the government's regulations on flying religious flags. On the morning of May 8, 1963 (**Buddha's Birthday**), at 6:30 a.m., Buddhists raised a banner against the flying of the flag during the annual Buddha procession in Huế from Diệu Đế Temple to Từ Đàm Pagoda in an orderly manner. The police were present but did not prevent or repress. The Buddha's Birthday celebration took place at Từ Đàm pagoda with a speech by Venerable Thích Trí Quang indicting the discriminatory policies of the Diệm - Nhu government, arousing discontent against those policies of the government. Venerable Thích Trí Quang's speech condemned the discriminatory regime against religion and Buddhism in the past nine years and mentioned the ban on flying the Buddhist flag, while only two days ago the Vatican flag was publicly displayed.

In the evening of May 8, 1963, a crowd of Buddhists gathered in front of Huế radio station to listen to the Buddha's birthday speech by Venerable Thích Trí Quang, which was recorded and replayed as usual every year. But the radio station refused to play the speech, citing technical problems, that it was unable to play it and only played music. While the Buddhist leader and the provincial chief were discussing, the government used water cannons to disperse the crowd. There were two explosions at the radio station, which made the situation suddenly worse.



*Dr. Erich Wulff and Ven. Trí Quang*

Armored vehicles and soldiers began to open fire. According to Professor Trần Hữu Thế, former Minister of Education, Ngô Đình Thục himself ordered Major Đặng Sĩ to "cleanse" the crowd of Buddhists at the Huế Radio Station on the evening of May 8, 1963.

The shooting events were witnessed by Dr. Erich Wulff (1926-2010), Professor of Medicine in Huế from the German educational mission. He narrated and recorded the events on the same night with Professor Krainick and his wife who was head of the educational aid mission of West Germany. In order to bring information to the international press, Dr. E. Wulff left Huế, entered Saigon, and then went abroad by way of Phnom Penh

(Cambodia). Dr. Wulff presented these facts before the United Nations Commission of Inquiry against Vietnamese Buddhism in September 1963.

In his memoir «Vietnamesische Lehrjahre» (Years of teaching in Vietnam), Dr. Wulff described how the incident happened, went with his colleagues to the morgue to take pictures of the victims, confirming that 5 out of 8 victims were run over by armored vehicles and lost their head. The Buddhist side accused the government army of killing eight people present at the Huế radio station on the night of May 8, 1963. He was expelled from Vietnam. After returning to West Germany in 1967, he joined the movement to fight for peace for Vietnam, condemning the war crimes of the US at the Bertrand Russell Court of Conscience. As the director of Huế Hospital, directly examining the victims of the massacre at Huế Radio, Dr. Lê Khắc Quyến - also the Dean of the Medical University, confirmed that the victims died from grenades, bullets fired straight and armored vehicles rolling over, not due to the "plastic explosives of the Việt Cộng" as announced by the government.

On May 10, 1963, Buddhist leaders met at Từ Đàm pagoda to plan ways and methods of fighting to protect Buddhism and demand social justice. A declaration was drafted outlining the five aspirations of Buddhism. This Declaration was sent to President Ngô Đình Diệm through the intermediary of the Government Representative in Huế. The five aspirations included:

- Requesting the government of the Republic of Vietnam to permanently withdraw the public cable banning the flying of religious flags in public places.

- Requirement of Buddhism to enjoy a special regime like the Christian missionary associations stated in Edict No. 10.

- Ask the government to stop the persecution of Buddhists.

- Request for Buddhist monks and nuns to be free to propagate and practice their religion.

- Asking the government to properly compensate the innocent dead and the mastermind of the murder must be tried.

The event of Buddha's birthday in Huế on May 8, 1963 shocked the world, as well as created a movement against the "religious discrimination" of the government of President Ngô Đình Diệm. Diệm's government had made efforts to assuage discontent and resolve Buddhist aspirations, but it was still unable to stabilize the situation in the face of the Buddhist leaders' high determination to fight. Buddhists did not believe in the goodwill of the government. Every act of the government was seen by the Buddhist leadership as a plot against their religion. Therefore, the two sides could not find a common voice to resolve the crisis.

Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức self-immolated at the intersection of Lê Văn Duyệt-Phan Đình Phùng streets, at 10:00 am on June 11, 1963 in the full lotus position in the presence of hundreds of Buddhists. Most Venerable Thích Quảng Đức just wanted to stir up the fairness



of Ngô Đình Diệm's government. Poet Vũ Hoàng Chương was inspired:

*You went up and the storm calms down from here.*

*Your shadow crosses the clouds,...*

*Where you sat is forever a masterpiece,*

*In the invisible, bright and shining of Compassion*

*...O mystic fire!*

Venerable Thích Quảng Đức, before the self-immolation, rewrote the Petition from the Heart, stating his intentions and aspirations before closing his eyes and returning to the Buddha land: *"I respectfully send my regards to President Ngô Đình Diệm who should use charity and compassion for the nation, implemented the policy of religious equality so that the country can live in peace forever."*

After Venerable Thích Quang Duc (1897-1963), 7 others also offered self-immolation in 1963. These self-immolations caused President Diệm to lose the support of Vietnamese people as well as public opinion in foreign countries.

The event of suicide on July 7, 1963 of the revolutionary Nguyễn Tường Tam, a man loved by the whole people for his great sacrifices and contributions to the national culture and the fight against the French to oppose the dictatorship of Ngô Đình Diệm who suppressed freedom and democracy, causing the spiritual value of the government to collapse. He left a famous will: *"My life is left to history to judge. I will not let anyone judge me. The arrest and trial of opposing nationalist elements are a serious crime that will make the country lose to Communists. Thus, I self-destruct like Venerable Thích Quảng Đức by setting himself on fire to warn those who trample every freedom."*

On August 20, 1963, the government mobilized the police, army and special forces in "Operation Floodwater" to simultaneously attack central pagodas in Saigon and Huế, namely Ấn Quang, Xá Lợi, Từ Đàm, Diệu Đế, Linh Quang and other major pagodas served as bases for the Buddhist struggle across the country, shot down the face of Buddha statues, and arrested 1,400

monks and leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha and the Intersect Committee, using barbed wire to surround the temples, not allowing Buddhists to enter or exit.

At Xá Lợi Pagoda on August 21, 1963, two leaders of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Most Venerable Thích Tịnh Khiết and Venerable Thích Tâm Châu were arrested. Immediately after being arrested, the leader of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha, Most Venerable Tịnh Khiết was released to Ấn Quang Pagoda. All of his aides remained in custody. Ven. Thích Trí Quang escaped to take refuge in the US Embassy. All members of the Executive Committee of the Saigon and Huế Buddhist Student Unions were arrested at their homes. Many intellectuals and students who supported the Buddhist struggle were also arrested. That operation was carried out by Colonel Lê Quang Tung's Special Forces and field police under the secret orders of Mr. Nhu. This campaign turned the struggle for religious equality into a political struggle that influenced ARVN's strategy.

On August 25, 1963, 300 students held a protest at Diên Hồng Square in front of Bến Thành market while the government was declaring a curfew. The police shot at the protest group and killed the female student Quách Thị Trang. About 200 people were arrested. Pope Paul VI had also spoken out three times on the issue of Buddhism. On August 30, 63, the Pope read a message to the Vietnamese people, but this letter was also banned by Diệm's government from being published. A passage in this message the Pope wrote: “The Pope has shown with great



*Quách Thị Trang - Bến Thành Market*

concern and pain the tragic events that are plaguing the Vietnamese people and his anxiety has deepened. ...The Pope prays that all people, in tolerant cooperation and in mutual respect for genuine liberties, unite to re-establish solidarity and fraternity.”

All these repressive and terroristic measures could be seen as violations of the fundamental human rights of freedom of belief and religion enshrined in the UN Charter. Ngô Đình Nhu's father-in-law, lawyer Trần Văn Chương, resigned as Vietnamese Ambassador to the US, and his mother-in-law, Thân Thị Nam Trân, resigned as an observer of the Republic of Vietnam at the United Nations to protest against Mr. Diệm's regime.

By this time, all forces disgruntled with Diệm's government had united into a bloc that considered his government to be authoritarian, nepotist, and discriminatory, unacceptable to the South. Vietnam. The political struggle spread to students, small businessmen, intellectuals and other forces. Diệm's government had lost all its domestic and international allies. The public opinion in the world and in the US was against the government of the Republic of Vietnam for

persecuting Buddhism. The US determined that the war against the Communists in Vietnam could not be won under the Diệm regime, so it felt it necessary to support the establishment of a new government in South Vietnam, regardless of its composition. The leaders of the ARVN contacted disaffected political forces and US intelligence to consult a solution to remove the dictatorship of the Diệm - Nhu - Cần brothers. On November 1, 1963, the ARVN successfully carried out a coup to overthrow the government of President Diệm. This coup ended the First Republic of South Vietnam.

According to Former Major General Đỗ Mậu: *Looking back at the Buddhist incident of 1963, if at that time the Diệm government declared to admit fault, then punished Đặng Sĩ for 40 days with a severe ban and fired from the army, then comforted and compensated the victims, immediately abolishing the unjust regulations in Edict 10, surely the Buddhist event has stopped there. The Buddhist incident in the South reminded me of the Land Reform in the North in 1956. The land reform case made people angry against the Hanoi government. Mr. Hồ Chí Minh hastily announced on the one hand his apology to the compatriots and asked for correction, on the other hand, temporarily halted the promotion of reform and dismissed immediately Mr. Trường Chinh, who was in charge of the program, although Mr. Trường Chinh was a senior member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Although those decisions were only political tricks, the political reality later showed that, when the people of the North saw "Uncle Ho" condescending to apologize to his compatriots and dared to fire the position of comrade "Party Secretary". In a way, they no longer have reasons and objects to fight for. As for international affairs, public opinion has seen that Mr. Hồ Chí Minh knows how to serve the people, to advance, to retreat, and to have leadership skills.*

*It is a stark contrast to the Ngô family in the South in terms of power because it is clear that in the past nine years, the Ngô family has carried out a harsh discriminatory policy, now commits new crimes, but is still clumsy to blame the Việt Cộng. These two events, although different in nature, were equally serious in intensity. Both touched upon the people's closest interests: the right to believe in the Buddhists in the South and the right to live of the peasants in the North. But looking at how to deal with it, it is true that in terms of his ability to change, Mr. Ngô Đình Diệm is only worthy of being a disciple of Mr. Hồ Chí Minh, even though both are dictators, both bloodthirsty, and both want to suppress legitimate struggles of the people.*

During the 18 months after the 1963 coup, the South had to witness more than 10 political crises (the 1964 coup by General Nguyễn Khánh; the establishment of the Three Heads of State; the movement against the Vũng Tàu Charter; the civilian government of Trần Văn Hương rose and fell; the civilian government Phan Huy Quát rose and fell; the failed coup on September 13, 1964 by Generals Dương Văn Đức and Lâm Văn Phát; the failed coup on February 20, 1965 by

Colonel Phạm Ngọc Thảo). The military faction got involved in power politics that brought down each other, and successive civilian governments were established and then had to withdraw (four civilian governments with many reforms). Coups and counter-coups took place continuously until General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu established the Second Republic of Vietnam.

After that, the government apparatus in the South was militarized, to deal with the increasingly escalating war. After 1963, anti-French national political parties such as Đại Việt and Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng were allowed to operate again in the South, but by then the government had been militarized to deal with the war. The role of the military became so important that it reduced the role of political parties involved in the anti-communist movement in the masses.

Later, Thiệu and Kỳ formed a new government with Thiệu as Chairman of the National Leadership Committee and Kỳ as Chairman of the Central Executive Committee (Prime Minister). The dissatisfaction of the masses with the freedom of generals fighting for power, causing many mutinies continuously, causing the situation of the Republic of Vietnam to be constantly disturbed, creating the event of the **Central Vietnam Mutiny of 1966**. The Central region, since the Buddhist crisis in 1963, under the influence of Buddhism led by Venerable Thích Trí Quang (1923-2019), has continuously been the starting point of political movements opposed to the government. According to the *Journal of Modern Asian Studies* 42 (2008), *it is clear from the evidence stored in the conversations of the Most Venerable Thích Trí Quang with the American authorities. Most Venerable Thích Trí Quang really has a strong anti-communist attitude and fully accepts the use of military force by the US against North Vietnam and China. The main factor leading to the conflict between the Buddhist movement and the Johnson government was Venerable Thích Trí Quang's assertion that the military regimes that followed Ngô Đình Diệm were hostile to Buddhism and were incapable of bringing the war against communism to a victorious end.*

The direct cause of the Central upheaval was the dismissal of Lieutenant General Nguyễn Chánh Thi on March 11, 1966, Commander of the I Corps and the I Tactical Zone, who openly criticized Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (the Head of State) and Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (Prime Minister), which he considered unjust and corrupt. To secretly concede to the demands of the strugglers to democratize the country, on April 14, 1966, Lieutenant General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu published Decree No. 14/66, holding elections to the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly is responsible for drafting and voting on the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam. In early May 1966, Prime Minister Nguyễn Cao Kỳ announced that he would postpone the National Assembly elections and that the Military Government would rule for another year. Immediately, protests erupted across Central Vietnam, with protesters retaking radio stations and other offices.

In the document SNIE 53-65 (Special National Intelligence Estimate), dated February 4, 1965, the CIA commented on Venerable Thích Trí Quang as follows: *“Among these leaders, Trí Quang is the most influential person, and also the most politically capable. He seems to have prevailed over all current or potential opponents within the Buddhist movement and is unlikely to be overthrown from within the movement. ... Trí Quang is very conceited and has a strong nationalist spirit, so perhaps he does not like US intervention in Vietnam's internal affairs. Although he acknowledges that U.S. support is needed now, he does not believe that the US is capable of understanding the political situation in Vietnam, and, in the long run, he wishes the US to withdraw from Vietnam.”*

Later, the CIA mentioned the Ấn Quang Buddhist sect in a separate section and stated that this group was "exceptional in the wide political capacity of the opposition, because of their wonderful organization in Central Vietnam ". "Of course, Ấn Quang Buddhism has never had the power to overthrow the Saigon government, but has the ability to create serious civil unrest as it did in 1966..." CIA asserted "Ấn Quang Buddhists disliked Thiệu but came to the conclusion that he was more acceptable than an uncertain general like General Kỳ or ineffective like General Minh, even though local monks and Buddhists had unsuccessfully supported the candidate Minh as President".

On June 6, 1966, in front of a powerful force of the government in Đà Nẵng with M41 tanks and artillery aimed at the "resisting" pagodas in April and May, e.g. Chùa Tỉnh Hội, Phở Đà, Phúc Lâm, An Long, Venerable Thích Trí Quang asked the people to bring the Buddha altar down the street to evoke the "kindness" of government troops marching to Huế. On June 16, 1966, Colonel Nguyễn Ngọc Loan himself, Military Security Director and General Director of the National Police, commanded the Marines (Mad Buffalo Battalion) and Saigon Field Police to carry the altar back to the people and the temples, clear the streets and arrest the secessionist soldiers. On June 21, 1966, Venerable Thích Trí Quang was put under house arrest and brought to Saigon, the struggle movement quickly disbanded, and the Central upheaval was considered over. The Central upheaval in the summer of 1966 ended with two very important consequences: 1) The end of the Buddhist domination of the South Vietnamese political scene by some Buddhists after the Ngô Đình Diệm regime was overthrown; the Buddhist leaders were affected and divided internally. 2) The beginning of the period leading to the establishment of the Second Republic.



Fearless spirit (Đà Nẵng) Buddha Altar on the street (Huế)

The National Leadership Committee held elections for the Constituent Assembly on September 3, 1965. On April 1, 1967, the National Assembly promulgated the 1967 Constitution. This Constitution was the legal basis of the Republic of Vietnam until April 30, 1975. According to the Constitution promulgated on April 1, 1967, the Elections will choose both executive (President) and legislative branches (Senate and House of Representatives). The September elections choose the President and the Senate (60 MPs). In October, elections for the House of Representatives (137 congressmen) were held. While the Republic of Vietnam urged the people to register to vote, the NLF-VC urged people not to participate. The NLF also launched a campaign of sabotage and assassination. The week before the election, 190 people were murdered and 237 more kidnapped. Terror attacks tripled. On election day 62 people were killed.

In 1967, with support from the US and the Democratic Party force he established himself, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu was elected President with 34.8% of the votes. **Nguyễn Văn Thiệu** (1923-2001) was the President of the Republic of Vietnam from 1967 to 1975 and Lieutenant General of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. He came from the first military training course of the French National Army, then graduated and became a service officer for the French Union Army. Later, Thiệu was trained and trusted by the US. After the 1963 coup d'état that toppled Ngô Đình Diệm's government, he served as Chairman of the National Leadership Committee of the Republic of Vietnam from 1965 to 1967.

### **Section 17f. "Americanization" of the War: 1964-1973**

The US participation in the plot to assassinate President Ngô Đình Diệm, who did not want the US military to be present in Vietnam, aimed at setting up a new regime not through elections but through a coup but in favor of the presence of the US military in Vietnam. After the coup, the Saigon government was not only unstable, but the crisis became more serious when the situation of the Republic of Vietnam was even worse than during the Diệm administration: the economy collapsed, prices escalated, and the money fell in value compared to the US. money, unemployment, speculation and corruption increased.



According to the Saigon government's admission: within three months after the coup d'état, Việt Cộng insurgents increased their encroachment everywhere, so the Hồ Chí Minh trail became a "wide highway". In the past, the transport group only went to Khe Hồ to dump the goods and then use elephants or human power to move into the mountains of Thừa Thiên. In early 1964, truck convoys were able to reach the Kontum border crossing station, the number of transports increased 40 times compared to the previous year, and the proportion of motorized transport was 51%.

In a report to President Johnson on March 16, 1964, McNamara presented a tragic picture of the aftermath of the coup that overthrew the Ngô Đình Diệm regime: *"In 22 provinces (out of 44 provinces), the Việt Cộng controlled 50% or more. Mỏ Cày district and the communes Đình Thủy, Bình Khánh, Phước Hiệp "100% red"; over 900 communes as in the case of these three communes occupied by NLF troops. In the Central region from Phan Thiết onwards, within two months after the coup, 2,200 strategic hamlets out of 2,700 strategic hamlets were completely destroyed. In total, out of 4248 strategic hamlets in the South, 3915 were completely destroyed"*.

### **Self-defense of the South**

The US replaced France in December 1954 gradually and entered the war directly from March 1965 to help protect the freedom of the South. On March 8, 1965, President Johnson's government let three battalions of Marines land in Đà Nẵng. At that time, the government of Phan Huy Quát did not know, but in order to keep the face of both sides, he also had to keep quiet and instruct the organization of the female student union to bring flower garlands to welcome the uninvited allied soldiers. According to Mr. Bùi Diễm, former ambassador of the Republic of Vietnam to the US, the US did not consult the RVN government before deploying US troops to South Vietnam. The presence of American troops in the South was not been approved by the cabinet or parliament of the Republic of Vietnam. This event marked the US participation in the Vietnam War which became increasingly fierce. The war escalated from 1965 to 1968, with the number of American troops and allied countries Korea, Thailand, Australia, New Zealand, Republic of China, and the Philippines totaling more than half a million soldiers.

US troops poured into Đà Nẵng beach in March 1965 partly repelled the Việt Cộng and opened a hope of victory. But at the same time, since then, the RVN government must always consult the US before making decisions. Craig A. Lockard observed that *"to the disdain of the Americans they served, the Republic of Vietnam was merely instrumental in ratifying, if not often excluded, American direction. The Republic of Vietnam rarely makes major policies, they were*

*not even consulted about the US decision in 1965 to send a large force of troops into the war on the ground.”*

According to the US government's statement, the military attack of the Republic of Vietnam by the DRV was contrary to the Geneva Agreement. Further, US government stated that the reason for the US military's entry into the war in South Vietnam was to protect the RVN under the terms of the SEATO Treaty since the RVN was placed under the military protection of SEATO.

In 1965, when forced to send troops to Vietnam because it did not want to see the South fall, the US, through diplomatic statements that were not hidden, told the communists that the US did not want to see Hanoi occupy the South, and it had no intention of overthrowing the government of the North. In defending the South, the US did not plan to cut Hanoi's supply lines from North to South via Laos and Cambodia.

The US was afraid of Chinese intervention like in Korea, so President Johnson did not want China to feel threatened, did not want the Vietnam war to strain relations between the US and the Soviet Union, and did not want war to ruin his Great Society program in the US. The US limited the war to infantry to South Vietnamese territory while the North Vietnamese viewed Indochina as a total battlefield. Because of the dispute with the Soviet Union, China did not want to see North Vietnam win in Vietnam, so China would not interfere if the US and the Republic of Vietnam army expanded the war to the North with the guarantee of non-infringement of Chinese territory. For China, if the North Vietnamese won, the Soviet thorn would be closer. In addition, the history of Sino-Vietnamese relations showed to China that a unified Vietnam would not be an easy friend to deal with. Mao Zedong gently messaged the US through journalist Edgar Snow that China had no troops abroad and did not intend to wage war with anyone except when Chinese territory was invaded (Interview with Mao, The New Republic, 27-2-65).

In 1969, as President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu called for peace by proposing elections that included the NLF, but Vice President Nguyễn Cao Kỳ warned that any attempt to ally with the NLF would be very costly and "dangerous" because it would upset the US. In the same year, Thiệu overstepped his constitutional right, specifically the law that stipulated the inviolability of congressmen, to arrest and open a military court to sentence congressman Trần Ngọc Châu to 10 years of hard labor. when this congressman proposed to set up a delegation of South Vietnamese legislators to the North to negotiate with the DRV.

The US military was only accustomed to conventional warfare and was not suitable for the conditions of combat against guerrillas in the mountains and forests. But the US still believed that it would win any kind of war by using great firepower. This style of fighting of the rich is too wasteful, disregarding the lives of the people, and often does not bring the expected results. Contrary to the goal of 'winning people's hearts', this fighting style only made the people sympathize with the Communist policy of "anti-Americanism and national salvation". In the book 'Vietnam 1945-1995' (page 329) Prof. Lê Xuân Khoa quoted an interview of President Thiệu with The New Republic magazine as follows: *"The main reason that the Việt Cộng entrenched themselves so strongly was that because the people still believe that there is no difference between the French that they call colonists and the Americans that they call imperialists. "*

### **Bombing the North**

The Gulf of Tonkin Incident on August 4, 1964 provided an excuse for the US Congress to authorize the US government to conduct all necessary war operations without congressional approval. In a declassified 2001 tape, President Lyndon B. Johnson admitted that the attack of the DRV ship on an American ship during the Gulf of Tonkin incident on August 4, 1964, had never occurred. In fact, the Gulf of Tonkin incident was set up by the US to have an excuse to bomb North Vietnam. In addition, the auxiliary source was many North Vietnamese soldiers fighting in the ranks of the Việt Cộng and captured by the US military.

Soon after, the US began bombing the North. To maintain the bombing, the US had to send aircraft and airmen to the airfields in the South, establishing bases there. This led to the Việt Cộng attacking the airfields. To protect the bases, the US needed to send more marines. Then there was the problem of defending from a distance and, finally, having to find and destroy the enemy deep within their bases. As a result, American troops gradually fought directly on behalf of the ARVN that gradually became a secondary force, mainly to maintain security in the areas they controlled.

Starting in August 1964, the DRV had to deal with fierce air warfare by the US Air Force and Navy. The first was Operation Pierce Arrow on August 5, 1964, an act of retaliation against the Gulf of Tonkin incident carried out by US Navy aircraft, raiding the DRV naval bases in Lạch Trường (Thanh Hóa), Bãi Cháy (Hòn Gai). Next was the Rolling Thunder campaign in early 1965, raiding the provinces from Thanh Hóa to the DMZ, then the air war spread to the whole of North Vietnam. In order to prevent international reactions, the US Air Force only left out the inner cities of Hanoi and Hải Phòng. Air warfare targeted road systems, industrial and military targets. Even small electric substations and auxiliary railway branches were hit. The

hardest hit was in the two provinces of Hà Tĩnh and Quảng Bình, which were the supply throat to the South and in the Vĩnh Linh area bordering the Bến Hải river - where the people had to live in tunnels.

In April 1965, the DRV Government signed an agreement with China to send a part of the Chinese army into North Vietnam, stationed in a number of important positions such as Quảng Ninh province, Thái Nguyên province and along National Highway 1 but it did not exceed south of Hanoi. A significant number of Chinese military personnel were then sent to the North, starting in June 1965. The total number of Chinese troops in the North from June 1965 to March 1973 was approximately 320,000 people, including about 1000 soldiers who died in battle. At its peak there were about 130,000 people, including surface-to-air missile units, anti-aircraft artillery, road construction, minesweeping and transport engineering units. This force was not allowed to participate in the war, but only to help Vietnam repair bridges and roads destroyed by American bombs.

Further, in the first phase (1965) there were also Soviet soldiers and missile experts who directly fought and trained North Vietnamese soldiers to use of anti-aircraft guns and missiles. The GRU task force under the General Department of Military Intelligence, the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces trained Vietnamese special forces and participated in raids on enemy military bases. By 1965, the air defense forces in the North had some fairly modern equipment provided by the Soviet Union, including many anti-aircraft artillery regiments of various calibers (with radar-controlled type), a warning radar system and a radar guidance system for the air force, anti-aircraft missile systems and fighter aircraft. The air defense forces of the People's Army of Vietnam had caused significant damage to the US Air Force and Navy.

The US military presence openly in South Vietnam was the pretext for North Vietnam to change its name from "ideological war", "who wins over whom", "civil war" ..., to "war against the enemy invasion", "war of national liberation", and of course North Vietnam must limit and kept secret the presence of other countries' armies in the North in order to keep the "justice of anti-American aggression". It also kept secret the presence of the Vietnamese People's Army in the South. If the North Vietnamese wanted to launch any campaign, they had to "ask for permission" from the "elders" in the Socialist faction, if the "seniors", for their own sake, did not "allow" then there would be no action (Hồ Chí Minh campaign was conducted in 1975 because the North Vietnamese had secretly "saved" weapons, beyond the "permission" of the "elders").

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew recently commented: *"I also feel very sorry that the balance of power shift is taking place because I consider the US to be a peaceful power."*

*They are aggressive and they have no intention of taking new territory. They sent troops to Vietnam not because they wanted to take Vietnam. They sent troops to the Korean peninsula not because they wanted to occupy North or South Korea. The goal of those wars was to fight communism. They wanted to stop communism from spreading in the world. If the Americans hadn't intervened and fought in Vietnam for as long as they did, the anti-communist sentiment in other Southeast Asian countries must have waned, and Southeast Asia may have collapsed like a red-wave domino game. Nixon gave South Vietnam time to build up its forces. South Vietnam did not succeed, but that increased time allowed Southeast Asia to act together and lay the foundation for the growth of ASEAN".*

The life of the people in the North became increasingly difficult and stressful, even the soldiers were starving. In urban areas, people evacuated to the countryside to avoid bombs, necessities for townspeople were sold under a very strict stamp system. The countryside was absent of young men. Young women were both engaged in production labor, assigned to participate in the self-defense militia to protect order and participated in military training and aircraft shooting. The government mobilized tens of thousands of young women to volunteer to join the fire line in the hardest hit provinces such as Nghệ An, Hà Tĩnh, Quảng Bình and on the Trường Sơn route, to Laos to do logistical tasks, build roads and ensure traffic. The casualty rate was quite high because of bombs and diseases.

Immediately after American troops landed in South Vietnam, the war situation changed in favor of the US and the Republic of Vietnam. The Việt Cộng were pushed back into a defensive position, and were aggressively pursued by the US air force. Large units had to leave the open plains to retreat to the countryside or the mountains. In the delta, they left only small units and launched a people's war with guerrillas. Adviser Edward Lansdale suggested that if they could win the hearts of the South Vietnamese, the guerrillas would have no place to hide, but the plan failed and led to the use of Agent Orange and the policy of search and destroy. The US side had the advantage of extremely strong firepower and equipped with a lot of modern weapons. In particular, the US military had very strong air support, but their most terrible weapons were B-52 aircraft, napalm bombs and armed helicopters.

The NLF or VC gave up their ambition to destroy American units at regimental level, so they avoided fighting in direct confrontation, but only applied ambush tactics. Their troops always followed the American troops but did not fight, only when the enemy set up camp or made an opening, they ambushed and after fighting, they quickly left the battlefield before the enemy artillery and aircraft could respond. Once charged, always close in close combat, using the melee method "Hold the enemy's belt to fight" to prevent the enemy from using artillery and

aircraft. Although very modern, the US military was not used to fighting in the mountainous terrain and their weapons were not fully effective when being used in close combat.

The US and allied troops launched "search and destroy operations" to track down and destroy VC units, but the enemy was nowhere to be found while at any time they could be attacked. Search and destroy operations often resulted in civilian casualties by mistaking them for VC, and even caused massacres of civilians in areas where the VC usually operated or were concealed by the people in that area and provided human, material and financial resources. In addition, they also used special forces to operate in big cities to throw grenades at American troops in public places, assassinate South Vietnamese politicians and attack US officials and soldiers. To counter, the US and the Republic of Vietnam launched Operation Phoenix to sabotage the organization and local guerrillas of the Việt Cộng. This campaign reached its climax after the Tết Offensive in 1968 when many groups of NLF cadres were exposed and pointed out.

Besides military campaigns, the US also conducted chemical warfare in the South. Herbicides (most famous Agent Orange) were used on a large scale by the US in the years from 1961 to 1971, the purpose was to defoliate forest trees so that the Việt Cộng could no longer hide, as well as could not grow food. According to a group of authors published in the journal Nature, it can be said that the chemical campaign in Vietnam is the largest chemical war in the world. During that 10-year period, the US military sprayed 76.9 million liters of chemicals into the forests and fields of Vietnam. Of these, 64% was Agent Orange, causing serious poisoning in many areas in South Vietnam, poisoning more than 1 million people. Some US officials and generals knew well the toxicity of the chemical but hid it. The US government asked President Ngô Đình Diệm to issue a statement that these substances were not harmful to human health. During the war, reports of birth defects appearing in the newspapers in Saigon were dismissed as propaganda for the enemy. Complaints about dangerous diseases from peasants in South Vietnam were ignored.

Until now, the Vietnam War still holds the record as the war with the most bombs dropped in world history. The total number of bombs dropped by US planes on Vietnam was 7.85 million tons, nearly 3 times the total number of bombs used by all countries in World War II and equivalent to the destructive power of 250 atomic bombs that the US dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On average, each Vietnamese person at that time had to endure about 250 kg of bombs dropped from American planes. That is not to mention the 7.5 million tons of ammunition used by the US on the ground (including grenades, mines, explosives, artillery shells of all kinds) and 45,260 tons (about 75 million liters) of toxic chemicals used by the US.

Former General Moshe Dayan (1915-1981) - Israel's hero in the victory over Egypt - was impressed by the strength of the US war machine as well as the capabilities and dedication of the US military. But he expressed doubts about whether superior strength, dedication and ability would give the Americans the upper hand in what was then largely a guerrilla war against an elusive adversary. He also believed that the Americans were fighting the wrong kind of war in Vietnam – and a war that he believed would, at best, end in a stalemate. Americans were implementing a strategy dependent on large numbers of combat troops, fierce bombing and strategic hamlet planning. Former British Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, a 78-year-old African desert war hero, told Dayan the US policy was "crazy".

Despite the enemy's determination and the success of their strategy, Dayan expressed doubt that the Việt Cộng could defeat the Americans, mainly due to the US' superiority in aircraft and artillery, armor, modern communications, aircraft carriers, helicopters, against an enemy without them. The only way Dayan saw “ *a victory for the Communists was political - not military -: if the Americans for political reasons (domestic or foreign)... decided to cease the war before it was achieved. total victory.* ”

Thus, Dayan said that the Americanization of the war demonstrated the temperament hubris (arrogance) of the US armed forces. He said that the US military had the power to destroy the Vietnamese Communists, but it never could destroy gained support and admiration for North Vietnam's struggle for independence.

### **Section 17g. Tết Offensive 1968**

During the Nationalist-Communist war, the two sides often ceased fire for three days of Tết. This was an unwritten practice between the two sides, respecting the traditional customs of the Vietnamese nation. At the end of 1967, the US military presence in NVN was large (486,000 soldiers), creating an illusion of peace in the South.



*Huế residents fleeing to RVN-US side despite collapsed Trường Tiền Bridge*

After 3 years of fighting directly with the US army, although it still stood firmly on the battlefield and made the US troops bogged down, the casualties of the Việt Cộng also largely increased; if this situation continued, it would be impossible to win. The reason was that the South was rich in natural resources while the North was exhausted because of the socialist policy

since 1954 and bombed by the US since 1964. In order to turn the situation around and create a breakthrough for the war, the Politburo of the Vietnam Workers' Party in Hanoi in August 1967, in the Winter-Spring Plan of 1967-1968, decided to launch a general offensive and insurrection during the Tết Offensive in 1968 with North Vietnamese reinforcements. It was one of the largest military campaigns and had a landmark role and consequences in the Vietnam War. North Vietnamese troops, Việt Cộng forces and special forces in the area suddenly simultaneously attacked cities and military bases throughout South Vietnam on January 30, 1968, except for Huế and Bến Tre a day later (i.e., January 31). The campaign was proposed by First Secretary Lê Duẩn, a native of the South (Triệu Phong, Quảng Trị), who took full power in the Labor Party since 1960, promoted armed struggle, and established the People's Revolutionary Party. The South, fully supported the NLF and sent regular North Vietnamese troops (NVA) to the South to strengthen the Việt Cộng under the name of the Liberation Army to invade the South.

Before that, the North Vietnamese army fiercely attacked military positions in the Central Highlands from December 1965 and especially launched three regular divisions, 325C, 304, and 308, to surround Khe Sanh (Quảng Trị) since January 20, 1968. Khe Sanh was a strategic point to control the traffic and transportation axis on the communist Trường Sơn trail from the North to the South, near the demilitarized zone, and guarded by the US Special Forces. It was located on the 9th road, between Laos border and Quảng Trị town, about 20 miles from the border and about 30 miles from Quảng Trị. The communist authorities in Hanoi also put up a diversion, by letting the Hanoi press announce that Khe Sanh would be a second Điện Biên Phủ, making the leaders of the Republic of Vietnam, the US, and the world focused attention on Khe Sanh, and waited for a great test between the two sides to explode. The actual front of the war was the Tết offensive. But the US McNamara electronic fence to control Trường Sơn road was destroyed during the Operation Route 9 - Khe Sanh, so the US army withdrew from Khe Sanh in July 1968. This was considered a landmark strategic victory of the Liberation Army (NLF-VC) in the war. From the end of 1968, another Trường Sơn route was opened, often called the East Trường Sơn road to distinguish it from the routes in the West. Compared with the western routes, the East Trường Sơn road is shorter and less winding, so the delivery of goods and troops to the South was significantly faster.

Three years after directly participating in the war, the US military prevented the fall of the Republic of Vietnam at the hands of the Việt Cộng, but the US forces were also unable to pacify the South. Understanding the weakness of the US side was that their military had been bogged down in an extremely expensive war of attrition, and public opinion of both the people and the political world in the US had become increasingly impatient and the anti-war movement growing stronger when the army was involved in the war for too long abroad. The Việt Cộng and the North Vietnamese communists planned a battle that made a big splash, *"A big blow to unleash*



*political possibilities*" (as Secretary Lê Duẩn said) to create a breakthrough for the war, in order to force the US to de-escalate the war and accept to sit down to negotiate.

The 1968 Tết Offensive led to political and military results for the whole period of 1969-1971, as well as created a strategic turning point for the entire war in Vietnam that was more important at the strategic level, because it had a comprehensive impact on the military, political, socio-psychological situation, and the war strategy of the US. During this time, Hồ Chí Minh's health deteriorated, and he went to China for treatment after recording the poem Happy New Year. By the mid-1960s, Hồ Chí Minh was old and weak and gradually transformed into a symbolic leader. **During the Vietnam War, the decision making was largely in the hands of Lê Duẩn and his right-hand man, Lê Đức Thọ.**

The ancient capital Huế was defended by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (the 1st Division and 3 Airborne Battalions, then the Marines from February 12), local militia units, along with the US Marine Division. and the US Air Force. Meanwhile, the core of communist forces in Huế was the North Vietnamese army (NVA) with the support of southern communist units – the NLF also known as the Việt Cộng, and communist sympathizers, many of them former members of the Struggle Movement organized by Buddhist monks and students in Huế in 1965, which later became the Buddhist Uprising that the ARVN suppressed in 1966 (Central Region Rebellion). Many members of this movement fled to the mountains and joined the communists. During the Tết Campaign, they returned to Huế in the ranks of the communists.



*Lt. Gen. Ngô Quang Trưởng*

As part of the Tết Offensive Campaign when the truce was violated, the Battle of Huế began with a surprise attack by communist forces at dawn on January 31, 1968 and lasted until February 25. The NVA-VC returned to Huế on the 30th day of Tết (right on the 180th anniversary of Quang Trung's Tết holiday to liberate Thăng Long in Mậu Thân 1789). Time G was set at 2:30 on January 31, 1968, at dawn on the 2nd day of the Lunar New Year (Tiền Phong online).

On the 2nd day of the Lunar New Year, Phu Văn Lâu flag tower no longer saw the national flag of the Republic of Vietnam (*which was hoisted during the ceremony of raising the flag on the first day of the Lunar New Year by Brigadier General Ngô Quang Trưởng and the main officers of Huế City*) but replaced it with a strange flag consisting of three reds in the middle

of a blue background with a yellow star. That was the flag of the People's Democratic Peace Alliance that was recently established by the Politburo of Hanoi in the secret area and appointed Lê Văn Hảo (1936-2015), who was currently a Professor at Huế University of Literature, as President since the end of 1967. From the 2nd day of Tết Lê Văn Hảo was Chairman of the Revolutionary People's Committee of Huế, fled to the secret zone with a few leftist dignitaries and followed the Hồ Chí Minh trail to Hanoi. In July 1989, on a visit to Paris, Hảo stayed there until his death in 2015.



*Huế VC Commander  
Lê Minh (middle)*

As the order to begin the attack on New Year's Eve of the Lunar New Year in South Vietnam, the communists confirmed: " *President Hồ's New Year's Eve greeting on Hanoi radio is indeed a battle order for the entire Army and the people.*" The Communists, mostly NVA, attacked 36 out of 44 provincial capitals, 5 out of 6 cities, 23 bases and airports. The communists managed to penetrate 13 population centers but were all repelled within 2 to 3 days except for a few strongholds of resistance lasting 6 days in Saigon, and Huế for 25 days.

Despite being taken by surprise, the army of the Republic of Vietnam began to counterattack on the 3rd of Tết (February 1, 1968). On the 5th day of Tết (February 3), the US Marines landed at the Navy Pier on the right bank of the Perfume River (Huế Radio side), and stationed at MACV Command. Concerned that the US was pulling from the right bank to the left bank (on the inner citadel), the communists knocked down Trường Tiền bridge on the evening of the 9th day of Tết (February 7, 1968). Before that on February 4, An Cựu bridge was also demolished.



*Gen. Westmoreland*

Faced with the risk of defeat, the communists planned to withdraw. On the 8th day of the Lunar New Year (February 6), the Communists began to move wounded soldiers, prisoners of war, and booty out of Huế. At that time, in the mountainous west of Quảng Trị province, the communists captured Lang Vei Village, a strategic position near Khe Sanh outpost on February 7. The US aircraft again bombed the vicinity of Hanoi on February 14, so on February 15, the Central Military Commission in Hanoi sent a cable to the Communist Party Committee of Thừa Thiên Huế with the following content: " *Must keep the Citadel, must not withdraw to serve the general political tasks of the whole country*" to resonate and gain the world's attention through determination no matter the cost. (Chính Đạo, Mậu Thân 68: victory or defeat, Houston: Culture Publishing House, 1998, pp. 146.)

On February 12, the Republic of Vietnam Marines and the US Marines landed at Bao Vinh wharf, located on the banks of Gia Hội river, near Mang Cá station, jointly launched "Operation Tsunami 739/68" on February 14, clearing the communist army in the Inner Citadel. The battle

became more and more intense, sometimes the RVN-US troops and the CS troops were only a few dozen meters apart, fighting each other for every house. On February 18, the US Marines captured the Đông Ba gate (Mai Thúc Loan street where the author and his family were witnesses trapped between two sides for 21 days). The communist troops stationed in the Inner Citadel could only communicate with their Gia Hội army through the Thượng Tứ gate. The ARVN and US troops gradually pushed the Communists out of the Citadel. In the early morning of February 23, the flag of the Republic of Vietnam flew again on Phú Văn Lâu tower, replacing the party flag of the Union of Nationalist Forces in Huế led by Lê Văn Hảo. Captain Phạm Văn Đính of the ARVN 1st Division commanded the advance on the flag tower with the support of the ARVN-US Marines. The ARVN and the Allies could be said to have mastered the situation of the Citadel from then on.

During the Communist attack, there were intense fighting stretching from the Citadel to Bến Ngự, Nam Giao bridge to Thiên An Monastery. It was not until February 22 that two ARVN Ranger battalions were deployed into Gia Hội, a completely civil area, to repel the NVA. Because the ARVN came to the liberation late, and the Communists occupied the Gia Hội area for a long time, they had time to slaughter the most people here in Huế city. There was no further fighting back to the South side, when the NVA troops chose to retreat through Gia Hội, to the mountains located near Đá Mài. The Communist side "*later ordered: prepare to retreat to the western mountains, try to conserve forces, bring enough unused weapons*". When the order to retreat was promulgated on the night of February 25, the atmosphere somewhat panicky occurred ... "(Bùi Tín, True Face, Political Memoirs, California : Publisher . Saigon Press , 1993).

During their occupation, the VC and the NVA organized the liberated zones, conducted many propaganda sessions, ordered the ration of food, forced the youth to participate in labor and fighting, as well as pointing out enemies, and sometimes their own family members for denunciations and murder. Former members of the Struggle Movement, who left Hue in 1966 and then returned with the Communist side in 1968, were already very familiar with the city and now played an important role in defining who needed to be eliminated (brothers H.P.N.T., N.Đ.X. etc.). Not only government and military officials were slaughtered, but innocent civilians, including women and children, were also tortured, executed or buried alive. After the battle of Huế, thousands of people went missing. No one knew where their relatives were. They roamed the streets, searching and digging among the bodies. Residents even found corpses in the Huế Citadel area and around the royal tombs outside the city.

Within a few months people began to find mass graves. The number of corpses continued to increase with the discovery of more graves in the fall of 1968. The total number of bodies excavated around the city increased to about 2,800 victims, with 22 mass graves. The massacre

of such unarmed civilians left a deep scar in survivors' memories. Countless innocent victims, young and old, men and women, students, intellectuals and monks, civil servants, and civilians at that time were killed in brutal ways such as crushed skulls by hoes and gun stocks, tying them up into bundles and throwing in grenades, or threading them and pushing them down into live burial holes.

During the war, casualties of soldiers on all sides were inevitable, but in the Tết offensive, many victims were brutally killed by the Communists during their occupation of Huế. Most of them were government employees, police, ARVN soldiers and officers who were on Tết holidays. They were not in combat, and a sizable number of civilians were just refugees as the author's two uncles (T.Đ. and T.T.) were buried alive in the vicinity of Huế City.

Up to now, no one was able to accurately count the number of civilians as well as the number of unarmed people not in a combat position (on Tet holidays ) killed by the Communists. According to the analysis by Nguyễn Trân, a RVN-era political activist who stated in his memoir: “On the part of the people, there were 5,800 deaths, of which 2,800 people were killed and buried in collective graves, 790 members of the provincial, town and commune councils who were accused of being "the people’s oppressors", 1892 administrative staff, 38 police officers, hundreds of young people suitable for military service, a Vietnamese Catholic priest (Bửu Đồng), two French priests, a German doctor and his wife, and a number of Filipinos. " (Nguyễn Trân, Good Deeds and Bad Sins - Historical Facts, Xuân Thu Publishing House , California, 1992, p . 642.)



Among the civilian victims, four Germans were killed: Professor Dr. and Mrs. Horst Gunther Krainick, Dr. Raymund Discher, and Dr. Alois Alterkoster. These three West German doctors volunteered to teach at Hue Medical University. All four Germans were arrested on February 5, 1968. These German medical professors were colleagues of Dr. Wulf who witnessed the 1963 Buddhist Massacre in Hué. Three professors (Krainick, Alterkoster and Discher) were members of the German Cultural Mission, together with Mrs. Krainick, were arrested and led away from their university housing by the NVA. They were mistaken to be Americans. On April 5, 1968, their bodies along with many other Vietnamese people were discovered in a mass grave near Hué.

The Krainicks had spent the past eight years working in the countryside and in the villages around the city, often with medical students. Their names were known by many people, even followers of the NLF. In 1962 they founded a free 30-bed clinic in Đan Nghi, a village deep in Communist-controlled areas ... They went there every weekend for medical consultations, were often stopped by VC but never got caught "because they helped people". Late in 1992, the Hué Medical Student Overseas Association held a Honoring Ceremony and Placing the Memorial Tomb at their graves in Germany.



Following their death, the teaching staff and students of Hué Medical University had built a stele commemorating the German professors (Dr. R. Discher, Dr. A. Alterkoster, Professor and Mrs. Krainick) who were massacred in the 1968 event. This memorial stele was demolished and thrown into the lake next to the school in 1975, a few months after the war ended and the country was reunified. In 1992, Hué Medical Students Overseas Association held a ceremony in Germany to express their gratitude and placed a stele to honor the German professors.



*Memorials for German Doctors in Hué (1968) and Germany (1992) by former Hué Medical Students*

While mass graves continued to be found in Hué, American attention turned to the noisy events in their own country in 1968:

- On March 31, President Johnson announced that he would not run again;
- On April 04, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, leading to a chain of riots across American cities;
- On June 06, Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated;
- In August, violent conflict between the police and protesters took place at the National Convention of the Democrats in Chicago ;
- Presidential campaign ended with Richard Nixon 's victory.

The fate of the victims in Huế was unable to dislodge the above news . Later, although the people of Huế continued to excavate many graves of the missing people and the number of undiscovered bodies increased to thousands, news of another tragedy continued to obscure Huế. On March 16, 1968, less than a month after the events in Huế, American soldiers entered Mỹ Lai village and killed about 300 to 400 civilians, including children, the elderly and women. When the incident was uncovered in 1969, the American people were extremely horrified by the actions that their soldiers had done in Vietnam. Mỹ Lai victims and American perpetrators pushed the Huế victims and the Communist murderers out of the American media, the American public and the world.

The Huế Massacre had received little attention continued in the post-war period. While the pictures of Nguyễn Ngọc Loan and the Mỹ Lai Massacre were often mentioned in most books about the Vietnam War and analyzed in dozens of specialized books published from the 1970s to the present, the Huế Massacre has never been seriously studied, and almost, if not completely, faded from the memories of American citizens and scholars. The politicization of the Huế Massacre extends beyond Vietnam and the US. The incident was completely never mentioned in the press or in any other public forum in the Soviet Union, in 1968 or in the years that followed. The only voice of concern from the Soviet Union was that of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a Soviet dissident. Nor has the situation changed in Russia that inherited the Soviet Union.

After the Tết offensive, the control areas of the National Liberation Front (NLF) and the North Vietnamese communists were narrowed. The Communist army was knocked out of the urban areas and severely weakened: military units were decimated, many political forces were exposed, casualties were much higher than in previous years. It was not until 1970 that their forces could recover. Because underground political organizations specialized in mobilizing the people were revealed and, in 1969, in many parts of the battlefield, the Communist army lost supplies from the people. They had to retreat to the countryside, to the mountains or to hide in areas across the borders in Laos and Cambodia . Due to the difficulty of resupply, some in the leadership of the NLF and Hanoi suggested disbanding the division-sized units and returning to the regimental level and smaller.

The battlefield in the South became quiet. In the two years after 1968, from 1969 to the beginning of 1970, it was the time when the US military and the ARVN actively attacked and destroyed the North Vietnamese army, and carried out the Phoenix campaign to pacify and dismantle the political movement of the Communists in rural and urban areas. The role of the NLF's political struggles had since declined greatly because their underlying political systems were disrupted and the fierce war at this stage did not allow them to gather people to make political demands.

For the North Vietnamese Communists, the success of Tết dealt a fierce blow to the prestige of the US military on the Vietnamese battlefield, reducing the position and influence of the government and the Saigon army in the cities, urban and rural areas, causing high-ranking US leaders to be shocked and amazed when both the US Embassy and the Independence Palace were attacked. Senator Robert Kennedy had to say: "*Why half a million American soldiers and 700,000 South Vietnamese soldiers working together have complete air and sea superiority, are sufficiently equipped with the most modern weapons, yet are not capable of protecting the cities from enemy attack ?*". The US Department of Defense, when summarizing the Vietnam War, admitted: "*By studying US predictable methods and habits, the enemy had outlined their strategic diversion and distraction plans. On the contrary, the American understanding of the enemy's strategic path was shallow and more subjective*". General Võ Nguyên Giáp concluded: "*Our policy is not merely military, but an overall policy that combines comprehensive military-political-diplomatic aspects. The Tết event had both military and political meanings*".



President Lyndon Johnson - Robert McNamara -



Walter Cronkite

In the early morning of January 31, 1968, gunfire exploded at the US embassy, reporters from the Caravelle and Majestic hotels came to inform and competed to announce that communist guerrillas had entered the embassy. This news moved public opinion in the US. They quickly made a report aimed at sending back to the US breaking news and sensational images. They made the news with the purpose of showing the people that what the White House and General Westmoreland said about the war being won was a joke. They moved footage of the ruins of Bến Tre city with the comments of Air Force Major Chester L. Brown and Peter Arnett "must destroy this city to save it" (Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining

Lie, Vintage Books, New York, 1988) to comment on the US military even though Bến Tre only collapsed 50% (Phạm Văn Sơn & Lê Văn Dương, 1968:344; quoted in Mậu Thân 68: Victory or defeat? by Chính Đạo (1998), p. 253). They also reported Huế Citadel collapsed completely while the walls of the Citadel were still standing. (The author was a medical student living between two fire lines at Mai Thúc Loan street near Đông Ba gate).

In the US, reputable commentators competed against each other to comment against the US. Walter Leland Cronkite Jr. (1916 - 2009) was an American radio journalist who served CBS Evening News for 19 years (1962–1981). During the 1960s and 1970s, he was often referred to as "the most reliable man in America" and "Uncle Walter". In mid-February 1968, while the battle was taking place in Huế, Cronkite set out to Vietnam and went to Huế to find out the aftermath of the Tết Offensive. General Creighton Abrams, commander of all forces in Vietnam, whom Cronkite had known since World War II. Abrams told Cronkite, *"We can't win this damned war, and we have to find a decent way out."* When Hue was retaken by the US-RVN military, VOA sent out this news: *"Today on February 26, 1968 the old capital Hue is completely liberated, ending the dirtiest battle for the whole last month..."*

The Americans called the Vietnam War as a dirty war. Upon his return, Cronkite in a television show staged from the Hue Citadel on 27 February 1968 with the theme "Report from Vietnam" made the conclusion: *"The only reasonable solution in the future will be negotiation, not as a winner, but as an honorary of those who lived their commitment to defending democracy and did the best they could."* Following Cronkite's editorial report, President Lyndon Johnson said, *"If I lost Cronkite, I would have lost Middle America."* The media and anti-war protests increased. On March 31, 1968, President Johnson had to announce unilaterally to stop air raids on the North from the 20th parallel and accept negotiations with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Hanoi accepted negotiations just for stopping the US bombing and having enough time to consolidate the political infrastructure in the South with Northern personnel.

These atrocious crimes never fade in Vietnamese memories and in Vietnamese history. Although betrayed, reversed, attacked, or sneaked, the Communists did not succeed in the Tet Offensive, but suffered catastrophes. The NVA writer, Colonel Xuân Thiều said: *"I saw in Tết 1968 in Hue too many deaths, great pain and losses. The dead soldiers have no more people to bury each other. Many people died ..."* Just hearing that, General Secretary Lê Duẩn stood up, blushed and shouted: *"Idiot! Idiot! Even a colonel is stupid!"* ... then he stood up and walked quickly to the door, as if running away. According to Lê Minh, commander of the entire campaign of Trị Thiên Huế Area, who was the Secretary of the Huế City Party Committee during Tết, wrote in his memoirs published in 1988 *"most of the civilians died due to US bombs. Only a small number of people were killed because the civilians rebelled against those they hated. In the end, there were people who were unfairly dealt with in the war. Whatever the reason, the responsibility is still with the leadership,*



*including me. The mission now of the revolution is to vindicate the families and children of those who died in such circumstances."* Lê Minh returned to the North after 1968 and met Uncle Hồ. After reporting to Hồ about the Mậu Thân victory in Huế, Lê Minh wrote, " Uncle said that if you killed less, the victory would have been bigger." Do not expect the current leadership to re-evaluate the event with a vindication or apology.

In an excellent article " Learning From the Hue Massacre ", New York Times , February 20, 2018, Olga Dror examined the historical lessons from the Tết event. Bluntly looking at the war crimes of South-North Vietnam and the US military inflicted on the people of Huế city. American scholars or historians were too focused on the war aspects of the Americans or on the position of the North Vietnamese. They denied the suffering of the Southerners who did not want to live under the Communist regime and fought. In reality, expelling the Americans was just the first step to put the South in the orbit of the North influence. Hanoi has always emphasized that the united Vietnam will be a socialist country. Postwar Vietnam wanted to ignore it, or see it as a fabricated event. In the annual events commemorating the Tết 1968 campaign in Vietnam, the Huế Massacre was never mentioned. Turning Americans into "the only evil" for the sole purpose of concealing the truth has also contributed to the elimination of the wrongdoings of the Communists for successive generations. The proof is that after 1975 many citizens had to leave their homeland and settle in America and elsewhere and began to speak the truth. Many Vietnamese people lost loved ones in Huế, and then lost their own country, which is now an integral part of American society. The mourning of what happened in Huế reminds Americans of their over-focus on the war role, as well as their unwillingness to learn more about "other peoples," which is the main obsession in current US policy towards other countries. To be fair, the situation in the US has begun to change, albeit slowly, as a new generation of scholars trained in Vietnamese and genuinely cared for all sides of the conflict are helping to develop studies beyond the US focus. An awareness of the objectivity of historical events is an important factor in shaping a nation and maintaining the identity of its people in a democratic free country that respects freedom of thought.

## **Part 9. Anti-War Movement in the US**

In 1965, with the sending of combat troops from the US and allied countries to directly participate in the war in Vietnam and wage a fierce war of destruction by air and naval forces against the DRV, the US pushed the war to unprecedented scale and intensity. With the strategy of Local War, using two pincers "search - destroy" and "pacify the countryside", the US announced that it would destroy the NLF within 18 months. At the peak of 1968 -1969, the US mobilized to South Vietnam up to US 480,000 troops and 68,800 troops from allied countries.

During the three years of war, the American people had to send their loved ones off to Vietnam to fight. They witnessed every night on television the images of American

soldiers' casualties increasing but not seeing the day of victory made the Americans discouraged and since then the anti-war movement increased, demanding the withdrawal of US troops. Of course, the "dumb" pro-communist or international communists did add fuel to the fire. The event of the Tết Offensive in 1968, when the US Embassy was attacked, shocked the American public opinion so much that President Johnson did not run for re-election to settle the Vietnam War and he called on North Vietnam to participate in negotiations to resolve it in Paris. President Johnson's decision was not supported by the South Vietnamese side.

During the 1968 Tết Offensive, **General Nguyễn Ngọc Loan** (1930-1998) shot a VC commando prisoner in the head with his hands tied, in Saigon without questioning and without crime accusation by law. The incident was quickly captured by journalist Eddie Adams. The photo of Eddie Adams immediately hit the front pages of international newspapers, causing a stir in public opinion, shocking many people around the world, and promoting the anti-war movement in the US. It became one of the most remembered images of the Vietnam War and helped Adams win the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for on-site news photography.



The press had fully reported it, especially the suffering that both sides inflicted on innocent people during the Tết Offensive. After visiting the city of Bến Tre in March 1968 when 550 people were killed and 1200 wounded out of a population of 75,000 (James P. Harrison, *The Endless War: Vietnam's Struggle For Independence*, Columbia University Press, New York, p. 172), and in his July 1968 report Peter Arnett, the AP Correspondent asked Infantry Major Phill Cannalla: *"When does civilian casualties become irrelevant to the objective of destroying the enemy?"* when giving a quote from US Air Force officer Chester Brown: *"The circumstances became necessary to destroy the whole province in order to save it."* The New York Times grabbed the comment as soon as it became aware of it. The same went for Time magazine. Since then, the above sentence has entered the legend of the war, becoming one of the most useful images of the anti-war movement. (William M Hammond, *Reporting Vietnam: Media & Military at War*, University Press of Kansas, Kansas, 1998, p. 115).

In addition, **the Mỹ Lai** or Sơn Mỹ Massacre on March 16, 1968 in Sơn Tịnh district, Quảng Ngãi province, U.S. Army soldiers massacred 504 unarmed civilians, most of them women and children. The massacre was hidden until the end of 1969, when the incident was discovered. This catastrophic event shocked American, Vietnamese, and international public opinion, heating up the anti-war movement. Journalist Seymour Hersh, who discovered the



tragic situation, received the Pulitzer Prize in 1970. His account was illustrated by this photo taken by photographer Ron Haeberle on March 16, 1968 shortly after the American massacre where mostly women and children died on the village roads. This marked a turning point in public sentiment about the Vietnam War, both in the US and in the Western world as a whole and contributed decisively to the mobilization of the antiwar movement.

A photo called **Baby Napalm** (named Kim Phúc) taken on June 8, 1972 in Trảng Bàng captured the image of a nine-year-old girl, her skin and clothes burned due to severe burns from napalm bombs running naked among evacuees including villagers, soldiers, and photojournalists. The photo became one of the most haunting images of the Vietnam War.



From a President who started a war, Johnson now turned to peace because the American people's hearts have changed. A young generation grew up and the old generation returned to the "God kingdom" also contributed to changing public opinion. Organized opposition to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War began slowly and in small numbers in 1964 at various university campuses in the US and rapidly as the war became more serious. In 1967, a coalition of anti-war activists formed the National Advocacy Committee to End the War in Vietnam, which organized many large anti-war protests from 1960-1972.



Countercultural songs, organizations, plays, and literary works encouraged a spirit of nonconformity, peace, and anti-establishment. This anti-war sentiment developed during a time of unprecedented student activism and right above the Civil Rights movement, and

was bolstered in numbers by the demographically significant baby boomer generation. It quickly grew to include a wide and diverse audience of Americans from all walks of life. The movement against the Vietnam War is often cited as a major factor influencing American involvement in the war itself. The US expeditionary force officially landed in Đà Nẵng on March 8, 1965, starting a direct war in Vietnam with the title of "allied". In total, in 1965 the number of American troops in Vietnam reached 184,000. US defense spending in Vietnam that year also amounted to 20 billion USD. This caused the Vietnam War to escalate continuously for many years afterward and the number of US troops stationed in Vietnam also increased to a record high, reaching 550,000 troops in 1969.

The American people turned their backs on the war in Vietnam. At the beginning of 1966, the American people supported the Vietnam War with the highest percentage (59%), then gradually decreased by May 1972 to only 28%. So many demonstrations against the Vietnam War took place in many places in the US. On October 21, 1967, at least 100,000 people participated in Washington DC, about 50,000 protesters then turned towards the Pentagon. The demonstration featured a young man who had planted flowers in rifles aimed at his head. The Guardian (UK) assessed that the incident that happened at the US military headquarters in 1967 had become a landmark for the change from simple anti-war demonstrations to mass resistance. Half a million people marched in Washington in 1969 against the war.

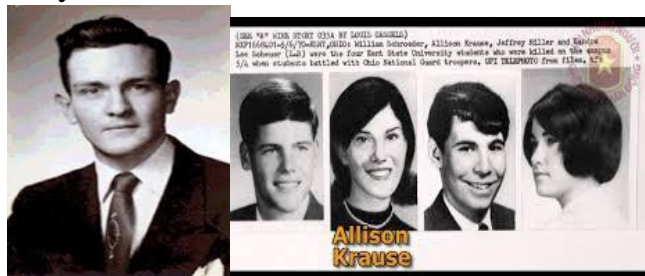
1968 was the year of running for President and Congress of the US. Nixon, representing the Republican Party, was a true hawk and asked President Thiệu to support him by not participating in the Paris peace talks. Thiệu believed that the "hawks" would continue to support the Republic of Vietnam, so he ignored Mr. Johnson's call, and the Democratic Party lost the Presidency to the Republican Nixon. After Nixon became president, the Paris peace talks still took place to end the war according to the American people's will. However, from 1968 to 1972, Nixon's first term, the war became more intense even though American troops gradually withdrew and most of the fighting was transferred to the ARVN. Vietnamization of the war, changing the skin color on corpses, was to please the American people.

But with thousands of large and small operations throughout the southern battlefield, culminating in two large-scale strategic counter-attacks in the dry seasons of 1965-1966 and 1966-1967, the US army still failed to achieve any significant goals. Unable to destroy the headquarters as well as any large units of the Việt Cộng, the goal of pacification after 18 months was still standing still. Also, from the military failures on the battlefield, doubts about the results of the bombing of the North and the increase of American troops in the South among the American people and Congress also increased. Many members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives have found that "the unforeseeable future of a war is now having a devastating effect on the will of the American people." America is increasingly mired in a never-ending war with no way out. The US government has no choice but to continue to increase troops and military costs.

Due to the great costs of the war, the US economy began to decline; the budget deficit was 4 billion dollars, prices skyrocketed, and inflation was out of control. On April 15, 1967, in Washington, about 40,000 people, including American veterans in Vietnam, participated in demonstrations against the war of the US Government. In October 1967, many protests of the American people against the war spread throughout the US with the aim of taking care

of the situation for the poor and ending the Vietnam War. The US government had to deal with great military, political and financial difficulties not only in Vietnam but also in the US.

The **Kent State University Massacre**, also known as the Kent State Shooting or the May 4, 1970 Massacre occurred at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, when



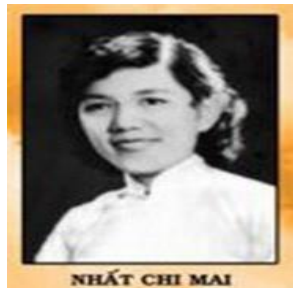
*Norman Morrison - Kent State victims*

several students were shot by the Ohio National Guards. Four students were killed and nine more were injured. However, other students who were shot were just walking nearby or observing the protest from a distance. The entire US reacted to the event to a remarkable degree: Hundreds of universities, colleges, and high schools across the country closed because 4

million students staged a class strike during the 1970 Strike and this event had a stronger impact on public opinion about the role of the US in the Vietnam War. Support for the war dwindled as the war progressed throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

In Vietnam, 8 Buddhist monks set themselves on fire in 1963. In 1976, 12 monks and nuns set themselves on fire in South Vietnam to protect the Dharma and the nation. There were also self-immolations by Americans. **Norman Morrison, a pacifist Quaker**, set himself on fire on November 2, 1965 on the banks of the Potomac River, near the Pentagon, to protest the US war in Vietnam. Norman Morrison was a Quaker, a pacifist. A week after Morrison's death, Roger Allen LaPorte, a 22-year-old American Catholic, set himself on fire in front of United Nations headquarters to protest the war. This action aroused a strong anti-war wave in the US as well as around the world afterwards.

**Buddhist Nhất Chi Mai** (1934 -1967) real name was Phan Thị Mai, alias Nhất Chi,



Buddhist name Diệu Huỳnh. She was born in Thái Hiệp Thạnh commune, Tây Ninh province and a female Buddhist who burned herself in Saigon to protest the Việt Nam's war. She graduated from the National School of Pedagogy in 1956, the Saigon University of Literature in 1964 and the Vạn Hạnh College of Buddhist Studies in 1966. After graduating from the pedagogical school, she worked as a primary school teacher at Tân Định school (Saigon). She joined the

group "Youth to serve society" (a youth association in Saigon at that time), and taught many orphans. At 7:20 a.m. on May 16, 1967, which was Buddha's birthday in the year 2511, Buddhist Diệu Huỳnh poured gasoline on her body and set herself on fire in front of Từ Nghiêm pagoda (Saigon, now in District 10, Hồ Chí Minh City). She died when she was

only 33 years old. Before setting herself on fire, she left 10 letters with the content calling for peace and ending the war.

The Kent State University case was the highest point the movement could reach. In the following years, the number of people participating in anti-war demonstrations and the number of demonstrations decreased. In Vietnam, the morale of American soldiers went down. Many soldiers became addicted to drugs, avoided campaigns, falsified reports, and threw grenades to kill their superiors (a total of nearly 900 cases in 1969-72). More and more people were not in favor of the war, and in Congress many regulations restricting the war were enacted. Senators Church and Cooper issued an amendment forcing the president not to attack Laos and Cambodia with military force. This was followed by laws that cut funding for U.S. troops in Southeast Asia (except for withdrawal purposes), required an expeditious withdrawal, and stipulated that the president must obtain congressional approval to deploy the U.S. military (War Power Act 1973). Even when American troops withdrew from Vietnam in 1973, a number of movements were still taking place to cut aid to South Vietnam, normalize relations, and compensate for war losses. During this period, groups of Vietnam War veterans and anti-war women's groups continued to be active.

### **John Kerry – Jane Fonda**

Shocked by what he witnessed in the Mekong Delta with his own eyes, Navy Lieutenant **John Kerry** quickly became the most anti-war activist even though he was still serving in the US Navy until 1978. In early 1970, Kerry joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) with about 20,000 members and he was a spokesman for the public and the press. It was President Nixon at the time who acknowledged this organization as one of the most influential elements in the anti-war movement in the US. Kerry was called a "traitor" when he was at the forefront of the anti-Vietnam war movement in the 1970s. Together with VVAW, Kerry carried out a propaganda campaign against the US military's crimes in Vietnam called "Investigation of Winter Warriors".



John Kerry before Congress



Ven. Thích Nhất Hạnh



Hanoi Jane

On April 22, 1971, Former Navy Lieutenant John Kerry became the first American veteran in Vietnam to speak at the Congress about the Vietnam War. According to him, Americans must put themselves in the shoes of the natives and see their country the way

they see it. Kerry pointed out that the most important lesson America needs to learn from the Vietnam War experience is when assessment of a country should be viewed through the lens of its own people. *"We cannot look at other countries only through the lens of the American people,"* Kerry concluded.

Hollywood actress **Jane Fonda** is famous for her film career and the picture of her sitting on an anti-aircraft artillery tray near Hanoi in 1972. Since returning from a visit to Hanoi, Jane Fonda's views have not changed, but grew stronger in opposing even US veterans, and condemning the US government and the government of the Republic of Vietnam.

Jane Fonda's actions, such as supplying medical supplies and medicine to North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, satirizing American prisoners of war captured in Vietnam, etc. divided the US, making veterans who fought in Vietnam until now still considered her an act of treason. Time has not erased the image of 'Hanoi Jane' wearing a "bà ba" shirt, sitting on the barrel of a gun, smiling like a flower and taking pictures with the North Vietnamese air defense troops. The image of the brightest American actress, Oscar-winner, siding with the "enemy" on a July day in 1972, is still vivid in the memory of American veterans who were imprisoned, or shed blood on the battlefield, but luckier than many soldiers, survived to return. Jane Fonda's activities have been admired for a long time by the anti-war and leftists in the US. But later on, criticism grew that Jane Fonda had "betrayed the American servicemen".

### **Thích Nhất Hạnh – Martin Luther King**

In early 1964, **Venerable Thích Nhất Hạnh (TNH)** returned home after completing research and teaching at Princeton and Columbia universities, USA since 1961. He was one of the founders of Vạn Hạnh University with target "Duy Tuệ Thị Nghiệp" of Buddhism. TNH was also the founder of the School of Youth for Social Service in 1965 to train young Vietnamese volunteers in serving villages, including remote areas. The school was a charity that rebuilt bombed villages, built schools and dispensaries, and helped families made homeless during the Vietnam War. In a meeting in April 1965, the student union of Vạn Hạnh School, Saigon made a "call for peace", with the main content of which was to urge the North and South to find solutions to end the war and to resolve the conflict and bring to the Vietnamese people a peaceful life with mutual respect.

In June 1965, Thích Nhất Hạnh wrote a letter to famous American activist **Martin Luther King Jr.** to call on him to openly oppose the Vietnam War. A year later, the two met for the first time in Chicago, discussing peace, freedom, and community. Not only is the leader of the movement to fight for the civil rights of black people, Rev. Martin Luther King had also been a strong opponent of the Vietnam War since 1967 because " *Conscience*

tells me that it is the right thing to do, not allow me to choose differently” (from Autobiography). On April 4, 1967, King addressed 3,000 people at Riverside Church in New York with his most famous anti-war speech, *"Beyond Vietnam: A Moment to Break the Silence"* referring to the ravaged Vietnam at the hands of “the fatal arrogance of the West”, noting that “we are on the rich side and safe while creating hell for the poor”. In the lecture 'Why I am against the Vietnam War', Martin Luther King commented: “We must admit that we were wrong from the beginning with our adventure in Vietnam, that we damaged the lives of the Vietnamese people. To atone for these mistakes, we must proactively end this tragic war.” In 1967, Rev. Martin Luther King nominated Venerable Nhất Hạnh for the Nobel Peace Prize. On April 4, 1968, he was assassinated exactly one year after giving his anti-war speech in New York.

The Vietnam War became more and more fierce, especially after the US poured troops into Vietnam in 1965. The death toll and material destruction were increasing day by day. Nhất Hạnh has stated: “*Communism and Anti-Communism are both rooted in Western fanaticism, and Buddhism is the enemy of all forms of fanaticism.*” (Alfred Hassler, *Ibid.*, p. 113). Standing between two deadly fanatical forces, thousands of innocent Vietnamese people had died and, in 1966, Vietnamese Buddhist leaders realized that they had to find allies abroad, and especially let Americans know the suffering and longing for peace of the majority of Vietnamese people. At that time, the only person in Vietnamese Buddhism who had the prestige, ability, and experience with the Americans to complete the mission of enlightening the world about the war in Vietnam, was none other than Nhất Hạnh.

On May 1st, 1966 at Từ Hiếu Pagoda, Thích Nhất Hạnh received “Ấn Khả- Dharma Seal” from Master Chân Thật, becoming a Zen master and spiritual leader of Từ Hiếu Pagoda. He belonged to the 8th Từ Hiếu branch of the Liễu Quán lineage in the 42nd generation of the Dhyana Lâm Tế Zen sect (Lin Chi Chan 臨濟禪, or Rinzai Zen in Japanese). Due to the invitation of Cornell University, Nhất Hạnh was allowed to go abroad. The trip to America became a world tour for peace, but sadly, it was also the beginning of the Zen master's life in exile. The main purpose of his trips abroad (USA and Europe) during this time was still to advocate for peace and Thích Nhất Hạnh led the Buddhist delegation to the Paris Peace Negotiations to pray for peace in Vietnam.

In the spring of 1966, Nhất Hạnh wrote a book aimed at American readers. This book had enjoyed fairly good popularity in the US, but it had also been published in eight other languages and in nine other countries. Remarkably, the book's most spectacular success was in South Vietnam, where a Vietnamese version was secretly put into print in the country and sold over 100,000 copies (in a country where selling 30,000 copies is considered a best seller). The book “Lotus In A Sea of Fire” talks about the concept of “engaged Buddhism”.



In 1966 Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh founded the Tiếp Hiện Order (Interbeing Order) and many practice centers and monasteries around the world. Since the seventies of the last century, Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh has been a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. And indeed, the Zen Master was a messenger of peace. For peace, the basic thing to do is not to get rid of nuclear weapons but to eliminate fear, anger and doubt in each person. Thereby, reconciliation will become easy. According to Zen Master TNH, the key to reconciliation is "listening". The Zen master also advised politicians to follow the Buddhist path to help negotiate and reconcile. The Zen master said that only love can remove all hatred. If all the leaders in this world acted with a mind filled with Understanding and Love, there would be no wars, no violence, no damned lives. It is not only the Popes, the Dalai Lama, and Thích Nhất Hạnh who have a policy of not encouraging war, but also many other religious leaders as well as some ordinary people who have organized protests against the war in Washington DC, San Francisco, Chicago and several other places.

### **Student Movement**

The year 1967 was a turning point in the anti-war movement in the US and even in Vietnam, from powerful statements such as the speech by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Riverside Church in April. The **movement of South Vietnamese students**, regardless of political orientation, had played an active and important role in the politics of South Vietnam, as an official opposition force. The Saigon Student Union was just one of many increasingly radical organizations at university institutions, including the Huế Student Union, the Vạn Hạnh Buddhist University Student Association and the Saigon High School Students' Union fostered anti-war activities. Under the influence of anti-war leaders, students organized rallies, marches, strikes and hunger strikes against the war, American intervention and various government policies in South Vietnam. Some student leaders actually worked secretly for the NLF or the Việt Cộng (Thành Đoàn) until the war ended.

After Tết 1968, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest in Washington as well as some other major cities demanding the US government to end the war in Vietnam. Just like in the US, the diversity in student responses reflected the diversity of South Vietnamese society. Although there were those who staunchly supported the Saigon regime and its war policy, others rejected both Communist and American domination. Some were willing to negotiate with the North; others yearned for the unification of the country under Communist leadership. This diversity clearly showed the complexity of South Vietnamese society. It is relatively strongest not among the middle class, but among the lower classes, among the workers and the poor. The Vietnam War was the dominant topic in all media, public discussion, and American history. Every war has opposition and support. But for the first time in American history, a war abroad divided society and eroded the authority of the leadership. (Marc Frey).

**END OF VOLUME II**

# **THE STREAM OF VIETNAM HISTORY 1856-1996**

Volume III

## **North-South Reunification in 1976**



English Translation by Trần Tiến Khanh

### **Part 10. Fighting and Negotiating 1968-1972**

In 1954, according to the Geneva Agreement, the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) had to withdraw from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, but the political forces of the Communists were allowed to stay in the South. The DRV government had no authority in the South, other than to arrange its political forces to stay to prepare for the national general election. Therefore, after discovering in 1963 the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in the South, the US used that pretext to land troops. The North again argued that the US and Saigon had violated the previous agreement and they reasserted the country's sovereignty (when the other party had violated it), but on the other hand established the National Liberation Front (NLF/VC). Therefore, the Labor Party and the DRV named the PAVN to fight in the South as the Liberation Army of the South under the flag of the Front, although this was denied during the war. The establishment of a new polity, the Republic of South Vietnam, aimed to raise the revolutionary faction in the South to the same level as the Saigon government, but the North could not easily interfere in the South's issues legally, but the most controversial issue was still the legality for the NVA from the North to fight in the South.

Before the 1968 Tết, both the DRV and the US had not seriously considered the peace talks and reducing the intensity of the war. The US side rejected all the conditions offered by the North Vietnamese (the US had to stop bombing north of the 17th parallel) and continued to escalate the war; on the other side, the DRV also rejected all US conditions to end the war, i.e. aid to the Việt Cộng. It was not until the Tết Offensive in 1968 that the US unilaterally gave in and accepted the conditions proposed by the DRV.

On March 31, 1968, Johnson announced a unilateral cessation of bombing in part of the North and agreed to open negotiations between the parties in Vietnam and the US side. He also announced that he would not run for President of the US in November 1968. This was a huge concession for the US because before that, they always maintained a hard point of view: the DRV had to withdraw the NVA from the South for peace talks. North Vietnam also agreed to negotiate. French President Charles De Gaulle (1890-1970) sent an envoy to Saigon in mid-April 1968 to propose the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) to sit at the negotiating table. Saigon agreed to negotiate. The parties agreed to choose Paris as the venue for negotiations. The Paris Conference officially opened on May 3, 1968.

After the Tết Offensive, the parties sat down to negotiate for the future of the Vietnam War. The negotiation was very complicated because, on the one hand, the parties did not really see the need to make concessions and on the other hand, the Soviet Union and China wanted to interfere in the negotiations. These two countries did not want the DRV to negotiate on its own, but wanted to pass it through China like the Geneva accords in 1954. But the DRV refused despite being pressured by two seniors.

## Chapter 18. Vietnamization of the War

This is the period "after the Tết Offensive" or the "Vietnamization of the war" when the US gradually withdrew from the Vietnam battlefield depending on the ARVN's ability to take on the war on its own but continued to push for strong military aid to the Republic of Vietnam to fight the Việt Cộng-North Vietnamese forces. In order for the RVN to stand firm, the US helped build an army following the model of the US army, with the most advanced war weapons left by the US and with the war logistics bases that the US military used. The US would provide maximum air support for the Army of RVN (ARVN) in the fighting with the North Vietnamese Army (NVA).

Immediately after American troops landed in South Vietnam, the war situation changed in favor of the US and the Republic of Vietnam. Three years after directly participating in the war, the US military prevented the Republic of Vietnam from collapsing in the hands of the Việt Cộng (VC), but the US troops were also unable to pacify the South. The VC were pushed back into a defensive position. Large units had to leave the countryside or retreat to Cambodia or Laos. In the plains, they left only small units and launched people's wars and guerrilla attacks.

From the military failures on the battlefield, doubts about the results of the bombing of the North and the increase of American troops in the South increased among the American people and Congress. The American people pressed the US government to soon end the war and bring its troops home.

In the summer of 1969, on the Hawaiian Islands, newly elected US President Richard Nixon met with President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu to discuss the withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam. The Americans wanted to call that process "De-Americanization of the war", but the Republic of Vietnam side objected because calling it like that was tantamount to acknowledging that this was an American war. In the end, the two sides agreed to call the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam "Vietnamization of the war".

### Section 18a. Cambodia 1970

The situation in the South was relatively quiet during the years 1969-1971. The VC and North Vietnamese troops actively stocked up on food and ammunition at bases in Laos, Cambodia and mountainous areas where the US and ARVN troops had not yet operated. The North Vietnamese army used the border areas of Laos and Cambodia, considered neutral areas, as a springboard to attack US-ARVN forces, then retreat back across the borders. US President Nixon ordered the opening of **Operation Cambodia** to end that situation. An important event that happened during this period and had great consequences for Indochina later was the US support for Lon Nol, the Cambodian prime minister, in the event that the

National Assembly voted to remove Prince Norodom Sihanouk from the throne and the position of Head of State and gave emergency powers to Lon Nol in March 1970, who then launched the anti-communist war in Cambodia.

In April 1970, about 40,000 ARVN soldiers and 31,000 US troops were mobilized to attack the VC Central Headquarters at the Cambodian border near Tây Ninh, but the VC leadership and most of the Vietnamese communist forces had moved deep into Cambodian territory because by intelligence they knew the plan in advance to launch counterattacks. The US claimed this attack killed about 2,000 NLF/VC troops, but they did not destroy the leadership of the VC Central Headquarters. Many intelligence analysts at the time believed that the Cambodian incursion dealt a stunning blow to the communists, forcing major force units away from the border and damaging their morale.

However, news of the invasion of Cambodia sparked a wave of anti-war protests, including at Kent State University that resulted in the killing of four students by National Guard soldiers, and at Jackson State University in Mississippi that resulted in two students being shot when police opened fire on the girls' dormitory. The Cambodian incursion also angered many congressmen, who felt that Nixon had illegally expanded the scope of the war. This had led to a series of resolutions by Congress and the legislative branch to severely limit the executive powers of the President.

Due to the protests of the American anti-war student movement, on June 30, 1970, President Nixon ordered the American troops to withdraw. The Lon Nol government troops and the ARVN garrison in Cambodia after the campaign could not cope with the North Vietnamese Army. The 5th, 7th, and 9th divisions of the Việt Cộng (VC) and the Khmer Rouge repelled the Lon Nol government troops, gaining control of the eastern and northeastern provinces of Cambodia to expand their bases connecting with Laos. The DRV also provided weapons and military equipment to help the Khmer Rouge build many new military units. The territory controlled by the North Vietnamese Army and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia became a large base for the communist war in South Vietnam.

The Cambodia campaign became a major American strategic blunder. They did not destroy the opponent, but on the contrary, created conditions for the opponent to develop. The North Vietnamese and VC troops were able to purchase necessities and medicine right on Cambodian soil to effectively equip their troops, which previously had to wait for the North's reinforcements located thousands of miles away. Areas controlled by them became corridors, bases and starting points to return after fighting in the South since the beginning of 1971.

Initially the process of Vietnamization of the war went relatively smoothly. The armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) after the Tết Offensive, equipped with modern equipment, showed more confidence and took the initiative on most of the southern battlefields from 1969 to the end of 1971. But that did not say anything because the VC in this period had not yet recovered from the Tết Offensive and did not advocate big battles. It was also possible that the VC limited their activities to make the withdrawal of US troops faster.

The NLF/VC also developed a political struggle movement in cities and schools, including universities in the South, to oppose the strategy of Vietnamization of the war: the movement demanded a peaceful end to the war in accordance with the anti-war movement in the US, but also associated with the slogan demanding freedom and democracy. Peace, independence and democracy were also associated with the slogan of national harmony... gathering nationalist, democratic forces and anti-Thiệu-Kỳ elements to expand the Front.



Communist POW 1969

Under the pretext of "protecting civilians against communist intimidation and terrorist activities", **Operation Phoenix** since 1968, with the help of the CIA, was deployed to root out secret facilities of the NLF/VC. By 1972, the US claimed to have "removed" 81,740 VC supporters, of whom 26,000 to 41,000 had been killed. The efforts of Operation Phoenix mainly took place by means of terror, assassination, and destruction. Teams of Phoenix members dressed in black were trained by American intelligence officers and sent to the hamlets. They stayed with the people to listen to collect intelligence, arrest elements suspected of being communist or pro-communist, and interrogate them to break out the organization. If they could not be exploited and was still suspected of being Communist or pro-communist, then they were eliminated. If it was not convenient to catch them, assassinate them. Thousands of people were killed. In the short term, these measures had a good effect on security, the rural situation had become significantly safer for the government of the Republic of Vietnam. However, in the long run, the executions and assassinations of civilians made the RVN government even more alienated from the people, causing the pacification program to be gradually stopped.

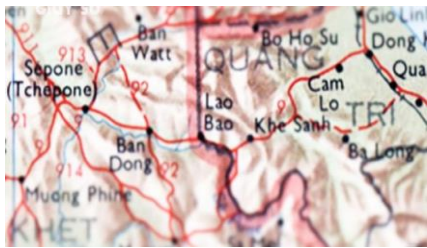
During this period, American aid was abundant, so the life of the people in the big cities became better and rural people flocked to the cities to make their living easier. However, the abundance of aid fueled corruption in the government and military. In the army, it was very common to overstate the number of "ghost soldiers" so that officers can receive their salary, but in reality there were no combat troops. This was a period when corruption raged within the military leadership of the Republic of Vietnam, with its reputations for smuggling, stealing military supplies and money. President Nguyễn Văn

Thiệu was criticized by many for his failure to control corruption and economic abuses. Corruption in the army was so widespread that officers and soldiers even sold military equipment, weapons and food to the VC, and even "donated" trucks to "partners" after every transaction.

### **Section 18b. Lower Laos 1971**

Operation Lower Laos or Operation Lam Son 719 (as the ARVN called it) or Operation Route 9 - Southern Laos-Quảng Trị (as the VC called it) during the period from February 8 to March 24, 1971 due to the strongest forces of the ARVN (1st Army Division, Airborne, Marines, Rangers) performed with the support of US air force and artillery. The objective of the operation was to disrupt the North Vietnamese Army's logistics system at Tchepone and all its logistics bases located southeast of Tchepone down to A Shau and to cut off the Hồ Chí Minh Trail at the town of Tchepone located near the Vietnam-Laos border 42 km to the west. This campaign was also a test of the ability of the ARVN to fight on its own in the event that the US continued to withdraw from the battlefields of South Vietnam, a test of the strategy of Vietnamization of the war and the ability to conduct effective independent operation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

Books and documents showed the political and military reasons that prompted the formation of Operation Lam Son 719: the positive development in the Vietnam war and the 1972 US Presidential election. The perfect success in the battle through Cambodia: supplies from the North connected from Laos to Northeast Cambodia and poured into the Tây Ninh bases were almost exhausted. All of these factors pushed the Vietnamese-American commanders to come to a decision: this was the best time to attack the communist logistics



bases in Laos and to cut off the communist supply line to the South. Another factor that made the leaders of Vietnam - America have to decide promptly: by the end of 1970, the US had 334,000 troops in Vietnam, with enough supplies and firepower. Therefore, if it was not possible to destroy the VC headquarters already deep in the interior of Cambodia, they must find a way to cut off supplies from Laos. In February 1971, Lam Son 719 campaign attacked from Khe Sanh base, Quảng Trị, cut across Lower Laos to destroy the reserve system of the NVA. At that time, the process of Vietnamization of the war was going well, so the Americans forced the ARVN to go to war to cut off the Hồ Chí Minh trail without American air support.

Because of the inherent flaws in the US-Vietnam command system, the need for secret planning, and the inability of US-Vietnamese military and political commanders to face the threat of actual combat, and due to poor execution, Operation Lam Son 719 collapsed in the



face of North Vietnamese resistance. This operation was a disaster for the ARVN that destroyed its best units, and shattered the confidence that had built up over the previous three years. For the US, it was a failure of the strategy of Vietnamizing the war, which many American political and military officials considered the best way to save the Republic of Vietnam and for the US to complete the withdrawal.

This campaign also marked a new development of the communist army. The outbreak of fighting in Lower Laos was unlike any previous battle in the Vietnam War. This was the first time the NVA abandoned the old tactic and launched a counterattack in the traditional conventional war style, the first time launching large attacks with infantry divisions (2, 304, 308, 320 and 324) with armored and heavy artillery support to crush ARVN positions on the flanks of the main front. The synergies of anti-aircraft fire made US tactical air support and air reinforcements difficult and suffered a lot of damage.

In addition to the high casualties on both sides, Operation Lam Son 719 was also said to be an operation with many defects — defects from planning to implementation. It was suspicious that Operation Lam Son 719 had the operation plan leaked from the start, but the operation was still continued to bring the ARVN to the dead end. The Vietnamization program had been going on for more than a year, and the success of the ARVN on all battlefields was demonstrated when the Vietnamese Communists circulated Resolution 9 in June 1969. Resolution 9 directed the communist commanders in battlefield B (the battlefield within the territory of the Republic of Vietnam, to distinguish it from the battlefields in Laos and Cambodia), to avoid fighting if possible and to return to guerrilla warfare to protect the troops; and should only confront the Republic of Vietnam on the political front rather than on the battlefield.

This was the most damaging operation for the ARVN. In terms of an experiment of Vietnamizing the war, Lam Son 719 was a heavy failure. More than half of the invading force suffered casualties. The elite Rangers and Parachute Divisions suffered heavy losses, and these are the best strategic reserve units of the Republic of Vietnam. The Americans "threw the ARVN into the stream of cold water and they drowned there".

In terms of logistical sabotage, this operation destroyed a number of Communist supply depots and facilities. According to the assessment of the US, this campaign delayed the plan to attack the provinces south of the DMZ by a year. But basically, the NVA's supply system was not damaged, and the number of trucks increased immediately after the operation ended. The victory of Route 9 - Southern Laos of the NVA and the Pathet Lao forces caused a heavy military and political defeat of the US and the Saigon government. This victory helped the NVA firmly protect the strategic transport corridor along the Vietnam-Laos border, bankrupting an important step in the US strategy of "Vietnamization of the war". In

early 1972, the NVA forces accumulated enough ammunition and launched another general offensive - the 1972 Spring-Summer Campaign.

### Section 18c. Shanghai Communiqué of February 28, 1972

The program of Vietnamization of the War was entering a successful stage when an event in the world caused it to be interrupted and the **victory of the Republic of Vietnam missed**. In early 1969, on the Ussuri River, along the border of Northeast China, Xinjiang region, the Soviet Union and China engaged in combat on the Damansky peninsula on the Ussuri River in Russia, then many clashes occurred during August. This event proved to the US that the rift, since 1953 after Stalin's death between the two communist parties, was real. In the context of the Soviet Union and China, the conflict had increased since 1961. Hồ Chí Minh advocated swinging between the communist countries, not leaning to either side. Regarding foreign affairs, the DRV advocated to support revolutions in the world, considered Vietnam an outpost of the socialist faction in Southeast Asia, joined the movement of non-alignment, was friendly with nationalist countries, and opposed imperialism.

The US did not miss an opportunity to find a way to isolate and to weaken the enemy's ranks. America's global strategy changed from that moment on. Henry Kissinger, National Security Adviser in 1969 and Secretary of State in 1973, played a prominent role in US foreign policy from 1969 to 1977. During this period, he pioneered a policy of détente with the Soviet Union and arranged the opening of relations with China. He also conducted diplomatic shuttle negotiations to have the Paris Peace Agreement **to end American involvement in the Vietnam War and to end the 1973 Yom Kippur War in the Middle East**. The negotiations ended with cooperation between the US and China forming a new strategic alliance against the Soviet Union.



21-2-1972 Mao-Nixon

Định mạng Việt Nam Cộng Hòa đã được định đoạt 1972



20-5-1972 Breznev-Nixon

On February 21, 1972, US President Richard Nixon visited China for seven days. Nixon's first visit to Beijing began discussions with Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai on the one China policy, and obtained Beijing's assurances of an honorable

peaceful resolution to the Vietnam war with a decent interval. President Nixon also reassured the Chinese leaders that the US would not support Taiwan independence and promised to take the steps the Chinese wanted. He was expected to be re-elected in 1972.

On February 28, 1972, the Shanghai Joint Communiqué was issued. President Nixon declared this was a week that would change the world: formalize relations between the two

countries, ending 23 years of diplomatic isolation and mutual hostility. The content of the notice was as follows:

1. Referring to the situation in Indochina, the US Government reaffirmed its aim to find a way to solve the Vietnam problem by negotiation, maintaining close relations with South Korea and Japan.

2. The Chinese government affirmed its "firm support" to the people of Indochina, wished to see Korea unification, and opposed the restoration of Japanese militarism.

3. In the Taiwan issue, the US recognized Taiwan as a part of China, but opposed the use of force to unify Taiwan. China did not consider the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Taiwan and the termination of relations with Taiwan as conditions for developing relations with the US.

4. Agreement on joint action to develop cooperation and exchange of science, technology, culture, sports and trade between the two countries.

Immediately afterwards, on the occasion of the Moscow Summit, President Nixon and General Secretary of the Russian Communist Party Leonid Brezhnev on May 22-30, 1972 on the topic of reducing the SALT1 and ABMT discussed the issue of Vietnam with a secret agreement. As a result of Nixon's 1972 visits to China and the Soviet Union, there were a number of Sino-American and Soviet-American bilateral agreements that were unfavorable to the Republic of Vietnam side. Politically, the US had made some progress when it had normalized relations with China and the Soviet Union, causing the US to voluntarily limit aid to Vietnam. These tacit agreements did not pass the US Congress and were revealed during the Carter administration.

Five days after the American delegation left Beijing, Zhou Enlai flew to Hanoi. He assured the North Vietnamese he was not selling them out at a high-level meeting with Nixon. Neither the DRV nor the NLF/VC wanted their fate to be decided in Beijing or Moscow. To make all this diplomatic ambiguity clearer, not long after Zhou returned home, Hanoi launched an open invasion of the South and sent their conventional forces into battle for the first time during the Vietnam War. The North Vietnamese Army crossed the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the North and the South on March 30, 1972 in the Battle of the Red Summer of 1972. The People's Newspaper in 1973 published an editorial "*The Victory of the Revolutionary Trend*" clearly showed the view of the DRV and the NLF/VC that "*The period of large countries gathering to crush small countries is over forever*". The North resolutely occupied the South in 1975 at the request and support of the Soviet Union.

#### **Section 18d. The North Invasion of Summer 1972**

"Red Fire Summer 1972" is the title of a war chronicle by military writer Phan Nhật Nam, published in Saigon in 1973, also known as the 1972 Spring-Summer Campaign (as the South Vietnamese called it), or Easter Offensive (as the US called it) which took place from March 30, 1972 to January 31, 1973. These were operations carried out by the NLF/VC with logistical and technical support of the NVA against the ARVN. When the campaign took place, the US only had 65,000 troops left in Vietnam, of which the number of troops fighting on the ground was very small and no longer directly participated in the war with the ARVN.

This was the general strategic offensive of the People's Army of Vietnam with large-scale battles, synergistic forces, and deep attacks on the defense system in important strategic directions: Trị Thiên, North Central Highlands, South East. Realizing that the situation changed more and more favorable in terms of force comparison and strategic position, the Politburo and Central Military Commission of the NLF/VC decided to expedite preparations to launch the 1972 strategic offensive throughout the South, in which the Trị - Thiên front was chosen as the main attack. In tactical zone I, the NVA attacked with 3 Divisions 304, 308, 324, B5 Front (4 regiments), 1 rocket regiment, 4 artillery regiments, 3 T54 tank regiments and 2 local isolated regiments. In April and May 72, the two 320th and 325th Divisions from the North of the South Central Coast moved down through Bến Hải - Latitude 17 and the 312th Division crossed the border from Laos to intensify their attacks on Cam Lộ, La Vang, Hải Lăng and Quảng Trị city.

In the course of the war, never before had the NVA launched such a massive offensive under the support of such well-equipped forces, which was stronger than anything else that the ARVN could focus on confronting again in the spring of 1972. The leaders of the DRV-NLF/VC were determined to launch a large-scale campaign to defeat the Vietnamization of the war and gain an advantage at the negotiating table in Paris. The campaign was timed to coincide with the first phase of the US presidential election campaign, with the hope that the escalation of hostilities would cause strong pressure in the US to demand peace and an end to the war.

The fighting was very fierce in the towns, the casualties on both sides and the people were very high. Finally, the NVA could not take the town and had to withdraw in the battle of Đắc Tô - Tân Cảnh, Bình Long province and the battle of Lộc Ninh, the town of An Lộc. The main battlefield of 1972 was in Quảng Trị province. At noon on March 30, 1972, two NVA 304 and 308 Divisions, with the support of tank and artillery regiments, crossed the demilitarized zone at the 17th parallel dividing the two countries. From the west, the 324B Division, with tank support, followed Route 9 from Laos to cross the border through Khe Sanh, entering the Thạch Hãn River valley. This force equivalent to 3 divisions surprised the defenders of the Republic of Vietnam and its American allies.

At the front line bordering the North, the defense force of the ARVN consisted of: the 3rd Infantry Division in the first phase, the 147th Marine Brigade, the 18th Armored Battalion, and the Quảng Trị Provincial Area Force consisting of local troops. In the later period, the 258th Marine Brigade was added, 2 Rangers regiments, 1st Armored Brigade (according to ARVN Brigadier General Vũ Văn Giai). Orders and counter-orders between the corps and the divisions caused the unit leaders to disobey orders and because of that, the defense system of Quảng Trị was broken (the units automatically left their positions to retreat south of Mỹ Chánh river). After only one month and through two attacks, the NVA gained control of the entire Quảng Trị province, threatening Thừa Thiên province and Huế city. The 56th Infantry Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel Phạm Văn Đính, about 600 men, surrendered to the Communists at the Carrol base (on the afternoon of April 3 with 22 cannons of 105mm, 155mm and 175mm).

The initial defeat of the Republic of Vietnam in Quảng Trị in 1972 prompted the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to state that if Huế fell, the government of President Thiệu would fall along with it. Comments by the CIA and the US State Department in May 1972, three years before the fall of Saigon, about the situation in South Vietnam were very public.

"Avenue of Horror" was the name that journalist Ngy Thanh (special envoy of Sóng Thần newspaper at that time) gave to the 9 km long road on National Highway 1. This road is located between white sand dunes, no buildings, just tall trees and bushes and it was therefore easily within sight of the NVA observers when calling their 122mm, 130mm, 160mm guns... from the direction of Trường Sơn to hit the evacuees. It was estimated that nearly 2,000 people were killed (only 1841 bodies were recovered) and more than 500 vehicles of all kinds (of the people and the army) were destroyed in the massacre on this road. The story of a 4-month-old baby being saved by the ARVN while lying on his mother's belly to suck on her breast had shown the humanity and responsibility of ARVN soldiers during wartime.



"Baby on Horror Avenue" Trần Thị Ngọc Bích is now Lieutenant Colonel of the US Navy Kimberley Michelle ([viendongdaily.com](http://viendongdaily.com))

In addition to the Avenue of Horror, in all fronts of the Red Fire Summer -1972 (in An Lộc, Kom Tum, the Mekong Delta...), Communist artillery fired indiscriminately at the flow of refugees who did not have an inch of iron in hand when knowing they were running in the direction of the South Vietnamese army: from Bến Đá bridge to Trường Phước bridge in Hải Lăng district, Quảng Trị province where the people (and soldiers) of South Vietnam retreated to the South in the last days of April 1972 when fighting broke out in the artillery barrage of the North Vietnamese army.

Until then, maintaining the newly gained control area and recapturing the lost area in Quảng Trị had become a political issue demonstrating the will and bravery of both sides and a strength to negotiate at the Conference in Paris. The US showed its will by bombing back to the North on April 16, 1972 with very fierce intensity: using B-52s to carpet bomb Hải Phòng and dropping torpedoes by the navy to blockade the ports in North Vietnam.

At the Quảng Trị battlefield, the ARVN brought all its reserves and decided to retake Quảng Trị town with maximum support by American B-52 aircraft. The NLF/VC was determined to maintain the Quảng Trị citadel area of the town. The fighting was extremely fierce, the casualties on both sides were very high to dispute a very small piece of unpopulated land that was completely destroyed. After nearly 3 months of fierce fighting, the NVA could not hold it and the ARVN recaptured the ancient citadel and Quảng Trị town. But, despite the support of the US air force, the Republic of Vietnam could not recapture Đông Hà town and other lost areas.

Kissinger's strategy of withdrawing troops from Vietnam was based on the Vietnamization of the War and negotiations with North Vietnam. On September 17, 1972, the army of the Republic of Vietnam regained Quảng Trị and the spirit of leadership in the South was high - that was the success of Vietnamization. But only three weeks later, the spirit was shaken again - because of the failure of the peace talks. During the meeting with Lê Đức Thọ (October 8, 1972), Kissinger gave in to the main point of the four years of secret talks: *The US unilaterally withdrew its troops within two months while the North Vietnamese army would station in the South.*

President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu was forced to withdraw his troops leaving the countryside open, mobilizing most of the reserve forces to protect threatened towns, creating an opportunity for local VC forces to launch attacks in the Mekong River Delta and the densely populated areas around Saigon. Although the US Air Force effectively bombed the VC concentration points, the strategy of Vietnamization of the war emphasized that the Republic of Vietnam had to take care of the fighting on the ground. The Americans would only help them with logistics and Air Force firepower. In essence, Vietnamization of the war went bankrupt when the ARVN's Lam Son 719 Lower Laos Campaign failed.

After the campaign, the VC held an additional 10% of the South's territory, added military bases and the important town of Lộc Ninh became the new capital of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam. By the end of 1972, the battlefield was stable because the two sides were exhausted and could no longer cause hostilities. After that, the two sides struggled until the end of January 1973, when the Paris Agreement was signed and the two sides stopped fighting. As a result of the campaign, the VC controlled more than half of Quảng Trị province.

Although both the NLF/VC and the US claimed victory, in fact the US strategy of Vietnamization of the war officially failed when on April 15, 1972, President Nixon announced an increase in bombing raids, including densely populated areas as General Abrams requested. According to journalist Jean Lacouture, the US bombardment was ineffective against the will and determination of the Vietnamese people. Despite the ARVN's combat effectiveness, losing many battles and suffering huge casualties (approximately 40,000 dead and 140,000 wounded), the army eventually held out with the support of American advisors and strong American fire support from the air, including consecutive B-52 missions that carpeted the enemy formations. The Republic of Vietnam and the US believe that the policy of Vietnamization of the war had proved effective, because they had repelled the largest attack ever by the NVA. But this assessment was somewhat optimistic, because of the fact that it was only thanks to the intense firepower of the US Air Force that the ARVN could hold its ground. In addition, the internal weaknesses in the ARVN's tactics had reappeared and became more and more serious, when they proved too dependent on US fire support. This point was captured and taken advantage of by the enemy.

However, Hanoi and Lộc Ninh quickly took advantage of what they won. The PAVN immediately assisted the NVA by beginning the expansion of logistics corridors from Laos and Cambodia into South Vietnam. The bases at Cửa Việt and Đồng Hà were rapidly expanded. Within 1 year, more than 20% of the goods shipped to the southern battlefields passed through here. It was further noted after the Vietnamese communists failed in their 1972 campaigns, in North Vietnam, General Võ Nguyên Giáp was replaced by his assistant General Văn Tiến Dũng who took the real power in the North Vietnamese Defense Ministry. The attacks of the Vietnamese Communists in 1972 were generally unsuccessful, and were repulsed by the ARVN on all four fronts. The battles in the hot summer showed that when fully equipped, even with a small number of troops, the ARVN army was strong enough to repel the fierce attacks of the enemy. During this summer's war, the communists only gained political clout in the world to step up their diplomatic campaign. Although the campaign did not bring a clear military advantage, it made the American society too tired. The US and world public opinion pressed the administration to achieve a peace by negotiation in accordance with the commitment to resolve the war during the presidency. By the end of 1972, the US and the DRV had reached a basic compromise on the main ideas of the Paris

Agreement and in early 1973, the US completely withdrew its forces from the war, leaving only military advisers.

In the 2007 work “Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal”, a research on the Vietnam War by history professor Andrew Wiest of the University of Southern Mississippi, mentioned the story of two ARVN officers from Huế Phạm Văn Đính (surrendered to the communists) and Trần Ngọc Huế (re-education prisoner of war) and concluded “*Unlike what the Western world thought, South Vietnam fought extremely bravely for 20 years. More heroic than what the Western world, up to this point, still writes, still believes and still imagines. In the battles, from the small ones before the Tet Offensive, and to a large extent thereafter, they fought courageously and effectively.*” The author Wiest affirmed that the ARVN was a neglected force. As a historian, Wiest asserted, through his own research, that the army of the Republic of Vietnam was a heroic force, having fought in the 20-year war to protect freedom.

In 1973, after signing the Paris Agreement, the US military withdrew from the South, leaving only an advisory force to help the Republic of Vietnam. A short time later, the US also cut in half the aid funding for the ARVN, greatly reducing its military capabilities. Even so, President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu still introduced the Four Nos Policy (not to acknowledge or ally or cede land with the communists and neutralize the South) as the basis of his strategy against the Communists. In April 1975, when the Republic of Vietnam regime was about to collapse, Thiệu was forced to resign. He went on television to blame the defeat on the US, and at the same time vowed to defend Saigon till death, but then he secretly evacuated abroad and eventually settled in America until his death. During this period, the government of the Republic of Vietnam was more dependent on the help of the US than the previous government of Ngô Đình Diệm. In many ways, Thiệu concentrated power in the executive branch that he headed, while undermining the legislative power of Congress.

Former Ambassador Bùi Diễm of the Republic of Vietnam to the US in the period 1967-1972 told BBC Vietnamese: “*We have to look at Vietnam in the context of a cold war at that time, when the Americans intervened in the issue. The problem of Vietnam was caused by the so-called 'defensive frontier' policy against the spread of communism into South Vietnam. If one spoke of the American help in South Vietnam, one would have to say the same thing about the presence of Chinese troops in the North during the war, which did not participate in the battle in the South, but provided the people in the North with all the ease so that the North could bring troops to attack South Vietnam. So, the accusations that South Vietnam was under the influence of the Americans, we have to look at the issue as the aspect of a Cold War with the US on one side and the communist world on the other, including the Soviet Union and China at that time.*”



Historian Father Nguyễn Phương, Professor of History and Geography of Huế University before 1975, in a work written in English abroad, consulted from many current sources about events happening in Vietnam from 1954 to 1975, referring to a number of former South Vietnamese leaders. His work was titled “A Parade of American Puppets, A story of South Vietnam from 1954 to 1975” and in the Introduction, page XVIII, Father Nguyễn Phương wrote: “*Ngô Đình Diệm, on the contrary, was a mandarin proud of his position. He loved his homeland more than anything else and did his best to make the country independent and unified. While pursuing national liberation, he was not alone, but his group was not large either. He has a few friends and especially his younger brother, Ngô Đình Nhu. However, he still enjoyed great political power, because of his popularity among the masses. As a man of honesty and integrity, with a passionate patriotism and complete devotion, he was loved and respected by his compatriots.*”

Many figures of the Republic of Vietnam were mentioned in this work, and in the eyes of historian Nguyễn Phương, some key figures were peered into their nature and intentions. Please try to read a passage about General Thiệu: “*Thiệu is inherently docile. Extremely ambitious and deceptive, he was not someone who could be devoted to any ideology or national cause. He is corrupt, but that doesn't bother the Americans when corruption has become a means of giving them freedom of action in another country.*”

Writing about Americans in Vietnam, historian priest Nguyễn Phương sometimes could not contain his anger or resentment, revealing a high level of national spirit. The author wrote: “*The record of the US in South Vietnam is, in short, a record of systematic and comprehensive destruction. It was the destruction of patriotism and national spirit through the overthrow and assassination of Mr. Diệm. It was the destruction of Vietnam's sovereignty by establishing a regime of American puppets with aid and advisors. It was the destruction of Vietnamese society by experimenting with the "search and destroy" strategy that had been the cornerstone of Kennedy's counterinsurgency tactics, and that, as Barry Weisberg notes, gave way to destructive ideas that happen very simply. Ultimately, it was the destruction of all human rights by arranging a total surrender of South Vietnam to the Communists. Since 1972, Kissinger has boasted: "I am reunifying Vietnam" .*

The Vietnamization program, which began in the summer of 1969 and ended at the end of 1972, focused mainly on the transfer of military equipment and supplies (such as the Long Bình depot), not placing much emphasis on the issues of advising and battlefield coordination. Thus, only three and a half years were interrupted by two battles: "Lam Son 719" against Laos (Spring 1971) and "Red Fire Summer" (Spring - Autumn 1972). After these two battles, the strength of the ARVN army was consumed. From tools, weapons and military equipment when transferred by the US (gifted or sold) to cruisers, battleships, transport aircraft, destroyers, missiles, advanced radars, the receivers needed to have long-term technical support for spare parts and maintenance. Thus, the ability to advise the

General Staff and the field commanders was limited. The American media often talked about transferring billions of dollars in weapons to the South but still the battle was lost. Let's listen to General John Murray, the defense *attaché* in Saigon, commented: "*Everyone mistakenly thinks about the transfer of military equipment to the Republic of Vietnam. In fact, it is just damaged or old, outdated equipment. Most are surplus, require too much maintenance.*" Every time Murray asked the Department of Defense to send in spare parts for maintenance, he was refused.

Besides the Vietnamization program also committed another important mistake: the ARVN was accustomed to the rich American military style of fighting. A major problem with Vietnamization of the war is that the ARVN was best by American standards when they used the same expensive fighting style as the US army, and the combat strength of the ARVN was highly dependent on US aid. The decrease in aid had a marked effect on the fighting strength of the army, which contributed to why this army quickly collapsed in the final year of the war.

However, militarily, the ARVN had many shortcomings: The army was powerful but lack sustainability and was only strong if it had strong fire power and mobility. The US air and artillery support was the most important factor for the combat strength of the ARVN. Both the fire and mobile elements required spare parts to be readily available for maintenance and repair.

With the "Vietnamization of the war", the US withdrew its troops from the South in "honor" due to pressure from the media, public opinion and the US Congress against the war with the Paris Agreement January 27, 1973. During the negotiations, the US continued to withdraw its troops and implement the Vietnamization program so that the Republic of Vietnam's armed forces would gradually replace the American forces in the face of a lack of budget and military support. Since 1972, Kissinger had boasted: "*I am reunifying Vietnam*". Over the next two years, the US Congress slowly reduced military aid to the Republic of Vietnam while the International Communist Bloc doubled for the North, so the balance of forces between the two factions was skewed in favor of the Communists.

Newly declassified documents also showed that Nixon and Kissinger believed that:

1. The Vietnamization program of the war would not make South Vietnam capable of defending itself.
2. The "peace" conditions that Kissinger negotiated would cause South Vietnam to collapse after a period of one or two years (the decent interval).

To cover up the failure of the Vietnamization and negotiating strategy, Nixon, on Kissinger's advice, extended the war to the fourth year (1972) of his first presidency—long enough to avoid the collapse of the Republic of Vietnam before the election for his second term. That's why Nixon extended the withdrawal program over the years. The number of US troops in Vietnam began to decline from a peak of 543,000 people in 1968 and did not stop until early 1973, that is, after the US presidential election in November 1972.

## **Chapter 19. Backgrounds of the Paris Peace Talks**

When one side was winning on the battlefield, negotiations often stalemated and that was true of the Paris Conference during the period from **1968 to 1972**. The US and the Republic of Vietnam considered the NLF/VC as just puppets of North Vietnam, created by North Vietnam, having no power (so they didn't want to sit with them), while the Revolutionary side always wanted to show the world that the Front was born from the South and had an independent path from the North. To enhance their position, to benefit domestic and foreign affairs, the Front established the government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC in 1969 and supported the Third Party for the main purpose of serving the negotiations in Paris. The parties used the conference as a forum for political struggle. During this period, the negotiations often reached a deadlock due to the tension on the battlefield and because the US side refused to enter into substantive negotiations for the withdrawal of US troops. During this period, there were also secret meetings of two special advisers: Lê Đức Thọ and Kissinger, which entered into substantive discussions, but could not come to an agreement because the parties' positions were too different and bureaucratic. The battlefield was not skewed to either side.

### **Section 19a. Republic of South Vietnam/VC 1969-1976**

Before the establishment of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam (1969-1976), the regions controlled by the revolution were under the management of self-governing People's Committees, then the People's Committee for Liberation and then the People's Committee of the Republic of Vietnam. Faced with the need for a central government, the Vietnam Labor Party advocated the establishment of a provisional government.

By 1968, when the VC and the North Vietnamese Army attacked the cities, it was necessary to have another Front to attract forces in the cities and the upper classes in the Southern urban society, thus creating the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces of Vietnam. This organization in appearance was established by the uprising of the urban masses, so when the NLF/VC entered Hue, it used the flag of the Alliance with President Lê Văn Hảo, not the NLF/VC flag, and publicly hung it on the flag monument of Phú Văn Lâu and Provincial headquarters of Thừa Thiên during the Tết Offensive.



The Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC on its launch day in June 1969

Immediately after its establishment, the DRV, the Socialist countries and many countries of the Third World recognized the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC (PRGRSVN/VC) as the legal representative of the people of the South. In June 1969, 23 countries recognized the Provisional Revolutionary Government, of which 21 countries established diplomatic relations. From the beginning of the Paris Conference with the participation of four parties, the US and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) had to accept the existence of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC (PRGRSVN/VC).

The establishment of the PRGRSVN/VC in 1969 was mainly for diplomacy and negotiation. The US and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) considered the Front are just puppets of North Vietnam, born by North Vietnam, having no power (so they did not want to sit together), while the Revolutionary side always wanted to show to the world that the Front was independent from the North, in order to enhance their position and to benefit domestic and foreign affairs. Nguyễn Hữu Thọ stood almost equal and independent of Hồ Chí Minh, the two having their own executive power. On the surface, the Front was a political movement, with independent executive power (when there was no government), not dependent on the Government outside the North, but the Front was still a subordinate of the DRV National Assembly because the National Assembly still represent the whole country.

From April 5-7, 1972, NVA forces attacked and captured Lộc Ninh town (Bình Long province) with 28,000 people. In Lộc Ninh, the return of prisoners of war from the two South Vietnamese sides took place after the signing of the Paris Agreement. After the Paris Agreement, the town of Lộc Ninh became the headquarters of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.

On January 27, 1973, the Paris Agreement was signed. The agreement recognized the existence of two governments, two regions of control, two armies in the South of independent Vietnam, and there would be general elections to form a three-component coalition government before the national general election. to unify the state with the DRV. However, because the Saigon government took military actions to sabotage the Agreement, the Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC was forced to continue to intensify the armed struggle, overthrow the RVN government and gain control of the South in 1975. Legally, the NLF/VC was completely independent of political organizations in the North,

however, neither the Front nor the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the addition of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, did not deny the political similarities, as well as the goal of national liberation and reunification. In order to complete the provisions of the Paris Agreement regarding the General Election, the DRV-RSVN/VC conducted the General Election in 1976 to unify into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Before 1975, the NLF declared itself an independent organization, but it also recognized the DRV government's claim of sovereignty over the country in its declaration of independence in 1945, until the RSVN/VC claimed sovereignty over the South in 1969. From January 31, 1977, this organization was completely merged with the Vietnam Fatherland Front. Today, the State of Vietnam affirms the NLF/VC as well as the fronts before and after that are socio-political organizations under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam from the day of their establishment.

### **Section 19b. The Third Force**

"The Third Force" (TTF) was officially proposed by the North Vietnamese government at the Paris peace talks to establish a coalition government in the South consisting of three components: the RVN, NLF/VC and the TTF movement demanding an end to the war. While the war was not over and the South had two military and political forces—the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the Government of Saigon of the Republic of Vietnam—, one could collectively call the organizations and groups not part of these two governments as the Third Force or the Radical Left Force. During the period from 1968, which was the height of the war, then "diverse" groups came together to oppose the Saigon government and American policies and fight for human rights, for peace and for national harmony and reconciliation.

TTF was not a politically powerful party organization, but it was flexible and had no lasting power. Political forces were loosely combined, appearing mainly in the cities of South Vietnam without supporting the government of the Republic of Vietnam or the NLF/VC-Republic of South Vietnam/VC. This force was not a homogeneous organization, but consisted of individuals or independent groups, or "associations" that were not closely linked with each other. The general political orientation was non-communist (DRV-NLF/VC-PRG) and also non-Republic of Vietnam (RVN).

Jean-Claude Pomonti, a reporter for the French newspaper *Le Monde*, believes that the name "Third Force" was used in 1960, after a group of 18 Caravelle politicians opposed the Ngô Đình Diệm government, but also anti-Communist, issued a manifesto demanding that Diệm reformed the government. According to André Menras, a French teacher who raised the NLF/VC flag on the Marines statue in front of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Vietnam in Saigon, said that the third force was "a peace movement that has

formed and grown strong since 1963 in the struggle against the policies of Ngô Đình Diệm. According to journalist Jacques Decornoy of Le Monde newspaper, TTP appeared in the fall of 1969 with a group of people who opposed Nguyễn Văn Thiệu's government and went in the direction of national reconciliation that Dương Văn Minh was seen as representing.

The Government of the Republic of Vietnam had always resolutely denied TTF. Not only denied the "Third Party" or "Third Force", the Saigon government also refused to propose a 3-Party Coalition Government as demanded by the VC. The Thiệu government wanted to destroy the urban movement to avoid a coalition government. The protests against the Saigon government for peace and strikes for the right to life became more and more frequent in the southern cities, creating a connection of many segments of society when the NLF/VC suffered heavy losses in 1968. It was not only pushed out of many southern rural areas but also had to withdraw troops to the border areas.

Therefore, the urban movement, especially that of students, made a "certain contribution" in controlling the military and political power of the US and the Saigon government, giving the Front time and space to recover. Naive Southern students, who didn't see the slightest hint of Communism in those days, stood up to oppose the Thiệu-Kỳ government: *"And that was a spirit of freedom of speech, and it must be said that it was a highlight inside that regime; we have the right, we could speak and we could protest."* (statement of a former student leader after escaping as a refugee in 1975).



In fact, the brutal repression and torture of students had been going on since the early 1970s. Starting in April 1970, for example, the *Tin Sáng* newspaper ran a two-month series of articles on student struggles and their brutal torture by the Saigon government. In this series of articles were published diaries sent out by students in prison. *Tin Sáng* (Morning News) was the largest of about 30 newspapers in the South, but because it was a progressive newspaper with the cooperation of many important figures in the National Assembly and in many political and religious sectors in the South. In addition, these characters were mostly Catholics, like the editors Ngô Công Đức and Hồ Ngọc Nhuận. Congressman Dương Văn Ba, in an article titled "Suppression of students has reached a new stage" published in the *Morning News* on May 25, 1970, called the US ambassador a liar when he said it was from a captured document from the VC that the students were involved with the NLF/VC. When the students challenged the ambassador to hand over the document, he did not give it.

To put pressure on the Paris peace talks, Hanoi established the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC (PRGRSVN/VC).

Foreign Minister Nguyễn Thị Bình of the Provisional Revolutionary Government made an "8-point" proposal that mentioned the establishment of an Provisional Coalition Government consisting of three components: "those of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, those who were for peace-loving, independence, neutrality and democracy in the Saigon government, and figures of political and religious forces, at home or abroad, who took a stance in favor of peace, independence, neutralism and democracy that reflect the aspirations of the entire Vietnamese people for peace, independence, neutrality, democracy, and national reconciliation and harmony.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1972 officially defended this movement, often calling elements who did not follow one side or the other in the South as "the third force" and upheld their role until early 1975 in reconciliation, conciliation and the formation of a coalition government. Following were the words of Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng in an interview with a famous French journalist named Jean Lacouture published in the journal Vietnamese Studies edited by Nguyễn Khắc Viện: *"The establishment of a government of national harmony: in the South was the key to peace, and the third force was an integral part of this solution. Since politics is the art of making something workable, we came to the conclusion that this was the only method that could lead to peace. I would say this is a chance solution. Other than that, there is no other solution, only war."*

When the Agreement was signed in Paris at the end of January 1973, Article 12 of the Agreement referred to the establishment of a "National Council of National Reconciliation and Concord consisting of three equal parts". After the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, TTF gathered organizations and individuals who claimed to not belong to either of the two opposing sides (the DRV government and the Saigon government), advocated against the war and supported peace, reconciliation, national harmony. Next, at the end of 1973, many movements appeared in Saigon and promoted by Hanoi, such as:

- Movement for the Implementation of the Paris Agreement.
- Popular Front for the Salvation of Hunger (the largest organization in the South, with the participation of groups from Catholics, Buddhists, Hòa Hảo and Cao Đài. Priest Phan Khắc Từ was one of the three vice-presidents.)
- Front Battle of Religions for Peace, Harmony, and Reconciliation (Founder Dương Văn Minh).
  - Force for National Reconciliation (A Buddhist organization led by Vũ Văn Mẫu).
  - People's organization demanding the implementation of the Paris Agreement (founded by Ngô Bá Thành).
  - Committee to Fight for Freedom of Press and Publishing (Headed by Representative Nguyễn Văn Bình, brother-in-law of Ngô Công Đức).
  - Commission for the release of political prisoners of the Third Force.
- Committee to protect workers' rights (Leader Phan Khắc Từ).
- Group of Legislators Fighting for Freedom, Democracy and Peace.

In the two years 1973-1974 in the face of the aforementioned situation, individuals and groups in the urban movement relied on the provisions guaranteed in the Paris Agreement on the liberties cited above for members of the public in the South, including TTF to fight against the Saigon government in many fields. One of those areas was the issue of the release of political prisoners. In addition to the issue of political prisoners, individuals and groups in the Southern urban movement also used the rights of "freedom of movement, freedom of residence, freedom to work and live" as guaranteed in article 11 of the Paris Agreement to fight for those in "Communist refugee camps" and war refugees living around the cities to return to their homeland. But this mass phenomenon was only the temporary demands pulled by the communists.

The late Prime Minister Võ Văn Kiệt said: “ *In my opinion, it is time for us to recognize the merits and great contributions of the patriotic classes of Vietnamese people who used to live in the heart of the old regime, now in the country or abroad. Myself and my brothers were allowed to take over Saigon in 1975, an intact Saigon after such a war, I think it is impossible not to mention the role of political forces opposing the US and Thiệu, had relations with the government of Dương Văn Minh at that time..... The reappearance on the political scene of Dương Văn Minh was the result of the active activities of the third force, the force who struggled against America-Thiệu right in the heart of the Saigon regime at that time.* ”

Former Vice President Nguyễn Thị Bình frankly admitted: "*Many people are afraid to talk about the third force, but in my opinion, this force has made certain contributions to the victory of our people.*" According to Ms. Nguyễn Thị Bình, during the negotiation and signing of the 1973 Paris Agreement, many individuals and very diverse political groups were formed, some people and groups organized by the NLF/VC, some people and groups had nothing to do with the Front, but its activities tended to follow the Front's struggle goals, which was the third force. Ms. Ngô Bá Thành, Lawyer Trần Ngọc Liễng, some members of General Dương Văn Minh's group... were among those forces.

After nearly half a century of "winning", the country becoming socialist, what they fought for in the past, such as democracy, freedom, a just society, people not exploiting people, prosperity for the people, no sign of foreigners ... now, these ideals are not only not there, on the contrary, their opposites are becoming more severe and a reality of Vietnamese society, but we do not see those people standing up, protesting, going on a hunger strike and demanding as before.

Indeed, after April 30, 75, the so-called NLF/VC or the Republic of South Vietnam/VC was still buried without trumpets or drums, let alone the third component



Professor Nguyễn Văn Trung was a person belonging to the Third Party in public opinion in the South before 1975, and now lives in Canada: *I lived in Vietnam until 1994, so the situation was in 1975, I know all. The people of the Liberation Front were also people of good will, but after 1975, they saw that they were only playing cards of the North. Then some people pull out, some stay there but do nothing. I see them as proud too. They don't protest, they know they're wrong, but they don't say it either, that's all, and it's all gone.*"

The above dissolution and self-dissolution at that time did not have any objection from the people in those organizations, although they faced the old regime very harshly without showing any fear. So, it is not clear why, as Ms. Nguyen Thi Binh admitted above, 36 years after the victory, "many people are afraid to talk about the third force"? Afraid to lose the aura of victory? Or afraid of no longer having the exclusive right to share the spoils? The longer the war lasts, the more polarization is created in society. Therefore, in order to heal the wounds of war and create conditions for national harmony and reconciliation, the victors should often be chivalrous. At the very least, open the door to the future by examining the past (not closing it) honestly and fairly. Without justice it is difficult to have a democratic and harmonious society.

### **Section 19c. Paris Agreement 1973**

The Paris Agreement on Vietnam or the Paris Agreement of 1973 was an agreement to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam by four warring parties: the US, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), the Republic of South Vietnam/VC (RSVN/VC) and the Republic of Vietnam (RVN). Republic of Vietnam signed in Paris on January 27, 1973. In public terms, there were four parties to the negotiation and the official content of the Agreement was basically based on the 10-point declaration dated May 8, 1969 of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC delegation, but the negotiation to reach the content of the agreement was mainly decided by closed sessions between the two delegations of the DRV and the US.

The Paris Agreement on January 27, 1973 was actually the end of a series of negotiations lasting 4 years and 9 months starting on May 13, 1968 between the US and North Vietnam, then January 25, 1969 with the added Republic of Vietnam and the NLF/VC with 202 formal sessions and 24 informal meetings (also known as "night walks") between Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Lê Đức Thọ, Xuân Thủy and a secret meeting with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai in Beijing. The Paris peace talks began in 1968 at the end of President Lyndon Johnson and continued under President Richard Nixon but made no progress until the end of Nixon's first term.

During the negotiation process, the US almost ignored the opinions of the RVN delegation and arranged everything by itself in closed meetings with the DRV while the DRV-RSVN/VC delegation always had assignments, smooth coordination, and good ideas, constantly discussed with each other before making a decision. Therefore, after the terms of

the Agreement were agreed between the DRV and the US, the delegation of the Republic of Vietnam refused to sign because there were unfavorable terms for them. But the Republic of Vietnam only objected for a short time, because then the US pressured the delegation to sign the Agreement.

The purpose of the DRV when participating in the negotiations was to force the US to withdraw its troops back home and to force the government of the Republic of Vietnam, led by whoever, to disband because the DRV believed that the government of the Republic of Vietnam did not want independence and peace, but only wanted to take control of the country for their own benefit. The US side believed that the DRV pretended to want to form a coalition government, but in reality, it was like forcing the US to do everything to make the leaders of the Republic of Vietnam resign and then let these people negotiate with the communists and the result would be an alliance under Communist control. According to Ambassador Dương Văn Quảng, director of the Diplomatic Academy, the signing of the Paris Agreement proved that the DRV-Republic of South Vietnam/VC achieved victory step by step and in a strategic way. This was the premise to the final victory. Besides, this was also a diplomatic victory when the Vietnamese Communists had mobilized the support of international public opinion. However, the later adoption of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué by the US and China caused many obstacles to the peaceful and unification process of Vietnam.

For the Republic of Vietnam, this agreement was a great disaster for them even though they signed it and put the existence of the Republic of Vietnam at risk in the near future. This agreement forced the US to withdraw all of its military forces from Vietnam and Indochina. This made the Republic of Vietnam lose its main support and sink deeper into crisis faster.

For the Americans they really wanted to end the war, forget it and open a new page in history. For the US military, this was their righteous way out of this war. The clause of the international supervisory and control committee was also a formality because the power of this committee was only the mechanism to monitor, recommend, and report the results of investigations. In general, this agreement strictly enforced only in terms of withdrawing US troops (and other allies) and returning American prisoners, reunifying Vietnam through political means. The US really wanted to withdraw its troops from the war and the DRV was willing to facilitate that.

The first meeting was set by the two sides on January 25, 1969 with 4 participants: DRV - NLF/VC - USA - RVN. This was another concession from the US because they previously refused to recognize the NLF/VC and considered the Republic of Vietnam to be "the sole government of South Vietnam". However, even though there were 4 parties, in reality, there were only 2 delegations that really took control of the conference, the DRV and the US. In particular, the issue of the status of the NVA-NLF/VC and the order of the

ceasefire - the general election was the main points of conflict between the parties. Simultaneously with the bombing of North Vietnam, US President Nixon visited the Soviet Union and China to settle the Vietnam War with a "decent interval". Both the Soviet Union and China were afraid that the US would ally with one or the other, so they wanted to completely solve the Vietnam problem. DRV criticized the Soviet Union and China's meetings with the US President.

In Paris, after the NVA invaded the South during the summer of 1972, peace talks continued, but this time both sides agreed to compromise. The US and the Republic of Vietnam agreed to accept a cease-fire in place, acknowledging that the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC was one of two governments that existed in parallel in South Vietnam (i.e., on an equal footing with the Republic of Vietnam), and that the US withdrew its troops completely out of South Vietnam. However, due to the victory that was achieved, the DRV side continued to not recognize the Saigon government. These points were in fact sufficient to satisfy the criteria for victory that Hanoi and Lộc Ninh had set forth before the general offensive began. The DRV-RSVN/VC agreed to let President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu continue to stay in power until the establishment of a three-part coalition government in the South to organize a General Election to unite with the North (including the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, the third forces, and the Republic of Vietnam – except Thiệu and his cabinet).

By mid-1972, the DRV had a policy of turning to a peace strategy under pressure from the elders, Russia and China. International and domestic pressure on the US for the signing of the peace agreement was increasing, especially the pressure peaked when Operation Lam Son 719 of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam failed and was seen as evidence that the US strategy of Vietnamization of war had collapsed, only then did the negotiations come into actual compromise.

At the end of 1972, Nixon was tired of the prolonged war with consecutive defeats and increasing number of casualties while unable to defeat the NVA-NLF/VC on the battlefield and was demanded by domestic and international public opinion to resolve the peace issue in Vietnam during his presidency as promised, and the US government of President Richard Nixon made concessions on this core issue. The DRV side also made concessions on the continued existence of the government of President Thiệu in order to establish a coalition government. During the negotiation process, the DRV-Republic of Vietnam with the October 1972 draft did not mention the status of the Vietnam People's Army in the South (North Vietnamese Army) but always demanded that the US withdraw its troops. Meanwhile, the US and the Republic of Vietnam always demanded that the People's Army of Vietnam withdraw from the South at the same time as the US withdrew from the South.

The draft of the compromise reached was: "U.S. troops and foreign allies must withdraw from Vietnam, President Thiệu's government was entitled to exist in a peaceful

settlement, unconditionally returning prisoners of war in Vietnam within 60 days." This Agreement did not define the two parties in the south, the two governments in the south, the definition of two military forces of the south, nor the definition of three political forces in the south with recognition of South Vietnam as a region of a unified Vietnam, along with not specifying whether the DRV only had sovereignty in the north or not, nor mentioning the name of the North Vietnamese Army (different from the agreement in October 1972 between the DRV and US negotiations ) and this was considered a setback by the US.

At this point, the only obstacle to a settlement was President Thiệu. On October 22, 1972, Thiệu became angry when Kissinger forced him to accept the draft Peace Agreement that Kissinger and Lê Đức Thọ had drafted in Paris. He warned Kissinger: "I don't agree with some of your employees going around in Saigon saying that I had signed. I have not signed anything. I am not against peace but I have not received a satisfactory reply from you so I will not sign." Kissinger lost his cool with President Thiệu's statement; he said he had succeeded in Beijing, Moscow and Paris but now he had to fail in Saigon: "If you don't sign, we will proceed alone".

The failure of the US to convince President Thiệu led to the cessation of negotiations in October. This was followed by Operation Linebacker I against North Vietnam but failed, so the US turned to pressure Thiệu accepted the results of the negotiations in October, before the parties returned to negotiations. In December 1972, the US opened Operation Linebacker II for B-52 strategic bombers to carpet bombing Hanoi, Hải Phòng and other targets in North Vietnam for 12 days (December 18 to December 30). 12) to force the North Vietnamese to return to negotiations.

In 1972, Nixon went to Beijing for the first time to share interests with Mao and settle the Vietnam war, leaving both Vietnamese sides uncertain of what would happen. Nixon ran for re-election. Although the US troops had withdrawn some, the war was still fierce and the Paris peace talks were still protracted. To secure re-election, Nixon sent Kissinger to Saigon many times to urge and strongly pressure President Thiệu. Nixon wrote many letters promising to protect the Republic of Vietnam if the Paris Agreement was violated by the North. In the end, President Thiệu had to sign the Paris Agreement which was very detrimental to the Republic of Vietnam because he believed in President Nixon's promise and also to help Nixon get re-elected. Author Larry Berman said that Nixon and Kissinger declared "peace with honor" was to deceive the American people, because documents show that at the time of the signing of the peace treaty, Nixon and Kissinger knew well that North Vietnam would return to war and that the US would have to intervene to support South Vietnam as promised.

In the end, Nixon was indebted to but betrayed President Thiệu, with the policy of taking care of the sole interests of the US. Since then, there was the negotiation behind the Republic of Vietnam's back to hand over the South to the VC, in exchange for the Chinese

market. It was also for the sake of the US that Nixon (Republican) "kicked" his closest ally, Nationalist China (i.e., Taiwan) out of the UN to put in China, causing consequences to this day. When the Paris Agreement was signed, Nixon kept his promise to the American people to withdraw all troops and stop participating in the Vietnam War.

At the end of 1972, which lasted longer than expected, the US government realized that they could not subdue the enemy by force and did not have enough resources to maintain the war, so they were forced to accept de-escalation at the negotiating table. The DRV-RSVN/VC also compromised on the status of the government of President Thiệu. The two sides came to a common compromise: American troops and foreign allies withdrew from Vietnam to stop all military interventions in Vietnam's affairs; it did not mention whether or not the PAVN remained in the battlefields of South Vietnam; and Thiệu's government was allowed to exist as a government concerned with peaceful resolution.

After the agreement document was signed, Henry Kissinger went to Saigon to inform President Thiệu the document had been reached. The Republic of Vietnam side opposed this draft and announced that it would not sign the agreement as draft. After that, the US government declared that the agreement could not be signed and demanded to change the main content related to the core issue: the regulation of the Vietnam People's Army in the South. The DRV side rejected the US amendment. The US bombed North Vietnam to force the DRV-Republic of South Vietnam/VC to accept and sign the plan proposed by the US. Under pressure from international and domestic public opinion, failing to force Hanoi to make concessions, President Nixon ordered an end to bombing on December 30, 1972 and re-negotiated to sign the agreement. The Paris Agreement had a final option that was not fundamentally different from the draft that the US previously refused to sign.



The Paris Peace Agreement was signed in January 1973 with basically the same content as the one signed in October, with the most important provision allowing the NVA to stay in the South to support the RSVN/VC in different areas that they already controlled. The Agreement prevented the US from providing aid to the Republic of Vietnam but did not prevent the DRV from providing aid to the Republic of South Vietnam/VC nor does it prevent the Socialist countries from continuing to provide aid to the DRV. In fact, after the Agreement was signed, the US continued to aid the Republic of Vietnam despite the objections of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC and the DRV.

According to this agreement, the South had 2 governments and 2 armies, i.e., the ARVN and the RSVN/VC (but not the NVA in principle). Thus, the US's recognition of the PAVN in the South as a part of the NLF/VC meant that it was allowed to stay. At this time, the revolutionary side openly acknowledged the support of the North to the South as it had been before, but more clearly. It was a fact that many revolutionary government cadres were from the North, many Northern cadres in the South Vietnamese delegation went to negotiate in Paris, or were present in Saigon at Camp David. The RSVN/VC Command also had many people who were RSVN/VC generals (General Trà, when he came on duty at Camp David in 1973 as the commander of the RSVN/VC, he openly told Saigon that he was a lieutenant general of the RSVN/VC). However, it was not until 1975 that the revolutionary party made it clear that the NLF/VC was part of the People's Republic of Vietnam, and that the People's Revolutionary Party was the Southern party of the Labor Party (in 1973, the revolutionary party showed that the Labor Party had the right to appoint cadres to the People's Revolutionary Party, but the real leadership in the South belonged to the People's Revolutionary Party).

The Paris Agreement was signed on January 27, 1973 in Paris, considered an important victory for the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam/VC. For the DRV, this agreement was the first step (and the most important) of two steps (Step 1 was "American withdrawal", step 2 was "puppet fall") to reach the final victory of reunification. For the US, this was their rightful way out of this grueling war. On March 29, 1973 the last American troops left Vietnam, ending all US military intervention in the Vietnam war. For the Republic of Vietnam, this agreement was a major disaster for this government and put the very existence of the Republic of Vietnam at risk in the near future.

The content of the agreement was divided into nine chapters, covering the same topics as in the 9-point draft that the US and the DRV agreed to in October 1972, with the backbone being the previous 10-point statement of the agreement from the NLF/VC. Thus, militarily, forcing the US and its allies to withdraw from South Vietnam, to stop attacking the North, no provision on movement for the PAVN in the South, and the two South Vietnamese could not receive more troops from abroad (but not bound to the Republic of South Vietnam/VC receiving support from the North), while the ARVN and RSVN/VC troops must withdraw and remain in position, the US side was not allowed to provide military aid to the Republic of Vietnam until the general election would be held. The South Vietnamese Joint Military Commission had the authority to ensure the coordination of actions by the two sides on not sending troops into South Vietnam, but the Four-Party Joint Military Commission did not have this authority. The agreement also stipulated free elections in the south according to the agreement of the two southern parties and then the new government would negotiate with the DRV to unify the country.

In principle, the signatories must recognize that South Vietnam temporarily had two governments (although there was no definition of them), but would soon be replaced by a new one. The number of RSVN/VC troops on the battlefield at that time, on the Hồ Chí Minh trail, the number of weapons they brought in and brought out were unverifiable data, but according to the data provided by the US, it was 219,000 people (lower than that of ARVN with 920,000 people). The amount of aid from the Soviet Union, China and other Socialist countries to the DRV could still be controlled at land border gates, airports and seaports (The agreement did not prohibit foreign aid to the DRV but only prohibited the supply of weapons to the parties in South Vietnam).

Similarly, American weapons entering Vietnam through ports and air bridges were also easily managed. However, the US' continued supply of weapons and 23,000 military advisers to the Republic of Vietnam (due to a decent interval) were a violation of the provisions related to the prohibition of the US from involvement in South Vietnam according to the Paris Agreement and made the ARVN more motivated to conduct military operations against the NLF/VC.

Due to the continuous armed actions of the Republic of Vietnam and the US to encroach on land and conquer the people, especially the Campaign to Overwhelm the territory, and the refusal of the ceasefire by the Thiệu's government, the NLF/VC declared that they were forced to take armed resistance actions to force the Saigon government to strictly implement the Agreement.

To reassure the Republic of Vietnam, President Nixon made a private promise to President Thiệu that in the event that the NLF/VC launched a war to destroy the Republic of Vietnam, the US would respond appropriately to ensure the security of the Republic of Vietnam. This promise later had no practical value because then the US Congress passed a resolution not to allow the President to send armed forces back to Indochina without the permission of Congress and stipulate the framework for aid to the Republic of Vietnam. With such impositions, even without the Watergate incident and even if President Nixon was in office, he could not keep his promises effectively.

Thiệu strongly opposed the US signing of the Paris Agreement at that time, because in his opinion it would give the DRV a significant advantage over the RVN. Specifically, the Americans would end their commitments and support to the Republic of Vietnam, which meant that aid to his government would be reduced and military superiority would be in favor of the DRV. As a result, Thiệu reluctantly accepted the signing of the agreement, despite the commitment of President Nixon's government to ensure the survival of the Republic of Vietnam. Nixon also secretly committed to Thiệu that he would reinstate US B-52 bombing raids against North Vietnam in retaliation for any intensifying communist

attacks. But Nixon resigned before the end of his term, and Nixon's promises were never fulfilled.

### **Section 19d. Decent Interval**

Three months after signing the Agreement, President Nixon appointed Graham Martin as US ambassador to Vietnam instead of Bunker. Frank Snepp described the role of Ambassador Martin: *“The US was forced to crawl out of Vietnam standing up, and to foster that illusion required the kind of conjuring and stagecraft at which Martin so adept”*. Thus, the drama of abandoning Vietnam had been staged since April 1973. On June 4, 1973, the US Congress passed the Case-Church amendment, cutting off all funding for US military operations in Indochina. President Richard Nixon lobbied Congress to extend it until August 15, 1973, to continue the bombing in Cambodia. After this date, all costs of the war in Indochina must be approved by Congress.

Following that, the US Congress introduced the "War Powers Resolution", but was vetoed by President Nixon on October 24, 1973. However, with a majority of over two-thirds, Congress overcame Nixon's veto and passed the resolution on November 7, 1973. This resolution limited the powers of the president and commander-in-chief of the US military. If the president sends troops abroad, the president must notify Congress within 48 hours. This army only operated abroad for 60 days and then withdrew. If it is more than 60 days, the permission of Congress is required. (Marc Leepson, p. 437.)

In mid-1974, President Nixon submitted to the US Congress a draft of a trade treaty between the US and the Soviet Union. Only now did the US Congress know that this was the price Nixon paid for the Soviet Union stopping supplying weapons to Hanoi and forcing Hanoi to sign the 1973 ceasefire. Of course, when presented to Congress, Nixon believed that it would be passed easily for the common interests of both countries, especially the step-by-step settlement of the cold war that the American people were looking forward to. However, he had miscalculated, the US Congress guessed that there were still many other costs between Nixon and the Soviet Union, China, and Hanoi in 1972. Therefore, Congress outright rejected the Soviet-American trade pact to force Nixon to reveal other agreements. Of course, Nixon did not comply and he used executive privilege to refuse.

But the issue of returning US POWs and war reparations came up only after both China and the Soviet Union informed Hanoi that they wanted Hanoi to end the war. At that time, even if Lê Duẩn wanted to continue fighting, he had no rice or bullets to fight. Therefore, just two meetings two months apart, Hanoi had already set out all of their conditions: that is, to release American prisoners of war unconditionally, not to demand the replacement of the Thiệu regime, not to ask for the release of 38,000 South Vietnamese



communist prisoners, not forcing the US to write the terms of war reparations in the Peace Agreement ... Of course, Nixon owed the Soviet Union and China these concessions.

Congress had another way of extracting what Nixon committed to the Soviet Union, China and Hanoi in 1972; it was a way of using the Watergate case to convene a special investigation committee into Nixon's wrongdoing in the wiretapping, so that the prosecutor of the investigative committee had the power to force Nixon to make public all the tacit commitments with Beijing, Moscow and even Hanoi. Nixon had no choice but to resign on August 9, 1974 to evade the Investigative Committee because he and Kissinger had made secret agreements with each other without asking Congress. Once he resigned, his commitments became void. Congress would no longer have an excuse to prosecute.

After Nixon resigned, the US Congress passed a law banning the US from trading with Communist countries in late 1974 (the Jackson-Vanik Act). The turn of the US Congress angered the Soviet Union because the commitments made by Nixon when he visited the Soviet Union in 1972 were not fulfilled. *Therefore, at the end of 1974, Soviet Deputy Defense Minister Viktor Kulikov came to Hanoi to urge Hanoi to send troops to invade the South, and the Soviet Union would provide weapons and war expenses.*

According to the 7 sections, 23 articles of the Paris Agreement, Hanoi unconditionally ceased fire, returned to the US 591 American prisoners of war unconditionally, returned South Vietnamese prisoners of war in exchange for the return of 28,000 North Vietnamese prisoners of war. Meanwhile, President Thiệu did not have to resign, 38,000 political prisoners of the NLF/VC continued to be detained.

Especially the "ceasefire by leopard skin", meaning that the NVA was still in the jungle and the ARVN army controlled the cities and countryside in South Vietnam. The North-South border was still respected according to the 1954 Geneva Agreement. On the surface, the Paris Agreement was too absurd, so international observers knew that there must be a separate secret agreement inside. Indeed, later in 1977, US President Jimmy Carter confirmed that there was a separate secret agreement behind the Paris Agreement signed by Nixon with Hanoi 4 days after the signing of the 1973 Paris Agreement. In October 1988 Hanoi published the full text of the secret agreement between Nixon and Phạm Văn Đồng. Accordingly, Nixon promised to give North Vietnam 3.25 billion USD in reconstruction aid and 1.5 billion USD in economic development aid for Hanoi. Within 30 days after the last American POW left Vietnam, the two sides would complete the reconstruction aid system, and within 60 days after that, the economic development aid system would be established.

The secret agreement was personally brought by Kissinger to Hanoi for Phạm Văn Đồng to sign. From then on, Lê Duẩn waited day and night for Kissinger's money and at the

end of 1974, the Soviet Union sent General Kulikov to Hanoi to incite Lê Duẩn to invade the South, which meant that the Paris Agreement was considered a mess. In the end, Hanoi gave away 591 US prisoners of war without receiving any money, after 10 years of arduous fighting, millions of deaths, tens of billions of dollars in war debt... so far it's just zero.

General Viktor Kulikov instigated Hanoi to start the war again, but Lê Duẩn and the Communist leadership group were really shocked. People in the North were exhausted, in 5 years the state closed all 18 universities and colleges, dwindled human resources to the point that they had to call in soldiers at the age of 16, in the North there were only thousands of widows left... with whom to start the war again? (According to the memoirs of Vietnamese Communist General Hoàng Văn Thái, by 1974 Hanoi had mobilized 16% of the population, it was impossible to mobilize any more. While the South was 5.88%)

In January 1974, according to CIA documents: "From late December 1973 to early January 1974 General John Murray and his staff worked day and night to try to find the answer to the military aid problem. But each time they find a solution to a problem, another problem arises, the result of which only leads to a dead end" (Frank Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 95). General John Murray was the last Commander of the US Army in South Vietnam. He came to Vietnam after the Paris Agreement of 1973, and in early 1974 he and the US General Staff in Vietnam had to calculate the books of military aid to South Vietnam in the second half of 1974 and the beginning of 1975. However, the Pentagon had told him in advance that it could be less than \$700 million USD, but according to John Murray's advisers, 700 million would only be enough to keep Region 4.

In 1974, also according to Frank Snepp, on August 16, John Murray had a final meeting with General Cao Văn Viên (Chief of General Staff), General Đồng Văn Khuê (General Director of Logistics) and some other generals. John Murray advised General Viên to prepare for reductions, urgently made a plan to be ready to leave Region 1, Region 2 and Region 3 to go back to entrench Region 4. However, "General Viên and General Khuê both said that the return to Region 4 militarily is okay, but politically it is not possible". After this meeting, John Murray returned to the US.

In May 1974, according to Dr. Nguyễn Tiến Hưng (Minister of Planning of the Republic of Vietnam), he happened to see Murray's plan "Cutting the Land According to the Amount of Aid" lying on President Thiệu's desk in May 1974, that is, 2 months before Nixon resigned. Thus, Murray was the author of the plan to abandon Region 1 and Region 2 in 1975, a plan that until 40 years later was still considered an initiative of President Thiệu. The fact that the President was deliberately planted unjustly by the American press and that he could not speak out at that time.

According to the memoirs of Colonel Phạm Bá Hoa, "On December 24, 1974, when the North Vietnamese army was attacking Phước Long on the 10th day, Major General Smith revealed that: "The US Defense Department has a plan with an estimated budget of more than 300 million dollars to evacuate to the US about 40,000 officers and their families, but the time is not yet clear" (Phạm Bá Hoa, *Đôi Giòng Ghi Nhớ*, 4th Edition, page 264). Thus, the scenario of abandoning the South was deployed before the loss of Phước Long, not after the loss of Ban Mê Thuột. A plan for the fall of the Republic of Vietnam was already planned before June 1975, including an estimate of the budget to be spent on the plan.

Looking back, in 4 years of negotiations, the two sides only negotiated with each other on 3 items: (1) US withdrawal (2) Hanoi's return of prisoners (3) US war reparations. However, the US withdrawal was due to Nixon's decision to withdraw his troops to replace them with the ARVN, not as a result of negotiation. Thus, there were only 2 issues that people had to make an appointment to Paris to negotiate in 4 years: Hanoi returning POWs and demanding war reparations. When the agreement was signed with 9 clauses and 23 articles, people immediately saw the absurdity: ceasefires by leopard skins, Thiệu's government still existed, 38,000 ethnic Vietnamese civilian cadres were still held in prison camps. Meanwhile, POWs of the NVA, POWs of the Republic of Vietnam, and POWs of the US were released. The US did not have to pay war reparations.

On April 16, 1973, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DRV sent an Official Note to the Foreign Ministries of the countries that signed the Paris Agreement on Vietnam and United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim to raise three urgent issues: ceasefire, implementation democratic freedoms and the release of political prisoners in the South. These were issues that the US and the Republic of Vietnam repeatedly violated. In October 1973, the second meeting of the 21st Conference of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party continued to affirm the path of revolutionary violence: advocates promoting the struggle on three fronts, military, political and diplomatic; take advantage of diplomatic forums to force the other side to implement the Paris Agreement; and at the same time actively prepare for the case of having to wage a revolutionary war throughout the southern battlefield in order to gain complete victory.

## **Part 11. Socialist Republic of Vietnam**

Unfortunately, the reform path of the modern western school was based on two opposing ideologies that made the country poor and degraded for a long time, so that the Vietnamese killed other Vietnamese people and wasted talent while foreigners used the Vietnamese people as their "bargaining chips" exchanged in international politics. Just like Phan Châu Trinh said before: "*only replace the horse rider*" when fighting against the invading France but letting many other powers (Japan, the Soviet Union, China, the US) pulled the strings by individual or group interests. The "replacement of horse riders" harmed

the interests of the country, national life, national property as well as corrupted social morality, full of divisions, injustices, and hatreds. In the funeral eulogy for Phan Châu Trinh on April 4, 1926, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng said: " *Unfortunately, our country's people are still dreaming, there are not many comrades and ancestors*". Phan Bội Châu also wrote in 1938 in L'Effort newspaper: "*People take advantage of social movements to divide forces in the country, to destroy unity and to destroy the national spirit of the people.*" In general, after the country was divided in two, the patriotic forces during the resistance war against the French were suppressed in both the North and the South.

After World War II, the US made a very clear choice to assist the French in re-establishing colonial rule in Indochina, and to pay for most of France's first Indochina war. It was therefore not surprising that left-wing Vietnamese revolutionaries viewed the US as a neo-colonial power when the US sent troops to participate in the Second Indochina War. The war in South Vietnam was just a small and national conflict that had nothing to do with America's national security but was an issue that was inseparable from America's highest priority – the struggle to stop Communism around the world during the Cold War and helped the South defend freedom after the French left.

In 1965, President Lyndon B Johnson stated, "*The reality is clear that the North Vietnamese attacked the independent nation of South Vietnam. The goal of the North Vietnamese is to completely conquer this land*". Johnson added that Communists in Vietnam received support and direction from the Soviet Union and China. The US provided about 10 billion USD in aid, not to mention several billion USD in local spending by the US expeditionary force. Meanwhile, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) received about \$3.5 billion in aid from the Soviet Union, China and other socialist countries.

Moreover, the analyses had also shown that the source of opposition to the US-backed Saigon government came from the South Vietnamese and was deeply rooted throughout the South due to an easy arrangement by the Vietnam Labor Party, not only from North Vietnam. From the late 50s to the mid-60s, participating in battles were mainly South Vietnamese guerrillas or the Liberation Army of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, which the US and its allies used to call Việt Cộng (VC) since 1960. Only when the war escalated after 1968 did most of the main units from North Vietnam and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) pull into the South to participate in the war known as the North Vietnamese Army (NVA). The North was left empty but was supported by the Chinese, Russian and North Korean troops to carry out the tasks of International Communism.

Robert McNamara, the chief architect of the war in Vietnam and Secretary of Defense under both Kennedy and Johnson, condemned the claims that justified the war. McNamara wrote two books to affirm that the US was "extremely wrong" to intervene in Vietnam, stemming from ignorance and misjudgment of the situation. McNamara wrote that if only he understood the rising tide of nationalism in Vietnam, or if only he understood that Hanoi was not a pawn of Beijing or Moscow, or if only he had realized the domino theory was completely wrong, he would convince his presidents to withdraw their troops from Vietnam. And so, millions of lives would be saved.

The Americans who opposed the war also did not recognize South Vietnam as an "independent country" established under the Geneva Agreement of 1954, because this agreement only provided for the "temporary" division of Vietnam in order for a general election to choose a leader for a reunified Vietnam in 1954 was "postcolonial", a time when internal conflicts were ripe between nationalist factions in Vietnam. Williams College historian Jessica Chapman argued that *"In essence, the Vietnam War was a civil war magnified many times over by outside intervention."* Others saw it as a "internationalized" civil war.

In essence, the Vietnam War was an American war, which further exaggerated the fragmentation in Vietnam and internationalized the conflict. And the reality was that while many Vietnamese resisted the Communist guise of "national liberation", there was no other nationalist party capable of seizing power. Without the intervention of the US in accordance with its economic interests, it was difficult to imagine that a free South Vietnam would survive, or if it did, it would be difficult to last.

The economy and spending of the Republic of Vietnam were sustained mainly by US aid. Small industry in the South and agriculture were devastated by war. Hyperinflation occurred along with corruption, and abuses of power made the economy worse. Bùi Diễm, former Ambassador of the Republic of Vietnam to the US, said that the economic and military situation of South Vietnam was very bad, which made people unhappy with Thiệu's government, the salary of soldiers was not enough, so the political situation was also bad. Desertion was a serious problem for the ARVN. Meanwhile, the NLF/VC had maintained a strong psychological advantage, with spirited soldiers willing to sacrifice personal goals in favor of the collective war effort, which was the decisive advantage. Besides, the NLF/VC had been trying to maintain the war effort to liberate the country for 30 years and there was no reason to give it up as its troops were getting stronger and stronger and gaining the upper hand. All soldiers and commanders of the NLF/VC thought that the day of victory was near, only one final battle left.

As in 1972, the Soviet Union fully supported the struggle of the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam/VC in principle. The material losses of the DRV side were gradually compensated with large amounts of aid. However, the ratio of economic aid and military aid was different than before. According to CIA estimates, in the two years 1973 - 1974, the DRV received from the Soviet Union and China an aid worth \$2,525 million, of which \$730 million was military aid. Although total aid was higher than the two years 1971 - 1972 (US\$2,220), the share of military aid was only 68.3% compared with the previous two years, (US\$1,065 million). According to the DRV's statistics, the value of military aid they received was much lower than the number given by the CIA. Specifically, in the two years 1973-1974, they received 114,532 tons of military aid from the socialist countries (mainly the Soviet Union and China) worth 330 million USD, equaling 19% compared to the two years 1971-1972.

Diplomatically, the Soviet Union and China were no longer as attached to the US as they were in 1972 and they still supported the DRV with different ways and goals. While the Soviet Union openly encouraged the DRV to liberate the South with a friendship visit to Hanoi by the Deputy Minister of Defense, General Victor Kulikov on December 22, 1974, on the contrary, China did not want the DRV to win an early victory even though they knew it was a trend that was hard to reverse. According to Henry Kissinger's assessment, China did not want a strong unified Vietnam on their southern border and neither China nor the Soviet Union wanted the DRV-Republic of South Vietnam/VC to cause fierce hostilities in South Vietnam.

Earlier on the occasion of President Thiệu's official visit to the US, the US and the Republic of Vietnam issued a joint communiqué in San Clemente on April 4, 1973, in which the US pledged to support the Republic of Vietnam and only recognize the Government of the Republic of Vietnam. The government of the Republic of Vietnam was the only legal government in South Vietnam. In terms of military, the US continued to make moves to make the Republic of Vietnam believe that they would receive naval support. On January 4, 1974, the US Navy's 7th Fleet dispatched a force of cruisers and destroyers to the mid-South China Sea. However, the US refused to support the Republic of Vietnam Navy when China captured the Paracel Islands from January 17 to 19, 1974 from the hands of South Vietnam with the intention of invading and expanding the maritime territory to the South with the secret agreement of the US.

On August 9, 1974, President Richard Nixon was forced to resign following the Watergate scandal. Vice President Gerald Ford, succeeding as President of the US, remained committed to supporting the ally the Republic of Vietnam, but with limits because the US economy was in a difficult period after the 1973 oil crisis and **must focus on military aid to Israel that required about \$1.5 billion** to keep this strategic ally in the Middle East. In a letter dated August 10, 1974 from the US President delivered by the US Deputy Ambassador to Saigon, W.J. Lehman, to President Thiệu, President Ford reminded the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to use the aid of the US wisely and more efficiently to bring about a self-sufficient economy in the next few years. If in the fiscal year 1972-1973, the Republic of Vietnam still received USD 1,614 million, in the fiscal year 1973-1974, Saigon only received USD 1,026 million and in the fiscal year 1974-1975, only USD 780 million remained.

According to Dr. Nguyễn Tiến Hưng, that was the number of US aid to both the Republic of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos and that was just a number on paper. In fact, after deducting the amounts of Cambodia and Laos, the amount of US aid to the South was only 313 million USD. The amount of dollars purchased from service sources for the headquarters of the US and its allies also decreased from 300-400 million/year to 97 million (1974). **In the period 1974-1975, for the US, solving the oil crisis and the Middle East problem along with re-equipping its ally Israel after they lost the battle to their rival Egypt on the Sinai peninsula in October 1973 was a more important issue than aid to the ARVN.** On the other hand, due to the constraints of the Paris Agreement and the lack of support

from both houses of the US Congress, the US Government's ability to intervene militarily in Vietnam was limited.

After the US military withdrew from the war, the ARVN not only lost its fire support from the air, ground and sea, but also had a large budget deficit due to reduced aid. The 1973 world oil crisis added an additional burden on fuel costs for military operations, even if it was limited to training, maintenance and servicing of military vehicles in accordance with the Paris Agreement and accompanying documents. The amount of ammunition of all kinds to be granted was reduced from 50% to 65%; half of the tanks could not leave the base and about 200 planes could not take off because there was not enough fuel. Consumer prices increased by 2 to 4 times for food, foodstuffs, fuel and some essential consumer goods, which greatly affected people's lives.

To cover the budget shortfall and balance the balance of payments and in addition to asking some US congressmen sympathetic to Vietnam to advise the Congress to be lenient, President Thiệu sent Dr. Nguyễn Tiến Hưng and a number of other officials to seek other funding sources to stabilize the socio-economic situation, the cost of the government apparatus and maintain the military force. However, finding loans from sources other than the US was as difficult as persuading the US Congress not to cut aid to the Republic of Vietnam. Dr. Hưng compared this to "*The humiliation of a beggar*".

After the unsuccessful trip of Generals Cao Văn Viên and Dr. Nguyễn Tiến Hưng to the US in May 1974, which resulted in a 50% reduction in US aid to the Republic of Vietnam and the Kennedy Amendment also prohibited using the Ministry of Defense's own budget to spend on behalf of Southeast Asian countries, the government of the Republic of Vietnam must look to financial sources outside the US. Ironically, these sources either did not have the time to deploy, or the leaders were uncooperative, or the lenders had conditions that did not target military spending (both directly and indirectly). At the World Bank (WB), Nguyễn Tiến Hưng encountered the indifference of President Robert McNamara, former US Secretary of Defense under Lyndon B. Johnson.

For France, the main obstacle was that the government's ODA (Official Development Assistance) loans with low and long-term interest rates must be tied to private banks' lending with high interest rates and short-term according to French law. The French side also requested that this concessional loan be used for social welfare projects, but could not pay for other expenses, but the ARVN side refused, so the aid of 130 million francs was suspended. Japan had a similar attitude. Other sources of aid were quite small and tended to be more humanitarian aid. Only the King of Saudi Arabia had a substantial and secret agreement on long-term investment of several hundred million dollars in oil exploration and production with low interest rates (they can be borrowed with oil itself, which the Republic of Vietnam was still missing), only to be paid with oil products. But when things were progressing, he was assassinated and the last hope of the Republic of Vietnam side to get a few hundred million dollars to supplement and maintain equipment for the army was also shattered.

During the 20-year war, Phước Long was the first province to be lost on January 6, 1975. Phước Long opened the Spring 1975 general offensive of the North Vietnamese army. There were many factors that led to the collapse, but in all the events that followed Phước Long - Ban Mê Thuôt, Pleiku, Huế, Đà Nẵng - were derived from two main factors : **the shortcomings of Vietnamization and US Congress cutting aid**. The ARVN collapsed too quickly because morale began to decline in August 1974 when the author of Vietnamization, President Richard Nixon resigned (August 8, 1974) and only three days later (August 11, 1974) US Congress cut off military aid to the Republic of Vietnam so that the US would abandon the Republic of Vietnam.

## **Chapter 20. General Offensive Campaign of Spring 1975**

The 1975 Spring Campaign, officially known as the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising, completely liberated the South. This was the final North Vietnamese military offensive. The campaign started on January 4 and ended on April 30, 1975. Before the General Offensive and Uprising, the political struggle movement of workers, students, students, and peace organizations demanded ending the war, demanding the resignation of President Thiệu... broke out in all major cities, taking place in many forms, combining covert with public and semi-public, legal and semi-legal... The combination of more and more people supporting the VC pushed the Saigon government into a state of confusion and passivity.

In April 1974, the 21st Conference of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Labor Party issued Resolution 21 requesting the strategic agencies to help the General Military Commission prepare policies and major military solutions. in which focusing on building the strategic plan for the liberation of the South. At the end of August 1974, the Central Department of the South and the Military Commission of the Region also sent to Hanoi the 1974-1975 dry season combat plan with the plan to liberate the South in two years 1975-1976. The content of this plan was also added to the draft plan of the Central Military Commission. The plan, after many additions and amendments, was presented by Lieutenant General Lê Trọng Tấn, Deputy Chief of the General Staff, at a conference on September 30, 1974 between the Politburo and the Central Military Commission meeting in Hanoi. The draft strategic plan outlined the steps, stages of military operations, strategic directions and specific tasks of each battlefield; it planned to be completed in 2 years 1975-1976.

In the two years 1973-1974, the DRV received only 330 million USD in aid, only 19% in the 1971-1972 period. Meanwhile, despite the reduction compared to before, the Republic of Vietnam still received \$2.65 billion in aid from the US, which is 8 times more than the enemy, but did not know how to "save" or fight the enemy as a poor military. In early 1975, when knowing that the DRV was preparing to fight big in the South, China stopped providing military aid. Due to a lack of equipment, many NLF/VC artillery units were still armed only with light mortars, recoilless guns (DKZ), or shoulder-fired anti-tank guns (B-40).



During the period of 1973-1974, the Republic of Vietnam tried to strengthen its control over the territory, focusing on the task of maintaining the occupied areas, continuing to erase the "leopard skin" points, removing the "dimples" of the Việt Cộng. The results of air reconnaissance showed that tens of thousands of tons of supplies were brought into the South by the enemy through tens of thousands of kilometers of the East and West Trường Sơn corridors. The oil pipeline system had entered Bến Giàng (Quảng Nam) and was continuing to be connected through Lower Laos and the Central Highlands and to the head of Military Region III. Thus, according to the analysis of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, a big fight in 1975, with a larger scale than 1972 and lasting for the whole year, could occupy Quảng Trị, isolate Huế and Đà Nẵng, take Kontum, take Tây Ninh and made it the capital



Richard Nixon - Henry Kissinger



Lê Duẩn –Lê Đức Thọ

After the Paris Agreement of 1973, the morale and combat ability of the ARVN were seriously reduced, especially after Richard Nixon resigned because of the Watergate affair in August 1974. This decline was also due to the objectives. The battle could not be completed as planned as well as successive defeats on the battlefield (Paracel Islands, Thường Đức, Phước Long). The situation in South Vietnam became more serious in late 1974 when the US Congress passed the 1974 Foreign Assistance Act, ending all military aid. This meant that the US could not use air power to assist South Vietnam when the NVA violated the Paris Agreement.

At the end of 1974, the main North Vietnamese army of the Southeast region coordinated with local VC forces to launch the Road 14 - Phước Long campaign to win a great victory to liberate the town and the whole province of Phước Long. On the night of December 13, 1974, North Vietnamese troops opened fire at Phước Long. The ARVN force consisted of only local troops and 4 Artillery platoons, totaling about 4,000 men. Despite facing overwhelming North Vietnamese forces consisting of 2 divisions (7th and 3rd Infantry Divisions) with artillery, tank, commando, and anti-aircraft units combined, which outnumbered the South Vietnamese forces six times, the defense force still resisted and lasted for more than three weeks, until January 6, 1975. The 'leopard skin' solution helped the Northern army with a great tactical advantage: it was able to choose the place, the date and time to attack. When attacking, it could concentrate its troops to obtain the upper hand.

This defeat marked a new decline of the ARVN, which was no longer able to conduct large-scale clearing operations to regain important areas, bases and towns in the bordering areas, although Phước Long is only 50 km from Saigon. The communists **took over Phước Long province on January 6, 1975** and Bình Long province on January 7, 1975. According

to the memoirs of General Văn Tiến Dũng, the situation of the battlefield was changing increasingly unfavorable for the ARVN because morale and fighting strength had decreased markedly. Due to the reduction of US aid, many soldiers and commanders had lost their morale for a long time while the economy was increasingly difficult due to economic crisis and 300% inflation in 1974. There were 170,000 soldiers deserted and demobilized in 1974, despite the increase in draft troops, the total number of troops still decreased by 20,000 compared to 1973.

The Battle of Phước Long lasted from the night of December 13-14 to December 26, 1974. It was not the opening battle for the 1975 Spring Campaign, but it had a very important meaning for this campaign and was considered as a strategic battle monitoring to probe the US response as well as the ARVN's ability to respond, counterattack, and release and hold the areas occupied by the ARVN before entering the big campaign. For the South Vietnamese side, this was also an opportunity for them to consider the US reaction according to the commitment to provide maximum support that President Gerald Ford promised in his letter to President Thiệu dated August 10, 1974. After the defeat of Phước Long, the American advisor John Pilger foretold the collapse of the Saigon regime that would take place in the near future. He wrote: *Saigon is collapsing before our eyes, a Saigon supported by the Americans, a city that is considered a "consumer capital" but produces nothing but war. Among the ranks of the world's fourth-largest army at the time, soldiers were deserting at a rate of thousands a day.* US Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger testified before Congress on January 14, 1975, that the US had not kept its promises to President Thiệu. Seven days later, President Gerald Ford, who had replaced Nixon after the Watergate affair, announced that the US was not ready to re-enter the war in Vietnam.

On January 7, 1975, the US reaction after the loss of Phước Long was in the White House statement: " *President Ford did not intend to violate the prohibitions (of Congress) on the use of military force by the US in Vietnam*" (Memoirs of General Hoàng Văn Thái, page 161). Upon hearing this news, Phạm Văn Đồng declared: "*Giving candy to the American army, they did not dare to return to Vietnam*" (page 146). Immediately after receiving the news, Lê Duẩn instructed General Chief of the General Staff Hoàng Văn Thái to plan to invade the South. One month after the victory at Phước Long, on February 5, Văn Tiến Dũng set out for the Central Highlands. That day, the CIA's USIS agency announced that the ARVN lost at Phước Long because President Thiệu deliberately left Phước Long to try to see the US reaction. The reason the CIA blamed Thiệu was to give the US Congress an excuse to vote to stop military aid to the Republic of Vietnam. When Hanoi did not see any reaction after capturing Phước Long, on January 8, 1975, it ordered a general offensive to start the campaign to liberate the South.

On March 7, 1975, Kissinger instructed US Foreign Service officials before he departed for the Middle East: "*Do all you can to allow Congress to continue to maintain at least \$700 million in aid for fiscal year 1975 for Cambodia and Vietnam. Not to save those two countries, but because it is impossible to save them*" (Frank Snepp, Decent Interval, p. 176). Kissinger did not want people to think that Vietnam was collapsing due to the lack of

aid. Two days after Kissinger said this sentence, Văn Tiến Dũng ordered an attack on Ban Mê Thuột.

With an aid level of 300 million, by June 30, 1975, the South Vietnamese army would have no rice and no more ammo (The Final Collapse document of General Cao Văn Viên). Kissinger therefore wished for ARVN to disintegrate before it ran out of Rice and Ammo by June 1975. At that time people would think that the Saigon army had lost to the fierce attack of the Hanoi army.

In early 1975, after two years of signing the Paris Agreement, the NVA mobilized almost its entire force of 270,000 main troops for the campaign, launching a major offensive across South Vietnam, starting in the Central Highlands. The fall of Ban Mê Thuột shocked the ARVN defense system and was the beginning of successive campaigns. In addition to the battle of Phước Long, which was considered a strategic reconnaissance battle, the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising consisted of three consecutive campaigns:

- Central Highlands Campaign (March 4-24).
- The Huế-Đà Nẵng Liberation Campaign (March 21-29) blatantly sent troops across the North-South border, Route 17, and the Laos-Vietnam border.
- Hồ Chí Minh Campaign (April 4-30).

At the same time, there were also smaller campaigns taking place in strategic areas such as: Long Khánh - Xuân Lộc, Trường Sa and islands in the East Sea, battles on ARVN defensive lines from afar such as Tây Ninh - An Lộc - Dầu Tiếng, Phan Rang - Ninh Thuận. These operations were carried out after the US withdrew its expeditionary troops from Vietnam, maintaining only aid and advisory forces. The balance of forces was completely tilted towards the Liberation Army and the NVA.

The fact that the NVA launched attacks at almost the same time on several fronts in the South made it impossible for the ARVN to mobilize strategic reserves to rescue key areas. Under the continuous attack of the infantry with strong fire of tanks and artillery, the NVA under little threat from the air quickly pushed the ARVN units into a passive position. The confusion in the ARVN's operational command at all levels made it impossible for well-equipped and combative units to resist effectively for long.

During the Central Highlands Campaign, the NVA captured Ban Mê Thuột on March 11, 1975. After Ban Mê Thuột was captured by the NVA and the ARVN's counterattack failed, as Commander-in-Chief, Thiệu was confused and then decided to withdraw from the entire Central Highlands. On the morning of March 14 in Cam Ranh, President Thiệu ordered Lieutenant General Phạm Văn Phú, commander of Army Corps II - Military Region II, to withdraw ARVN forces from the Central Highlands. This campaign made a turning point marking the beginning of the collapse of the Republic of Vietnam. That strategic

mistake led to chaotic escapes from the Central Highlands provinces and was attacked by the NVA, causing heavy losses. Then the central coastal provinces also fell.

One day after the death of Ban Mê Thuột, according to General Cao Văn Viên, President Thiệu invited Generals Khiêm, Viên, and Quang to have breakfast at the Independence Palace and then expressed his intention to cut back the territory to fit the US military aid level in 1975. General Viên recorded his feelings at the time: *“President Thiệu's decision showed us that it was a decision he had carefully considered. President Thiệu seems to have hesitated about that decision, and now he just confessed it to the three of us at breakfast ... President Thiệu sketched it out: ...A few important pieces of land are being occupied by the Communists, we will try to get it back at all costs...Ban Mê Thuột is more important than the other two provinces of Kontum and Pleiku ...”* (Cao Văn Viên, *The Final Collapse*, translated by Nguyễn Kỳ Phong, pp. 129-131. *The Last Days of the Republic of Vietnam*). The book was accompanied by the latest commentaries of General Cao Văn Viên. *“It is an indisputable fact that the ARVN will run out of ammunition and fuel by June 1975 ...”* General Viên quoted the Pentagon document: *“Immediately after Phước Long was attacked, the US had no reaction. It is an almost obvious fact that the US does not want the war to continue and vote for aid for the Republic of Vietnam to continue fighting is not going to happen. For the US, the Vietnam War is over”*. The quotations above explained why President Thiệu had to abandon Region 1 as well as Region 2, and why General Viên did not enthusiastically participate in President Thiệu's plan.

According to General Cao Văn Viên, President Thiệu thought that it would be difficult to keep Region I, so he instructed that "partially keep it" but must keep the central coast and Region II if possible because of its potential offshore oil. In the Central Highlands, Ban Mê Thuột was more important than Kontum and Pleiku due to abundant resources and a larger population than the two provinces. Thiệu concluded: The best option was to keep Đà Nẵng, if it could be Hue, the better. The second option was to retreat to Quảng Nam, taking Chu Lai as a forward base. The third option is to retreat to Tuy Hòa. In addition to purely military reasons, one of the reasons that forced Thiệu to consider the possibility of narrowing the territory was to match the reduction of aid from the US from more than 1 billion USD to 700 million USD in fiscal year 1975. In fact, this was the core of the military redeployment plan of the ARVN submitted by General Cao Văn Viên in January 1974 but was rejected by Thiệu. Because it was not possible to produce weapons by itself and must import 100% from outside, the combat ability of ARVN completely depended on the level of US aid.

To prevent journalists from reporting on the defeat in the Central Highlands, Thiệu ordered 19 journalists to be jailed and 5 newspapers closed. The increasing hostility of the Government towards the foreign press led to the Saigon police ordering on March 14, 1975, Agence France-Presse journalist Paul Leandri to go to the Police General Headquarters for questioning. and was shot dead by Saigon police. Paul Leandri died at the age of 37, leaving a young wife 4 months pregnant. Paul Léandri, head of Agence France Presse news agency in Saigon, only announced that *"a number of Montagnards had rebelled in Hậu Bồn against the ARVN troops"*. The Police invited him in for questioning. After a few hours of being detained, Leandri suddenly walked out. He got out of the room, jumped in his car and drove

off. When the police whistle stopped, he continued to drive. The policeman pulled out his gun and fired a few times at the wheel to keep it. Unfortunately, a stray bullet hit him right away. Leandri collapsed on the spot. Foreign reporters were extremely indignant and strongly protested. In a situation that was extremely unfavorable for the South in all aspects, militarily, politically, economically, and the face of the South had been smeared by images of barbarism, dictatorship, and corruption, now the image of Leandri being shot and killed had been shown around the world! Finally, after April 30, 1975, the press and the US government opened a campaign to blame President Thiệu for the loss of the country so that people would not resent the US for abandoning the Republic of Vietnam.

On March 28, 1975, the US Army Chief of Staff, General Frederick C. Weyand, flew to Saigon to survey the situation to report to the US President. US Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger instructed Weyand not to promise much to the Thiệu government because the situation could not be reversed, since he saw that the situation of the ARVN troops had become too bad. Seeing that the failure could not be saved, after seeing Weyand's report, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger cursed: *"Why don't they - the Republic of Vietnam - die. The worst thing that can happen is that they live forever ."* Most figures in the US Congress and Government oppose sending US troops back to Vietnam. The more pressing issue now was to get the Americans out of South Vietnam.

The Huế-Đà Nẵng campaign was launched on March 5 by the Central Military Commission and the Liberation Army General Command, almost simultaneously with the Central Highlands Campaign. While the situation was dangerous, President Thiệu ordered the withdrawal of parachute and marines divisions from Military Zone I, saying they were to protect more important targets. This deployment weakened ARVN I Corps. Lieutenant General Ngô Quang Trưởng, commander of the I Corps, had to withdraw his troops from Quảng Trị, then went to Hue and ordered to defend till death in Đà Nẵng. The North Vietnamese quickly cut off land traffic north of Hải Vân Pass, forcing ARVN I Corps units to flee to the Thuận An and Tư Hiền estuaries to wait for naval ships to come to the rescue. The flight took place in disorganized panic. PAVN units attacked these estuaries with artillery and infantry. The ARVN units that managed to escape and boarded ships bound for Đà Nẵng were no longer combat ready, but worsened further the situation in Đà Nẵng. The remaining forces either surrendered or disbanded. On March 26, the Liberation Army took full control of Huế city.

Immediately after capturing the ancient capital of Huế, the NVA surrounded Đà Nẵng from the west, south, and north and began to attack on March 26. The city was in chaos. The demobilized soldiers from Huế pulled in to become a mixed army. Officers and soldiers along with civilians try to escape the city by navy ship. The MAACV mission in Saigon established an air bridge to evacuate the Americans and their allies. The ARVN defenses around Đà Nẵng fell apart one after another after two days of desperate fighting. The VC units that bypassed the outer ring quickly captured the city center without any significant resistance. On March 29, Đà Nẵng fell. Here about 140,000 ARVN officers and soldiers surrendered. The Huế-Đà Nẵng campaign ended.

In the last days of March and early April 1975, in turn, the central coastal provinces including Quảng Ngãi, Bình Định, Phú Yên and Khánh Hòa were left behind. At this time, the Liberation Army captured 14 provinces in South Vietnam. The ARVN gathered all the remaining units of Corps I and II, established a containment line at Phan Rang and assigned the ARVN 3rd Corps Commander to command. Thiệu's proposal to use Phan Rang as a remote line of defense was supported by General Fredrick C. Weyand, who was visiting South Vietnam. The rationale for this support was a report to the US Congress of a \$722 million emergency military aid under discussion.

However, on April 16, the defense of Phan Rang was broken by the NVA after only 24 hours of fighting. Not only that, from March 17 to April 3, the ARVN outposts in Tây Ninh, An Lộc, Dầu Tiếng, Chơn Thành, and Đình Quán fell one by one. The ARVN at the Xuân Lộc front fell into an open position on all three sides of the North, West and Southwest.

On April 17, the U.S. Senate rejected an emergency request of \$722 million from the Gerald Ford government. Although no one believed that US aid could turn the situation, some experts like US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger hoped that it could help the Republic of Vietnam regain its military position to convince the enemy stop advancing and negotiate. Two days after this Senate decision, CIA director William Colby told President Ford: *"South Vietnam is facing complete and rapid defeat."*

Evacuation flights organized by the CIA had already begun to remove Vietnamese collaborators from Vietnam, and the US Embassy had already begun burning classified documents. On April 20, the simplified legal procedures for the evacuation of Vietnamese people came into effect. This evacuation was carried out at Tân Sơn Nhất military airport, commanded by General Homer Smith. C-130s and C-140s were constantly ascending and descending during the day; and paperwork continued throughout the night. General Smith had to use the entire 43rd Marine platoon to maintain order at Tân Sơn Nhất.

The Xuân Lộc - Long Khánh campaign began on April 9 between the two most powerful armies of North and South Vietnam. This was the last long and organized battle of the ARVN troops in the Vietnam War. On April 21, the Xuân Lộc "steel door" was dismantled. North Vietnamese troops were present at the gate of Saigon. Most of the ARVN task forces were defeated, only the 18th Division retreated to Biên Hòa to entrench. Right before the start of the battle of Xuân Lộc, pilot Nguyễn Thành Trung, who was a member of the NLF/VC and installed in the ARVN ranks, flew an F-5E to bomb the Independence Palace. This event further confused the leadership of the Republic of Vietnam. The defeat at the Xuân Lộc front led to the resignation of Thiệu on April 21, 1975 after 10 years as President of the Republic of Vietnam.

The US side hoped that with the departure of Thiệu, the DRV-RSVN/VC will accept a political solution. However, that did not happen. During the crisis, President Thiệu tried one last time before resigning, writing a letter in desperation imploring President Ford to "loan for freedom". In New Orleans on April 23, 1975, Ford declared the end of the Vietnam

War. At noon on April 29, 1973, Saigon Radio broadcast the song "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas" sung by Bing Crosby, signaling the beginning of the final evacuation of the US.

Although the ARVN strongly resisted, causing the NVA to suffer many losses, it could not stop the momentum of the attack and the victory was inevitable. Around Saigon, the NVA gathered all of its strongest forces, including the main 270,000 NVA and the NLF/VC armed forces, to prepare for the battle they were sure would bring total victory after a 30-year struggle.

Later, in his memoirs *Spring Great Victory*, General Văn Tiến Dũng of the NVA wrote: *One of the motivations that motivated the DRV-NLF/VC to launch a general offensive in the South was because the US had reduced aid, making the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam (which was organized according to the expensive American style of fighting) could not have enough money to maintain a large number of weapons. That's because "air force firepower has decreased by nearly 60% due to lack of bombs and ammunition; mobility is also reduced by 50% because of lack of aircraft, vehicles and fuel".* While the Saigon army needed 3 billion dollars a year to maintain the war machine, their opponents only needed 10% of that amount to build a military force large enough to both hold the North and strengthen troops fighting in the South. The weakening of the ARVN was also due to psychological factors when the morale of soldiers was very low, the number of deserters increased sharply. Even in the ARVN elite units, the desertion rate also increased to a very high level.

## **Chapter 21. The Forced Death of South Vietnam**

On April 20, the Xuân Lộc defense troops of the ARVN was forced to withdraw. When Xuân Lộc fell, nothing could save the Saigon regime anymore. Leaving Xuân Lộc left Saigon almost open, no longer defending from afar. The Liberation Army and the North Vietnamese closed in on the city on the periphery. On the same day of April 20, US Ambassador Martin went to the Presidential Palace to persuade Thiệu to resign, because the DRV side had repeatedly stated that it would not negotiate with Thiệu. Due to great pressure from the generals under his command such as Trần Văn Đôn, Cao Văn Viên, Prime Minister Nguyễn Bá Cẩn, Economic Minister Nguyễn Văn Hảo, Thiệu resigned on the evening of April 21, 1975. Upon resigning, Thiệu appeared on television for 3 hours to criticize the US government's abdication of responsibility. Also in his resignation speech, he strongly stated that he would take up arms to fight: *" Even though we lost a President Nguyễn văn Thiệu, the army still has Lieutenant General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, the compatriots still have a soldier Nguyễn Văn Thiệu. I vow to fight alongside my fellow soldiers ... "* But those claims were not made by Thiệu. Only 4 days later, he secretly boarded a plane to escape Saigon on the night of April 25, 1975. Thiệu's departure took place secretly in the dark, under the arrangement of Thomas Polgar, CIA chief in Saigon. Vice President Trần Văn Hương took over, but the NLF/VC still refused to talk to him.

The day April 21 when Thiệu resigned was decisive. General Võ Nguyên Giáp said that *"the key was April 21, when Thiệu resigned. I knew then that we had to attack immediately, seize the opportunity, and we all agreed."* . That night, at Forward Headquarters at Lộc Ninh, 75 miles from Saigon, General Văn Tiến Dũng, who commanded the NVA wings advancing toward the city, ordered the general offensive to begin. To ensure victory, the People's Army of Vietnam added the 1st Corps (also known as the Army Determined to Win) by sea and by air into the Saigon battlefield for the final battle called Operation Hồ Chí Minh. The force attacking Saigon was equivalent to 20 divisions, organized into 5 corps. At 5:00 p.m. on April 26, Hồ Chí Minh Campaign began to open fire with 5 corps in 5 attack directions: North with 1st Corps, Northwest with 3rd Corps, West and Southwest with 232 Corps , the East with the 4th Army and the southeast with the 2nd Army. On April 27, Tân Sơn Nhất military airport in Saigon suffered 3 salvos of NVA rockets for the first time in more than 40 months, causing many deaths and wounded, ruined houses. Two American soldiers were killed by rockets, and they were the last American soldiers killed in the war.

By the end of April 28, all the defenses had been breached in all directions, and the NVA could immediately enter the city, but they paused to allow more time for a negotiated solution. The Third Force arranged to put General Dương Văn Minh as president on April 28, 1975. Immediately upon taking office, to conduct negotiations President Dương Văn Minh asked the Americans to leave. On April 29, at 4 p.m. on April 28, Washington, DC time, NVA rockets and artillery shells poured down on Tân Sơn Nhất airport. President Ford convened an emergency meeting of the National Security Council at 19:30; he asked Ambassador Graham Martin to immediately evacuate the remaining Americans and Vietnamese as many as possible.

On April 30, 1975, the General Association of Vietnamese Students in Paris (Association Générale des Etudiants Vietnamiens de Paris-AGEVP) together with thousands of people covered in white mourning towels cried in the heart of Paris streets during "A Big Day of Mourning" (August 30, 1975), Grande Journée de Deuil". Nguyễn Hoài Thanh, former president of the student association for the 1985-1987 term, recalled when he joined the crowd that year: *"Of course we were very emotional because we knew Saigon in advance will collapse when Kissinger publishes the book Vietnamization of the War. We are very sad that our allies have abandoned us, we are also very sad that the world signed the agreement in 73. The Republic of Vietnam is abandoned. We took to the streets to show the world that the people of the South were about to lose their freedom and we took to the streets to commemorate all the soldiers who died for Freedom and Democracy."*





The NLF/VC-North Vietnamese troops stopped outside the city for a day to allow the Americans to evacuate before entering. According to General Trần Văn Trà, his troops waited for the main purpose to liberate Saigon, not to kill the Americans and humiliate them. According to the memoirs of South Vietnamese army generals such as Nguyễn Hữu Hạnh, Nguyễn Chánh Thi, and former congressman Lý Quý Chung, on the morning of April 28, French intelligence general Francois Vanuxem went to meet President Dương Văn Minh and requested the Republic of Vietnam to call on China to intervene in order to save the South Vietnamese army which was in danger. A Chinese diplomat suggested that the South Vietnamese military should entrench themselves in the 4th Tactical Zone, promising that China would send troops to the northern border of Vietnam to relieve the siege. Dương Văn Minh, who had been persuaded by the NLF/VC Central Military Department of the South through his brother Dương Văn Nhựt, alias Mười Ty, the NVA Colonel and his family, refused and said: *“I thank you for the goodwill. but in my life, I have worked as a henchman for France, then a henchman for America, that's more than enough. I can't continue to be China's henchman.”*



Three Presidents: Nguyễn Văn Thiệu-Trần Văn Hương-Dương Văn Minh

At 8 a.m. on April 30, President Dương Văn Minh and the ARVN General Staff ordered a unilateral cease-fire, ready to welcome enemy troops into Saigon: *“Our line and policy is national reconciliation and harmony to save the lives of compatriots. I deeply believe in reconciliation between Vietnamese people so as not to waste Vietnamese bones and blood. That's why I ask all the soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam to stay calm, stop shooting and stay there. We also ask the soldiers of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC to stop shooting because we are here waiting to meet the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC to discuss together the ceremony to hand over the government in an orderly manner and avoid the needless bloodshed of compatriots.”*

According to the ARVN, this order did not actually have much effect because most of the ARVN at that time had disbanded, most of the soldiers had surrendered or left their weapons with their families. Therefore, when the Liberation troops entered Saigon, most of them only encountered small and disorganized resistance groups. The fact that Captain Phạm Xuân Thệ asked President Dương Văn Minh to surrender instead of the plan to form a three-component coalition government was to force the ARVN across the battlefield to let go of guns, avoiding unnecessary casualties for both parties and civilians.

According to the Minister of Trade and Economy of the Republic of Vietnam Nguyễn Văn Diệp, before the entered Saigon, French intelligence general Francois Vanuxem (at that time wearing the rank of Colonel) came to meet President Dương Văn Minh, Senate President Nguyễn Văn Huyền and Vũ Văn Mẫu on the morning of April 30 to propose to the Republic of Vietnam to postpone the army not to surrender to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam, but to continue to make a claim to establish a coalition government. If a coalition government was established, France would help the Republic of Vietnam receive the patronage of the People's Republic of China. However, President Dương Văn Minh immediately refused.

The French motive at that time was to want Saigon to cease fire to protect French assets in Saigon from the ravages of fighting, defending Saigon was to protect French interests. The French wanted to re-establish their influence over the former colony. Within the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the advisers at the Presidential Palace, there were two trends in dealing with the Saigon problem. One was working hard for a cease fire, the other was advocating doing business with the Provisional Revolutionary Government. Even when the NLF/VC started the campaign to liberate Đà Nẵng, France sent French Ambassador to Hanoi Philippe Richer to meet the DRV Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng to discuss how to overthrow Thiệu's government to set up a government with ability to talk to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC. President Dương Văn Minh saw the French intentions and did not want China to interfere in the reunification process of Vietnam, so he refused and accepted the surrender to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC in order to quickly have peace and unify the country.

General Dương Văn Minh became President and did not intend to negotiate with the revolution because he saw that it was no longer possible to negotiate. He also did not intend to continue the war because he had long advocated peace, ending the war. This was evident when Dương Văn Minh appointed two "underground sympathizers" of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC (Brigadier General Nguyễn Hữu Hạnh and Lawyer Triệu Quốc Mạnh) to hold two armed forces, the army and the police. He also appointed a civilian (Professor Bùi Tường Huân) as Minister of National Defense. Less than a day after taking office, on April 29, 1975, he ordered the release of political prisoners, terminated contact with the US DAO delegation, did not move troops, and did not destroy bridges.

At 9 am on the same day, exactly 3 hours after the last American helicopter left the roof of the Embassy, General Trần Văn Trà ordered the NLF/VC troops to enter Saigon from five directions. They advanced quickly without any organized resistance. At the radio station, President Dương Văn Minh, on behalf of the entire cabinet of the Saigon government, read a declaration of unconditional surrender to the revolutionary army on the afternoon of April 30. The song "Joining big arms" by Trịnh Công Sơn was performed by himself on Saigon radio and was the first song to be played on the radio after the surrender of the Republic of Vietnam regime.

Historian George C. Herring, a former professor of history emeritus at the University of Kentucky, commented: " *The government of the Republic of Vietnam collapsed only 55 days after the Liberation Army began to attack. This also proves for the diseases this administration has been plagued with since its inception: political fragmentation; a lack of visionary and capable leaders; a tired and corrupt upper class unable to adapt that created a dangerously weak national base... Faced with these harsh realities, the attempt to create an anti-communist stronghold just south of the 17th parallel had a seed of failure from the start.*"

On April 30, 1975, President Dương Văn Minh surrendered the government to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. The US also withdrew all military forces and evacuated Americans from the three Indochina countries after this event.



President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, through the memoirs of his adviser Nguyễn Tiến Hưng, always blamed the US for abandoning its ally. They cursed the US for fleeing and abandoning the South. They never considered the fight against communism as a historical necessity and they had a responsibility before history to protect the country from the threat of communist peril. When the US stopped giving aid, they resigned. Although before that, when the US still gave aid, they accepted an "one candidate" election to continue their leadership, despite the principles of democratic elections. They never conceived that with or without the US, the Vietnamese people had to fight against the imposition of communism and the communist regime in their homeland.

General Cao Văn Viên, in an interview at the end of his life, made some commented about Thiệu as well as comparisons between Nguyễn Văn Thiệu and Ngô Đình Diệm: "Each person is a dictator in his own way. President Diệm was a dictator, ruled the country as a mandarin; he was born anti-communist, granted himself a "heavenly mandate" to save the country. President Diem was proud of the nation, proud of his family, liked to monologue,

*did not accept 'straight-forwardness' but was heavily influenced by his family, while Mr. Thiệu followed the line of 'dictatorship within democracy, in which he governed both the legislative and judicial branches. Because of his lack of knowledge like Mr. Diệm, Mr. Thiệu took the time to consult experts, listen and summarize to decide on his own. Mr. Thiệu was suspicious like Cao Cao and was not afraid to give favors to create factions and divide opponents like he did at the National Assembly. He said "a politician has to be stubborn". Therefore, President Thiệu "overthrowing" Mr. Kỳ was not difficult and lasted longer than President Diệm, but he was not as good as Mr. Diệm. Mr. Thiệu was a conspirator, Mr. Diệm was a moral man."*

Hoàng Đức Nhã, Former Private Secretary and Press Secretary and also a cousin of President Thiệu commented on him as follows: *"President Thiệu is a patriot who has a very clear method of national leadership according to the provisions of the Constitution, but is not someone who defies the Constitution."*

However, in the end, when peace was achieved at the cost of betraying the Vietnamese people, Kissinger calmly confessed his feelings about the Vietnamese leader during the most dramatic time in history. Kissinger said: *"After the ceasefire, our troops will withdraw to the other side of the hemisphere, and his people still see an army continuing to sacrifice for the fragile hopes of independence in Indochina. We were certain that our measure would stifle Hanoi's ambitions. But President Thiệu's eyes are only concerned with fragile things in the future... "* Kissinger also confessed that because there was no other choice, the US had to sacrifice South Vietnam, and because of that, Kissinger had to play the role of President Thiệu's enemy, but deep in his heart, Kissinger admired President Thiệu: *"Like a miracle born of courage, Mr. Thiệu tried to steer the nation during this difficult time, fighting against the enemy's intent to invade and reassure the people. I personally have little sympathy for Mr. Thiệu, but I respect him very much because he is a man who persevered in fighting in terrible loneliness after the withdrawal of US troops. He accepted little sympathy and understanding for him. That doesn't make him lose his quality... "*

After 1975, the Americans wanted to drive the South Vietnamese people's resentment of losing their country towards Thiệu and the ARVN to forget the act of "selling out allies" of the US (The words of President Thiệu told directly to Kissinger's face in 1972). They lobbied the overseas Vietnamese-language media to condemn Thiệu for causing the loss of the country. They accused the ARVN of cowardice, corruption ... They silenced Thiệu's voice and those of the ARVN soldiers. Every year in April, Vietnamese-language media such as RFA, BBC, ... are busy with arguments calling for reconciliation between the communist regime and those who have been driven abroad. They considered those who chased and those who were chased

to be equally guilty.

Meanwhile, the war between South and North Korea was similar to the war in Vietnam. But today RFA, BBC ... tell the descendants of South Korea that in 1950 the North Korean army overran the 38th parallel to invade South Korea. The US military helped the South Korean people push the North Koreans back to the North. The blame was on the North Korean side, not the South Korean side. But for the Vietnam war, the North Vietnamese army also overran the 17th parallel to invade the South, but the US said: The communist side and the ARVN side were both at fault, so the US stood in the middle and did not know which side to help!! So far, there has been no consensus on which side is right or left. Americans still want Vietnamese children to see President Thiệu as someone who always obstructed and destroyed peace.

Later, Western historians mainly studied how the shortage of ammunition in the ARVN affected its downfall, without knowing that it was the South Vietnamese Liberation Army who suffered a much more serious shortage. The rapid collapse of the ARVN, in fact, did not lie in the firepower, but according to Merle L. Pribbenow's assessment, "*The strongest blow to destroy was the stunned mentality that the talented and unexpected strategy of the Liberation Army hit the commander-in-chief of the Republic of Vietnam.*"

French journalist Paul Dreyfus was one of 25 French journalists present in Saigon at the last hour of April 1975. In his book titled "And Saigon fell" (Et Saigon tomba - Collection Témoignages, 1975). The author considered the fall of Saigon to be the 'most important' event for the Asian communist system after Mao's 1949 invasion of Beijing. In an interview on April 24, 1975 that lasted for more than an hour, the author described General Dương Văn Minh as very calm with a slow and gentle voice, referring to the very slim chance of negotiating with his heart deeply confused by the current state of the country. Minh described the exhausted state of the army, the demoralized generals, the nearly empty stockpiles of ammunition and combat gear, the abandoned supplies, the helpless bureaucracy, the worried populace and the unscrupulous people of Thiệu did nothing but hid their dollars, gold, jewelry, and art works... The author said, "No matter *what, he told me, I'm not going anywhere. It's still my country, happy or unhappy, but I feel very unhappy. I'd rather live in a prison in my country than be free in a foreign country.*" On the same day, President Hương went to General Minh to discuss about a negotiating role.

On the evening of April 26, the Senate and Lower House agreed to give General Minh full authority to operate in order to bring about an "honorable peace", while during both Saturday and Sunday evening artillery shells hit the center of Saigon. A close associate of General Minh told Dreyfus without hesitation: "*We have an impossible mission.*" The people of the capital lived in a panic before the increased shelling. The North Vietnamese and VC divisions supported by heavy tanks were less than 30 kilometers from the capital of the Republic of Vietnam. The bravest generals also said that all was lost. The "Galaxy" flights of the US Air Force hurriedly transported the evacuated US citizens, Thiệu's close associates followed in the footsteps of their fleeing masters with suitcases full of dollars, jewelry, valuables, houses, and banks were closed.

In the morning of April 30, at 10:00 a.m., among the officers of the victorious army, there were VC secretly operating in Saigon, not wearing military uniforms or military ranks or badges, present at the president's office. During the surrender reception, he knew General Minh very well. He approached and said, *"You did a great job for Vietnam, preventing Saigon from being destroyed. We thank you, General Minh."* Minh replied that he hoped for the victor's gallantry.

Journalist Paul Dreyfus also reflected on what Mr. Minh was thinking: *"At some point, in a brief moment a few days ago, did General Minh think it was possible to reach an agreement? I didn't believe it. When I last met him, when he was not yet in power, I noticed that he thought that surrender was inevitable, but without a doubt, General Minh hoped to have time to work out how to arrange it. By putting aside his own personality, Minh accepted in the eyes of history, as a general who surrendered unconditionally, to save his country unnecessary pain."*

But there were also Southern heroes and artists such as seven-day former President Trần Văn Hương (1902-1982) on April 29, 1975 when US Ambassador Graham Martin came to invite him to leave his homeland: *"I know the current situation is very dangerous. Having come to this point, the US also has a part to play in it. Now, the Ambassador has come to invite me to leave the country, I am very grateful to the Ambassador. But I have thought carefully and decided to stay in my country. I volunteered to stay to share with them a part of the pain, shame, and suffering of the people who lost their country."* After the news of surrender was broadcast from Saigon, five ARVN generals had died by suicide on April 30. They were Nguyễn Khoa Nam, Phạm Văn Phú, Lê Văn Hưng, Lê Nguyên Vỹ and Trần Văn Hai.



In short, the Republic of Vietnam was persecuted not because it did not know the malicious conspiracy of the Communists, did not heroically oppose the enemy, but because of the internal troubles caused by the so-called Third Party and the total belief in an unreliable ally.

## Chapter 22. Unified Vietnam: Communist Party of Vietnam

With the rapid collapse of the Republic of Vietnam after the US withdrawal, Nguyễn Văn Thiệu, then Trần Văn Hương resigned. On April 28, 1975 Dương Văn Minh (1916-2001) officially took office as the President. Two days later on April 30, he announced his unconditional surrender on the radio in front of representatives of the South Vietnamese Liberation Army. The Government of the Republic of Vietnam officially collapsed.

On April 30, 1975, after receiving the surrender of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of South Vietnam/VC took over the representative offices and properties of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam as well as the membership status in international organizations. The economic situation went smoothly, without any legal obstacles because countries and international organizations were of the opinion that according to international law, this was just a change of government in the territory of South Vietnam, not a change of new entity. According to them this is a government inheritance, not a national inheritance.

Before reunification, the two countries of Vietnam applied to join the United Nations. One was the DRV with the capital Hanoi and a red flag with a yellow star. And the other Vietnam was the Republic of South Vietnam with the capital Saigon, and a red flag on the top half, bottom half blue, a yellow star in the middle. On April 30, 1975, when Saigon fell, the NLF/VC flag was hoisted on the roof of the Independence Palace in Saigon. The Provisional Government of the Republic of South Vietnam declared the inheritance of the Government of the Republic of Vietnam, claiming the territory from the 17th parallel to Cape Cà Mau, with both the Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa archipelagos. The authorities were all in the name of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, with the title: "Independence, freedom, neutrality". On May 2, 1975, the new government ordered the dissolution of all political, social, cultural, and religious organizations... established under the Republic of South Vietnam regime, including the NLF/VC, which was dissolved on May 1. "Our *army was unified last night!*" (Trương Như Tảng recounted when he took refuge in Paris). Newly established organizations to fight "American imperialists and puppets to save the country" were either disbanded or merged into official Hanoi organizations such as the Fatherland Front, the Liberation Women's Union, and the Revolutionary Government, the National Front for the Liberation of the South, the overseas facilities... all disappeared with no traces left!

In mid-July 1975, the two countries of Vietnam jointly proposed to apply to join the United Nations. Representing Hanoi was Nguyễn Văn Lưu, and Đinh Bá Thi represented Saigon. On August 11, 1975, the United Nations voted to allow the two countries of Vietnam to join the United Nations, but the US vetoed the accession of the two countries. According to Prof. Ngô Vĩnh Long, until April 30, 1975, the view of the reunification of Vietnam of Hanoi and the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, when the war ended, would be a multi-step process lasting from 12 to 14 years. Because the two Vietnams failed accession to the United Nations, hardliners in Hanoi were urged to end that lengthy project of reunification. But after the two Koreas' accession to the United Nations failed in August 1975, the Vietnam Workers'

Party, or the current Hanoi Communist Party, held its 24th Central Conference, deciding to urgently unify Vietnam. In September 1975 at the 24th Conference, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party set out the task of completing the national unification in terms of the state (Resolution No. 247-NQ/TW, September 29 1975). The 24th Conference of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party decided on the tasks of the Vietnamese revolution in the new period "Completing the reunification of the country and moving the whole country forward quickly, strongly and firmly to socialism." The NLF/VC and the Provisional Government of the Republic of the South together closed shops because they had "successfully completed the historical task" (Nguyễn Thị Bình declared).

The overwhelming majority of the members of the Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly in the term XXX (1975) voted in favor of admitting the Republic of South Vietnam along with the DRV as members of the United Nations, proving this more clearly (in 1975, it was not approved). Admission was refused by a US veto on September 30. The Republic of South Vietnam/VC and the DRV applied to join the United Nations, but both meetings of the Security Council in August and September 1975 were vetoed by the US. On April 25, 1976, the Republic of South Vietnam and the DRV held a general election to reunify the Vietnamese state in accordance with the terms of political measures to reunify Vietnam in the Paris Agreement. On September 20, 1977, Vietnam officially became a member of the United Nations.

On the domestic front, after April 30, 1975, a military management mechanism was established before the government apparatus operated normally. The Military Management Committee issued Order No. 1: requiring military officers of the Republic of Vietnam to present to the new government, register and hand in weapons from May 8 to May 31. Soldiers of the rank of general and colonel must present themselves at 213 Hồng Bàng Boulevard, Saigon. The lieutenants will report to the district. Police and intelligence officers must go to the Committee for Internal Security in Saigon. Corporals and soldiers went to the Ward Committee.

Government agencies of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC and the Revolutionary People's Committee as well as the front system operated normally under the leadership of Party committees at all levels until the State was officially unified. At the central level, a party system was established, and the party cadres committee ensured the leadership of the Party. The Party Central Committee issued Resolution 247 of September 1975 to promote socialist reform in the South and work towards state reunification. The Central Bureau of the South and the Party Committees dissolved, and established the Central Committee of the Party and Government in the South. According to the leadership mechanism, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC is under the Government Council of the DRV. Many agencies and departments were merged in turn. Many cadres were sent to the south, and many southern cadres went to the north to work. Some officials from the North who went to work in the South still held positions in the North.



From November 15-21, 1975, the Political Consultative Conference was held in Saigon, between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRVN) delegation led by Trường Chinh and the South Vietnamese delegation led by Phạm Hùng, which approved the organization of national elections. Under the direction of the Vietnam Workers' Party, from November 15 to 21, 1975, a political consultation conference was held to move toward state unification.

### **Section 22a. 1976 General Election**

On April 25, 1976 a general election in the whole country was held, electing 492 deputies to the unified National Assembly of Vietnam. From June 24 to July 2, 1976, the National Assembly held its first session, naming the country the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The National Assembly passed the following contents:

- . The national flag and national emblem are the Red Flag and the Yellow Star.
- . The national anthem is the song Tiến Quân Ca.
- . The capital is Hanoi.
- . Renamed Saigon - Gia Định City to Hồ Chí Minh City
- . Remove the Demilitarized Zone along the 17th Parallel.

With this event, starting from July 2, 1976, the Republic of South Vietnam/VC and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam officially merged into the Socialist Republic of Vietnam of a unified Vietnam. The southern capital Saigon became Hồ Chí Minh City so that *"millions of people are sad and millions of people are happy."*

The country of Vietnam reunified completely and took the name of the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam**, led by the Communist Party of Vietnam that changed its name from the Labor Party in 1976. The Party applies socialism, one-party autocracy, lacks humanity, strictly controls and suppresses religions, and erases the culture of the South or the Republic of Vietnam. Therefore, after taking power in the North, and reunifying the country, the Communist Party implemented policies of land reform, denouncing, destroying writers and artists, eliminating opposition, renovating industry and commerce, burn books, change money.

The Party set up new economic zones, a system of household registration - subsidies of cooperation measures, a plan to "re-educate" the military and officials of the former Republic of Vietnam, causing tens of thousands of former regime officials to die in re-education prisons. The Party completely reformed the commercial bourgeoisie and expelled overseas Chinese, divided classes (descendants of high-ranking party members, martyrs,

poor people, puppet soldiers...), treated badly workers and peasants (even martyrs with meritorious services to the revolution) that were formerly the center of the revolution...

These policies were completely applied in accordance with the "revolutionary violence" of the international communist movements of Stalin and Mao Zedong, causing hundreds of thousands of people to die in re-education prisons and went against the spirit of national unity and respect for private property of Vietnam's constitution of 1946 as well as in contrast to the patriotic communists of the 1920s to 1945s who demanded freedom, democracy, equality, justice for the people and national independence under the French rule. Although they endured a bloody war for decades but still had some stability where they chose to cut their umbilical cords, after the reunification day, the people of the South were persecuted, kicked out of their homes, and regularly threatened by the ward police with the household registration system and subsidized economy. Therefore, everyone, including Northerners, silently determined to find their way to the sea.

### **Section 22b. Destroying Southern Culture**

Synthesizing the three humanistic, liberal and nationalist spirits to form the philosophy of building the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), a country that had just gained independence, had to face wars and had built a solid foundation within 20 years. RVN was a country with free education, free economy, completely free public health, farmland for farmers, free press, free development of religion, literature and arts, and a constitutional democracy, the rule of law with three clearly separated powers. The South before 1975 was a fertile and fertile land for freedom trees to freely flower and bear fruit.

With a free market economy, almost all commercial activities were run by the private sector and developed technology through industrial parks and job-creating factories. The law ensured that private competition was truly fair and legal. Despite the war, the gap between the rich and the poor, between the rural and the urban areas were not much different. The interests of the employer and the worker were harmonized to create a relatively full and comfortable life. During the 1968 Tết Offensive, the people did not support the NLF/VC as expected.

The right to democratic freedom, although relative, also ensured a happy life for the people, promoting talents and initiatives to help society. A civil society with many civil associations, including religious organizations, trade unions, scouts, countrymen, mutual aid, charity, research, clubs, was formed in the South. In particular, free education from primary to university based on humanism, liberalization and ethnicity, especially university autonomy, had trained generations of good citizens for the South, for Vietnam and for humanity. Generations of descendants of the Republic of Vietnam have glorified the Vietnamese race in the world after 1975. The people as the root, the nation as the foundation, freedom for progress had become the cultural foundation of the Republic of Vietnam, which

was preserved and passed on to Vietnamese generations today. Culture is expressed through the way of living, thinking, and behaving. The people of the Republic of Vietnam live, think and look to the future completely differently from the communists in the North.

In parallel with the detention of hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese officials and soldiers to end both military and political aspects, the communists did not forget two other important aspects, economy and culture. Thus, the campaign against the bourgeoisie took all the material wealth and means of production of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie and merchants in the South. Several times of money changes had turned Southern society into poor people. How can they forget the daily chant of the Communists: *"Taking over the government, all benefits and rights will be returned to us."* The victors of the past were hungry, now their pockets were full of gold, the tall houses with large doors were taken from the people of the South, the wives and children of hundreds of thousands of prisoners were now in their hands. That is the prerogative of the comrades in power. A Communist leader expressed the general sentiment of the communists: *"We occupy the puppet's house and sleep with the puppet's wife"*. The slogan *"Intellectuals, Richmen, Landowners and Notables Dig up their roots"* was used to impoverish the southern people and to compete with each other to become the officials of the new regime, also known as **red capitalists**, which were clearly visible today with Doctorate degree suitable for the word Tri (Intellectuals). Communists believe that they must destroy the entire old social structure, culture, and traditions before they can build a new society. They also want to rewrite the entire history, denying the good things in the past thousands of years of the Vietnamese nation before the arrival of Communism. A large-scale campaign to destroy Southern social culture, starting with the burning of books, arresting writers, journalists, and artists in the South, and replacing them with noisy cheap propaganda means. such as slogans, banners hanging on the street, loudspeakers in the ward...

Vietnamese Communists are loyal internationalists who memorize the classics and methods of the Communist Party. Everything they did after capturing the South was strictly according to the books and the lines of the Communists. They are real Communists. Don't tell them about the nation, about the Vietnamese homeland, about reconciliation. Communists don't know those words. They know only hatred and violence.

After the liberation of the South and the reunification of the country, from the point of view of the Party's direction to the practice of literary criticism, they all agreed in the statement that 30 years of war and the new colonialism of the US imperialists had left heavy cultural and ideological consequences. The general direction and behavior were against reactionary political ideology and depraved ideology, against the influence of bourgeois and neo-colonial culture; raise the flag of national independence and socialism, promote the spirit of national pride and patriotic tradition, protect and develop the national and democratic elements in culture; carry out the ideological and cultural revolution, build a new culture and new ideology, remove the differences or still not identical, and unify the two

regions. This is also one of the basic tasks of social reform, human reform, building a new regime, new people, new lifestyle, new ethics...

After 20 years of dividing the country in two, taking the date of April 30, 1975 as a landmark, the North became a copy of Communist China. Reviewing movies, how to dress, how to live, how to educate, review books, poetry, music, pictures in the North easily showed this. Before 1975, under the one-sided view of the North, Southern literature did nothing but praised individualism, love of boys and girls, lamented their own responsibility, created a false sense of peace, and directed people to enjoyment lifestyle, indifferent to the country's destiny. While in the North, literature directed people to focus their energies on the same ideals and specific goals, but fantasized about social institutions with beautiful words, Southern literature such as dreamers and mourners led people's hearts like scattered sand, if the will to fight is gone, the consequences will come. In the defeat of the South, Southern literature before 1975 made a significant contribution.

After April 30, 1975 a communist ideology was imposed through the government's "cultural management" system. Saigon culture in particular and South Vietnam in general were abolished in a variety of brutal ways. From burning books, banning the circulation of valuable creations, to trying their best to interpret and capture this heritage in a different direction. Even history changes. Distorting facts, breaking old customs, destroying traditional cultural and moral values. Denying freedom of speech and the opposition.

**The burning of books** is a crime before history. It not only happened under Qin Shi Huang (259 BC-210 BC) in China but happened right in our country after 1975 when the Communists captured the South. Scholar Nguyễn Hiến Lê wrote in his memoir: *One of the first jobs of the new government was to destroy all publications (books and newspapers) of the Ministry of Culture, including translations of Lê Quý Đôn's works, poetry by Cao Bá Quát and Nguyễn Du; French, Chinese and English dictionaries were also burned.... In 1978, the North government ordered the destruction of all books in the South, except for books on natural science, technology, and dictionaries; Thus, not only the novels, history, geography, law, economics, but also the poems and texts of our ancestors written in Chinese, later translated into Vietnamese, even the *Kiều, Chinh phụ ngâm ... printed in the South, all must be destroyed.**



The policy of "dictatorship of the proletariat" was first applied in the South to target the South's culture and literature before 1975. Before the policy of arresting middle and high-ranking officers and civil servants of the government. The former right to go to study and re-education, before launching a campaign to fight the commercial bourgeoisie in major cities in the South, the communists, right from March and April 1975, captured any locality,

immediately ordered the closure of all literary and artistic activities, from newspapers to publishers, publishers and bookstores, ordered the people to destroy all traces of Southern literature and art. . While continuing to maintain a five-part economy, the communists accepted only one literary component: the socialist realist literature, subject to the absolute domination of the party.

In fact, not until April 1975, right before that, from the first years of the 1960s, in the North, the communists had an intention to destroy Southern literature by two methods: one was to falsely accused that Southern literature was a "new colonial literature" in order to erase its majestic position in the process of national literature, secondly, to create the so-called "liberation literature of the South Vietnam" with writers in the North were smuggled into the South, hiding in the mountains, hiding in the sea, claiming to speak the most passionate voices of the Southern compatriots.

The burning of books was demonstrated through the campaign Against Debauchery- Reactionary Culture. The slogan itself in the campaign clearly stated two purposes: (1) politically, eliminating reactionary ideological currents opposing the regime, and (2) culturally, eliminating the form considered ' perversion in the form of capitalism'. One of the urgent jobs of the new government when the South collapsed was sealing and confiscating books at libraries. The works of major printing houses, publishing houses and bookstores in Saigon such as Khai Trí, Sóng Mỏi, etc. were sealed and banned from circulation. Even children's book authors published special children's stories. Those books were educational, entertaining, or set a good example for young children. The content was healthy and of educational quality. These publishers were often not-for-profit, with the backing of religious organizations, or conscientious publishers like Khai Trí's case. Those are publishers like Tuổi thơ (Childhood), Nắng Sớm (Early Sunshine), Tuổi Hoa Niên, Beautiful Books, Viễn Du, Hùng Dũng, Roses, Sunflowers, Hoa Mai ,.. these children's book publishers were banned totally.

All books published in the South were "equally equated" with remnants of the US and their puppets, a culture of slavery, reactionaries, and debauchery. Government levels from wards, communes, districts, and cities had issued directives to gather all kinds of books, from novels, editorials to textbooks, for cremation. The period after 1975 was an unfortunate period of Literature for the whole South, unfortunate because books were confiscated and burned. Unfortunately, more than 200 writers and artists were sent to re-education. Misfortune followed their whole life. Since they were denied writers since then, their prison sentences were extended forever because they never had the chance to write again. The old data of the Ministry of Information showed that, in September 1972, according to the National Committee of UNESCO, the Republic of Vietnam granted an average of 3,000 books to be published a year. In total, from 1954 to 1975, there were about 50,000-60000 books of all kinds published, in addition 200,000 foreign titles were imported. For example, each book had a minimum of 3000 printed copies. There would be 180 million Vietnamese books destroyed. This was just an approximation. And so, the number of books confiscated,

burned, sold on the sidewalks or recycled was about 180 million copies throughout the South. The South here extended from Bến Hải to Cà Mau.

In addition to the above two measures, the Northern press constantly slandered and distorted Southern literature. According to Phan Cự Đệ and Hà Minh Đức, in the book *Vietnamese Writers*, volume 1, from 1954 to 1975, excluding broadcasts by Voice of Vietnam, only on major magazines and newspapers in Hanoi such as *Học Tập*, *Thông Nhất*, *Art Research*, *Văn Nghệ*, *Literature Magazine*... there were 286 articles to implement this plot.

After capturing the South in 1975, the Communist Party's level of resistance to Southern literature increased on a wide scale and with an extremely violent degree. At all party congresses, the communists made the abolition of Southern literature and art an urgent political task. Reporting at the 5th National Assembly session, Lê Duẩn instructed: "*After liberation, our people have done a lot of work to wipe out the traces and remnants of that culture. This work needs to be continued patiently, actively and thoroughly.*"

To counter the influence of previous Southern literature, the communists used two main methods at the same time: propaganda and terrorism. No one had tried to test the number of articles and books aimed at smearing Southern literature from 1975 to now. In most articles and books, the communists used a familiar tactic: slander. Slandering anti-communist writers as the CIA. To slander those who specialized in writing about gentle love stories as "perverse". Slandering even those who were only making pure literature as "psychological warfare". With communists, everything outside the orbit of communist domination was "reactionary" and deserved condemnation. The following *argument* was very typical: "*...the books that propagate existentialism, nihilism, and sexual incitement, although ostensibly do not express the official position of the US and the Saigon government, in fact ideological substance of neo-colonialism, serving the political conspiracy and reactionary ideology of America and its minions*". (Saigon Giải Phóng on February 15, 1987)."

Along with propaganda activities that are slanderous and distorted in nature, the communists also mobilized police and youth volunteers to search and confiscate old books and newspapers, arresting those who circulated old books and newspapers. On August 20, 1975, the South Vietnamese Communist Ministry of Information and Culture issued Circular No. 218/CT.75 banning the circulation of "reactionary political and lewd books". On March 8, 1976, the same Ministry of Information and Culture continued to issue Notice No. 15 reiterating the above ban. Particularly in Saigon, in May 1977, the Department of Culture and Information issued Circular No. 1230/STTVH/XB asking the people to either destroy or hand over all cultural publications of the old regime. Each of these notices was accompanied by a lengthy list of works condemned as "reactionary" and "lewd". Both the notice and the list were widely published in the domestic press. Particularly, the list was later

supplemented and gathered into a large, thick book, titled List of books banned from circulation, which is sold in all bookstores in the country.

After each announcement, almost as a rule, the communists launched a massive campaign to suppress cultural products. The police surrounded the streets to stop people who were secretly buying and selling used books and newspapers. The police broke into people's houses, rummaged everywhere to find and confiscated old books and newspapers. Up to now, the communists had launched at least five such major crackdown campaigns at different times: late 1975, early 1976, mid-1977, mid-1981 and mid-1985.

The possession and circulation of old books and newspapers were considered a "serious crime" before state law. In the Penal Code published by the communists, published in the People's newspaper from July 12 to 17, 1985, article 82 under the title "Crime of propaganda against the socialist regime", in Section A, Chapter I, The section "Crimes" clearly states: those who oppose the people's administration will be sentenced to prison. During the 1980s and 1981, the communists prosecuted many people who were selling used books and newspapers in court. Causing a stir in public opinion was the case Vinh Sử and Bùi Đình Hà who were sentenced to 20 years in prison in Saigon. Cultural censorship was as strict as it was political. Just keep a cassette tape, a daily newspaper before 1975, they could be brought to the prosecution right at their door because they were accused of "using and possessing depraved cultural products".

Confiscate old books. Arrest those who circulate old books. Not yet finish. From 1975 up to now, the communists had launched many cruel terrorist campaigns targeting the old writers and artists of the South. Many people were arrested, exiled in prisons and re-education camps. In 1978, after many years of investigation, the magazine Quê Mẹ in Paris published a list of 163 Southern writers and artists detained by the communists in re-education camps. The Express newspaper, issued on August 12, 1978, published the full names of 130 writers and artists among 163 writers and artists who were victims of the communist's revenge policy. On April 30, 1980, at a press conference in Paris, Quê Mẹ magazine again provided a list of 40 new artists and artists who were arrested or re-arrested in 1980.

In general, about 10 years after liberation, the basic spirit of literary and artistic criticism was to prevent, oppose, criticize, fight, and wipe out the culture of enslavement, debauchery and hybridization; remove reactionary and obscene publications; severely punish those who intentionally violate the regulations of the State. About 10 years ago, attitudes towards Southern literature before 1975 had many positive changes. The way of looking at this part of literature was more scientific, open, and broader than before. It was entirely possible to speak of a need to re-read, re-evaluate, introduce and re-populate some of the literary values that were once considered "beyond the front lines".

The South might lose. But that literature had no reason to be unjustly erased like that. Because in those 20 years of literary activity, it determined to show its place with the nuances and personality of an authentic Literature. A literature whose product was the result of freedom of thought and freedom of creation. That was the superiority of literary and artistic activities in the South that, even after decades of division and even after decades of reunification, people have not been able to accomplish such a simple thing. From being harshly criticized, rejected, and banned from being popularized, Southern literature has gradually been considered an integral part of Vietnamese literature, published and seriously studied.

Many southern authors (writers, critics) reappeared in contemporary literary life, many works (composition, research, criticism, literary history) were reprinted and received by readers. The Văn Nghệ Newspaper of the Vietnam Writers' Association, the Vietnam Cultural Forum of the National Committee of the Vietnam Union of Culture and Arts Associations each opened a column to introduce Southern literature before 1975; many specialized journals at the central and local levels also published studies on the authors, works, literary phenomena, literary criticism of Saigon before 1975; many theses, master's theses and many research topics at grassroots, ministerial and state levels have taken Southern literature and academics from 1954-1975 as the object of survey, analysis and evaluation; Some publishers, cultural and media companies have selectively introduced "familiar strangers"...

In other words, the change in attitude towards Southern literature took place in both research, publication, and teaching, collection, introduction and dissemination to the public. Encouraged activities are overcoming prejudices and biases, soberly selecting works with elements of nationalism, humanitarian spirit, democracy, patriotism and progress, with innovative value. In general, the whole life of the South, including the cultural and literary life, over the past 45 years has gradually "liberated" the people of the North from the big prison in which people are forced to pretend creating, "stretching" or being mesmerized, but blindly obeying in wartime and following "socialist orientation"...

Northerners who migrated to the south in 1954 still kept quite a lot of the characteristics (both good and bad) of the middle class in Hanoi before 1954. Of course, it was in contrast to the Northern society that lived for 20 years of "social reform" under socialism" and war, where the totalitarian government turned society into a giant barracks, all for the war, everyone sharing the monotonous poverty. There, the "ruralization" of Hanoi made the simple and popular way of life beat the elegant and lavish lifestyle of a place known for a thousand years of civilization.

In general, under a regime that respects individual freedom according to Western influence (France and then America) a liberal lifestyle is quite disadvantageous in participating in wars (in fact, it has contributed significantly to the South "losing"), but has



an inevitable attraction after peace for those who were once living in the “giant barracks”. For people in the North, that lifestyle is more attractive because of the innocence and carefree nature of the residents of the Southern Delta, plus the free and equal attitude of the citizens of a Cochinchina who enjoy the long-standing rule of law under the French. Not to mention the "false prosperity" that American aid brought to Saigon has greatly increased its attractiveness.

The liberal society was regretted even more after the "socialist" path brought Vietnam's economy to the brink, the "socialist man" had never been seen and had to be "untied" to plunge into "self-saving" by any means, causing the long-suppressed individualism to unfold to the extreme according to the law of the pendulum! Even some of the positive points that people living with real ideals in the Northern society have, such as the spirit of simplicity, dedication, group work, co-community and suffering, etc., quickly fade or even disappear in the majority of cadres! But that cannot be considered due to the "negative influence" of the "individualist" and "enjoyable" lifestyle of the South as attributed to "Propaganda", but simply an understandable "rebellion" of people in the North when they see "lost illusions" before their eyes! On the contrary, it is also undeniable that some negative effects from the evils of a wartime society, under incomplete democracy, with the manipulation of the "Kaki party" and the presence of dozens of thousands of foreign soldiers (along with whores, drugs, gangs, public theft and corruption) after the imposed order of the totalitarian regime broke down!

The capital Saigon became “Hồ Chí Minh City.” The nature of this change, of course, is for the ultimate goal - to erase Saigon from the mind, community memory and connection with the past (not just the past of the Republic of Vietnam). This will-only act, thinking that "Saigon has lost its name" (according to the lyrics of musician Nguyễn Đình Toàn), has shown the impossibility. The people of Saigon and the South until today are still very clear, they are forced to accept the use of the name HCMC for administrative procedures but still call Saigon naturally as a universal place, containing cultural and history meanings. Saigon, that name has not been lost in official speech, literature and press, so much so that, at times, in the blood of the censors' guards, there were bans in using the word "Saigon." But then back to the same. No administrative and financial orders can forbid when the words are created from the deep thought and consciousness of the people.

Perhaps two outstanding advantages of Southern culture that have penetrated strongly, deeply and widely into the North after 1975 are:

- The spirit of independence, self-advocacy and self-determination of an individual's life have increasingly triumphed over the habit of "industrial chickens", passively looking forward to "the state and unions" that the centralized and subsidized regime have created in the long run. Especially after the state is exhausted, it is necessary to let the people "save themselves". This is decisive for the society to gradually liberalize, free from the control and constraints of the totalitarian state. Economic independence is ideological independence.

- Spiritual life, mainly Buddhist beliefs and practices. Buddhism, which was restricted and strictly controlled in the North, revived after 1975 thanks to the support and transmission from the South. Although the religion is heavily exploited by the state and the god-traffickers, causing terrible distortions and corruption, genuine Buddhism in the country still thrives thanks to the good influence of the Southern Buddhist tradition.

The cultural and artistic life of the South and its influence after 1975 should be recognized on the social and lifestyle background as mentioned above. **The phenomenon of Trịnh Công Sơn** with love music and anti-war music reflected love, homeland and the status that occupied the hearts of many people on the "winner side". Trịnh Công Sơn's music is the most unique cultural product of the South, it crystallizes the depths of the Vietnamese soul in the most tragic situation in history, unprecedented in Vietnamese music until now when looking for the "true mind" of impermanence of Buddha Nature. After many years of being monopolized by "red music", it broke out with "yellow music" all over the streets and alleys (before the pitiful bewilderment of the prisoners in the "yellow music" case in Hanoi when they returned home. !)

It can be said that the Vietnamese music industry before 1975 was the most prosperous period in history. The thoughts of a whole generation of young people born and raised in wartime, the concerns about the fate of the whole nation, the mission of patriotic young people were contained in the songs composed with the highest quality. The theme "Youth, Homeland and People" brought back the strong development of social work movement in the South until April 1975, when it stopped working such as: relief for flood victims and war victims. The Vietnam Du Ca (Traveling Music) Movement was established as a "volunteer youth organization" with the aim of educating the young generation through cultural and community activities about national pride, love for the homeland, thoughts of the people of a small country who want to rise up to change the fate of their nation. An expanded cultural environment, a place for young people to develop their talents and compete for musical talent. Musicians strived to compose because they were free to express the artist's feelings. But the most important thing was that the people of the South had enough to eat and clothe, and had the mood to enjoy music through radio and television stations, concerts, music tea rooms and discos. The tape and disc centers also contributed to the transmission of music to the masses. Material life was relatively complete, spiritual food indispensable. Arts and music were therefore also developed with colorful, extremely brilliant colors. The growth of music had led to singer training institutes, music classes, and musical talent supply to the South. After 1975, that music scene was revived overseas.

Because **the press** is an activity that the Communist Party must firmly grasp as a propaganda tool to guide public opinion, the influence of the Southern press (a true journalism) on the press after 1975 is mainly in the aspect of the press. journalism profession. The newspaper Tin Sáng (Morning News) of the NLF/VC supporters was a very popular Saigon-style newspaper in the new regime. After the "Đổi Mới" (Renew), thanks to the relaxation, a number of newspapers in Hồ Chí Minh City boldly used veteran journalists

from the South, creating a flourish of journalism with a tendency to approach the truth. Independent investigations, quick information, and market journalism tactics that Saigon people have a long tradition of being followed by the "subsidized" press. The influence of that style of journalism can be seen very clearly in newspapers in Hồ Chí Minh City (most clearly in Tuổi Trẻ-Youth, Lao Động Chủ Nhật-Labor Sunday...) and increasingly with newspapers in Hanoi.

Southern books and newspapers also have a strong impact on the spoken language as well as the written language in the North. Many southern words have automatically become popular nationwide, writing proper names in English characters has challenged and is overtaking the backward and inadequate Vietnamese transcription of the North. If the Northern literature before 1975 is generally said to be the literature that "directs" propaganda to serve the war, "the literature must be religious", the "uniform" literature is strictly controlled, isolated from the world (with a few exceptions, surpassed by talent and flexibility; and a few "hidden" works of the Nhân Văn Giai Phẩm and the "Revisionist group"), Southern literature before 1975 is a literature of natural life, of natural, authentic and extremely diverse people, which is developing strongly in a free and attached society to the civilized world. The factor of Western influence is very decisive for the development in these 20 years, which can be compared with the golden period of modern Vietnamese literature 1930-1945. It is extremely regrettable that the rushing current was stopped because of the incident of April 30, 1975, causing Vietnamese contemporary literature to stall for a long time, until now it has not recovered its momentum of development.

Contact with Southern Literature before 1975 created a decisive turning point in ideological orientation for many authors of "orthodox" Northern literature. Its spirit of freedom, humanity and innovation had gradually "cleansed" the habit of "self-censorship" and "political service", the dogma of "socialist realism"... mind of the generation of writers "against France and against America". It certainly inspired the ideas of drastic changes of some leaders in the late 1970s such as Trần Độ, Nguyễn Ngọc... and many successful writers since the last "Đổi Mới-Renew" policy in late 1980s. Most of today's young writers in Vietnam are following that spirit.

After April 30, 1975, a number of Southern writers and artists continued to make efforts to maintain the values of Southern Literature and Art that were once considered 'toxic and depraved' and banned. Poet Hoàng Hưng, who spent more than 3 years in prison with the charge of being forced to "pass on reactionary cultural products" just because he carried in him a collection of poems by poet Hoàng Cầm in 1982, asserted that Literature - Art in the South before 1975 was a part of Vietnam's literary achievements. He said:

*"After 1975 I entered Saigon very early and I read a lot of Saigon's works before 1975 as well as bought a lot to read and study. In recent years, when we made the Văn Việt page of the Vietnamese Independent Literature Group, we have a profile that systematically provides readers with the achievements of Southern literature before 1975, that is, the*

*literature of the Republic of Vietnam period from a variety of sources. Thereby, I have grounds to say that the achievements of the Republic of Vietnam's literature are so great that up to now, the mainstream Vietnamese literary researchers in this regime have not yet thoroughly understood and have not been able to accept those values. That is a huge defect because it is not only the achievement of the South or the Republic of Vietnam, but so far, it must be affirmed that it is a part of Vietnam's literary achievements in general. ”*

Journalist Nguyễn Ngọc Giả, who has many articles on the education of the Republic of Vietnam, once studied vocal, commented that the Literature - Art of the Republic of Vietnam period was especially pluralistic and individualistic, so it was very rich and creative. He explained: *“Literature - Art in general as well as music in particular, in my opinion, it is an invaluable treasure of the Vietnamese people because it achieves its humanity, ethnicity and liberalism. Humanity probably doesn't need much to say. A song gives people a good vibe. There are songs that are timeless. There are songs that are 60 years old and 70 years old still live forever in the hearts of the audience. In terms of ethnicity, the musicians of the South before 1975 used ethnicity very well in each piece of music. Using the characteristics of folk songs of each region to apply to new music must be said to be very delicate and very beautiful. Liberalism is indisputable because it comes from individualism. In each piece of music by a musician or in each voice of a singer, they express their individuality very clearly. Therefore, it can be said that it is a creation, without creativity, it is impossible to talk about music in particular as well as literature and poetry in general. ”* He concluded that it was individuality that gave Southern music before 1975 a colorful flower garden, because each singer and musician were a very own, very special and very beautiful flower. And that was the manifestation of pluralism.

As a painter and a journalist in charge of the "Literature - Art" section of RFA for a long time, Journalist Mặc Lâm said that he carefully studied Vietnamese literature before 1975 and what he cared about was the creativity in each product. He added: *"Talking about literature before 1975 in the South, it can be summed up in one sentence that Vietnamese literature was young in only 20 years but very fresh and prosperous, based on the spirit of art and literature. purely technical and not for political or other reasons. Beauty is expressed through literature, words, and individual creativity, from writers, poets, painters or shapers. ”*

Writer Nguyễn Thị Thanh Bình in the US said that the imprint of Southern literature from 1954 to 1975 gave overseas writers and poets the motivation to continue. She gave her opinion : *"Southern literature from 1954 to 1975, i.e., only 20 years, but it is extremely important in the history of Vietnamese literature because it is very groundbreaking and has no " order" like the literature of the Socialist era led by the party. Artists do not create according to orders, do not follow anyone's orders, do not have to bend their pen because of freedom of speech and freedom of thought. It creates an opportunity for creativity to explode and push to the bottom of the emotion, not write a sentence and then flatter a sentence or write a sentence and then omit a sentence. Southern literature from 1954 to*

*1975, which lasts only 20 years, but it is extremely important in the history of Vietnamese literature because it is very groundbreaking and does not have the "ordered" character like literature in the Socialist era led by the party .”*

### **Section 22c. Re-Education Camps**

Building a great national unity block with the worker-peasant-intellectual union as the foundation concretized the development stage of the revolution as Hồ Chí Minh said: *“We unite to fight for unification. and independence of the Fatherland; We still have to unite to build our country . ”* After the liberation, General Secretary Lê Duân gave an oral order: *“At any cost, do not touch the people of the old government to avoid a bloodbath as predicted by the foreign press before the liberation and those belonging to the old regime would only be sent to re-education and education”*. General Trần Văn Trà, chairman of the Hồ Chí Minh City (Saigon) Military Administration Committee, made an unforgettable statement to the press: *“For the Vietnamese, there is no one who is a winner or a loser. Only the American empire is defeated.”*

Because of this secret statement, soldiers, civil servants, and members of former RVN voluntarily went to "re-education" training. After April 30, 1975, within two months, hundreds of thousands of officials and soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam were sent to concentration camps, said to study progressive socialist ideology and then return to live in harmony in the new society. Initially, they let soldiers and non-commissioned officers study for 7 days and after that, they saw soldiers and non-commissioned officers walking away. Second-level officers (captain and below) were told to bring 10 days' worth of food, and 1 month's allowance for seniors and above when they went to the camps. It was an incident of Mao Zedong and Stalin's model of "re-education through labor camps" in at least 150 concentration camps throughout Vietnam.

Then a month passed, and no one was spared. When explaining this incident, a Communist prison guard proudly said: *“It is the art of the revolution to put you in prison, there is no such thing as releasing you, after a month of detention, for those who owe blood to the people like you. You still have a long time to reform.”* After a year of applying hard labor to the "re-education" regime, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Southern Republic, before being dissolved by Hanoi, announced a 12-point policy that stipulated the period of "re-education" as three years. This announcement gave hope to those who had lost all faith in the prospect of one day being reunited with their families. By the end of 1978, that fragile hope was again shattered.

The three-year "re-education" period as promised by the Communists ended, but no one was released. On the contrary, during this time, most of them were exiled to the mountainous areas of North Vietnam, where their bodies and spirits were weakened. A second wave of suicides occurred, but this time in addition to the despairing corpses there were many more from starvation and disease. In a re-education camp, a practitioner asked

about the reformation period as follows: “You guys don't understand what 3 years is. If you analyze closely, you will find that there are 3 qualitative years and 3 quantitative years. A brother can have 3 years of qualitative reform, that is, he has been rehabilitated for exactly three years without missing a day, but he cannot have full 3 years of qualitative because the rehabilitation is too bad, the reformation is not good, so he has not been about a family reunion.” (Phan Phát Huân: AK and the Cross.) Knowing that they have been deceived, many people have committed suicide. Others tried to escape the camp only to be caught and beaten to death like animals.

In December 1979, Amnesty International had an official 10-day working trip to Vietnam on the issue of detaining former soldiers, employees and officials of the government of the Republic of Vietnam after April 30, 1975. In March 1981, Amnesty International published a 26-page report on the results of that trip, summarizing the situation of prisoners held in re-education camps around the country. The report also included a response letter, replying back and forth between this organization and the Vietnamese state in 1980. Amnesty International's report stated that the Vietnamese government's arrest of RVN former soldiers, employees and officials, and other dissidents, as well as their continued detention without trial from 1975 to 1979, constituted a serious human rights violation under international human rights law. Depending on their rank or service time for the US/Republic of Vietnam, these people had to undergo re-education for a period of time, usually from a few days to a few months, especially for some 17 years. According to the US State Department, the vast majority of prisoners were imprisoned for three to 10 years.

When they first captured the South, the communists immediately arrested the remaining ARVN officers, civil servants, and cadres in the country for long-term detention, without sentencing in the desolated mountainous areas. The number of ARVN officers, civil servants and cadres imprisoned was more than 1,000,000 people in over 150 prisons; Accordingly, about 500,000 people were released in the first 3 months, 200,000 were detained for 2 to 4 years, 250,000 were detained for at least 5 years, and in 1983 (i.e., after 8 years) about 60,000 people were still detained. (Spencer C. Tucker, Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War, a Political, Social, and Military History, Volume Two, Santa Barbara, California, 1998, p. 602.)

According to Amnesty International, this is a violation of Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as Articles 5 and 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which are international laws that prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention without trial by the state. By December 1979, the Vietnamese government had informed Amnesty International that about 26,000 people were still detained. Amnesty International said that the admission of still detaining people of the Republic of Vietnam regime for longer than three years (from May 1975), also showed that Vietnam had violated Decree 2-CS. /76 issued by RSVN/VC itself. Of the one million people who entered the camp, at least 165,000 have died (Anh Do & Hiếu Trần Phan, “Millions of lives changed forever with Saigon's fall”, Orange County Register daily, Sunday issue, 29 April 2001).

According to this 1979 report of Amnesty International (AI), in the period 1975-1979 40,000 people had to go to the North to re-educate. This exile campaign was carefully prepared by the Communists because they had a year to arrange and implement. The Northern prison camps were built on high mountain forests, completely isolated from the outside society because the roads were very difficult, upstream of the river or behind the green mountains near the border. Exiled to the North, the prisoners lost all contact with their families, so all food supplies were cut off. Working hard all day, the camp only fed two meals, with each meal consisted of two cups of moldy rice and a little boiled water spinach. Apart from two meals, there was nothing else to feed the body. Every day, the prisoners looked at each other and could only sigh. Everyone was getting thinner and thinner.

Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng, when answering questions before the French Parliament in the late 1980s, declared that re-education was a humanitarian policy, because if in other countries, including France, these prisoners would be executed by mass for treason and cooperation with foreign invaders. According to Phạm Văn Đồng, the number of people who had to undergo detention after April 30, 1975 was more than 200,000 out of a total of 1 million people who showed up. As of 1980, the Vietnamese government confirmed that 26,000 people were still in re-education camps. However, some foreign observers estimated between 100,000 and 300,000 were still in re-education camps. US estimates put about 165,000 people incarcerated.

According to a 1983 Aurora Foundation report by Ginetta Sagan and Stephen Denney, more than a million people went to re-education with very little return after ten days or a month. There were over 150 re-education camps nationwide at that time. About 500,000 people were released within three months; 200,000 in camps for two to four years; 240,000 at least five years; tens of thousands of people over ten years.

The correctness of the nouns of the event “re-education prisoner or political prisoner” as well as “criminal or lenient” is a matter of great political, historical and humanitarian importance. If the South, even during the feudal period, wanted to find out about historical truth, the North wrote history to serve political purposes. According to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Vietnam, the state of Vietnam proposed four components that needed to be focused on sending for re-education: the puppet army: Army officers from lieutenant to general; Government: police, judiciary, administration; reactionary party and writer and journalist "commando with pen". Southerners were imprisoned by the communists after April 30, 1975 for anti-communist reasons that meant for political reasons. The Communists could not bring these people - citizens of a country illegally invaded by the communists - to court for conviction. The communists pretended that these people were war criminals according to article 3 of the law on crimes against the revolution issued on September 30, 1967 of the DRV, but because of the policy of "tolerance" and "consideration" of the party, so these people were sent to "re-education"

instead of going to court for trial. In short, imprisoning people without formal conviction or trial is a violation of human rights and a crime against humanity.

### **Typical Forms of Abuses in “Re-education” Camps**

*Starving Torture* – This is a vicious revenge attack that destroys the prisoner's will in the long run. The prisoner was constantly hungry, no longer thinking about anything but food. Year-round, month-round, not having a full meal; The more you eat, the hungrier you become and starve until you die. With such quantity and quality of food, it can only provide about 600 to 800 calories a day, not enough to survive, and have to do hard labor, so there are many prisoners who died of starvation, of malnutrition. In addition to destroying the will of the prisoner, starvation also aims to destroy the prisoner's physical body so that there is no resistance against disease. Therefore, there are many brothers and sisters suffering from diseases caused by malnutrition such as tuberculosis, exhaustion, edema, dysentery, scabies..., and there are many very painful deaths just because of hunger, because of malnutrition, because of lack of medicine and not being treated...Not only snakes but also centipedes, mice, snails...meaning that all animals that move are subject to the same fate. Whenever a toad or a frog is caught, the frog is "*managed*" and called Protein; Everything is based on meat, nutritious protein. Prisoners have a saying: "*Whatever moves can be eaten, eat whatever vegetables do not die*" ... (NCT Kiêm Giang Prison.) By the policy of starvation combined with hard labor, the Communists killed prisoners in "re-education" without taking them to a shooting range, without putting them in a crematorium like the Nazis did. They also did not need to create "bloodbath" scenes.

*Physical Torture* – Communists draw up the slogan "work is glory." They forced prisoners, who were mostly educated elders, to do hard labor such as hoeing, digging, making roads, digging ponds, cutting trees, chopping wood, sawing saws, and making bricks with a sick body, starving and exhausted, in addition to growing food crops to serve the camp's life, digging wells, and supporting the demining force left over from the war. Because the policy used labor to reform ideology, production labor was the key and labor was a measure of the prisoner's level of enlightenment.

Digging: 150 m<sup>2</sup>/day/person

Growing cassava: 5000 m<sup>2</sup> /day/4 people

Clearance: 300 m<sup>2</sup>/day/person

Take a tree with a diameter of 30cm, a length of 4 meters, a tree for two people, and bring it to the camp 3 kilometers away; 10 cm in diameter, 4 meters long, two people, five trees a day.

Roofing straw: 10 bundles according to camp standards. (PNG)





In an article from France, dated October 6, 2014, author *Hàn Giang Trần Lệ Tuyên* wrote about Doctor Phùng Văn Hạnh, a physician in Đà Nẵng who had to work in the fields and was not allowed to be in charge of health because *in the medical record (pathological record) of each camper stated: it was all skin and bones*. Dr. Phùng Văn Hạnh had to go to pick up rattan, or go to "gather cassava". "Mót" means to search on the cassava clumps, which the "reform" prisoners had finished pulling, then dig a hook, to find the remaining cassava roots, and must do it right with the "target" every day of 70 (seventy) kilograms of cassava, must be carried to the camp's food depot, to be weighed properly, to be rested. Speaking of this, people who were not in the same situation, could not understand it all, because with 70 kg of cassava, but only "gathered", but not in the bunch of cassava that was still intact. Thus, having to "pick up" each cassava tuber, one must climb the forest from early morning until the sun descends the mountain, then 70 kilograms of cassava will be enough. That is one of the ways to take revenge and torture on the status of Doctor Phùng Văn Hạnh! If anyone has ever been through "re-education" prisons, they have "stepped" through the tests of human quality. Because it's there, where the former "re-education" prisoners have demonstrated their own personality. In those places, there were iron shackles, shackles house, solitary confinement house, and gun butts that were always ready to strike down on the emaciated prisoners who could no longer resist. And there are guns that are always ready to fire, to kill innocent prisoners! And it is the "re-education" prisons that have been "forged", which have molded great personalities like Doctor Phùng Văn Hạnh, because of him, he proved before the former Political Prisoners of Quảng Nam - Đà Nẵng over the long years in prison, tortured with an unbeatable spirit!

*Mental Torture* – The purpose of communists is to make the prisoner's mind always under stress to cause serious injury to physical and mental health by two following methods:

*Political indoctrination* by the political study sessions with topics: Crimes of the US and Republic of Vietnam, the Socialist Theory and Policy clemency of Communist Party of Vietnam. These training sessions aim to sow in the prisoners' minds a sense of guilt so that they can confess their sins with peace of mind for long-term rehabilitation. Occasionally, senior cadres from the central government would present political and military topics that were both boastful and threatening. However, the terrorist atmosphere of the prison camp made some brothers confused and stressed. As a result, there were some people who committed suicide and escaped from the camp.

*Confession* – Next to the “political study” section is the “self-criticism.” The man in charge must first write a “self-declaration”, starting with a “resumé”, followed by a self-criticism and past declaration: twice a month; Each statement is about 20 pages long, handwritten. Prisoners must write a biography from infancy to entering the prison; must declare the class composition of the family line from the previous three generations to the following descendants; must declare his past deeds and must accuse them of evil deeds as well as condemn himself for having a blood debt to the people. For example, military doctors were accused of treating wounded and sick soldiers to quickly restore the combat strength of the puppet army... In short, all puppet troops and puppet authorities were evil elements. He owes blood debt to the people and must honestly declare his crimes as well as sincerely do productive labor in order to soon be considered by the Party to be “in the heart of the nation.”

Human capacity is limited and the needs of the camp are increasing day by day. Besides the deaths from work accidents such as being crushed by a mountain stone, falling to the ground, or being pierced by a bamboo tree, gradually people see deaths from starvation and lack of strength. After more than three years of being exiled to the North, the prisoners buried each other, because of starvation, a part of the cassava hill was crowded. There was a time when death became familiar in everyone's mind and in front of everyone's eyes, causing neither fear nor emotion. Prisoners wait for Death to visit like they are waiting for a release.

The policy of forced labor combined with starvation is a sophisticated and malicious killing method of the Communists. It is the most heartless and cruel thing that people can treat a person with the same bloodline living in the S-shaped land but with different foreign ideologies.

The wives and children of those who were sent to “re-education” also became victims of discriminatory measures and abuse. They were evicted from their place of residence and had to go to a **new economic zone** among the wild mountains without even the slightest comfort necessary for life. Going to the “new economic zone”, was also a way of being sent to exile in desolated areas. After 1975, in addition to economic reasons, the migration to the new economic zone also had a political intention to reduce the number of people belonging to the government of the Republic of Vietnam, concentrated in urban areas, especially in the Saigon-Chợ Lớn-Gia Định area. Easy to control antagonists. During the five years 1975-80, Hồ Chí Minh City sent 832,000 people to the countryside. New methods of forcing urban people to go into economic activities include revoking household registration, withdrawing cards to buy rice and other necessities, and banning children from going to school, forcing them to move to the countryside. Beautiful young women were forced to work as odd jobs for Communist cadres in order to have the means to support themselves and raise young children. According to Lê Duẩn, speaking at the first session of the National Assembly, on June 25, 1976: *“In the South, people in the South, thanks to the invasion wars of the American imperialists, had a material standard of living exceedingly far from the capacity*

*of the domestic economy and the results of their own labor, they should understand that it is a life of false prosperity, in exchange for the suffering and death of millions of other compatriots. They should understand that a life style that follows artificial needs in the style of a "consumer society" and chases after trivial tastes is completely contrary to a truly civilized happy life. Those compatriots today can and need to return to reality, to the life of the nation, to live with the results of their labor.*” Their children were severely discriminated against when taking exams and were not allowed to go to university. Their houses were divided among themselves by Communist cadres, and their money at the bank was not allowed to be taken out. Others, together, rushed to the sea, giving up their own lives and that of their children in exchange for the freedom to find a place worth living. The movement of "Communist refugee boat people" has touched the conscience of humanity because of the millions of people who risked their lives to die, nearly half were in the stomach of fish or prey for pirates.

In 1976, Kissinger declared: *“The US is preparing to normalize relations with Vietnam.”* The normalization of relations failed because during the negotiations in Paris in early 1977 Hanoi insisted that the US paid \$3,250 million in reparations for the war. Of course, the US rejected that unreasonable demand because Hanoi did not respect the Paris Agreement of 1973. Vietnam's economy was declining day by day because of the embargo. The ineffectiveness of the planned economy and the mire of the Cambodian war left the Hanoi regime on the brink of an abyss. China had become hostile and the Soviet Union was also in trouble, so it did not know who to turn to. The US was the only lifeline left. Hanoi had no choice but to start to fight gently. In the early 1980s, both Phạm Văn Đồng and Nguyễn Cơ Thạch said they would release "re-education" prisoners if the US accepted them. Hanoi used "re-education" prisons as a bargaining chip to ask for aid from the US.

Washington's response and progress to the "re-education" prisoner release campaign were documented as follows:

- On September 11, 1984, Secretary of State George Schultz formally requested Hanoi to release and allow political prisoners to be resettled in the US. Three weeks later President Reagan sent an official letter to the Departments of State, Welfare and Justice regarding the admission of Vietnamese “re-education” prisoners. The US agreed to meet with Ambassador Võ Đông Giang of Hanoi in New York. The negotiations were conducted in secret.

- In July 1988, the delegation of Robert Funseth, US assistant deputy secretary of state, went to Hanoi to meet with Vietnam's assistant foreign minister Trần Quang Cơ to discuss the release of political prisoners and to resettle them in a foreign country.

- On July 30, 1989, Robert Funseth and Vũ Khoan, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, signed in Hanoi the document on "re-education" prisoner resettlement.

Through this compromise, 3,000 “re-education” prisoners and their families came to the US in the first months of 1990. This settlement program planned to send 400,000 people abroad, 20% of which reached freedom in 1990, 30% in 1991, 30% in 1992, 10% in 1993

and the remaining 10% in subsequent years. According to reliable documents, it was also known that of the ARVN soldiers who were allowed to settle in the US after the reformation period, 61% were captains and below, 35% were colonels and generals, and 4% were senior officials.

The number of those who died in the "re-education" camps has not been determined. The document of the Hawaii Political Prisoners Association, established on April 20, 1993, gave a very flawed figure of 587 people. This is only a fraction of the actual number of "rehabilitation deaths". According to another incomplete document, the number of "re-education" camps set up nationwide by the Vietnamese Communist Party after 1975 was 80 camps, including two camps on Côn Sơn and Phú Quốc islands.

Amnesty International also cited the records of detention and re-education of people who were not part of the army or the former Saigon government. These were the records of Vietnamese prisoners of conscience of Amnesty International after 1975. In addition, the report also addressed the issue of compulsory re-education for those who had been arrested while attempting to leave Vietnam informally. That is, those who "crossed the border" unsuccessfully in Vietnam after April 30, 1975. Named in the report were former Dean of the Saigon Law University (1973-1975) Vũ Quốc Thông, an opposition politician in the South, Hồ Hữu Tường, and writer Duyên Anh.

These people were not in the category of being forced to report for re-education at the request of the Military Administration Committee. They were professors, opposition politicians, journalists, and writers, who were typical South Vietnamese intellectuals. The 1981 report cited the case of politician Hồ Hữu Tường. By the time Amnesty International's delegation arrived in Vietnam, Tường had been detained without trial for over two years. In June 1980, although it was known that he had a serious illness and was in the final stages, the authorities still did not agree to release him so that he could be reunited with his family in Saigon. On the contrary, they transferred him from the re-education camp in Xuyên Mộc, Bà Rịa to the infirmary of Hàm Tân prison, Minh Hải. Three weeks later, he died shortly after being returned to his family.

Since 1981, Amnesty International's report had argued that the state could not criminally prosecute those who wanted to leave Vietnam, regardless of their departure. Amnesty International cited Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12, part 2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Accordingly, a person always has "the freedom to leave any country, including their own". And so, Amnesty International had expressed concern, as well as asked Vietnam to stop the detention and re-education (even short-term) of those who had failed to cross the border. Because it is also a violation of human rights under international law.

On the day some prisoners were released (1985), young policemen came to say goodbye with a touching sentence: "Go *back home, get well, and then go abroad. We will stay here to whenever.*" At that time, the prisoners did not grasp the message of "then go abroad", but immediately understood that the young Communists had begun to wake up after a few years of being "re-educate" by the prisoners. It was some prison guards who had to admit: "These *stubborn puppet troops cannot be reformed. The French and American POWs know fear, but these puppet soldiers don't know what fear is.*" It was because of their arrogant and unyielding nature that the fallen ARVN soldiers were brutally and despicably avenged by the inhuman communist prison guards. There were so many brothers who died under the enemy's revenge and before they died, they still kept the heroic aura of a southern soldier. (according to DNU, 2008 California)

After joining the United Nations, Vietnam also joined the International Monetary Fund with an initial loan of \$35 million. The World Bank was also promoting a plan to help Vietnam develop its post-war economy. Inheriting the vacancy of the Republic of Vietnam, Hanoi was also a member of the Asia Development Bank. In that context, if there was no wrong policy of "rehabilitation", the people of the North and South would have put their efforts into healing the wounds of war, and carried out national reconciliation to quickly bring the land back. The country would become rich and powerful like the US after the North and South civil war and Germany after the East-West split. The decision of the Communist Party of Vietnam to send the main army of the Republic of Vietnam to "re-education" for a long time after 1975 was a serious mistake. The North-South hatred still exists and causes long-term harm to the country.

## **Chapter 23. The Ages of Subsidies and Renovation**

Although it regained its independence in 1945, Vietnam had to go through 30 years of war until 1975 when the country was completely reunified. The Vietnam War was one of the most expensive wars in human history up to that time. The leading powers were: the US, the Soviet Union, and China, due to their many goals and calculations. In different periods, they provided aid to the parties to the Vietnam War in all aspects of economy, military, culture, science and technology, training, education... with different levels. Foreign aid has had a great influence on the lives of the people of the two regions of Vietnam. However, due to the low economic starting point, the war consequences are too heavy along with the shortcomings and mistakes in the process. Directing the socialist economy, maintaining for too long the centralized subsidy mechanism, by 1985, the Vietnamese economy fell into a serious crisis and had to use the rules of the private market economy of the Republic of Vietnam before 1975 to "Innovation". However, the main natural resource of Vietnam's economy up to now is oil and gas.

Before 1975, each year the South's economy received about one billion USD in aid from the US, totaling about 7.3 billion USD. Also from 1954, the South Vietnamese economy followed the capitalist market model to improve the living standards of themselves

and their families, although the southern government mainly served the war of self-defense against the NVA-NLF/VC invasion with a level of destruction regardless of humanity and international law, but created a democracy under the rule of law and built the country from French colonialism. Economy of the Republic of Vietnam (1955-1975) was a market-oriented, developing and open economy. The economy of the Republic of Vietnam developed stably under Ngô Đình Diệm's presidency in the period 1955-1963, then due to the impact of the escalating war, it became unstable with characteristics such as: low economic growth rate (with many years of negative growth), high inflation rate, weak state budget deficit and weak trade. War was a factor that has a great impact on the economy of the Republic of Vietnam, adversely affecting resources, economic growth and slow down economic growth, creating high inflation and making it impossible for the Republic of Vietnam to implement effective economic development policies, thus becoming increasingly dependent on US aid. The US played a great role in the economic development of the Republic of Vietnam through economic aid as well as technical assistance.

Another feature was the considerable domination of Chinese merchants with self-managed business in many respects in Chinese-like autonomous regions in Vietnam. At the same time as the war escalated, the Chinese made a significant contribution to corruption, bribery, tax evasion, draft evasion, and political instability in the Southern society at that time. Until April 30, 1975, the economic power of the Chinese in Vietnam was still a problem with no definitive solution.

The territory of South Vietnam at that time was divided into two regions: one controlled by the Republic of Vietnam and the other controlled by the NLF/VC with each region having its own economy. In the period 1955-1975, the economy of the Republic of Vietnam grew at an average of 3.9% per year (per capita increased by 0.8% per year), in 1956, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the Republic of Vietnam. 4.4 times higher than that of the DRV. This large disparity was due to the fact that the territory of North Vietnam was heavily damaged in the Indochina War between the Việt Minh and the Franco-Nationalist Vietnam, while the territory of the South was less damaged by the war.

Since 1958, the North has been supported by the socialist countries (mainly Russia, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) with an amount of approximately 7 billion USD to carry out socialist economic reform and form an economic development model. Centralized economy and publicization of means of production, central planning of a centralized economy. The State implemented the product distribution regime with fixed wages and subsidies through stamps. With the first 5-year plan (1961-1965), the North entered the initial stage of construction, agriculture was restored quickly and many first heavy industrial facilities were built. In the North, began the period of economic recovery and development after the war through the rapid restoration of agriculture and transportation. But since 1964, the weaknesses of the economic model began to show. Also from 1964, the US escalated the war and sabotaged the North through air raids. The people of the North both produced,

fought, and provided aid to the South thanks to the aid of communist countries, especially Russia and China. This situation lasted for 10 years (1965-1975).

However, in the period 1955-1970, this gap gradually narrowed, especially since 1963, when the economy of the Republic of Vietnam was in recession for many years. By 1972 and later, statistics by Russian author AG Vinogradov showed that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the DRV was higher than that of the Republic of Vietnam. The reason for this was the escalating war situation in the South, along with a series of instability within the Republic of Vietnam as well as the US cut back on economic aid.

Year	1956	1958	1960	1962	1964	1966	1968	1970	1972	1974
RVN	62	88	105	100	118	100	85	81	90	65
DRV	40	50	51	68	59	60	55	60	60	65

As shown above, in the period 1955-1973, in general, the RVN had a higher GDP per capita than the DRV. The reason was the level of economic aid from the US. However, in 1974 (the last year before the war ended), the gap in GDP per capita between the two regions of Vietnam disappeared, and GDP per capita in the two regions was at the same level in 1974. This can be explained by the reduction of economic aid from the US since 1973, causing the economy of the Republic of Vietnam to be in recession. Professor Nguyễn Cao Hách - Vice Chairman of the Socio-Economic Council of the RVN said that "*if the US cuts aid to the Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of Vietnam can only live for 4 months*".

Immediately after the fall of Saigon, on May 16, 1975, the First Secretary of the Vietnamese Labor Party, Lê Duẩn, went directly to the South to learn about the "*false prosperous*" economic situation of the South. He acknowledged the positive factors of the private economy and the free market in the South. At the reserve meeting of the 24th Conference of the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party, term III, he said: "*In the North previously had cooperatives immediately. But the South cannot do that now... There must be bourgeoisie, it must be developed somewhat first. In the past, in the North, we have made some mistakes, because we went against the rules. If we go against the rules and bring it to the South, it will be even more wrong.*" However, the majority of the Central Committee of the Party at that time wanted to apply the economic model of the North to the South: household registration (management of accommodation), rice book (management of food) and local police (people management) were the three core mechanisms for the Communist Party's coercive police system. Therefore, the Conference finally decided to implement: abolition of the commercial bourgeoisie, the socialist reform of the national bourgeoisie, the construction of cooperatives, the improvement of handicrafts and small commerce. The economy relied on two basic economic components: state-owned (in public and commercial) and collective (in agriculture - with cooperatives as the core). This was the general pattern in the socialist countries applying the central planning regime. In Vietnam,

it was implemented according to a formula given by Lê Duẩn: *Party leadership, State management, working people as master.*

At the end of August 1975, the Politburo of the Vietnam Workers' Party launched re-education campaigns. Next, the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the South Vietnam approved a plan to target **the commercial bourgeoisie**, by confiscating houses and driving people out of the city to the new economic zones, called it Operation X, whose head was Đỗ Mười. The first phase of this campaign was carried out unexpectedly at midnight on September 9, 1975 throughout the South, focusing on the Chinese; Phase 2 was conducted from December 4 to 6, 1976 and lasted until 1990, targeting small businesses and light industry. During the X2 Campaign, many big bourgeois in the South were arrested, their properties confiscated such as Khai Trí bookstore, a symbol of the South's free culture.... Parallel to the bourgeoisie attack, the campaign forced emigration of urban citizens under the old regime and their properties confiscated, especially in Saigon (where 80% of the South's manufacturing economy was concentrated before 1975); during the X3 campaign forcing people to the countryside and mountains in order to build **new economic zones**, **the economic** strength of Saigon was destroyed, leading to complete exhaustion, poverty, disease and illiteracy. New economic zones were places where there was a lack of infrastructure like water, electricity, schools, hospitals and poor land, so thousands of hungry and miserable people left the new economic zones to beg on the streets of Saigon. According to the United Nations economic experts at that time, Vietnam was more than 50 years behind in terms of economy because of Hanoi's policies of taxing the people in the South from 1976-1987 and as a result, Vietnam ranked third in the world in 1985 on the poverty index. From 1987 to 1997, Vietnamese refugees in the US sent money to help their relatives and revive the economy of the South when the amount of foreign currency sent back every year was about 7- 12 billion dollars.

During more than 10 years of building socialism on a national scale (1975-1986), the economy with a strong peasant-agricultural identity was severely damaged by the war; with the centralized planning mechanism, there were major shortcomings in solving development tasks, especially in the economic field. After many years with the centralized mechanism, many key and essential issues of people's lives had not been fully resolved; the country had not had profound and radical changes in the mode of development; the imbalance in the economy was getting worse; people's enthusiasm for labor and creative capacity, and national resources had not been exploited, fully promoted, even eroded. Public confidence in the leadership of the Party and the administration of the State decreased.

The cooperatives in the South were carried out urgently in the years from 1977 to 1980. Land was nationalized and gathered to organize collective farming, and products were divided according to the level of contribution, rice and agricultural products decreased. However, the economic situation in the South was not suitable for the cooperative model because the "Peasants have fields" program of the Republic of Vietnam in the early 1970s distributed land, making the majority of farmers in the South belonged to the middle class



with productivity quite high. Moreover, the Hanoi government also realized that the history of cooperatives in the North had many failures, so the cooperatives in the South had to be abandoned because of the weak "production corporations", which led to the 1979 famine.

Since 1978, the Khmer Rouge attacked Vietnam across the border. Vietnam's defense spending therefore increased sharply. In January 1979, Vietnam counterattacked against Cambodia. Fighting on the northern border broke out. Defense spending skyrocketed. Aid to Laos and Cambodia also increased. Meanwhile, many Western countries and Japan that had provided aid to Vietnam had stopped providing aid. At the end of 1978 and the whole of 1979, the Mekong Delta suffered from great floods. Cultivated areas were flooded for 5-6 months. The new economic mechanism applied in the South had caused the Southern economy in particular and the whole country in general to decline. Due to reduced production and insufficient goods, the distribution was controlled by the stamp system.

Professor Trần Văn Thọ of Waseda University Tokyo wrote about the economic status of Vietnam in the first 10 years after the war: *"The ten years after 1975 were one of the darkest periods in Vietnam's history. Only in economic terms, being an agricultural country (in 1980, 80% of the population lived in rural areas and 70% of workers were farmers) but Vietnam lacked food, many people had to eat "bo bo" for a long time. Food per capita decreased continuously from 1976 to 1979, then increased again, but until 1981 still did not recover to the level of 1976. Industry and commerce also stagnated, production stagnated, daily necessities were in short supply. In addition to the difficulties of a country after the war and the unfavorable international situation, the main cause of the above situation is the mistake in development policies and strategies, the most prominent of which is the haste in applying the socialist model in the economy in the South... The danger of prolonged food shortages and the difficulties associated with it. Other factors that give rise to the phenomenon of "breaking the fence" in agriculture, in trade and in determining food prices have improved the situation in some localities. But we had to wait until Đổi Mới (Innovations, December 1986) to see a real change. Due to that situation, Vietnam's gross domestic product (GDP) in the 10 years before Đổi Mới grew by only 35%, during that time the population increased by 22%. Thus, the average GDP per capita increases by only 1% (per year)".*

The Communist Party of Vietnam simply understands that building socialism is nationalizing the means of production, then developing the economy according to the plan. It is that simple thinking that leads to failure. Moreover, Vietnam's production level is too weak, so the planned economic model cannot promote development investment. Subjectivity, voluntarism, dogmatism, haste, weakness and backwardness in theory, misperception and wrong theory, break away from both theory and practice, and want to move straight to socialism from a backward agriculture; exaggerated will, revolutionary enthusiasm; disregarding economic laws, scientific knowledge and workers' interests; setting goals and plans that are too high and not suitable for reality, have brought the Vietnamese economy and society into a state of crisis.

## **Subsidy Period**

The subsidy period, which took place from about 1976 to 1986, was a special historical period that had imprinted on the minds of millions of Vietnamese people. The country after reunification entered a peaceful period, built a planned economy according to the socialist model like the Soviet Union (former). Before that, when the North was liberated in 1954, the command economy was applied, but the subsidy period on a national scale only started from the beginning of 1976 to 1986.

Subsidy period is the name used in Vietnam to refer to a period in which most economic activities are subsidized by the State, taking place under a planned economy, a feature of the economy according to the principle of communism. Accordingly, the private economy was gradually eliminated, making way for the state-led economy. Although the command economy existed in the North under the DRV regime before 1975, the subsidy period is often used to refer to the economic activities of the whole country in the period from the beginning of 1976 to the end of 1986. nationwide, that is before Đổi Mới. For people in the South, hearing the words "liberation", cooperative groups, money exchange, household registration, stamps, "bo bo-sorghum" ... makes them tremble with fear. Symbols of this period are rubber sandals made from old tires.

## **Money Exchanges Impoverished the Society**

First, socialist reforms with the work of impoverishing the people and leveling the gap between the rich and the poor were implemented through money exchanges many times after 1975, but with a minimum limit on the amount of money exchanged (the form of stealing money from the people). On September 22, 1975, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC organized a money exchange on a nationwide scale in order to bring in a new currency named "Vietnamese Banknote" (also known as the "Liberation Money") into circulation at the rate of 1 VND of Vietnam Bank to 500 piasters of the Republic of Vietnam and equivalent to 1 USD.

On the occasion of the 3rd anniversary of the complete liberation of the South, the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced that currency exchange was conducted nationwide on May 2, 1978 with the aim of unifying the country's currency at the rate of 1 old đồng of Vietnam Bank in the North or 0.8 VND of Liberation in the South for 1 VND of the new Vietnam Bank. After this money change, from 1979 to 1985, difficult life and high inflation made money change sensitive information for the whole society. Most people are always in a low position to know when there is a rumor about "changing money". In the currency exchange on September 14, 1985, the "expropriated" were the rich, small merchants and the bourgeoisie to save the planned economy, which was exhausted because of production stagnation and had to maintain two wars with Cambodia and China. Facing the complicated situation of goods and money circulation and the serious shortage of cash

in payment, the State again announced the exchange of money at the rate of 10 old VND for 1 new Vietnam Bank to serve the revolution in prices and wages. The government had added a large amount of money to circulation, equivalent to 1.38 times the amount of new money issued in the previous money exchange to serve wage and price reform.

Changing money and issuing money blatantly causing inflation to rise to a high level is the culmination of the state's art of depriving people of money. The socio-economic life of Vietnam in the years after money exchanges fell into chaos with high inflation of three figures: in 1986 it was 774%, in 1987 it was 323%, and in 1988 it was 393%. With such an increase in inflation, in just three years from 1986 to 1988, the prices of goods and services in Vietnam increased nearly 100 times. Life was too hard, with many worries. Many families sold necessary items, heirlooms or raised livestock and poultry in the house to earn extra income. People from the north to the south bought things that were not available in the north such as radios, phonographs, wristwatches, pens, TVs, refrigerators, etc., and brought them back to the north as a "victory gift" and as a form of looting. The material wealth and petty bourgeois materials of the South were extremely rare and precious in the North. It is true that after the country's reunification "the Southerners accept the relatives, the Northerners receive the goods".

In general, money at this point did not have much value. Through each stage of applying and popularizing the stamp system widely, the currency also gradually depreciated. For example, if the salary in 1978 was taken as the standard in 1980, this salary was only 51.1%, in 1984 it was only 32.7%.

### **Subsidized Society and Cultural Life**

Cultural activities were strictly controlled during the subsidy period, and people had little contact with Western culture. The government wanted what the people knew through loudspeakers in the neighborhood all day long. The films, literature or music... were all censored by the state before being released. Foreign literature was mainly from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, following the trend of socialist realism. Romantic literature was considered negative at this stage. At that time, there were no TV series, only feature films and documentaries. Movies were shown at mobile cinemas, theaters or broadcast on central televisions. There were also commercial films, but rare. Foreign films were films of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. The fight against superstition was promoted, science was popularized to people of all ages through books and newspapers. Newspapers were one-way controlled by the state, without advertising. Writers and artists were paid salaries by the state like civil servants, working in state agencies under the Party's directives.

Under socialism, everybody is the same, there is no injustice, discrimination between rich and poor, wealth is made in excess. It is a desirable society, but perhaps it only exists in books, how can everyone be the same since the ability and capacity of each person is different. It's just propaganda, a form of dogmatism, lies; that's why the communist soldier

came from the jungle to Saigon saying that in the North of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, TVs were littered on the street, but he himself was in front of a TV, without knowing one. The society had less disparity between rich and poor as today, but people's living standards were low. The spiritual life did not have many kinds of entertainment, life was uncertain and controlled by the ward police, but it was poor and difficult for everyone, except for the party members. Unemployment and beggars had been a problem for many years. The network of public security and criticism at the study session in the neighborhood made people suspicious of each other.

Along with subsidizing food and consumer goods, the state also controlled housing distribution. Many hi-rise dormitories were built according to the Soviet model in the cities, and were allocated to state officials and employees. When the houses were damaged, people did not have to repair themselves, but the Department of Real Estate took care of them. The apartment buildings were unhygienic because of raising livestock in the narrow apartments, so many diseases arose and they also lost the aesthetics because of drying clothes or excess items.

During the subsidy period, education was universal to communes and wards with primary schools, secondary schools and kindergartens, but parents had to pay tuition. The work of eradicating illiteracy for the people had been promoted. The schools were all about the history of the Party, with very little attention paid to the history of nation building over thousands of years filled with many national heroes. Female teachers were knitting clothes and selling them for pennies to buy some extra food. Male teachers worked part-time in agriculture to earn potatoes for the day! Students and children in the South had to drop out of school for a whole generation of ignorance, malnutrition, starvation, scabies, or dropping out of school to work as hired laborers to make ends meet. Passing the entrance exam to university at that time was not only academic but the necessary standards were based on the background of a family with many generations of revolutionaries but still paying tuition. All graduates were assigned jobs by the state but could not choose their own agency.

The slogans "Labor is glorious", "Overcome difficulties" became more and more exhausting, where to find "glory" labor other than the days of useless labor by intellectuals in the South with weak legs and soft hands at irrigation sites, digging canals here and drying the water there designated by incompetent researchers. Thanks to their knowledge and use of all kinds of war waste and daily life waste, they had recycled many items to meet social needs, fed their families, and also were not afraid to re-apply the old-fashioned technique of using coal-fired gas to transform cargo cars.

In terms of health, people under the Republic of Vietnam regime did not spend money in "hospitals" and were treated with full drugs and specialties, but after the reunification all medical services must be paid for, and there were many shortages and the level of medicine and medical ethics were reduced with many bad things. People's constant fear was getting

sick and going to the hospital. People when entering the hospital had a feeling of insecurity and always have to have cash to pay a deposit in order for treatment to be carried out even if there was an emergency. The medical system had many levels (Party members, civilians, ...) and was often overloaded. Not only having money, the patient must have some relationship with the doctor or nurse or leave it to chance. Private pharmacies were closed, confiscated, and only *herbal* drugs were available to cure all ailments (Andrographis paniculata (Burm.f.) Wall. ex Nees], also known as Acanthaceae, bitter leaves, dried herbs, ... In nature, these herbs are native to India and Sri Lanka, then widely cultivated in South Asia, Southeast Asia, southern China, the Caribbean, Central America, Australia and Africa. Doctors just waited at the hospital to go home to raise pigs and grow vegetables to improve life.



### Stamps during the Subsidy Period

Not long after reunification, the US embargoed, especially the South, which was used to using American-made products, so it could not continue to use them. The size of aid from the socialist countries also decreased rapidly, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe still helping for a few more years. In particular, aid from China stopped completely in 1977. These aid sources included important commodities such as rice, yarn, sugar, milk, clothing, medicine, etc. Reviewing movies and books in the Northern, the way of clothing, the way of life, the way of education, of poetry, of music were copies of the Chinese Communists. After joining the *Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON or CMEA, also known as the economic cooperation organization of the countries of the socialist system in the period 1949-1991)*, Vietnam must follow the price system of this block, and the level of aid of 1.5 billion rubles for Vietnam only had the purchasing power of 600-700 million rubles before entering the bloc.

At this time, goods were scarce, not enough to fully serve the needs of all people, including officials and employees working in state agencies and enterprises. Goods were distributed by the state on the basis of a stamp system. The wages of workers were also converted into food. Even there were stamps, but there were too many people queuing to buy, so there were many cases of "queueing all day" (Socialism) from late at night waiting for their turn to when goods no longer existed. Goods were small in quantity, not diverse in types and items to choose from to meet their needs, so sometimes there was not enough to eat until the end of the month, many people had to go to the black market to buy. However, the black market still operated on a small scale, was considered illegal, so the goods in the market were not many and the prices very high. Many people received coupons but did not

use them, often selling them on the black market. Goods through the coupon system were often priced much lower than the price outside the "underground" market (black market). All sources of manufactured goods were concentrated in the state and distributed to the people from needles to daily food. But everything was lacking but the quality was poor. The standard distribution based on position and rank was uneven, creating class preference groups in society and the black market. The value of assets, equipment, goods and supplies determined by the state should be many times lower than the actual market value.

Officials and civil servants were provided with 13 kg of rice/month and hard-labor workers with 20 kg/month. On weekdays, according to the stamp system, each cadre and worker were allocated 3 kg of meat/month. Therefore, cooked rice was often stuffed with potatoes, corn, cassava, bo bo (sorghum) ... very popular and no longer strange to those who had experienced the subsidy period. The sources of extra food were mainly from the Soviet Union and India. At Tết, in addition to the higher regime (5 kg/person), almost every agency also slaughtered pigs and divided them among cadres.

At first a rice book was named a food book. This system was applied around the 1960s, first food, then changed to stamps covering the types of items, the quantity that a family was allowed to buy, based on standards such as rank and age. Therefore, some families were given preferential treatment and priority to purchase, and some were not. Stamps for buying daily necessities would have a separate regime depending on the job position and occupation that state officials and employees were distributed differently: food standards coupons A, B, C, the lower were D, E1, E2 and the lowest was N for the common people. Accordingly, the stamps were distributed among senior officials as follows: Special Standard A1 for senior officials- coupon A was for ministers-B for deputy ministers- coupon C for heads of service, department, institute. These people were served at their own stores on Nhà Thờ, Tông Đàn and Vân Hồ streets in the capital. At Huế University of Medicine, Professor Võ Đăng Đài wrote in "Calculating the book for a section of the road": *All staff members are given monthly necessities with the same standards. Mr. V ăn, a former administrative staff member and an official in the North, are in charge of this. Every month they go to receive some meat and vegetables to distribute to employees. They divide it into parts and draw lots. Everyone looks forward to having a portion with a lot of fat to bring back to be fried to save for a long time, and the fat is very practical. Occasionally, goods come in, miscellaneous items such as 5m of fabric for trousers, 5 bars of soap, 5 toothbrushes, 4 bicycle tires, 2 pairs of pedals, etc... the voting pot is divided among those who have real needs, in the socialist spirit, "I am for everyone, everyone is for me". If it fails, draw a lottery.*

### **Hộ Khẩu (hukou, household registration) Regime**

In the planned economy, private commerce is eliminated, goods are distributed according to the system of stamps, controlled by the state, limited to abolishing market trading or free transportation of goods from one place to another. The state has a monopoly

on the distribution of goods, restricting cash exchange. The hukou (hộ khẩu) system was established during this period to distribute food and foodstuffs per capita, most notably a rice book that fixed the quantity and items allowed to be purchased based on hukou. The most prominent is the rice book, in which the quantity and items allowed to be purchased are fixed based on the number of members in a family. The hukou system in Vietnam was established in 1964 as a tool for social management, economic planning, and movement control at a time when the state played a larger role in direct management of the economy and people's lives. The hukou system restricted the rights and access to public services to people who were not registered as permanent residents in the place where they lived. Legislative provisions of 1964 set forth the basic criteria of the system: that each citizen must register for permanent residence in one and only one household at the place of permanent residence, and that movement can only be performed with the permission of the competent authority. Controlling the rate of migration to cities was part of the original function of the system, and linking hukou to the distribution of consumption, access to public services, and employment made the hukou an effective tool to control people's behavior. In principle, the transfer of people from one place to another can be done, but in practice it is very difficult.

Before Đổi Mới (Renovation) - the transition towards a market economy in the late 1980s - very few people moved their places of residence without permission from the authorities, and people had to be very careful in struggling to live without a permanent residence in the locality. The influence of this system had diminished significantly since the introduction of Đổi Mới, as well as a series of reforms that have been implemented since 2006. The most important change was that it no longer required permission from the government at the place of departure to register at the new place of residence. Moreover, the registration of temporary residence at the new place of residence was no longer difficult.

### **Subsidized Economy**

The economy is managed by the state according to the "allocation - handover" regime. Most of the workers in this period worked in state agencies and enterprises. The economic management mechanism of the country is the central planning mechanism, which is reflected in the following aspects: The economy administratively managed by the state based on the norm of ordinances from top to bottom. Accordingly, enterprises operate under the decisions of state agencies related to the ordinances as prescribed in terms of materials provided, forms of production, capital, products and personnel organization, salary and set of regulations. the machine works... Enterprises will have targets to meet according to the state's funding plan and product delivery. Profit and loss will be managed by the state.

Enterprises are heavily involved in business and production by the relevant administrative agencies, but are not responsible for profit and loss and are not legally responsible for their decisions. The state budget is the agency that collects profits and errors for the activities of enterprises. During the subsidy period, the monetary-commodity relationship was not valued, almost as a formality. In which, the relationship in kind occupies

the leading position. The management apparatus through many levels from central to local. Because there are many levels of intermediaries, the operation is not dynamic and timely, even leading to many negative effects affecting the interests of workers and people.

The subsidy period lasted for 10 years from 1976 to 1986 before the implementation of *Đổi Mới* (Renovation). From the point of view of the socialist economy modeled on the Soviet Union, the planned economy is the most important feature with the plan of allocating resources, ignoring the market mechanism and the production of goods, consider the market economy as a characteristic of capitalism. The multi-sector economy is not recognized, but only the state-owned and collective economy is the mainstay, in order to remove the private economy, individuals and private ownership from society. Therefore, Vietnam's economy in this period fell into a state of crisis and stagnation with many negatives.

In general, before *Đổi Mới*, the economic management mechanism in Vietnam was a centrally planned mechanism with the following characteristics:

-Firstly, the State manages the economy mainly by administrative orders based on a system of detailed ordinance norms imposed from top to bottom. The State assigns targets and plans to allocate capital and materials to enterprises, enterprises handing over products to the State. Loss is compensated by the State, profit is collected by the State.

-Secondly, administrative agencies interfere too deeply in production and business activities of enterprises but do not take any material and legal responsibility for their decisions. The material damage caused by the decisions of administrative agencies, and the state budget must bear. Enterprises have no autonomy in production and business, nor are they bound to take responsibility for production and business results.

-Thirdly, the commodity-monetary relationship is overlooked, just a formality, the in-kind relationship is key. The State manages the economy through the "allocation - handover" regime. Therefore, many important goods such as labor power, inventions, and important means of production are not legally considered goods.

-Fourthly, the management apparatus is cumbersome, with many intermediate levels that are both less dynamic, and also give birth to an incompetent management team, with a bureaucratic and bureaucratic style, but enjoy higher benefits than employees.

During the 10 years of subsidies, Vietnam implemented two five-year plans: the second (1976-1980) and the third (1981-1985). Due to the lack of recognition of commodity production and market mechanisms, the Vietnamese state considers planning to be the most important feature of the socialist economy, allocating resources according to the plan as the key. The State considers the market as a characteristic of capitalism, which leads to the fact that it does not recognize the existence of a multi-sector economy in the transitional period, taking the state and collective economy as the main focus. quickly abolish private ownership and individual, private economy. The economy fell into a state of stagnation and crisis because Vietnam copied the planned economic model of the Soviet Union without really



understanding the advantages and disadvantages of this model. By the end of 1979, in the South, there were 1,286 cooperatives and more than 15,000 production groups, comprising about 50% of peasants. However, by 1980 these organizations had disbanded, only on paper but not working as planned. As a result, agricultural production stagnated while the population increased, causing food shortages that caused Vietnam to import 5.6 million tons of food from 1976 to 1980 despite peaceful circumstances. The country stood on the brink of famine, so it received food aid from the United Nations and the West.

From 1975-1986, Vietnam had a centrally planned economy with bureaucratic subsidies. After South Vietnam was completely liberated (1975) and the country was reunified (1976), the implementation of the second five-year plan began immediately (1976-1980). This plan had many unrealistic goals, so most of the targets were not achieved. Production stagnates, growth is only 0.4%/year (13-14 % planned) while the annual population growth rate is over 2.3%. Food shortage was severe. In 1980, 1.576 million tons of food had to be imported. The budget deficit is large, prices increase annually by 20%, imports are 4-5 times more than exports. The state lacks investment capital for the economy, many projects have to be abandoned, and essential consumer goods are seriously lacking.

The economy in the period 1981-1985 was unbalanced and fell into a serious crisis. Production stagnation manifested itself across all sectors. Inflation increased rapidly, in the early 1980s it increased by 30-50 % annually, by the end of 1985 it reached 587.2% and hyperinflation reached its peak in 1986, with 774.7%. People's life was very difficult. Facing the stagnation and crisis of the economy and the context of the socialist countries in danger, Vietnam carried out the comprehensive renovation work on the whole country, in the direction of a market economy with social orientation. Facing that situation, the Communist Party of Vietnam, with Trường Chinh replacing the dead Lê Duẩn, initiated and led the implementation of *Đổi Mới* (Renovation). In 1986, the first year of the end of the subsidy period, it seemed that many people were surprised because of decades of eating food subsidized by the state. The state only worried about borrowing from international banks, or asking for aid, even borrowing wheat and rice from India, Indonesia and Thailand, while people waited for money from overseas refugees.

Stemming from the fact that young and present generations are curious about the "subsidy period", Vietnam Museum of Ethnology exhibits "Life in Hanoi during the subsidy period 1975-1986" with many images and artifacts. It was a dark period of great difficulty, pain, and horror of our forefathers' generation in history, in which human dignity was tortured by food, reflecting the mistakes of the Communist Party for ten years. This is a recognition of the mistakes of the past or a deterrent for future generations. Only the families of Northern officials or the families of the revolutionaries were full, but the people of the South had no escape, so they had to leave the country and fled across the borders.

## **Economic Reforms since 1986**

In fact, by the end of the 70s, the country had really fallen into a socio-economic crisis. That situation had made renovation a very pressing need, an urgent requirement of life. While Vietnam officially decided to carry out the *Đổi Mới*, many important changes took place in the world, especially China's reforms since 1978 due to the unthinking and naive synergy of the ambitious US since 1972 and the reforms of the Soviet Union since 1985 due to economic exhaustion and the rift of the Soviet Union. These changes affected Vietnam.

In the late 1980s, the situation began to change markedly. In the early 1986-1990 period of the *Đổi Mới* (Renovation) period with the main task of reforming the management mechanism to improve the economy, monetary policy, agricultural policy, etc. However, in the early years of this plan, the old regime had not been lost, and the new one had not yet formed, so *Đổi Mới* had not been significantly effective. On average in 5 years, gross domestic product increased by 3.9%/year. In particular, the agricultural sector had made remarkable progress. In 1988, Vietnam introduced a system of contracting agriculture, allocating land to peasants, and taking peasants' households as the economic unit. As a result, if in 1988 it had to import 450,000 tons of food, in 1989 it became a rice exporter of nearly 1 million tons and in 1990 it became the third largest rice exporter in the world with 1.5 million tons. Some key industries such as electricity, rolled steel, cement, and crude oil achieved good growth rates.

The average import-export value increased by 28.0% per year, and the trade deficit decreased rapidly. If in the years **1976-1980** the ratio between exports and imports was 1/4, then in the years 1986-90 it was only 1/1.8. A great success was that hyperinflation had been contained and pushed back (in 1986 it was 774.7%, in 1987 it was 223.1 %, in 1989 it was 34.7% and in 1990 it was 67.4%). In short, the success of in the years **1986-90** was that production was restored, the economy grew, and inflation was pushed back. What was more important was the fundamental transformation of the old management mechanism into the new one. This success was all the more meaningful because *Đổi Mới* was carried out before the East European countries and the former Soviet Union had fallen into total crisis.

In the period **1991-1996**, the great difficulty at this time was that the economy was still besieged and embargoed in the context of East European countries and the countries of the former Soviet Union falling into a serious crisis. Total foreign trade flows of Vietnam with this region decreased suddenly, in 1991 was only 15.1% in 1990. The economic management mechanism had changed fundamentally: state-owned, state capital, private sector. private enterprises, cooperatives, individuals... in which the non-state economy accounts for 60% of the gross domestic product. Economic sectors were given the right to use land and import and export. The state-owned economy continued to be focused and played a leading role in the economy. In the five years 1991-1995, the gross domestic product increased on average by 8.2%. In 1996, it increased by 9.5%. Agricultural

production, especially food production, developed continuously and steadily, increasing by 1 million tons of food each year. Industrial production had gradually adapted to the new management mechanism, with an average annual increase of 13.5%, which was the highest growth rate ever. Domestic production had accumulated, ensuring over 90% of the accumulated fund and the annual consumption fund. From 1991 to 1995, there were 1401 FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) projects with 20,413 billion USD of registered capital. This was the period when FDI inflows into Vietnam increased the most, about 50%/year. Regarding exports, during this period, the average export turnover per year increased by 27%, 3 times higher than the GDP growth rate. During this period, thanks to the development of production, the smooth circulation of goods, and more experience in fighting inflation a few years ago, prices gradually stabilized. Prices of goods and services in 1991 increased by 67.5%; in 1993 only increased by 5.2 %; in 1996 to 4.5%.

For the first time in history, Vietnam had normal relations with all major countries and economic-political centers in the world. On July 28, 1995, Vietnam became an official member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Also in July 1995, Vietnam and the European Union signed a Framework Agreement on economic, trade, scientific and technical cooperation and normalized diplomatic relations with the US. Vietnam had also applied to join the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum and the World Trade Organization (WTO). By the end of 1996, Vietnam had official economic and trade relations with more than 120 countries, foreign trade turnover increased rapidly, an average of over 20%/year. Many countries and international organizations had given Vietnam grants or loans to invest in socio-economic development. People's living standards had gradually improved. Education and health are consolidated and enhanced. The material and spiritual life of the majority of the people had improved. The number of middle-income households and the number of rich households increased, the number of poor households decreased. Every year more than one million workers had jobs.

In the two years **1996-1997**, the economy developed well, the average GDP reached more than 9%, higher than the average level of the previous 5 years. Many manufacturing and business industries continued to make significant progress. The production value of agriculture-forestry-fishery increased by 4.8% on average; industrial production value increased by 13.8%, export turnover increased by 28.4%/year on average, import increased by 20%/year. Inflation continued to be controlled, at 4.5% in 1996 and 4.3% in 1997. Development investment capital increased rapidly to about 14-15 billion USD, equaling 35% of the 5-year plan 1996-2000, of which domestic mobilized capital accounted for 51%, the rest was capital from abroad.

However, since mid-1997, due to the impact of the Asian financial crisis and the heavy impact of natural disasters, Vietnam's economy had faced many difficulties. GDP growth rate continuously declined: in 1996 reached 9.34%; in 1997 reached 8.15%; **1998** only 5.83% and in **1999** only 4.8%. The decrease in growth rate was reflected in most of the major economic sectors: the industry-construction industry achieved an increase of 13.5% in 1996,

decreased to 12.6% in 1997, 10.3% in year. 1998 and fell sharply to 7.7% in 1999. The service sector reached 8.9% in 1996, decreased to 7.1% in 1997, 4.2% in 1998 and only 2.3% in 1999. The agricultural sector also declined: from 4.4% in 1996 to 4.3% in 1997 and only 2.7% in 1998. In 1999, agriculture showed signs of recovery with a growth rate of 5.2%.

The decline was also revealed in the external economic fields. Regarding foreign trade, in 1998, export turnover only increased by 0.9% compared to 1997. Although in 1999, import and export reached a record of 11.52 billion USD, an increase of 23.1% compared to 1998 but lacked firmly, the export rate of agricultural products and raw materials was still high. Foreign direct investment also fell sharply. In 1999, there were only 298 licensed projects with a total registered capital of about US \$1.548 billion. The Government had been making efforts to adjust policies to attract foreign investment because this was an important source of capital contributing greatly to socio-economic development (the FDI sector contributed nearly 10% of GDP, 21 % exports and created more than 300,000 jobs).

However, the economy still made some encouraging achievements. The work of attracting and disbursing ODA had made gradual progress over the years. From 1993 to 1999, Vietnam disbursed USD 6.3 billion, accounting for more than 40% of the committed ODA source. The tourism industry had also achieved many achievements with an increasing number of foreign tourists, the industry's services were also of better quality. Especially, export of laborers and women had increased the foreign money but had left bad reputation: there were more than 54000 workers overseas, the market increased from 215 countries in 1995 to 38 countries in 1999. The program of foreign marriages was popular with South Korea, China and Taiwan.

The fields of education, health, culture, and society maintained the gain momentum. The material and spiritual life of the people continued to be improved. The work of hunger eradication and poverty reduction was promoted in order to gradually improve social justice and create conditions for economic development. Over the years, poverty in Vietnam had decreased significantly. The Government had been applying many measures to promote the economy such as promulgating and implementing the Enterprise Law, reforming administrative procedures, rearranging state-owned enterprises, improving the investment environment, and passing the Law on Foreign Investment, revised financial reforms, continued implementation of commitments to international and regional economic integration.

In recent years, Vietnam continued and strengthened its economic Đổi Mới in many fields and had achieved important achievements in economic development. Vietnam had focused on administrative reform and creating a favorable business environment, expanding international cooperation, actively and proactively integrating into the international economy effectively, so that Vietnam's economy continued to maintain its status as a country

with relatively fast and stable development. Economic sectors continued to develop, the state economy continued to be renewed, although it was still slow, but gradually improved efficiency in production and business activities. Forms of reform of state-owned enterprises had also become more diversified, creating favorable conditions for accelerating this process. The private sector had grown strongly and was increasingly expanding its scale and industry. The Enterprise Law promulgated in 2000 created favorable conditions for private enterprises to operate. In 2017, new private enterprises only contributed 43.2% of GDP and 39 invested in projects. The economic sector with foreign investment had also developed strongly. Up to now, Vietnam had attracted more than 40 billion USD of FDI (registered capital). Foreign-invested enterprises had made many positive contributions to the economic development, especially the industry of Vietnam, contributing to improving the quality and increasing the competitiveness of domestic products.

Foreign economic activities also had stable development. Import and export turnover had also continuously increased, in 2001 it reached over 15 billion USD for export and 16 billion USD for import, in 2002 it was over 16.5 billion USD and 19.3 billion USD respectively. Key export products had been formed, including light industrial goods, agricultural, forestry, seafood and electronic goods. Although the rate of trade deficit was still high and volatile, Vietnam's foreign trade had made a great contribution to the country's economic development. Tourism also had a great development with about 2 million international visitors each year. Related service industries such as hotels, airlines... also had new developments. The financial and monetary system was also gradually being improved and upgraded to meet the development needs of the economy. Banks operated smoothly and offered more and more services, especially the development of e-banking service system. Banking operations were improved to reduce the bad debt ratio significantly.

In general, in more than 20 years of implementing *Đổi Mới*, Vietnam has achieved many important economic achievements, gradually integrating into the regional and world economy with a growth rate of 6-7% but growing rapidly caused financial scandals of losing state-owned companies (Vinashin, Vinalines, oil and gas corporations...). The reality of Vietnam's "socialist-oriented market economy" today has widened the gap between rich and poor and inequality with social injustice, especially the appearance of many USD millionaires and billionaires, who take advantage of their relationships with high-ranking party officials who convert assets from the state into private ownership when the new era shifted from a planned economy to a market economy. Many dollar millionaires of Vietnam belong to "special interest groups" who have obtained a fortune through the process of cheap privatization of public property, turning public land into project land, or recovering land from the people at a cheap price, after then change the purpose of use to sell with a much higher field value.

Practice has shown that Vietnam's *Đổi Mới* is suitable for the general trend of the world and specific conditions in the country. In the early years of the 21st century, Vietnam's economy continued to have good development steps, creating momentum for the economy

to grow more steadily. The Government and people of Vietnam are continuing to strengthen the Đổi Mới process with a focus on economic reform, improving competitiveness in order to quickly narrow the development gap with other countries in the region. On the basis of economic achievements achieved and lessons learned in implementing Đổi Mới, Vietnam has been and continues to accelerate this process, carry out industrialization-modernization, speed up the economic structure, strengthen the competitiveness of Vietnamese goods in the domestic and international markets.

Đổi Mới is a comprehensive reform program encompassing the economy and many other aspects of social life initiated by the Communist Party of Vietnam in the 1980s. GDP per capita increased from 100 US\$ (1986) to \$200 in the early 1990s and then to \$1,200 in 2010. However, Vietnam's political situation has only changed little and not fast compared to the economy, but it still retains the model of Socialism and Marxist-Leninist Communism. Đổi Mới in Vietnam is similar to the new mixed economic policy NEP of the Soviet Union under the leadership of Lenin (1921-1924), Reform and Liberalization in China and Đổi Mới in Laos. The views on Economic Đổi Mới in Vietnam and China are based mainly on the reform experiences of Eastern European countries, but in Vietnam and China, Đổi Mới comes from the economic and social aspects but it is not accompanied by great changes in terms of politics - ideology and administrative legal system.

In particular, the export of workers and women has contributed to increasing foreign currency income and creating jobs, but has left many scandals: the **marriage** program with foreigners, especially Korea, China and Taiwan and **export labor** or **foreign workers** (currently more than 54,000 workers are abroad). The market was expanded from 15 countries in 1995 to 38 countries in 1999 sending people to work as hired laborers everywhere from Malaysia, Taiwan to Eastern Europe, Middle East. Every year, tens of thousands of Vietnamese people are sent abroad to work, bringing in foreign currency up to 3-4 billion USD/year, but when they are forced, beaten, even sexually abused, died from work accidents, violence, etc...and so on, the state did absolutely nothing to help them.

Only the South Vietnamese knew what Communism was after 75, the leaders accepted to correct their mistakes, learn, and find their way back to the old road that they had previously trampled and destroyed. but life has started to revive again, people in the south of Vietnam do not see anything new, but only bitter regrets for a few decades behind, looking at countries like Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand before 75 they had nothing better than VN? According to the International Monetary Fund 2019 recorded GDP per capita of Singapore 64,000 USD, Korea 31,000, Taiwan 25,000, China 9,600, Thailand 7000, and Vietnam 2,700. Only then can we know that thanks to the renewal of communism, the Vietnamese people are where they are today.

A look at Vietnam's economic history shows two highlights of the two periods of the Republic of Vietnam (Republic of Vietnam) before 1975 and the reunification of Vietnam

after 1975. Under the Republic of Vietnam regime of South Vietnam for two short decades, from 1955-1975, propaganda by the NLF/VC and the left-wing US media during the war believed that the Republic of Vietnam was just a puppet regime that passively followed the US command. But on the contrary, in fact the Republic of Vietnam has demonstrated its ability to establish a country and build a country from the day it regained its independence from the French colonialists for the South. The Government of the Republic of Vietnam has created a democracy under the rule of law and successfully applied a policy of human and scientific education to create basic human capital to establish and maintain an economic stability even in the conditions of a fierce war.

Under the socialist regime, in the period of twice the existence of the Republic of Vietnam, 45 years (1975-2020), the reunified Vietnam inherited many of the Republic of Vietnam's legacies and was more successful in transforming the economic face of the country. Despite the serious corruption problem and administrative incompetence of the authorities, Vietnam has made it for two decades with an average annual growth rate of 5%-6% thanks to the vast majority of the population, more specifically their sweat and tears.

## **Chapter 24. Overseas Vietnamese Refugees**

### **1975 Evacuation**

The consecutive victories of the 1975 Spring Campaign put the Republic of Vietnam government in a disadvantageous position and in danger of collapse. Faced with that situation, the US carried out a campaign to evacuate American citizens and Vietnamese who had worked closely with the US out of Saigon. Operation Gió Lốc (Frequent Wind), the final phase of this airlift, was the last American military operation of the Vietnam War. Evacuations began in early March 1975. At first, evacuations were slow. Many Americans with Vietnamese relatives refused to leave, while Vietnamese faced difficulties due to administrative procedures. On the other hand, US Ambassador to Saigon Graham A. Martin also wished to stabilize the situation and avoid panic. Therefore, by April 19, the number of people evacuated had only reached 6,000.

The evacuation peaked in late April, between 20 and 28, after Admiral Gaylor and Ambassador Martin eased the procedures. At this time, the number of people needing to be evacuated increased by tens of thousands because US President Gerard Ford authorized the relief of "in danger" Vietnamese people regardless of whether they depended on any US citizens or not. Flights took off hourly, with about 20 C-141s per day and 20 C-130s per night. Each flight can carry more than 180 people, although regulations for the two types of aircraft above only allow no more than 100 people. The landing points of these flights were the Philippines, then makeshift camps in the islands of Andersen, Guam and Wake in the mid-Pacific when the Philippine President limited the number of refugees.

From April 27, artillery shells of the Liberation Army began to fall on Saigon, forcing the US to stop using expensive C-141 aircraft and from 29 onward, only helicopters could be used. At 7:30 p.m. on April 28, Washington time (i.e., 7:30 a.m. on April 29 in Saigon), President Ford convened an emergency meeting of the National Security Council, asking Ambassador Martin to bring out those who needed to be evacuated from the country. This was the final phase of the "Operation Frequent Wind" evacuation plan, directed by the US Defense Attache Office (DAO).

Since the Saigon airbase and civilian airport were disabled, the evacuation landmarks were chosen as the US Embassy and the DAO area at Tân Sơn Nhất. In order for the helicopter to have a place to land, people cleared the trees around the Embassy and painted reflective paint on the roof. UH-1 helicopters gathered people who wanted to evacuate from rooftops in the city to these two locations, where they were transported by CH-53 or CH-46 helicopters to a fleet of 50 ships waiting at sea. Participating in the campaign were F-4, A-7, and AC-130 fighter aircraft mobilized from Thailand in the supporting role.

From noon on 29th to 30th morning, the air bridge transported a total of more than 7,800 people. After the President of the US ordered a halt to the evacuation of third-country nationals, Ambassador Graham departed on a flight at 3:45 a.m. - the crew was ordered to arrest him if he refused to leave. After completing the evacuation, the DAO area was razed. The campaign ended at 9 a.m. on April 30, just a few hours before the Liberation Army tanks entered the Independence Palace.

Although carefully planned, Operation Frequent Wind still encountered many surprises due to the chaotic atmosphere of the city. At evacuation points, tens of thousands of people gathered around buildings. In the DAO, the South Vietnamese officers demanded that they and their families be taken first. At the embassy, the mob outside tried to climb the wall and then used a truck to try to break through the gate. The "success" forced the American soldiers inside to retreat to each floor, to lock the doors. They had to take furniture and set up a "barricade" behind the last door.

April 29 was also the day to witness the last deaths of American soldiers in combat. At dawn that morning, Corporal Charles McMahon and Private First Class Darwin Judge were assigned to guard Post No. 1 at the gate of the DAO. Around 3:30 a.m., a rocket fell on Post No. 1, killing them on the spot. Both had only been to Vietnam for a few weeks. The deaths of two soldiers were not included in the plan. Due to the urgency of the Frequent Wind campaign, the bodies of the two men were forced to be abandoned in Vietnam. Later, thanks to the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the two bodies were brought back to the US and buried in accordance with military rites. In addition, a helicopter crash in the South China Sea at the end of the operation also claimed the lives of two more pilots, William Nystul and Michael Shea.



Operation Frequent Wind was a US Air Force campaign to evacuate by helicopter American and South Vietnamese officials and generals out of Saigon. From April 29 to 30, 1975, the final days of the Vietnam War, more than 50,000 people were evacuated from various points in Saigon. 50,493 people (including 2,678 Vietnamese orphans) were evacuated from Tân Sơn Nhất Airport. The pilots flew a total of 1,054 hours and 682 flights during the campaign. When the US allies fled before the advance of Communist North Vietnam, they left behind 980,000 ARVN soldiers, soldiers who had fought alongside American soldiers to defend the borders of the free world.

At the hour of the Republic of Vietnam's death, the tragedy of "life and death" took place extremely poignantly. People were stepping on each other to flee the Communists regardless of life or property because the US did not have an evacuation program commensurate with the alliance. Initially, the US only wanted to evacuate 50,000 people. At the last minute, the number of lives that were fortunately saved only inched up to 130,000. They wanted everything to be done quickly. This mood can be guessed by Henry Kissinger's cruel curse: "*Why don't these people die fast?*" Thus, just by doing a small calculation, one can immediately see that more than 800,000 ARVN soldiers had been victims of the re-education regime of the Vietnamese Communists. In Saigon and the rest of the Republic of Vietnam, millions of Vietnamese people began to ask themselves one key question: can they stay under the new regime or find a way to leave the country by sea?

On April 28 and 29 from the 7th Fleet's aircraft carriers offshore, the US Marines used helicopters to evacuate people. The evacuation took place in chaos because so many people wanted to leave but could not accommodate them all. Helicopter parking spots were chaotic. US Marines struggled to maintain order. The Americans had to leave behind many Vietnamese in favor of Americans because of the limited number of aircraft. The images of evacuation had been imprinted in the minds of many Americans and Vietnamese as a sad memory. Ambassador Graham Martin was one of the last Americans to leave. Of the 120,000 Vietnamese and 20,000 Americans evacuated in this round, not a single person was killed by military operations of the Liberation Army. On April 29, following the anger of US Secretary of Defense Schlesinger and Adviser Henry Kissinger in Washington over Ambassador Graham Martin's lingering in Saigon in an attempt to create the appearance of "decent Americans leaving", US President Gerald Ford ordered emphatically: "End the evacuation at 3:30 am, local time, the morning of April 30". However, the order was still not executed in time due to Martin's hesitation, the "escape" continued until the last American helicopter left Saigon at 5:24 am on 30 April.

Set in the fierce circumstances of the war, the evacuation effort of the US in general and Operation Frequent Wind in particular had an impressive level of safety. Apart from the casualties aboard one helicopter crashed due to running out of fuel at sea, there were no significant losses. The US side also noted that the Liberation Army had a special concession for evacuation helicopters, which were slow targets that were easy to hit. "*I felt the North*

*Vietnamese let us go. They were able to shoot us down"* said Sergeant Ted Murray of the US Embassy's security team. Later, it was confirmed that the DRV had directed General Văn Tiến Dũng not to target the American helicopters. The general also commented: *"In my opinion, the Gió Lốc campaign is an amazing achievement"*.

### Crossing the East Sea 1975-1995

The events of April 1975 began a great journey of millions of Vietnamese people using small boats to cross the East Sea to seek freedom and find a better place worth living. Those who crossed the sea survived because of the charity of the world community, creating a foundation for gathering the exile community everywhere. An estimated 3 million Vietnamese fled their homeland in fragile boats after the 1975 incident, said Vũ Văn Lộc, director of the Vietnam Refugee Settlement Service in San Jose, California, USA. Some interesting data are as follows: "As far as I know, the boat people started after 1975. There are people who have been evacuated since 1975, but most of them are evacuees. It was not until at least August-September, 1975, that is, after the Communists entered Saigon, that people started leaving Vietnam by sea to Malaysia and Thailand. At that time, there were no more American military waiting at sea. At that time, it was considered as crossing the border by sea. Since there were Vietnamese people crossing the sea and many people died and entered refugee camps, in the world dictionary, the word **"boat people"** began to appear in the world dictionary. Boat people are the refugees by sea."



Di tản tỵ nạn 1975



Thuyền nhân vượt biển tỵ nạn thập niên 1980



### Crossing the sea at all costs 1975-1995

Within a few days after the fall of Saigon, on May 4, 1975, a Danish ship of Maersk company carrying 3473 Vietnamese (mainly overseas Chinese in Chợ Lớn) docked in Hongkong, who were Chinese with money in the Republic of Vietnam and crossed the sea just before the fall of Saigon. The Hong Kong government considered them "illegal immigrants" but accepted them as "temporary residence". Those were the first Vietnamese to cross the sea to Hong Kong. After reunification in 1975, millions of Vietnamese people left the country and thousands of people died at sea. These "boat people" sought freedom around the world even though they had to sacrifice their lives on the high seas, shaking the conscience of mankind. According to statistics from 1975 to 2005, in 30 years, nearly 3 million Vietnamese people settled in 126 countries around the world. Among these, nearly 1 million people crossed the sea. The census of the Southeast Asian refugee camps in 1995 was 839,200 people, including 42,900 people traveling by land. It is estimated that three

hundred to four hundred thousand people had died and could not reach the shores of freedom. The tragic images of refugees had awakened the conscience of humanity. These boat people were received as freedom fighters. It was a vote by the human condition to reject the communist system.

The wave of evacuations began in April 1975 when the US ended its presence in Vietnam and abandoned its allies. However, the most serious problem that Vietnam faced after liberation was not war criminals but the bourgeois forces of the South. Most of this force was overseas Chinese. Of the 1.5 million Chinese who lived in Vietnam during the war, more than 1 million were concentrated in Chợ Lớn. It was a distinct region of rich capitalism in the midst of one of the world's poorest countries. Before 1975, in the South, overseas Chinese controlled almost all important economic positions, and especially firmly grasped three important fields: production, distribution and credit. By the end of 1974, they controlled more than 80% of the production facilities of the food, textile, chemical, metallurgical ... and almost monopolistic industries: 100% wholesale, more than 50% retail and 90% import and export. Overseas Chinese in the South had almost complete control over market prices.

After Vietnam's reunification in 1975, the diplomatic tensions with China over the territorial sovereignty dispute with the Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa archipelagoes made the Vietnamese government concerned about the large group of Chinese people who were currently living in Vietnam, especially when this group held a very important economic position in the South. The problem of the Chinese people was aggravated when they openly displayed the Chinese national flag and Mao Zedong's photo in Chợ Lớn.

In January 1976, the Vietnamese government ordered the Chinese in the South to register for citizenship. The majority of registrations were Chinese nationals, although they converted to Vietnamese citizenship from 1956-1957. In February of that year, the Chinese were ordered to re-register according to the nationality they received during the Republic of Vietnam. Chinese nationals continued to register as Chinese nationals. Later that year, all Chinese-language newspapers were closed, followed by Chinese schools. With these actions, the Vietnamese government ignored the agreement that after the unification it would consult with China on the issue of the Chinese in Vietnam. This policy of Vietnam in 1976 was affected by the rapidly changing relationship between Vietnam and China, with fear that China might use overseas Chinese to force Vietnam into hard policies of General Secretary Lê Duẩn. The overseas Chinese issue was seen by the Vietnamese government as a challenge to national sovereignty rather than a simple internal matter.

In July 1976, when the Hanoi regime eliminated the NLF/VC's Southern probation apparatus to realize the unification of the two regions, forced people to go to the new economic zones, and concentrated over one million South Vietnamese in the re-education

camps, waves of evacuation by sea began to increase. And by the end of 1977, there were over 15,000 Vietnamese refugees in Southeast Asian countries.

In 1977, overseas Chinese continued to control the South's economy, with 80% inflation coupled with continuing problems of food shortages and speculation. The Vietnamese government feared that overseas Chinese might be manipulated accordance with the goals of the Chinese government, accompanied by a severe stagnation of the southwestern economic regions due to conflicts at the border with Cambodia. Meanwhile, the Chinese in Chợ Lớn held demonstrations demanding the preservation of Chinese nationality. These things made the Vietnamese government worry about the risk of the country being disturbed both from within and from outside due to causes stemming from China.

By March 1978, nearly all gold and foreign currency exchanges in Vietnam were located in the Chợ Lớn region, and the government finally decided to put an end to this absurdity. In early 1978, the army and police destroyed a large number of networks of hoarding and state holdings of the food trade. In March and April 1978, about 30,000 large enterprises of overseas Chinese were nationalized. The economic status of wealthy merchants was abolished, and the state tightened control of the economy. Until 1978, when the Communist government launched the policy of bourgeois re-education, and the subsequent dispatch of troops to Cambodia, and faced with a border war with China, a wave of refugees by sea had quadrupled, with the majority of those departing from the Chinese-Vietnamese population. By the end of 1978, there were 62,000 Vietnamese boat people as refugees in Southeast Asian countries.

In June 1979 alone, over 54,000 Vietnamese boat people came to seek refuge in the above countries. These waves of refugees had caused countries in Southeast Asia, such as Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia to declare no more refugees from Vietnam, causing the boat people were banished from disembarking. Since then, the number of boat people dying at sea had also increased. The number of people crossing the border peaked in the years 1978 - 1979 (the period of the Southwest border war and the Vietnam - China border war), in which a majority of people were Chinese, crossing the border because fear of war breaking out between Vietnam and China. In 1978, the number of Chinese accounted for 70% of those who crossed the border from Vietnam by sea.

In late 1977 and early 1978, a large number of overseas Chinese in South Vietnam began to flee the country, becoming "refugees" floating on the high seas. Around the same time, overseas Chinese in North Vietnam began to cross the Vietnam-China border, becoming refugees on the mainland like those crossing the sea. By early June 1978, the number of refugees in China had reached 100,000. In mid-July, the total number of people surpassed 160,000. The city of Hekou in China's Yunnan province received the highest number of refugees in one day, more than 1,900; in Dongxing, a border district in Guangxi,

4,000 people per day are recorded. In mid-July 1978, China closed its border with Vietnam to stem the flow of refugees, but small groups still continued crossing. In February 1979, when China launched its three-week war against Vietnam, 202,000 refugees were already in China.

On November 8, 1978, the French heard that the cargo ship Hai Hong was carrying 2564 South Vietnamese boat people, but no Asian country accepted to receive it. This was just one of many similar ships. At that time, there were hundreds of thousands of boat people who wanted to leave South Vietnam after being occupied by the communist regime in North Vietnam. In order to save those who were precariously at sea, who did not know the fate between life and death, some Parisian intellectuals had thought of creating a "ship for the Vietnamese". Some had supported the North in the war against the American army. In a news report on television, artist Yves Montand said: "*Vietnamese people are drowning, so we have to help them*". Since then, the ship "Light Island" was born to go to the East Sea to save the Vietnamese people.

Finally, when war with China broke out in February 1979, the urge to leave turned into panic. At the border, the situation was even more tense. The Vietnamese government believed that 160,000 Chinese living there crossed the border before the Chinese invasion, and that many had infiltrated back into Vietnam to get information. Fearing that every Chinese was a spy, the Vietnamese pushed them away. The deteriorating relationship between Vietnam and China also increased the number of Chinese leaving Vietnam. As a result, the number of evacuees from Vietnam doubled in the first 6 months of 1979, among those displaced in the years 1978-1979, overseas Chinese accounted for a very large number.

Nobel Prize-winning writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez who visited Vietnam in mid-July 1979 described: *The situation in Hồ Chí Minh City at that time, as well as throughout the South after reunification, was very chaotic. The number of overseas Chinese, over 1 million people, are all in a state of panic because of the threat of a war with China... The political problems created by the US further complicate matters and the finding a solution for the Vietnamese boat people at that time was impossible.* In 1980, the number of people crossing the border to China reached 260,000. After this period, the number of overseas Chinese in Vietnam halved (from 1.8 million in 1975 to 900,000 in 1989) was still the force that controlled Vietnam's economy as before, and Vietnam has become the only country in Southeast Asia that has successfully assimilated the Chinese.

In July 1979, a conference was organized by the United Nations in Geneva to discuss the fate of those who crossed the border in Vietnam. On July 21, 1979, at this Geneva Conference, Vice President Walter Mondale called on the Hanoi government to immediately stop forced expulsions and announced an increase in the number of refugees from the US government and calling for the help of other countries in the world. This conference established a treaty between Vietnam and Southeast Asian countries for refugees for the first

time and countries that allowed permanent settlement. Indonesia and the Philippines set up temporary refugee centers. Vietnam promised to allow organized border crossings. Third countries would speed up the permanent resettlement of Vietnamese residents. The US accepted all those who arrived at a free port without relatives in other countries and increased the number of refugees to 14,000 a month. Many other countries such as Australia, Canada, Great Britain, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Japan, Israel, ... opened their hands to welcome Indochinese refugees.

On February 27, 1980, the Committee for Rescue of People Across the Sea, or “Boat People SOS” was officially established. Professor Nguyễn Hữu Xương, a lecturer at the University of California at San Diego, at that time the Chairman of the Committee, writer Lê Tất Điều was also in the area with writer Phan Lạc Tiếp. They, along with a few others, quickly formed the Committee to Save the People Across the Sea. One of the people very active in this activity was writer Phan Lạc Tiếp, a former naval captain. With experience on the coast of Vietnam, where the boats were going to the exchanged estuaries, Tiếp instructed the boats to rescue boat people.

In France, the Association of Doctors Without Borders, the *ship Jean Charchaco* , was the first ship to set sail, and after 40 days of operation, it rescued 110 people in 1985. The list of those people was sent everywhere and the Vietnamese community was very happy, in which, the press, artists, and brothers Hùng Ca stood out to organize a fundraiser to save people crossing the sea. Then another ship was *the Cap Anamour*, by a combination of three organizations: the Boat People Committee, the World Medical Association in France, and the German ship Cap Anamour. This ship went on 14 trips and rescued 818 people. In total, in 5 years, 3,103 people were rescued.

From July 1979 to July 1982, more than 20 countries such as the US, Australia, France and Canada resettled 623800 Indochinese refugees. At this point, the Vietnamese government allowed the Vietnamese to leave if they wanted to but had to pay and lose their homes and properties. In 1984, 30,000 Vietnamese went out in this way. This conference organized the sending of ships to a number of countries that did not accept refugees to rescue them. In the first 5 months of 1979, 81 ships carried a total of 4,031 people at sea, including the *ship Light Island* . From 1975 to 1990, 67,000 Vietnamese were rescued at sea.

According to documents and information from the SOS Committee, in March 1989, in order to prevent the wave of people crossing the border, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees issued a purge policy in Southeast Asian refugee camps, beginning the closing period of refugee camps. At the same time, the US also began to have immigration programs ODP (Orderly Departure Program), HO (Humanitarian Operation) and Amerasian Resettlement Program, Vũ Văn Lộc said: “*People see it. Too many deaths by boat, and then in the refugee camp it's not solved, so the orderly departure program can solve by family reunification, HO, or mixed... people who go to refugee camps and then are*

*returned to Vietnam under a program called ROVR (Resettlement Opportunity for Vietnamese Returnees) ”.*

By 1982, the Chinese in the South had crossed the border by sea and by land to go through a third country. According to one statistic, two-thirds of the half a million boat people from Vietnam were of Chinese origin. Add to that an estimated 250,000 ethnic Chinese who crossed the border into China across the northern border from April 1978 to the summer of 1979. After the wave of Chinese crossings ended, by 1989, the Chinese population in Vietnam had decreased from 1.8 million (in 1975) to 900,000. The Chinese were no longer the controlling force in the Vietnamese economy as they once were, and their original Chinese customs and languages had largely disappeared. This is a rare exception from other Southeast Asian countries: the Chinese have been almost assimilated by the Vietnamese. Although the majority of Vietnamese people may oppose China's behavior in the South China Sea, no one is thinking of taking revenge on the family of a Chinese merchant.

In a brochure published in 2000, titled “The State of the World's Refugees 2000, 50 years of Humanitarian Action,” wrote about world refugees to mark 50 years of UN humanitarian work. Ms. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, spoke of the courage of the millions of refugees and asylum-seekers around the world who have lost everything, except hope, and have overcome many challenges to find a way to live. Ms. Ogata named these people "The Great Survivors of the 20th Century".

Rarely in the history of mankind has there been an exodus as tragic and prolonged as the waves of boat people leaving Vietnam after 1975 until the last decade of the last millennium. The absurdity of the Vietnamese boat people tragedy was also striking because the Vietnamese refugees had to leave their homeland in search of the right to life, while the gunfire was no longer on the territory of their country. At that time, when the aspiration for peace that every Vietnamese people cherished in their hearts for so many years just dawned, the whole nation could have joined hands to build a country together after so much suffering and loss in nearly half a century of constant fire and smoke. On the contrary, the excessive hatred and bigotry of those who held power with guns have continued to cover the country and the people in a space of brutal repression and terror, making Southerners at that time had only one way out, which was to plunge into the sea to find a way to live. With a hope and a prayer, tens of thousands of families, including children and the elderly, have set sail for the shores of hope, despite the dangers that perhaps all have anticipated before deciding to leave.

After the terrifying journeys floating on the ocean, some boat people have also reached temporary shores. These classes of people have brought to the outside world stories about fathers and mothers who had to share the grains of rice that fell from their children's mouths; to sharing each drop of water more precious than gold squeezed out of a rain-soaked

cloth, to deceive the constant hunger and thirst. Or the tragic stories about the dead who saved the living with their own flesh and blood. Or more stories told quietly, telling about the cases of having to deal with pirates. In addition to the threats posed by man's damnation to man, these boat people must also face the wrath of nature. Storms have caused countless boat people to prey on the sea. No one dared to guess with every person who had the opportunity to set foot on the shore of freedom, how many other people had died on the ocean.

Finally, the wave of Vietnamese refugees by sea wrote the tragic history of the boat people, and the horrifying stories of the Vietnamese refugees' sea crossings touched the world's conscience. In March 1979, America's Orderly Departure program was born to try to prevent waves from crossing the sea. In addition, before and at this time, programs to save people crossing the sea were launched by a number of international charity organizations, two boats to rescue boat people at sea, the Anamour operated by a German charity and launched in 1979, L'Ile de Lumiere, operated by French charity Médecins du Monde in 1980, saved the lives of many Vietnamese boat people adrift at sea between 1979 and 1990.

After two consecutive wars in 1978 to occupy Cambodia and 1979 the Vietnam-China border (the conflict continued until 1988), in the decades following 1980, Vietnam was ranked among the world's five poorest countries. Unemployment and begging filled the streets. The crimes of tyranny and plundering of land happened again between party members and peasants, between police and low-income people. Corruption, buying and selling positions in the party or government, even doctorate degrees in universities, including medical fields, had caused social decline, and "first procedure" (bribery) was rampant. People had to eat rice or fillet for a long time under the subsidized economy. Another official service of labor export and women marrying foreign husbands were a form of selling their bodies for foreign currency. With the "renovation" plan, the economy was stabilized thanks to the "capital" of billions of dollars each year that the Vietnamese refugees from "thousands of miles" sent back to their relatives in the country, and it only served one new class, the "red capitalist" manipulators.

This is the first time in history that the number of Vietnamese leaving the country is up to millions. The outstanding feature of the boat people movement is that all those who crossed the border voluntarily left, wanted to leave on their own, completely spontaneously going out in families and small groups. There is no party, political force or foreign country to intervene or organize the departure of the boat people. Sometimes, communist authorities take advantage of the people's desire to go and find freedom or organize a semi-official border crossing to get gold. Despite leaving in a plan that CS called "semi-official", the people who left were still those who voluntarily wanted to leave Vietnam to avoid communist dictatorship.



## **Orderly Departure Program (ODP) 1979-1991**

ODP was a program of the US allowed the Vietnam refugees entering the US after the Vietnam War ended. This program has been conducted since 1979 with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (who has been present in both regions of Vietnam since 1973). In the early 1990s, the issues of re-education prisoners and mixed-race children were discussed in the diplomatic process between the two countries. After diplomatic relations between the US and Vietnam were normalized in 1995, the US directly engaged in dialogue with the Vietnamese government to create favorable conditions for migrants from Vietnam under that program.

The introduction of the refugee program is because the US is aware of its responsibility to allies who have fought for a common cause for freedom and democracy. This program applies not only to Vietnam but also to other allied countries in the world. Since 1965, there have been refugee programs initiated by the US Congress (Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1952). The US is a nation of immigrants and refugees. For a long time, the US has had laws on immigration and asylum; but after April 30, 1975, in response to the wave of millions of Indochinese refugees, especially Vietnamese, the US Congress and the US Government issued 3 laws as follows:

- The first act - the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975 allows refugees to enter the US under a special immigration status.

- The Second Act – Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of May 23, 1975. This act established a domestic program to assist the refugees.

- The Third Act - The Refugee Act of 1980 establishes the Office of Refugee Resettlement to administer refugee programs and services within the US. The States of the USA act as intermediaries in the immigration process and require an asylum assistance plan in order to receive Federal grants...The Refugee Act of 1980 was passed to establish a system to deal with the increasing number of refugees from Vietnam and other countries around the world. This Settlement Act (Refugees Act, 1980) is a very important law regarding settlement procedure.

Therefore, bringing Vietnamese political prisoners to settle in the US is to pay a moral and ethical debt of the US to those who were once allies fighting side by side on the same battlefield. Everything progressed according to a previously agreed upon route. In addition to the above three laws, in 1987, the US Congress also passed the Amerasian coming Home Act to accept Vietnamese-American children.

Since 1982, the US State Department and the Vietnamese Communist Party have been negotiating for the ODP program. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Reagan administration have been preparing to accept Vietnamese political prisoners since July 1982. (US and UN Said to Study Vietnam Resettlement Offer, New York Times July 1, 1982) In 1984, a new agreement was signed between the two countries.

Since the early 1980s, the communists have begun to move prisoners from the mountains of the North to the South, whom the communists have determined to send into exile to die in savage "re-education camps" in the North. Following that, the communists also began to release prisoners one after another. Around this same time, the US Embassy in Thailand began accepting asylum applications and issued LOIs (Letter of Introduction) to released prisoners to prepare for exit documents.

From 1984 onwards, the applications to the US Embassy in Thailand to apply for asylum were public and official, but there were also some political prisoners who were afraid when they were released, or for some reasons did not send their applications by post in Vietnam, but tried to send them to the US thanks to friends, relatives or Ms. Khúc Minh Thơ who forwarded to the US Embassy in Thailand. The Political Prisoner's Family Association had received and forwarded thousands of political asylum applications from former prisoners.

In October 1989, the communist government of Vietnam issued a notice and began to accept exit applications and issue passports for former prisoners to go to the US according to the applications. At that time, the ex-prisoners already had in hand the Letter of Introduction (LOI) issued by the US Embassy in Thailand to contribute to the exit file. At the same time, the US set up an interview office in Saigon. Each month, the US interviewed and accepted more than a thousand families of former political prisoners of Vietnam into the US continuously for more than 4 years until February 3, 1994, when the last ex-prisoners and their families entered the US. US President Bill Clinton announced the end of the embargo on communist Vietnam and prepared to establish diplomatic relations.

In 1989, President Reagan's administration negotiated with the Hanoi government and reached an agreement for former soldiers and officials of the Republic of Vietnam to be released and resettled in the US with priority under the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) for people incarcerated for three years or more. In fact, HO is not an abbreviation for any "Humanitarian Operation" program, but is just an inference from the ordinal numbers of lists of political prisoners was granted a passport by the communist government with the number H (study) and given to the US side for an interview to seek asylum in the US. For example, the first lists containing the numbers: H.01, H.02, H.03... consist of 2 parts: the alphabet part is H and the unit number part is 01, 02, 03... and When it comes to ten and higher, there are no more zeros, but lists with the numbers H.10, H.11, H.12....After being interviewed and approved. After the interview and approved relocation in the US, list H will be changed to list R (abbreviation for re-education detainee) and an ex-prisoner will be granted a green card with the same number R1, R2.....

The ODP program has since been named the Humanitarian Resettlement Program (HR). Program offices were first established in Bangkok, Thailand in January 1980. The program identifies three target groups:

- The HO or R category are former prisoners of a re-education camp, officially known as the Special Release Reeducation Center Detainee Resettlement Program.

- U11 category are former US government employees.

- V11 category are former employees of a US private company or US organization.

The US government recognized people held in "re-education camps" as political prisoners in order to pay a debt owed by the US to its ally in the war to prevent the expansion of Communism in Indochina and Vietnam. When the last ex-prisoners stepped on the plane to leave Vietnam, immediately on February 3, 1994, President Bill Clinton announced the lifting of the embargo for Vietnam and preparing to establish diplomatic relations between two parties.

During the implementation period, ODP has supported nearly 500,000 Vietnamese refugees to reach the US. On November 14, 1994, ODP officially closed. Several thousand more people were resettled after 1997. By 1999, the ODP offices in Bangkok were also closed and only special cases were considered from Hồ Chí Minh City. On November 15, 2005, the US and Vietnam signed an agreement allowing Vietnamese nationals who were late in their application at the end of the 1994 Orderly Departure Program to be considered for permanent residence in the US. This Agreement expired on June 20, 2008.

### **Repatriation CPA 1988-1997**

The Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA) from 1988 to 1997 supported the repatriation of Vietnamese boat people who wanted to return to their homeland. In March 1989 representatives of 29 countries met in Kuala Lumpur to make a decision on screening to determine refugee status for boat people arriving in the camps after March 14, 1989. With the adoption of the Comprehensive Program of Action in 1989 UNHCR established protocols for the repatriation of refugees on a large scale. This program was for those boat people who have been screened, and do not qualify for refugee status to be resettled in third countries. This event has caused protests, even the self-immolation of people crossing the border in refugee camps and many overseas associations calling for help to the International High Commissioner for Refugees.

As part of the CPA Program, UNHCR provided direct resettlement grants to boat people who agreed to repatriate in the form of cash payments. In addition, UNHCR also conducted a post-repatriation inspection program under this program. The purpose of the post-repatriation screening program was to monitor the settlement of repatriates and avoid

cases where boat people were punished by the Vietnamese government for leaving as refugees.

By the end of 1988, over 110,000 boat people had returned from Asian refugee camps and had been resettled in the places they had previously left. UNHCR's CPA officially ended on June 30, 1996 for refugee camps in Southeast Asian countries, and on June 30, 1997 for Hong Kong refugee camps. The tragedy of Vietnamese boat people only really ended in 1999, after the program to resettle the repatriated boat people under the CPA program was completed.

For the US, people from North Vietnam who had no connection with the government of the Republic of Vietnam were not allowed to immigrate. Most of the people sent back were from the North because they did not meet the refugee standards. According to the agreement between Vietnam and other countries in the region and UNHCR, each person who returned would be granted 240 USD and the Vietnamese government promised not to mistreat them. Asylum status for Vietnamese who crossed the border ended in 2005 when Malaysia forced the repatriation of the last group of boat people in the camp.

After the events of April 30, 1975, followed by the Southwest Border War and the Northern Border War, a huge wave of boat people left Vietnam. With news about boat people having to cope with storms in the East Sea and pirates, international public opinion was very sympathetic to the status of these people. Many countries promised to accept these boat people, and they were automatically considered refugees under international conventions. In some areas with a large number of people crossing the border, the United Nations or the host country had set up temporary camps for people who crossed the border to temporarily stay while waiting for departure to a third country.

· Hong Kong: Achau, Argyle Street, Chimawan, Green Island, Heilingchau, High Island, Shek Kong, White Head, Tuen Mun, Pillar Point Harbor.



- Indonesia: Galang, Kuku.
- Malaysia: Bidong (Pulau Bidong), Sungei Besi.
- Philippines: Bataan, Palawan.
- Thailand: Banthad, Leam Sing, Phanat Nikhom, Sikiw, Site 1, Site 2, Songkh

Finally, Indonesia closed the refugee camp in Galang in 1996; Thailand in 1997; the Philippines in 1997; Hong Kong in 2000. In 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officially abolished the last refugee camp located in Malaysia, ending 21 years of HCR cooperation in this country to help people crossing the sea from Vietnam. Now in many refugee camps there were no trace left outside the cemetery of the graves of many unfortunate compatriots who died or committed suicide in the camps. In addition, there were still a few memorials or museums of relics and images of the boat people, despite the diplomatic pressure of the current Hanoi government to remove on the local government.

The waves of sea crossing ended only 20 years after the war ended and after nearly a million people crossed the sea. From July 1979 to July 1982, more than 20 countries led by the US, Australia, France and Canada allowed 623,800 Indochina refugees immigrated to their country. In the period 1975-1995, there were 796,310 Vietnamese boat people, of which 754,842 people were settled in other countries. With the current communist regime's lack of national reconciliation, especially the lack of chivalry of the victors, causing millions of people to risk their lives to leave the country in search of freedom, the Boat People Memorial is recognized by the Westminster City Council, California through a resolution as a symbol of freedom and love for humanity and a memorial to those who perished at sea.

## **Chapter 25. Border and Island Wars**

The war against the colonialists and "against the US to save the country" of North Vietnam, which implemented communist internationalism against a "degenerate bourgeois" polity, should win strong support from both communists and progressive forces in the Non-Aligned Movement and also in the West. Since the 1950s, the division between China and the Soviet Union has become increasingly severe, and the communist regimes of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos have also suffered in their relations with these two opposing factions. The enmity was then fueled by centuries-old animosities between Vietnam and Cambodia, and especially between Vietnam and China. China had little to no reaction to Vietnam's activity in suppressing anti-communist insurgents in Laos, but it strongly opposed Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia.

The fall of Saigon in 1975 appeared to be a temporary concession by the US in its long-term strategy for the free world in the context of the Cold War and Asian relations in the late 1970s. During the decade since 1972, the world alliances have changed their strategy, which has had a strong geopolitical impact on the globe and the region. Beginning with Nixon's policy of détente with the Soviet Union and friendship with China, and along with the policy of expanding the war into Cambodia in the early 1970s, Hanoi's relations with other countries were in trouble. China and Vietnam began to compete in Indochina, so they had to maintain a strategy of balancing between Beijing and Moscow.

But since 1975 Vietnam's relations with its Asian allies continued to deteriorate. Faced with the mounting difficulties caused by the transition from war to peace, Vietnam could not only rely on the Soviet Union but also hoped to find American reconstruction aid, especially when China's support was reduced. After Saigon surrendered to the NVA, the Ford government froze South Vietnamese assets in the US and then imposed an embargo on May 16, 1975. Hanoi wanted to normalize quickly with Washington on the condition that the US agrees to provide economic aid as committed in Article 21 of the Paris Peace Agreement. When the US State Department refused to make concessions, citing Vietnam's violation of the agreement from 1973 to 1975, Hanoi denied the right to search for 2,000 missing American soldiers (MIA).

In the fall of 1975, General Secretary Lê Duẩn went to ask for help from China and the Soviet Union. While China had expressed displeasure with Hanoi foreign policy, Russia had committed to long-term aid to Vietnam. In 1977, Leonard Woodcock led the first American mission under Carter's administration to arrive in Vietnam and persuade Hanoi to cooperate fully on the MIA issue, but Vietnam still demanded a pledge of aid prior to normalization. Then Hanoi published Nixon's secret aid pledge letter, angering American public opinion. The US Congress did not recognize Nixon's promise and enacted a law banning all aids to Vietnam. While facing internal and external problems, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was involved in a war with Cambodia and was attacked by China.

### **Southwest War 1977-1991**

The Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot captured Phnom Penh in the spring of 1975, killing 1.6 to 1.8 million Cambodians including those trained by Hanoi in the Cambodian genocide and driving the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. After taking power, Pol Pot refused to negotiate border issues with Vietnam and did not hide his anti-Vietnamese tactics to pursue a hostile policy at the same time as the domestic genocide campaign. In 1976, although China was more friendly with Cambodia, Sino-Vietnamese relations were not completely broken because Beijing still urged Cambodia to find a diplomatic solution on the border issues with Vietnam.

In April 1977, Khmer Rouge troops attacked six provinces bordering Vietnam. Beijing also increased military aid and supported the Khmer Rouge. In response, Vietnam began tightening control over the Chinese in the country, encouraging the Chinese to naturalize and move them out of the border areas. When the Khmer Rouge attacked again in September, deep into Vietnamese territory, raiding the village of Ba Chúc and slaughtering 3,157 civilians, Hanoi was no longer conciliatory. In February 1978, the Vietnamese leadership decided to sponsor a general uprising in Cambodia to overthrow Pol Pot while their troops clashed with China on the northern border. In the spring of that year, the Chinese began to flee the cities and towns of Vietnam. The US immediately ended diplomatic negotiations on normalization with Vietnam. On November 3, Hanoi signed a mutual defense agreement with Moscow (directly targeting China) and planned to enter Cambodia.

On December 25, 1978, Vietnamese troops, with Soviet support, crossed the western border. Six days later, Cambodia refused to negotiate and ended diplomatic relations with Vietnam. Vietnamese troops liberated Phnom Penh on January 7, 1979, overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime and established the People's Republic of Cambodia with Heng Samrin. To gain complete control of Cambodia, the Vietnam People's Army repelled the remaining Khmer Rouge units that had retreated to remote areas along the Thailand-Cambodia border. The situation escalated when Thailand's territorial sovereignty was violated many times. Heavy fighting with many casualties due to direct confrontations between Vietnamese and Thai troops. Thailand allied with Beijing to strengthen its military, buy new equipment, resupply the Khmer Rouge and build a diplomatic front against Vietnam.

Vietnam attacked and occupied Cambodia for over a decade. After the Paris Peace Conference in 1989, Vietnam withdrew its troops from Cambodia. This time Vietnam's economy was in trouble and Vietnam was isolated in the international arena except for the Soviet bloc because of its aggressive aggression against Cambodia. The US economic embargo resulted in many countries refusing to have trade relations. Neither the World Bank nor the International Monetary Fund provided loans. Finally, the fighting with regular troops in the region ended after the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia signed with the United Nations to oversee a ceasefire and disarmament of the conflicting factions after 13 years of war. In 1993 Cambodia held elections supervised by the United Nations to establish a constitutional parliament with a constitutional monarchy.

### **Northern War 1979**

The traditional Vietnam-China conflict took place in modern times under the Republic of Vietnam in 1974 and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in 1988 so that China occupied the entire Hoàng Sa (Paracel) archipelago for the purpose of paving the way to Southeast Asia and controlling the maritime route in the East Sea.

After France withdrew from Indochina under the 1954 Geneva Agreement, the entire territorial sea south of the 17th parallel of Vietnam controlled by the French army would be transferred to the Vietnamese National Army, including the Hoàng Sa (Paracel) archipelago. After the government of the Republic of Vietnam was established on the basis of inheriting the State of Vietnam, the archipelago was under the administrative management of the Republic of Vietnam. During the transition between France and Vietnam in 1956, the People's Republic of China occupied the eastern half of the Paracels and the Republic of China occupied Aba Island (in the Spratlys).

After diplomatic tensions in 1974, the naval war occurred due to the tacit agreement settlement in the 1972 Shanghai negotiation between Mao and Nixon and the China-US delegation at the Paris conference in 1973. The US withdrew all troops from Vietnam on March 29, 1973 with a commitment to support China's 12 nautical miles. The Republic of

Vietnam alone fought the DRV, which was a convenient opportunity for China to carry out its long-standing plan to suddenly invade the Paracel, even though China had signed the "Convention of the International Conference on Vietnam" on March 2, 1973, respecting Vietnam's independence and territorial integrity. According to article 2 of this convention, the participating countries " *recognize that the [Paris] Agreement meets the aspirations of the Vietnamese people's basic national rights of independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, the right of self-determination of the Vietnamese people, and respond to the earnest aspiration for peace of all countries in the world.*" (Among the countries that signed the treaty on March 2, 1973, there was China represented by Foreign Minister Cơ Bằng Phi.)

### **Hoàng Sa (Paracel) Naval Battle 1974**

The 1974 Paracel Sea Battle was a battle between the Republic of Vietnam Navy and the Chinese Navy that occurred on January 19, 1974 on the Paracel Islands. Both sides claim sovereignty over the archipelago, while the United Nations does not confirm any country's sovereignty over the Paracel, leading to disputes over sovereignty and ultimately creating conflict. The Republic of Vietnam Navy quickly failed with the tacit agreement or indifference of the US Navy. The 7th Fleet did not take any action, including saving the ARVN soldiers who were escaping by canoe in the middle of the sea. In exchange for its alliance with China, the US warned the South Vietnamese regime not to fight back and tacitly recognized the Paracel as belonging to China.

When the naval battle of the Paracel occurred, the DRV said that "*the Paracel lie below the 17th parallel and therefore do not affect them. In general, they don't take a stance, don't take sides.*" (Report by William Colby, director of the CIA, January 25, 1974). North Vietnam did not dare to speak out against China because DRV was receiving aid from China to wage a war to invade South Vietnam. The Hanoi government only stated that territorial disputes between countries should be resolved by negotiation in the spirit of respecting justice, mutual respect and good neighborliness. (Qiang Zhai). It was not until 1979, when a border war broke out between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and China, that the communist authorities in Hanoi condemned Beijing's invasion of the Paracel Islands.

China also took advantage of the Soviet-American conflict and concern about Soviet expansion in the Third World, to gain Western support in punishing the DRV. Deng Xiaoping was welcomed by US President Carter in Washington in early 1979 to seek support to "teach Vietnam a lesson". The West, like ASEAN, followed China's lead in accusing Vietnam of being a vassal of the Soviet Union, fostering expansionist tendencies. As a result, Vietnam fell into a political abyss after 1979, and it was not until 10 years later that it came out of its isolation.



The Vietnam-China border war originated from the long tense relationship between the two countries, took place for about a month with loss of life and property for both sides. The 1979 Border War, commonly known as the Vietnam-China Border War of 1979, was a short but fierce war between China and Vietnam. The Chinese armed forces launched a punitive campaign on February 17, 1979 and attacked the northern provinces between the two countries of Vietnam. China was determined to contain Soviet/Vietnamese influence.

The Vietnam - China border war in 1979 was brief but left many consequences. The war ended when China announced the completion of its withdrawal on March 16, 1979 after President Tôn Đức Thắng on the Vietnamese side signed an order to mobilize the entire population and China captured Lạng Sơn towns, Lào Cai, Cao Bằng and some border towns. Then both China and Vietnam declared victory. Despite suffering great losses and failing to force Vietnam to withdraw its troops from Cambodia, China proved that its Soviet opponent would not directly join the war to protect Vietnamese comrades. The war also left long-term consequences for Vietnam's economy and tension in relations between the two countries. Armed conflict on the border between the two countries continued for more than ten years. In 1991, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the funding ran out, so diplomatic relations between Vietnam and China were officially normalized.

The Vietnam-China conflict 1979–1991 was a series of military clashes on the border and islands between the two countries, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the People's Republic of China. When the People's Liberation Army withdrew from Vietnam on March 16, 1979 after a border war, China declared that it was not ambitious for "an inch of Vietnamese territory". In fact, Chinese troops encroached on about 60 square kilometers of disputed territory that Vietnam controlled before hostilities broke out. In some places, such as the area around Friendship Gate near Lạng Sơn, the Chinese occupied pieces of land that had no military value but had important symbolic value. Elsewhere, Chinese troops occupied strategic military positions as a springboard from which they could attack Vietnam. China's occupation of border territories infuriated Vietnam, and between the two sides broke out a series of battles for control of those areas. The border conflict between Vietnam and China continued until 1988, culminating in the years 1984-1985. By 1990, with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the fighting ceased, and relations between the two countries gradually returned to normal, but Vietnam was in a weak position. With the signing of the Agreement on Demarcation of Territories in 2009, China gradually withdrew from the positions occupied by Vietnam in the past.

### **Trường Sa (Spratly) Naval Battle 1988**

In Vietnamese Navy documents, this event was part of "sovereignty protection" activities in Operation CQ-88 (Sovereign-88). Many Vietnamese documents refer to this event briefly as the Trường Sa Naval War or the Gạc Ma Massacre. The conflict for control over the Spratly Islands 1988 was a conflict event in the Spratly Islands area in 1988 when the People's Liberation Army Navy of China attacked with force to occupy Cô Lin Reef, the rocky reef Len Đao and Gạc Ma reef, at that time being protected by the Vietnam People's

Navy and building constructions on these islands. The event happened when the world's public opinion was focusing on the situation in Cambodia, before ASEAN countries re-established relations with Vietnam on the Cambodia issue. The Chinese side sent landing troops to stop and open fire to snatch the Vietnamese flag on Gạc Ma reef, then used the cannons on their ships to shoot at the Vietnamese naval transport ship (which had no cannon for self-defense), causing the battle broken out on the morning of March 14, 1988. The Vietnamese side lost three Navy transport ships, and 64 Vietnamese sailors were killed. China suffered damages to a number of landing craft, and 25 sailors injured. After that, China poured troops to occupy Gạc Ma Reef and the two countries sent their navy out to keep a number of other reefs that both sides claimed sovereignty. The Republic of China (Taiwan) side had expressed its support for the Chinese army in this battle.

### **Disputes over the Nine-dash (Cow's Tongue) Line**

The Spratly Islands (English: Spratly Islands; Sino-Vietnamese: Nansha Islands; Malay and Indonesian: Kepulauan Spratly; Tagalog: Kapuluan Kalayaan) are a set of geographical features surrounded by rich fishing areas and possessing large oil and gas reserves in the East Sea.

Disputes in the Spratly Islands and nearby areas are not only disputes over sovereignty over islands/rocks but also disputes over natural resources such as oil and gas and seafood.

There have been many conflicts between countries over foreign fishing vessels in other countries' exclusive economic zones and the press often reports on the arrests of fishermen. Many of the claimant states have not yet granted permission to exploit resources in the waters of the archipelago, fearing an immediate conflict could result. Foreign companies also do not make any commitment to exploit this area until the territorial dispute is resolved or the participating countries reach a mutual agreement. Today, the archipelago is in a state of territorial disputes to varying degrees among six countries, respectively: Brunei, Republic of China (Taiwan), People's Republic of China (China), Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam. At the international level, the scope of the Spratly Islands concept is still unclear and controversial. At the national level there are also different interpretations. As for the Philippines, the scope of its claim covers most of the archipelago and is known as the Kalayaan Island Group. Although Taiwan, China and Vietnam nominally all claim sovereignty over the entire archipelago, but the concept of Nansha Islands in the perception of Taiwan and China is inclusive of all the geographical features located within the southern part of the "nine-dash line".



The nine-dash line (English: Nine-dash line; Sino-Vietnamese: Nine-dash line, also known as the cow's tongue line, U-shaped line, and nine-dash line) is the name used to refer to the territorial sea in the East Sea which the Republic of China and later the People's Republic of China (China) advocated and unilaterally claimed sovereignty. It first appeared

in February 1948 under the Chiang Kai-shek government, in the appendix "Map of the location of the South China Sea islands" of the "Map of the Republic of China Administrative Region." This line appeared since the Republic of China was not able to measure the islands at the time to determine all the terrain, creating a demarcation line for the surrounding administrative area, so they drew a line running through the point between the islands and the neighboring land to indicate that the islands within the drawn line are Chinese territory. No specific geographical coordinates have been given and maps have been shown to show different eleven-dash lines from time to time. After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the People's Republic of China still defined the boundaries of the "11-dash line" of the Republic of China. In 1953, two segments in the Gulf of Tonkin were removed, becoming the "nine-dash line".

On September 4, 1958, the Government of the People's Republic of China claimed a twelve-nautical-mile territorial sea including the East China Sea, Paracel, Zhongsha (Scarborough Shoal), Spratly and all other islands of China. On September 14, 1958, Prime Minister Phạm Văn Đồng of the DRV-North Vietnam sent a diplomatic note to Zhou Enlai, Premier of the State Council of China, recognizing and supporting the declaration of the Government of the People's Republic of China on China's territorial sea. After the border war in 1979 and currently Vietnam declared the Chinese sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly islands as illegal based on historical evidence and legal bases which support Vietnam's sovereignty over these islands.

The cow's tongue line covers four groups of archipelagos and large shoals in the East Sea, namely Hoàng Sa archipelago, Trường Sa archipelago, Đông Sa archipelago and Macclesfield beach. In early 1974, a short time after the defeat in the battle at the Crescent Island group of the Paracel Islands (also known as the Paracel Sea Battle in 1974), the government of the Republic of Vietnam issued a decision to strengthen its forces at Trường Sa archipelago. Sa and instructed the army to conduct the "Trần Hưng Đạo 48" campaign to capture a number of islands.

At the 1951 San Francisco Conference on the delimitation of territories and islands that the Empire of Japan once occupied during World War II, the Spratly were the subject of claims by many claimants: Union of France, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. As a result, the Conference did not recognize any country's sovereignty, the archipelago was considered derelict and caused even more intense disputes later. Although the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea was created to determine maritime boundary issues, the Convention itself does not contain any provisions on how to resolve disputes over sovereignty of island features.

All the countries participating in the dispute over the islands, except Brunei, have their armies, weapons, equipment and personnel stationed at various military bases on various islets and reefs. In November 1946, when both the Việt Minh and the French were preparing

for war in the mainland, Chiang Kai-shek's army landed on Woody Island in the Paracel, and in December 1946, landed on Itu Aba in the Spratly. In 1950, Chiang's troops withdrew from these two archipelagos to allow Beijing to claim "sovereignty". After the Geneva Agreements, when the South Vietnamese government had not yet had time to take over the Paracel, the two largest islands there were taken by "Chinese liberation forces".

In 1956, Taiwan occupied Taiping Island. In the early 1970s, the Philippines occupied 7 islands and reefs in the eastern area of the archipelago. In March 1988, Vietnam and China clashed militarily at three reefs: Gạc Ma, Cô Lin and Len Đao. In February 1995 and November 1998, there were two outbreaks of political tension between China and the Philippines due to China's actions to gain and consolidate control of Mischief Reef. Vietnam currently controls 21 geographical entities (7 atoll and dunes along 14 small coral reefs), the Philippines 10 (7 atolls and dunes along 3 small coral reefs), Malaysia 7 small coral reefs, Taiwan one island and small coral reefs, and Chinese self-claim "hegemony" 90% of this area.

At the First Conference on the issue of sovereignty disputes in the East Sea held in Hanoi in March 2009, Hoàng Việt's report from the East Sea Research Foundation analyzed China's claims to the "cow's tongue line" area according to international law, asserting that the U-shaped line violates the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982. Just one day after China submitted a map of the nine-dash line in the East Sea to the Secretary-General. United Nations, May 7, 2009, Vietnam, Malaysia and then Indonesia protested and rejected it.

At the conference titled "East Sea Disputes: National sovereignty and international rules" chaired by Thiên Tắc Economic Research Institute and online newspaper Sina.com/blog, held on the afternoon of June 14, 2012 in Hanoi at the Tianze Economic Research Institute, Chinese scholar Li Linghua, a long-time researcher on international maritime boundary demarcation, admitted that: *"The nine-dash line drawn by our ancestors has no specific latitude and longitude, and there is no legal basis"*.

On July 12, 2016, at the Permanent Court of International Arbitration (PCA) in The Hague, the Netherlands, in the Philippines' sovereignty case, a 5-person arbitration panel officially declared the rejection of the nine-dash line of China, requested the immediate withdrawal of this policy. The judges at The Hague ruled the following:

- China has no "historic rights" to the South China Sea;
- The nine-dash line drawn by China itself is not consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea;
- There is no feature in the Spratly that can confer an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to China.

The Spratly Islands have no arable land and no indigenous people. Research by a number of scholars such as Dzurek (1985), Bennett (1992), Cordner (1994) and Legal Advisor to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs have all shown that the Spratly islands lack the ability to sustain full economic life because they are so small, arid, and have very few resources on the island. The natural resources of the waters of the Spratly archipelago are very valuable, such as seafood and the potential for oil and gas. In 1972, Geological Service Inc (GSI) researched the central and southern areas of the Hoàng Sa archipelago. In June 1973, two groups from Britain and France, Roberto Research International Limited and Bureau d'Études Industrielles et de Coopération de l'Institut Français du Pétrole (BEICPIP) collaborated to produce a report on Geology and Exploitation of hydrocarbons offshore South Vietnam. At that time, the Republic of Vietnam began to organize bidding for foreign companies. The winning companies had drilled many wells, and in October 1973 said that in the continental shelf of Vietnam, the potential for oil is real. The preparation for oil exploitation in the East Sea of the Republic of Vietnam could not be overlooked by China. China immediately issued a statement reconfirming the two archipelagos of Paracel and Spratly as China's Nansha and Xisha. The situation was becoming more and more tense. Both the Republic of Vietnam and China reinforced many warships to confront each other. Finally, the naval war broke out on January 19, 1974. The stronger Chinese fleet prevailed. In June 1976 the Philippines drilled for oil at the Nido complex off the coast of Palawan.

Regarding the potential of oil, gas and other minerals, the geology of the archipelago's waters has not been surveyed much, so there are no reliable assessment data. However, China's Ministry of Geology and Mineral Resources estimates that the Spratly Islands have very large oil and natural gas reserves, up to 17.7 billion tons compared with 13 billion tons of Kuwait, and they rank the area as one of the four regions with the largest oil and gas reserves in the world.

Located in a tropical climate area and with diverse ecosystems, the Spratly archipelago has the potential to attract tourists. The Spratly waters are also one of the most densely packed maritime regions in the world. During the 1980s, at least 270 ships passed through the Spratly Islands every day, and "now" more than half of the world's supertankers pass through the waters annually. The Spratly Islands currently do not have a large port, but only a few fishing ports and small airstrips on strategically located islands near the main shipping route. However, sailing through this area may face many difficulties due to the danger of storms, high waves and the risk of running aground or hitting reefs.

After the clash between the Chinese Navy and the Vietnamese Navy in 1988, from 2014, China began reclamation and expansion of Fiery Cross Reef into the largest artificial island in the Spratly archipelago at 2.74 km<sup>2</sup> (as of July 2015) with a total cost of more than 73 billion yuan (11.5 billion USD). China built on Fiery Cross 9 piers, 2 heliports, and 10 antennas for satellite communications and a radar station, a 3,000m runway large enough

for strategic bombers in the Spratly to allow the Chinese military to cover vast airspace from the Western Pacific including Guam (where there are American bases) to the Indian Ocean.

The commander of the US Pacific Command (PACOM), Admiral Harry Harris, said that currently, the reefs that China occupies and illegally built in the South China Sea look exactly like bases for fighter aircraft, bombers, ships and reconnaissance activities. According to the Pentagon's Asia-Pacific Maritime Security Strategy report, in early December 2013, China began building artificial islands on the rocks and the reefs they control in the Spratly. From December 2013 to June 2015, China expanded 1,170 hectares of artificial islands. In places where China has built islands, it has dug deep canals and berths for large ships to dock. Compared with neighboring countries who also did reclamation, in just 20 months China expanded 17 times the area of other countries combined in 40 years and accounted for 95% of the total area of artificial islands in the East Sea. The infrastructure that China is building could help increase its power presence in the South China Sea. The artificial islands will help China increase its combat capability in the Spratly Islands. The country can also use them to hunt submarines in and out of these waters to protect its submarines.

On September 16, 2015, US Defense Secretary Ash Carter said the US would operate in any area that international law allows. Washington has repeatedly criticized Beijing for its aggressive moves, and China's assertiveness in the South China Sea, including its construction of artificial islands - such as the chain of islands in the Spratly and further north in the Paracel - where Beijing has built an airfield for the purpose of military purposes. Turning a reef into an airport does not imply sovereign rights or the right to restrict air and maritime traffic. Washington asserts that freedom of navigation and freedom of access to the disputed territory are crucial to the regulation of navigation on international sea lanes. This is an area in the Spratly archipelago in accordance with international law in the area of freedom of navigation operations. “ *Innocent passage* ” is a concept used in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS 1982) on allowing foreign ships to pass through the territorial waters of a country or sovereign territory, with certain restrictions on the rights of such vessels. With a view and strategy, determined not to let China monopolize the East Sea, freedom of navigation patrols (FONOP) of the US Navy were conducted amid rising tensions between the two powers over the strategic sea lane.

## **Chapter 26. Movements for Democracy and Human Rights**

In the 1945 Declaration of Independence written by President Hồ Chí Minh, it affirmed the democratic freedoms of all Vietnamese people. In the 1946 Constitution, the Preamble affirms three basic principles of this Constitution:

- Unite the whole people regardless of race, male, female, class or religion;

- Ensure democratic freedoms;
- Implement a strong and wise government of the people.

The Communist Party's view later said that the 1946 Constitution contained "less socialist nature, voluntarism, centralized bureaucracy and subsidies". However, the provisions of the 1946 Constitution were mostly not materialized. The Vietnam Labor Party established a dictatorship of the proletariat in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese government believes that "Vietnam's Constitution guarantees all citizens equal rights in politics, economy, culture and society, the right to complain and denounce, the right to work, study, and health care ... regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion." However, some foreign organizations believe that there is a big gap between what is stated in the constitution and reality. In the period after 1975 to 1988, in Vietnam there were three parties: the Communist Party of Vietnam, the Socialist Party of Vietnam and the Democratic Party of Vietnam. Since 1988, the Democratic Party of Vietnam and the Socialist Party of Vietnam announced to cease operations, and in Vietnam there is only one party to lead, the Communist Party of Vietnam. Currently, according to the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the Communist Party of Vietnam is the only political party leading the entire people and the State. The Vietnamese government does not allow the establishment of an openly opposition party or organization, the publication of private press (Directive 37) and unofficial demonstrations and rallies.

The International Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) classifies Vietnam as an authoritarian regime along with China and Burma. According to the 2012 Democracy Index ranking conducted by the Economist, Vietnam ranks 144th out of 167 countries in the ranking. According to this magazine's list, Vietnam is in the group of authoritarian governments lacking democracy. For many years, the US State Department also classified Vietnam as a country "without democracy, with restrictions on freedom of the press and religion".

Under international pressure, and at the same time wanting to join the international community and the WTO, Vietnam **signed** a series of international conventions on human rights and democracy. After Vietnam signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Program of Action 1993, Vietnam amended its Constitution (1992), recognizing human rights in accordance with the signed agreements. According to Article 4 of the 1992 Constitution, the Communist Party of Vietnam is the comprehensive leading force in all activities of society. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that Vietnam has signed and committed to implement, citizens have the right to "freedom of ideology" within the legal framework, but the distinction between "criticism" and "anti-propaganda" is inconsistent.

If compared with the standards of the Western democratic system, Vietnam currently has many problems in implementing democracy according to the commitments that Vietnam has signed. First of all is the freedom to vote and choose candidates. Then there are the rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of the press and access to information from multiple sources, and freedom of religion. Therefore, international human rights organizations believe that in Vietnam "there is no democracy". Similarly, when comparing before and after 1975, the political atmosphere in South Vietnam was more open, and rallies against the Saigon government were quite active and popular, especially the urban movement. Many of the demonstrations were organized by the Communists of South Vietnam to pull strings and take advantage of troubles to account for a large part of the collapse of the southern regime. Due to the clear understanding of the results of political turmoil, the former student activists were restricted by the repressive police regime.

The Vietnamese government affirms that it is always interested in democracy and seeks to expand and promote democracy in Vietnam, but it also acknowledges that the US and Western countries have used human rights issues as a "weapon" in the strategy of peaceful evolution aimed at transforming socialist countries or in economic negotiations. The Vietnamese government always emphasizes that it does not accept foreign forces using democratic pretexts to interfere in Vietnam's internal affairs, as well as the fact that some individuals in the country "disguise themselves of democracy" to interfere in the country's internal affairs, slander, misrepresent, distort information, and commit acts that violate Vietnamese law. At the National Security Conference on the afternoon of December 17, 2012 in Hanoi, Prime Minister Nguyễn Tấn Dũng said: "resolutely not to rekindle the formation of opposition political organizations that oppose and go against the interests of the country and the people".

### **Individuals and Organizations in Vietnam**

After 1975, when the country was unified, the whole country followed Socialism, a number of movements against the socialist regime remained in the South, carried out by individuals of the Republic of Vietnam regime but all failed. Especially starting from the process of "opening up", "renovation" started from 1985-1986, individuals and organizations claiming to be fighting for democracy in the country began to appear. In particular, as socialism around the world collapsed, revisionist movements began to take shape.

**Vietnam Human Rights Front**, an organization fighting for human rights, was established and operated very soon after the communist North Vietnamese invaded the South (1976-1978). It was established in early 1977 by Mr. Nguyễn Đình Phương or Giáo Phương, originally from the Đại Việt Party, Chairman of the Front; after 10 years in prison at the Chí Hòa prison, he died after his prison term expired. This is a collective of Tonkinese emigrants who fled the communists after 1954, who published the 1977 Vietnam Declaration of Human Rights with content full of ideas about human rights and civil rights that were



considered by the Vietnamese communist government at that time as serious security breach.

Although after 41 years (1977-2018) Vietnam still has no human rights, the repression of human rights defenders continues. But the reality shows that it is the struggles for human rights of successive generations, along with international pressure, that have forced the Vietnamese Communist Party and government to gradually return to the people their rights in democracy, people's livelihood, basic human rights despite the fact that the communist regime in power continues to commit more serious, sophisticated and cruel repression of human rights and civil rights. The latest accusations from the European Union (EU) countries and the US Congress are still true about the bad repression of human rights by the Vietnamese communist government.

**Trần Độ and some others:** Lieutenant General Trần Độ was the former head of the Central Committee for Culture and Arts. From 1991 until his death in August 2002, Trần Độ contributed to nurturing the movement along with Mr. Hoàng Minh Chính, Phạm Quế Dương, and Nguyễn Thanh Giang. He called for "restoring the inherent role and position of the National Assembly and the Government. The Constitution must be properly implemented, that is, the laws that are not in accordance with the Constitution's spirit must be corrected. That is, there must be laws enacted to promulgate the right to freedom of association, party formation, freedom of speech, press and publication laws. Amend the laws on free election and candidacy, relinquish the decision-making power of Party organizations."

**Block 8406:** includes a number of individuals who claim to be callers for democracy in Vietnam. The name "Block 8406" comes from the group's April 8, 2006 manifesto. The Vietnamese government believes that the group's activities violate Vietnamese law and has sentenced several members, including Nguyễn Văn Đài and Lê Thị Công Nhân. They want the Vietnamese people to have freedom and democracy like other civilized countries in the world like in Czechoslovakia through the Velvet Revolution, a nonviolent revolution in Czechoslovakia that took place from November 16, 1989 to December 29 of the same year and led to the collapse of the socialist regime in that country. This event was part of a series of collapses of socialist regimes in other Eastern European countries in 1989.



**Club of Independent and Free Journalists:** a number of individuals organize clubs to promote freedom of expression. Some key members include Nguyễn Văn Hải (blogger), AnhbaSG, Tạ Phong Tần, Nguyễn Tường Thụy...

**Vietnam's bauxite movement:** some intellectuals demanded that the Government give up the bauxite project in the Central Highlands and that the Communist Party carry out reforms, be more democratic, listen to opinions at home and abroad when conducting affairs. This is a protest against a number of current issues of the Party's leadership and the Government's management (including: the bauxite project, the North-South high-speed railway project, the Vinashin case ...). Website of Bauxite Vietnam was edited by Professor Nguyễn Huệ Chi.

**Democratic Party of Vietnam (XXI)** announced by Hoàng Minh Chính to restore 2006 but the operation was ineffective due to the domestic ban and not being able to mobilize support. Hoàng Minh Chính also did not have influence on society.

**Democratic Youth Gathering** founded by Nguyễn Tiến Trung, including a number of young people at home and abroad gathered to call for democracy in Vietnam. They believe that Vietnam still does not have democracy and human rights, so their stated ultimate goal is to promote democratization of the country.

**Religious organizations:** The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam was banned after 1975. After 1975, the late Most Venerable Thích Huyền Quang in Bình Định and the Most Venerable Thích Quảng Độ continued to ask for justice and peace for the nation. Thích Quảng Độ has been the Supreme Patriarch since 2008 and was a Vietnamese dissident for human rights activities. He was awarded the 2006 Thorolf Rafto Memorial Prize and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize several times. He spent many years in prison for fighting for the right to religious freedom in Vietnam. Some of the NGOs that promote religious freedom in Vietnam include: "Quê Mẹ: Action for Democracy in Vietnam" with Thích Quảng Độ as a key member.



Ven. Thích Quảng Độ



Father Nguyễn Văn Lý

Father Nguyễn Văn Lý is a former prisoner of conscience with four years in prison. In September 1977, because of his involvement in the dissemination of two speeches by Archbishop Nguyễn Kim Điền with the content condemning the Vietnamese government for "advocating for the destruction of religion", Father Lý was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison for the crime of "anti-revolution" and imprisoned in Thừa Phủ (Huế). On

March 30, 2007, in Huế, the People's Court of Thừa Thiên-Huế province opened a trial for Father Lý on charges of "conducting propaganda against the State", showing non-cooperation, opposition and speaking out "Down with the Vietnamese communists...", a security guard in plain clothes covered Nguyễn Văn Lý's mouth with his hand. This image has become a symbol of the suppression of freedom of speech and religion under the current regime.

**Individuals:** a number of well-known individuals such as Lê Công Định, Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, Lê Thăng Long, Cù Huy Hà Vũ... were arrested and charged with crimes of abusing democracy to oppose the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The news about democracy of these organizations and individuals are often disseminated by them on the internet. The Proposal 72 group proposed to change the Constitution to add democratic rights to the people.

**Network of Vietnamese Bloggers and dissidents have used the Internet** to propagate their political views about disagreeing with certain government policies or regulations, or making statements against the Party. Forms include forums, blogs (Huy Đức, Vietnam Bauxite network, Vietnam Human Rights Network, ...) or speeches via Paltalk network or retreat to secret activities, not publicly recognized as **Democratic Youth Union, Block 8406, Old Resistance Club**. Many people were detained because the Vietnamese



government believed that they had violated Article 88 of the Penal Code for abusing freedom to propagate against the State. Those who regularly express thoughts critical of the Party's leadership are considered "dissidents", and to a greater extent "hostile forces" and can be severely punished. A typical example is the case of Cù Huy Hà Vũ who gave speeches against the ideology and leadership of the Party and was accused of

"undermining the socialist state".

The Vietnamese government considers that social criticism is very necessary, but Decision 97 of the Prime Minister issued in 2009 requires "criticism on the guidelines and policies of the Party and State need to send such comments to the relevant Party and State agencies, they must not be publicly announced in the name or in association with the name of the socialist organization." Therefore, the Party does not allow critical comments to be published before permission. In 1986, Vietnam started the process of Đổi Mới, integrating with the world. Vietnam signed treaties on human rights when participating in international organizations and accordingly in turn change its human rights policies.

After 1975, Vietnam was unified under the leadership of the Communist Party. Under the strict management of the police, no protests broke out. When Vietnam began to open up

to reform, people's living standards improved, but there was no political change, and protest activities did not take place much. Typically, the demonstrations in Thái Bình province in 1997 or in the Central Highlands in 2001. In fact, some of the protest movements had the influence of foreign factors, causing peaceful developments, threatening the leadership of the Communist Party. The media is afraid to use the word "protest" but often uses words such as "gathering in large numbers" (claims), "gathering to cause disturbances" (order and peace).

By Amnesty International's standards, so-called **Prisoners of Conscience** are individuals who are imprisoned, detained or harassed for expressing their human right claims under nonviolent activism. Freedom to live with conscience is one of the basic human rights, besides freedom of thought, religion, speech, etc. Freedom to live according to one's conscience is to live in morality and in love, in justice and in truth. Refers to a prisoner of conscience anyone imprisoned for peacefully fighting for human rights or because of their race, politics, religion, color, language, belief or way of life, as long as they did not use or advocate violence.

In the view of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the State of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, there are no prisoners of conscience in Vietnam because this concept has not been accepted by senior party cadres. Their perspective is still the main difference between the Vietnamese government and the public opinion and political world of Western countries. The Vietnamese mainstream view them as "lawbreakers" who should be tried. The Vietnamese Communist government arrests activists on fabricated charges. Many bloggers, lawyers, land rights activists, environmental activists, anti-Formosa and anti-China, political dissidents and followers of unregistered minority religions have been arrested and detained simply because they peacefully exercise the civil and political rights enshrined in the country's constitution.

Every year, dozens of people are arrested and falsely accused of "conducting propaganda against the state", "abusing democratic freedoms" or "conspiring to overthrow" with very heavy sentences despite the regime's constitution recognizes all basic freedoms. They declare things or make inferences based on the spirit and content that the Vietnamese State Constitution has set forth. Most of the prisoners of conscience have been charged with crimes against the state. Most prisoners of conscience have been charged or convicted under the charges of Articles 79, 87 and 88 of the 1999 Penal Code or Articles 109, 117 and 331 of the 2015 Penal Code.

According to Amnesty International's 2018 report, Vietnam has 97 prisoners of conscience and considers Vietnam to be one of the most active prisons for peaceful activists in Southeast Asia. Take a look at the number of people in Vietnam who have been labeled by AI as "prisoners of conscience" for protection: Thích Quảng Độ, Nguyễn Đan Quế, Lê

Công Định, Nguyễn Văn Lý, Cù Huy Hà Vũ, Nguyễn Hữu Vinh, Nguyễn Ngọc Như Quỳnh, Trần Thị Nga, Tạ Phong Tần, Trần Huỳnh Duy Thức, Nguyễn Văn Hải, etc...

In August 2013, in the article "Thoughts in sick days" published in Người Việt newspaper (published in Orange County, California, USA), Lê Hiếu Đằng was former Vice Chairman of the Fatherland Front Committee in Vietnam in Hồ Chí Minh City, after escaping abroad, said that the Communist Party had "betrayed the revolutionary ideals, betrayed the people, betrayed the people who contributed to the building of the regime", including him. He argued that it was necessary to democratize and build a multi-party institution "to save the country from the current critical situation", calling for the establishment of a political party named Social Democratic Party.

On May 6, 2014, Cù Huy Hà Vũ appeared in public, through a press conference at the headquarters of the US Congress in Washington DC. Dr. Vũ said that his father, like his uncle, poet Xuân Diệu, were honest people, advocated for the poor and farmers, and fought against the corrupt Vietnamese government, so he continued the above tradition. Dr. Vũ affirmed that he still holds a Vietnamese passport, is a Vietnamese citizen, so he has always fought for human rights, democracy and happiness of the Vietnamese people.

International organizations such as Reporters Without Borders RSF, Human Rights Watch, the US Government and the EU regularly have human rights dialogues with the Hanoi regime about terrorism, arrests, beating, assaulting and then imprisoning those who speak the truth and their thoughts do not agree with the party but have little effect. Therefore, human rights have a great influence on the economic development of the country because it is difficult to appeal international capitalist investors and call for export trade. Hanoi ignored it when international human rights organizations condemned the Vietnamese Communists for violating international commitments on human rights as well as calling for the release of those detained or imprisoned. The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act of 2016 authorizes the US government to punish officials of governments around the world including Vietnam for human rights abuses by restricting financial resources and travel to the US. Through the Defending Freedoms Project of the Tom Lantos Commission on Human Rights, US Congressmen and Members of Congress campaigned for release, reduced sentences, and improved conditions for prisoners of conscience.

### **Overseas Organizations**

These mainly were organized by overseas Vietnamese. The boat people and the re-education prisoners of the ODP program after resettling in a third country, especially the US, Australia, and Europe, have many opportunities to re-establish their careers and succeed in foreign lands while continuing to fight for real democracy and human rights for Vietnam. Some have disbanded, others belong to the Coordination Committee for Action for Democracy. The four members of the Committee are the People's Democratic Party, the Vietnamese Labor Movement, the Rally for Justice, and the Việt Tân Party. Overseas

Vietnamese have many opinions about the democratic process for Vietnam, but lack of an ideological consensus, a roadmap and specific evaluation conditions. Among these, the Việt Tân Party has been listed by the Vietnamese government as a terrorist group.

### **Overseas Vietnamese community**

There are many names for Vietnamese people residing outside the territory of Vietnam, who may be holding Vietnamese nationality or/and nationality of the host country, such as overseas Vietnamese or Việt kiều or Vietnamese in another country. In the early 1970s, there were about 100,000 Vietnamese living outside Vietnam, mainly concentrated in neighboring countries (Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, etc.) and France. This number skyrocketed after the events of 1975 and the number of countries inhabited by Vietnamese people also increased; they departed as part of the April 1975 evacuation, in waves of boat people and under the Orderly Departure Program. Since the 1990s, Vietnamese people have immigrated to the US mainly for family reunification. Vietnamese Americans began to assimilate into American society and became a significant ethnic minority in the country.

In the early 1990s, with the collapse of the Eastern European bloc and the Soviet Union, people sent by the Vietnamese government to study and work without returning home contributed to the mass of Vietnamese who settled in these countries as well as migrated to Western Europe. Later, the strategy of "exporting labor" as well as "getting married to a foreign husband" increased the overseas Vietnamese population. Thus, overseas now there are more than 4 million Vietnamese people living in more than 100 countries in five continents, mainly the US, Australia, Canada, Japan, Northern Europe...of which more than 2 million live in the US.

The overseas Vietnamese community has outstanding characteristics such as a young, dynamic community that quickly integrates and the vast majority tend to settle in the host country for a long time, about 80% have naturalized but most have not renounced Vietnamese nationality while most Vietnamese in Russia and Eastern Europe still consider as temporary residence. However, the overseas Vietnamese community is characterized by complex social composition, political trends, and diversity in occupations, religions, and ethnicities, differences in class, political opinion and circumstances of leaving as well as residing in different areas.

French people of Vietnamese origin live relatively peacefully and integrate into French society, without causing many problems like other minority groups in France. Although not as active as Vietnamese refugee communities in the US or Australia, French people of Vietnamese origin has some political activities such as honoring 60 years of the yellow flag with three red stripes in Paris. Although French-Vietnamese have a relatively high naturalization rate, they have little interest in politics in France and rarely participate in local and national elections. They often naturalize for economic reasons instead of their

political stance. Although they are not interested in political changes in France, they are very interested in the political situation in their homeland, and in the past have played a very important role in political movements in Vietnam in the 20th century.

After 1975, the overseas Vietnamese community divided into two distinct groups: one that supported the Hanoi government and the other that was against the Communist Party. Due to the trend of political ideology (national or communist) before 1975 and now, it is patriotic or reactionary according to the concept of the winners, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Communist Party. Supporters of the Hanoi government self-identified as "immigrants" while anti-communists self-identified as "refugees" with an opposing stance against the government in Vietnam, hence the title Vietnamese living abroad must be demonstrated as follows:

- Reactionary overseas Vietnamese who are mostly Vietnamese refugees (e.g., Vietnamese Americans) and do not accept the current regime
- Patriotic overseas Vietnamese are immigrants with Vietnamese passports, most of them living temporarily and are closely related to the current regime.

For the majority of Vietnamese Australians, political views tend to be opposed to those of the state government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The difference between the anti-communist extremist tendencies of members immigrating to Australia after the events of April 30, 1975, and a somewhat more moderate trend of Vietnamese immigrants to Australia in the last two decades (from the 1990s onwards) because they immigrate to Australia less for political reasons, but mostly for economic purposes, want to find an economically developed and easy to do business and live, like the goal of any community Overseas Chinese or other Southeast Asian immigrant communities.. For reasons of language, family connections, employment and especially compatriotism, the majority of Vietnamese live together and often gather in big cities. Vietnamese people in Australia often live in solidarity, and often have community activities to preserve Vietnamese culture and identity.

Vietnamese Americans are political refugees, considering returning to Vietnam is impossible, so they participate in political activities in the US at a very high rate. Although the Vietnamese community has found fortunate opportunities to succeed in the US, they have had to overcome many difficulties but thanks to their efforts, talents, and personal ethics, including discrimination against Asians. It can be said that after more than 40 years of community building and development in the US, now the Vietnamese community in the US is a united community supporting each other to develop and maintain the cultural traditions of the Vietnamese people in the US. Flower country.

Vietnamese Americans have the highest naturalization rates of all immigrant groups: in 2015, 86% of all Vietnamese in the US who were eligible for naturalization became US citizens. Many Vietnamese-Americans have strong anti-communist views, especially those

who used to join the army of the Republic of Vietnam. In a poll for the Orange County Register in 2000, 71% of respondents said that fighting against communism was a "top priority" or "very important" and 77% valued pressuring the Vietnamese government to improve its human rights policy. Vietnamese Americans regularly demonstrate against the Vietnamese government and protest against individuals or groups that they believe support the Vietnamese government. Many Vietnamese Americans have been involved in local politics and have been elected or appointed to central government positions. Much of the political movement of the Vietnamese-American community through public agencies is still centered on anti-Communism. Vietnamese people left their homeland to come to the US, in order to have freedom, equality and opportunities, they must fight to protect those rights in their second homeland, the US. They also call for the improvement of left-wing American education and many policies to help the Vietnamese community. Textbooks, references and professors in American universities often distort the history of the Vietnam War, so the younger generations of refugees are affected.

In May 2004, the City Council of Garden Grove, California unanimously voted to establish a "No Communist zone" with the intention of preventing state delegations from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam from travelling into the Little Saigon area. Also because of the advocacy of the Vietnamese community, on August 12, 2009 the City Council of Westminster, CA passed resolution 4257 recognizing the last Saturday of every April as "**Vietnamese Boat People Day**". At the state level, California passed resolution ACR-40 declaring April 2011 as the month of Vietnamese Americans with the following key points: Consider the yellow flag with three red stripes as a symbol of the Vietnamese American community and recognize the week of April 24-30 as "**Black April Memorial Week**".

Since most Vietnamese Americans are refugees and anti-communist, they are dissidents with the communist government in Vietnam. Many Vietnamese Americans regularly demonstrate against the human rights situation in Vietnam and have recently lobbied local authorities to recognize the Republic of Vietnam's yellow flag with three red stripes as a symbol for the Vietnamese overseas community via "Operation Yellow Flag" and is now known as "**the flag of Freedom and Heritage**" of the Vietnamese community in the US. Thanks to the resolution of Senator Jim Webb (Democrat-Virginia) and Representative Joseph Cao Quang Ánh (Republican-Louisiana), the US Congress recognized May 2nd as "**Vietnamese Refugee Day.**"

Remittances are also an important source of revenue for Vietnam. In 2009, the amount of money sent by overseas Vietnamese to their relatives through official channels was 6.2 billion USD, in 2010 was 8.1 billion USD (about 8% of the country's GDP of 101 billion USD in 2010 dollars), in 2011 it was 9 billion dollars (an increase of more than 20% from 2010). According to the World Bank, in 2014-2015, Vietnamese people around the world sent home 12 billion dollars through official means, of which the US is the most with 7.4 billion dollars, from Australia is 1.1 billion dollars, Canada 923 million dollars, and 714



million dollars from Germany. According to the World Bank, the amount of money sent by overseas Vietnamese to Vietnam has increased sixfold since 2000.

Overseas Vietnamese are a source of economic and human capital for Vietnam and have high consumption power. In addition, the number of overseas Vietnamese enterprises also invested in doing business in Vietnam, until 2010 it was estimated at 3,400 enterprises, with a total investment capital of about 6 billion USD, including some large enterprises of the overseas Vietnamese community has developed successfully, rising to become the leading branded enterprises in Vietnam such as Vingroup, Euro Windows. The Vietnamese community in the US today is a community that contributes greatly, supporting and connecting with domestic entrepreneurs to help the development of the country.

In fact, it is difficult to have national harmony in the country of Vietnam because of a discriminatory and merciless revenge policy of the totalitarian Socialist Republic of Vietnam with the people on the losing side, causing enormous damages to the Vietnamese people that are increasing day by day as the Communist Party of Vietnam increasingly suppresses the domestic democracy movement.

## **Part 12. Understanding Vietnam's Constitutions through Different Regimes**

Before 1945, Vietnam had no constitution. Since the establishment of the first republic, the history of Vietnam with two different regimes has recorded that the first two Constitutions were born, in 1946 by the DRV and 1956 by the South Vietnam after the country was bisected.

The Constitution is a particularly important political-legal document ensuring political and social stability and national sovereignty, demonstrating the democratic and progressive nature of the State and the regime. As the basic law, the original law of the State, the Constitution has the highest legal effect in the legal system. Each Constitution is associated with a period of development in the history of the Vietnamese nation. There can be no rule of law state without a constitution in terms of ensuring human rights, citizens' rights, are respected and obeyed, first of all, by public agencies and individuals. One of the basic conditions to ensure that the constitution is respected, adhered to, and applied in daily life is its validity. The basic feature of constitutional implementation is the constitutional right of the people to invoke the constitutional provisions to protect their legitimate rights and interests and on the other side of the relationship between the individual and the state. It is the responsibility of the State to recognize, respect, protect and ensure the implementation.

A nation with the rule of law is a constitutional, legal, ethical, rational and effective state. Building a state governed by the rule of law therefore requires a constitution with the content of the rule of law, democracy, brief but comprehensive in principle, most areas of social life based on two main pillars: human rights, freedoms, mechanisms to ensure the implementation and organization, assignment and control of state power based on the principle of "the constitution has the highest legal effect". The constitution should clearly define the state's responsibility for human rights, the constitutional protection mechanism, the direct application of the principles, spirit and rules of the constitution, and how they can be implemented. invoke and guide human consciousness and behavior in reality.

## **Chapter 27. DRV 1946 and 1959**

The Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is the most valuable legal document in the legal system of Vietnam. According to our country's constitutional history, since the founding of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam until now, our country has had 05 Constitutions, which are the 1946 Constitution, 1959 Constitution, 1992 Constitution. (amended and supplemented with a number of articles in 2001), and the 2013 Constitution. These Constitutions were born in certain historical contexts and times in order to institutionalize the Communist Party's revolutionary line. Vietnamese products for each stage of the country's development. The current constitution is the 2013 version, which is the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam approved by the 13th National Assembly of Vietnam at its 6th session on the morning of November 28, 2013. effective January 1, 2014.

In Vietnam, the Constitution *"is the most important legal and political document **after the Party's program**, is the original law, stipulates the very basic issues of a State... "* and *"The revised Constitution" has institutionalized the Party's Platform on national construction during the transition to socialism, inheriting the 1946 Constitution, 1959 Constitution, 1980 Constitution and 1992 Constitution.* This leads to the fact that the constitution can only serve a certain historical period and then expires and has to do something else. The rule of law society is based on the law which is based on the constitution; so, the stability of the society and the regime can be said to be based on the stability of the constitution.

### **1946 Constitution**

It was the first constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, drafted by a committee and approved by the 1st National Assembly on November 9, 1946. The passed Constitution marked the end of foreign domination, declaring Vietnam independent from North to South. According to democracy, the power in the country belongs to the entire people regardless of race, gender, male and female, rich and poor, class, religion; democratic freedoms are guaranteed...The 1946 Constitution was born as a strong legal affirmation of

the Vietnamese people's national sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

After reading the "Declaration of Independence" on September 2, 1945, giving birth to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, on September 3, 1945, at the first meeting of the Government, President Hồ Chí Minh confirmed the establishment of a democratic constitution is one of the six urgent tasks of the Government: *"First we were ruled by an absolute monarchy, then the colonial regime was no less tyrannical, so the country was ruled by an absolute monarchy. We don't have a constitution, so our people do not enjoy freedom and democracy. We must have a democratic constitution."* The Constitution Drafting Committee was established under Decree No. 34-SL dated September 20, 1945, including 7 members: Hồ Chí Minh, Vĩnh Thụy, Đặng Thái Mai, Vũ Trọng Khánh, Lê Văn Hiến, and Nguyễn Lương Bằng, Đặng Xuân Khu (Trường Chinh). The Constitution was drafted and published in November 1945. The 1946 Constitution consisted of a preface and 7 chapters and 70 articles. The Preamble identified three basic principles of the Constitution:

- Solidarity whole people without distinction of race, girls, boys, class and religion.
- Ensure democratic freedoms.
- Implement a strong and wise government of the people.

All seven chapters of the Constitution are built on the three basic principles mentioned above. It is these three principles that show three basic features of the 1946 Constitution. This is a constitution drafted in the spirit of separation of powers: legislative (Congress), executive (Government) and judicial (Courts) like the Constitution of the US and the constitutions of other republics. Article 1 of the 1946 Constitution clearly states: "Vietnam is a Democratic Republic". Notably, Article 10 of the 1946 Constitution clearly stipulates individual liberties: "Vietnamese citizens have the following rights: freedom of speech, freedom of publication, freedom of organization and assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of residence and movement in the country and abroad". These are freedoms restricted in later constitutions.

However, the values of the 1946 Constitution are not implemented in practice, only politically valid. Because of many reasons the 1946 Constitution was not implemented. However, due to war circumstances (10 days after the National Assembly approved the Constitution, the nationwide resistance war broke out) the 1946 Constitution was not officially published, but under the leadership of President Hồ Chí Minh, the spirit of the provisions in the 1946 Constitution was implemented in practice based on specific situations.

With the basic meaning and values of the 1946 Constitution, the 1946 Constitution was "the most outstanding democratic constitution in Southeast Asia at that time" and "contains democratic ideas far superior to the legal system" of the People's Republic of China"; and until now "still valid for a democratic society under the rule of law in Vietnam". Another comment is that the 1946 Constitution does not follow any pre-existing

constitutional archetypes in history. The 1936 Soviet Constitution was very famous, but President Hồ Chí Minh - a man deeply influenced by Marxism-Leninism - did not take this Constitution as a model when formulating the 1946 Constitution.

### **1959 Constitution**

After the 1954 Điện Biên Phủ victory, the North moved up to build socialism. The National Assembly decided to amend the Constitution. The Constitution was drafted in 1946 and the Committee to draft the revised Constitution was established on December 31, 1959. At the 11th session of the National Assembly, the first session of the Assembly unanimously approved the revised Constitution. The 1959 Constitution promotes the spirit of the 1946 Constitution, and at the same time reflect the actual situation of a people's democracy gradually moving towards socialism. The 1959 Constitution affirms that Vietnam is a unified country from Lạng Sơn to Cà Mau, organized under the government of the Democratic Republic of the Republic, all powers belong to the people, freedom and democracy rights are guaranteed. The people use their power through the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels elected by the People. The National Assembly, People's Councils at all levels and other state agencies practice the principle of democratic centralism...

## **Chapter 28. Socialist Republic of Vietnam 1980, 1992 and 2013**

### **1980 Constitution**

Vietnam was unified through the Hồ Chí Minh Campaign in the spring of 1975, opening a new period in history. Vietnam's complete independence is a favorable condition for the unification of the North and South, leading the country to socialism. On June 24, 1976, the 6th National Assembly held its first session, issued a Resolution on amending the 1959 Constitution and established a Constitution Drafting Committee. In September 1980, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam held a special session to consider and give additional and revised comments before submitting to the National Assembly for discussion and approval. On December 18, 1980, at the 7th session of the 6th National Assembly, unanimously approved the 1980 Constitution based on the 1977 Soviet Constitution model with the mechanism of the National Assembly electing the State Council to assume administrative responsibility. serve on the Standing Committee of the National Assembly. The Council of State has both executive and legislative functions. The Council of State has the power to declare war, order general mobilization, approve foreign treaties, and supervise the Council of Ministers. This Constitution defines Vietnamese society according to the policies of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

For the first time in Vietnam's constitutional history, the leading role of the Communist Party of Vietnam over the State and society has been stipulated in the

Constitution. **Article 4 of the 1980 Constitution** of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam defines: *The Communist Party of Vietnam, the vanguard and combat staff of the Vietnamese working class, armed with Marxist-Leninist doctrine, is the only force leading the State, leading the society; is the key factor determining all victories of the Vietnamese revolution.* The 1980 Constitution defined the dictatorship of the proletariat. This Constitution defines the position and role of socio-political organizations such as the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the Vietnam General Trade Union, the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union, and the Vietnam Women's Union. .

### **1992 Constitution**

Since 1986, the comprehensive reform of the country initiated by the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam has achieved initial achievements. The National Assembly decided to amend the 1980 Constitution to meet the situation suitable to the country's socio-economic conditions. The 8th National Assembly issued a Resolution Demarcating the scope of legislative competence of the National Assembly and continued to affirm that *"The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is a State of the people, by the people, for the people."*

All State powers belong to the people, the basis of which is the alliance of the working class with the peasantry and the intelligentsia" (Article 2). In chapter V, the basic rights of citizens are regulated, which includes freedom of speech (article 69), freedom of religion (article 79), inviolability of the body (article 71), freedom of movement and residence (article 68), freedom of business (article 57), copyright (article 60), and other rights. The 1992 Constitution (amended) stipulates an independent and self-reliant economy on the basis of promoting economic integration into the international economy, carry out industrialization and modernization of the country, implement the policy of developing a socialist-oriented market economy.

The 1992 Constitution is based on the synthesis of opinions of the People and opinions of the Politburo and the Central Committee of the Party. On April 15, 1992, the 1992 Constitution stipulates the Party's renewal line, accelerates economic reform, and continues to affirm the dictatorship of the proletariat. The people exercise state power through the National Assembly and the People's Council, which are elected by the People and are accountable to the People. The organization and operation of the state apparatus follow the principle of democratic centralism. State power is centralized, unified, without division of legislative, executive and judicial powers according to the theory of "separation of powers".

Under the leadership of the Politburo, the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the 10th National Assembly, the 9th session issued Resolution No. 43/2001/QH10 dated June 29, 2001 on the establishment of the Committee to draft amendments and supplements to a number of articles of the 1992 Constitution. After synthesizing the opinions of the People, the draft was publicly discussed. On December 25, 2001, the National Assembly term X, the 10th session with an absolute majority

unanimously approved Resolution No. 51/2001/QH10 on amending a number of articles of the 1992 Constitution. The 1992 Constitution defines the rights of official citizens through Articles 50: political, civil, economic, cultural and social rights are respected. In the amendment of the 1992 Constitution, Article 4 has removed the phrases "unique" and "is the key factor determining all victories of the Vietnamese revolution".

## **2013 Constitution**

The 13th National Assembly decided to amend the 1992 Constitution to ensure synchronous renewal in both economic and political terms and to build a socialist rule of law with a total of 11 Chapters with 120 Articles. The 13th National Assembly of Vietnam passed on November 28, 2013 which still emphasizes the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam (Article 4).

From 2011 to 2013, the Constitutional Amendment Drafting Committee held a review of the implementation of the 1992 Constitution and discussed the draft Constitutional amendment. At the 4th session, the XIII National Assembly decided to hold the people's opinion on the draft amendment of the Constitution. The collection of People's opinions has been implemented by all levels and sectors, attracting extensive, serious, active and enthusiastic participation of a large number of people and Vietnamese compatriots abroad. This is a period of political, legal and democratic activities, far-reaching in the whole political system. On January 2, 2013, the Committee for Draft Amendment to the 1992 Constitution officially announced the Draft Amendment to the 1992 Constitution on the mass media to collect comments from all classes of people. In this revision of the Constitution, many important issues of the country were consulted by the people, reflected in different options for each article of the Constitution. For the first time in history, comments on amending the 1992 constitution were sent to each household by the Vietnamese government. According to reports of relevant agencies and organizations, in the five months to May 2013, there were more than 26 million people's comments on the draft Constitutional Amendment, with more than 28,000 conferences, workshops and seminars were held.

Many dignitaries have suggested to remove Article 4 so that the ruling party can compete politically with other parties, amend the provisions on human rights, land ownership, state organization, armed forces, and referendums. to the Constitution. Especially the opinions of the Proposal 72 groups and the Joint Constitution Writing Group. But at this time, the People's Army Newspaper published an article stating that *"requiring to remove Article 4 of the 1992 draft amendment and supplement to the Constitution is an attempt to abolish the leadership role of the Communist Party of Vietnam."*

## Chapter 29. Republic of Vietnam 1956 and 1967

The State of the Republic of Vietnam existed from 1955 to 1975, the territory extended from the 17th parallel to the cape of Cà Mau of Vietnam. This regime went through two First and Second Republics. From the point of view of legal science, the Constitution of this regime is a typical example of the Constitution created from conflicts and contradictions between groups in a country. In the two main constitutions (1956 and 1967), the Vietnamese state had a fairly detailed, specific, tight and clear constitutional process. It is worth noting that these processes are all constitutional and come with certain constitutional principles in order to protect the supremacy of the Constitution and sustainable development through the amendments or replacements of the Constitution. The constitutional process in the Republic of Vietnam can be summarized into the following steps: Constitution Drafting Committee → Constituent National Assembly or Legislative-Constituent National Assembly → Promulgation by the President. Please review the values that can be learned from the constitutional spirit of the Republic of Vietnam. The fledgling Republic of Vietnam ended on April 30, 1975, but the republic's spiritual values persist to this day.

### 1956 Constitution

After the referendum south of the 17th parallel in October 1955 with the result that the head of state Bảo Đại was deposed, the new President Ngô Đình Diệm ordered a meeting of the Drafting Committee at the end of 1955 composed of 11 members to draft a Constitution for the new republic. On October 26, 1955, Prime Minister Ngô Đình Diệm officially announced the results of the referendum to depose Bảo Đại, establishing the Republic of Vietnam, with the Provisional Charter as the legal basis for national governance. In March 1956, a Constituent Assembly with 123 members was elected to nominate 15 people to form its own Constitutional Committee, chaired by Trần Chánh Thành to jointly draft the Constitution. In July 1956, the National Assembly voted to approve the Constitution. On October 26, 1956, the Constitution was promulgated by President Ngô Đình Diệm.

The Constituent Assembly, established on March 4, 1956, became the first legislative assembly of the First Republic – a single National Assembly. This Constitution began to separate the executive and legislative branches of power. However, in practice, legislative power does not have much meaning. During this period, the Constitution did not provide for a separate and independent Judicial branch. The court system is placed under the supervision of the executive branch through the Ministry of Justice.

Legally, the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam 1956 affirms that the division of power of the regime is the separation of three powers and has the goal of allowing the legislative and executive branches to control each other. Regarding the judicial branch, the power is weaker and not fully independent because it is dependent on the Ministry of Justice and the Presidential government to appoint and administer ... Compared with other countries,

the 1956 Constitution puts a lot of power into the executive branch because the president has prerogatives in cases of civil unrest, war or financial crisis.

The Constitution was seen as a way for Ngô Đình Diệm to have full control over the state apparatus. According to the 1956 Constitution, President Ngô Đình Diệm had full power to suppress or paralyze any laws that he did not agree with, as well as easily enact and enforce laws that were favorable to him. Constitutional spirit and democracy are not enough. The Constituent Assembly deprived the people of their right to elect a Legislative Assembly and the first president of the Republic of Vietnam. Absolute power was given to the President by the Constitution, so democratic rights were limited to the Constitution of the First National Republic (the government) which recognized and guaranteed all individual liberties. Especially Article 20: "The State recognizes and guarantees the right to private property." In addition to the liberal economic expansion according to this article 20, the government has had extremely active policies.

While the South was under threat from communism, the role of political parties and localities should have been given top priority, the 1956 Constitution focused only on the central government without mentioning the locality, cities, provinces, communes, towns... also it does not mention the role of political parties.

In terms of spirit, the 1956 Constitution placed the people at the key position of the nation and "sovereignty belongs to the whole people" (Article 2). It is worth noting that the foundation of the constitution outlines three aspects: "Vietnamese civilization", "spiritual spirituality", and "human values" as clearly stated in the preamble. Since the text states that the nation has a "mission" before the "Creator", some people believe that this proves the government's bias towards Christianity while other religions are not mentioned. In the first republic of Ngô Đình Diệm's government, Buddhism and other religions were severely discriminated against and persecuted. In the opening paragraph of the Constitution of October 26, 1956, there was a reflection of the Christian bias quite clearly as follows: "...our people are ready to accept progressive ideological currents in order to complete their mission before the Creator ... " refers to the mission before the Creator, is it before God in Christianity, without mentioning other religions. In addition, in his speech delivered at La Vang Basilica, Quảng Trị in 1960, Peter Martino Ngô Đình Thục made a vow: "*We wholeheartedly dedicate the Church and Vietnam to Our Lady Immaculate Conception.*"

Apart from some social activities, such as electricity, water, aviation, etc., economic activities are completely free. The government does not compete with the private sector and only plays a prompting role and ensures that the private sector competes fairly and legally. Therefore, the economy and industry have developed faster than other countries in the region.



In general, the 1956 Constitution was built on the spirit of humanity, liberation and nation, and this spirit was continued to be maintained in the 1967 Constitution.

### **1967 Constitution**

The **1967** Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam is the constitution passed by the National Assembly of the Republic of Vietnam on March 18, 1967, and is a major amendment to the 1956 Constitution. It was promulgated by the government on April 1, 1967, giving birth to the Second Republic of Vietnam.

In September 1966, a Constituent Assembly consisting of 117 Deputies was elected by a vote throughout the territory of the Republic of Vietnam, with the aim of drafting a new official Constitution, providing for a return to a new constitution. The civil state ended the period of military rule. The Constitution Drafting Committee has studied and consulted many different Constitutions, especially those of France, USA, Japan and Korea. The constitutional work this time received much support from the international community, especially the US.

This 7th Constitution (since the 1956 Constitution and the Provisional Constitutions) was promulgated on April 1, 1967. The 1967 Constitution created a presidential institution, a bicameral legislature, and an independent judiciary. The political system in the Republic of Vietnam allows democratic rights to be quite common, such as allowing multi-party rights, the right to protest, universal suffrage, and suffrage for the position of President... The 1967 Constitution established the organizational structure. The government structure of the Republic of Vietnam is very complete, following the model of the US state. The Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam has quite fully expressed the spirit of constitutionalism. The basic rights of the people are guaranteed and clearly stated in the constitution. The latest is the mechanism of separation of powers and the right to political opposition of the people. Accordingly, state power is no longer a unified and centralized entity, but is divided into three powers: legislative, executive and judicial powers as three separate mechanisms, independent of each other, self-restraint and monitor each other. The President role is well-defined. The Judiciary is independent of the Executive, delegated to the Supreme Court and exercised by the trial judges.

In addition to other fundamental rights, the Constitution clearly states that people have the right to freedom of education (however, "basic education is compulsory and free", Article 10), the right to freedom of residence and movement, the right to go abroad and repatriate (Article 14) and freedom to form trade unions and strike (Article 16), freedom to conduct business and competition (Article 12), freedom to evangelize and practice religion (Article 9), freedom of association (Article 13) and political party (Article 99)

Clear provisions are also written directly into the constitution to protect people from being unjustly: In case of suspicion of committing a crime (the Defendant), without being tortured and coerced, the accused has the "right to defend himself" and is presumed innocent until there is sufficient evidence to convict. The people have the full right to have different political views than the state: Right to open opposition (Article 13) and right to political opposition (Article 101) and the constitution protects equality between parties, right to assembly and freedom of thought, freedom of speech of the people (Articles 12 and 13 and 99), banning all forms of censorship, except for cinema and theater subjects (Article 12). However, the party Communism is outlawed. Soldiers are not allowed to participate in party activities (to keep the defense apparatus neutral) and if elected "to elected or political positions at the central level" (such as the National Assembly, different levels of government, etc.), must apply for discharge or long-term leave (Article 23).

## **Chapter 30. Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a common framework to be achieved by all nations and all peoples. The spirit of the Declaration is to use communication and education to promote the Member States of the United Nations to respect the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Declaration. It was co-authored by John Peters Humphrey (Canadian), René Cassin (French), PC Chang (Chinese), Charles Malik (Lebanese), Eleanor Roosevelt (American), and many others.

During World War II, the Allies adopted the Four Freedoms - freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from fear, and freedom to desire - as their basic war goals. The United Nations Charter "*reaffirms belief in fundamental human rights, human dignity and worth*" and commits all member states to promote "*universal respect and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion*". As Nazi atrocities became apparent after World War II, the international community argued that the United Nations Charter did not adequately define human rights. A joint declaration outlining the rights of individuals is necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Charter of Human Rights.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is therefore a declaration of fundamental human rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France. The Declaration has been translated into at least 500 languages. The declaration arose directly from the experiences of the Second World War and was the world's first declaration of human rights, which enumerated fundamental rights to which all individuals were entitled to, regardless of race, skin color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality or social origin, property, place of birth, or all other circumstances. It includes 30 articles that have been elaborated in international treaties, regional human rights agreements, constitutions and national laws.

The Manifesto not only selected the progressive ideas of mankind, but also addressed issues that were challenging for the social systems of the time. That is the right not to be stigmatized, discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex; the right to freedom of thought, religious belief, freedom of assembly and association; the right to participate in the governance of the country, etc. These are urgent needs of the majority of the population that are still unmet even in the most developed capitalist countries. Economic, social and cultural rights; the right to work, including the right to protection, against unemployment; the right to education, etc. was considered the superiority of the socialist system (at that time), after much debate was included in this important document.

Institutionalizing the ideology of the Declaration, up to now, the United Nations has adopted many conventions, especially: "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights", "International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights" (1966). These two conventions define in detail human fundamental freedoms in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres; at the same time, establishing the responsibilities and obligations of member states to respect and protect basic human rights and freedoms. Along with that, the United Nations has adopted many other conventions and protocols contributing to the establishment of a system of international principles, norms and standards on human rights.

However, one limitation of the Declaration is that it does not mention the human rights of the colonized peoples and who is responsible for respecting and protecting their rights? For oppressed peoples, the prerequisite of human rights is national independence. This is a major gap in the political – legal ideology of this document. It shows that, in practice, no empire has acknowledged this right and voluntarily handed over its independence to the colonial peoples. In order to have real independence, oppressed peoples must stand up to gain that right by way of revolutionary struggle. Therefore, after many struggles, on December 14, 1960, the United Nations issued the “Declaration on the return of independence to colonial countries and peoples”.

After liberating the South and reunifying the country, Vietnam became a member of the United Nations (1977), especially entering the Đổi Mới period, with the view that people are both the goal and the motivation; Associating each step of economic growth with ensuring social security, all for the people, for the people’s happiness. Vietnam has joined most of the international treaties on human rights promulgated by the United Nations and good guarantee in fact. President Hồ Chí Minh, right in the Declaration of Independence in 1945, boldly stated basic human rights and linked human rights with the rights of the nation: *“All nations in the world are born equal; Every nation has the right to life, the right to happiness and the right to freedom”* . He referred to the American Declaration of Independence and the French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen to affirm that those human rights values must also be applied to all peoples, including

those in colonial countries. The Vietnamese people also have the same rights as any other people in the world.

In Vietnam, the concept of "human rights defender" has not been recognized by the state and mentioned in any official documents. On the other hand, if the Communist Party achieves military victory and holds political power, if it implements the policy of building a democratic and civilized Vietnam with national reconciliation both at home and abroad, it will be a public victory and great work for the nation and country. The embryonic democracy of the First Republic (1955-1963) in the new context of regaining its independence after the French colonial period and further strengthened by the Second Republic (1967-1975) was modest and relative, which is threatened daily by the Nationalist-Communist war, still allows the people of the South to live happily within the framework of human rights respected by the United Nations charter and the most basic freedoms such as voting, speeches, meetings, demonstrations, etc., are still implemented. Advocating for the rule of law, or rule of law, of both Republics with relatively free elections for the National Assembly and the President; Central and local administration is controlled by well-trained administrative professionals in specialized schools (National School of Administration of the South). In each province, the governor is a political or military figure appointed by the central government, but the deputy governor is usually an administrative officer.

In contrast, the reunified Vietnam now only promotes free elections but has never been implemented in practice through elections to the People's Councils and National Assembly deputies (the party selected and the people elected). Vietnam is just now starting to learn from the experience of administrative reform like under the Republic of Vietnam, but following the instructions of the Party. The National Assembly of Vietnam is now preparing draft laws proposing to supplement the Prime Minister's authority in applying new models of organizational structure for each ministry, ministerial-level agency, central government agencies, and so on. central government, and local authorities at the Provincial and District levels. Accordingly, the Prime Minister also has the additional power to establish, merge, or dissolve other administrative agencies and organizations at the Provincial and District levels. But in reality, the Party Committee holds real power from the central government to the provinces (totalitarian) through resolutions. The Party elects the positions of President, National Assembly Speaker and Prime Minister a few months before the National Assembly meets and must legalize these positions.

In short, the declaration of human rights and the constitutions that stipulate laws and institutions with fancy nouns that the public authorities do not apply or take advantage of, the citizen's rights are taken away and the dignity of the people only is "ruled" and trampled on, while society will lose its morality and become unstable.

## Part 13: Questions Worth Asking for the 20th Century

The Americans abandoned Chiang Kai-shek to avoid intervening in China in the years 1947-1949 for fear of getting bogged down, but then they were bogged down by the Korean War and after Korea the big and brutal, long-lasting war in Vietnam, 10 times worse than the Korean War. In 1950, the Chinese helped the Việt Minh to establish five regular divisions: 304, 318, 312, 316, 320, then the 351th heavy weapon division. The Việt Minh then openly attacked the French with large units. At the end of July 1953, the Korean War ceased, and China's aid to the Việt Minh skyrocketed to attack Điện Biên Phủ (ĐBP). The US also increased aid to France, in 1954 78% of the war costs were borne by the US. The Việt Minh put most of their regular divisions into this historic battle, a total of 63,000 men, four times that of the French (12 battalions and 5 parachute battalions). In March 1954, the military situation of Điện Biên Phủ was getting worse and worse, after March 26, 1954, the basin only had to provide reinforcements by parachuting troops as well as food and ammunition. France and the US both saw the danger of the fall of ĐBP. The consequences of the US' refusal to carry out the Vulture plan haunted the Eisenhower government even after the death of Secretary of State Dulles in 1959. Americans regretted not having carried out Operation Vulture for the Việt Minh and the Communists to win a big victory. The ĐBP had shaken the whole world, it changed a historical twist.

In the conclusion of the book on ĐBP, Prof. Bernard Fall said that the West (British-American) avoided intervening in Indochina in 1954 but later had to intervene in 1967 (the Republic of Vietnam). If the ĐBP had not been fallen in 1954, perhaps Vietnam's history would have been less complicated. Recently, two historians Logevall and Ted Morgan also shared the same opinion in two big books about the Red River Delta and the first Indochina war. Bernard Fall said: "*Here, the North has not only defeated France but also of America. The US missed the opportunity to destroy the main force of the enemy, so that 10 years later in 1964-65 that army grew and the Americans had to face an extremely bloody war.* Senator Johnson became the President of the US, and he suffered the consequences of his own making, since 10 years ago (1954) Johnson stopped the Vulture campaign. The US is afraid of getting bogged down in the South China Sea and eventually it costs them hundreds of billions of dollars and more than 50,000 American soldiers died. Senator Lyndon Johnson and President Eisenhower are the two people who bear the heaviest responsibility for this mistake. If the implementation of the Vulture plan does not mean losing the North, it is unlikely that there will be the Geneva Accords and the great exodus.

During the sixth conference of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in July 1954, Hồ Chí Minh and the Politburo began drawing up a plan to "fight the Americans and save the country" under the orders of Chairman Mao. In May 1959, the Central Committee of the Vietnam Workers' Party decided to invade the South by force even though it had to "*burn the whole Trường Sơn range*".

In 1972, President Nixon tried to get out of the war with no way out, he succeeded in making peace with China to find peace for Vietnam. In February 1972, President Nixon went to China, the handshake between Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon at least made America and Southeast Asia a peace so far. Many Vietnamese nationals condemned Nixon for making peace with the Communists to withdraw from the South, but he had no real power to do so. President Nixon still stood close to President Thiệu as a line of defense against the Communists, but the American people, the Congress (Democrats) wanted to sign the Agreement to end the interference honorably, the cause of the war is no longer there. On November 7, 1972, Nixon won with the highest number of votes ever: 520 Electoral College votes (96% of the votes), 18 million more than his opponent McGovern in the popular votes, but the Democratic opposition still kept the upper hand: House of Representatives 56%, Senate 57%. They combined with the Media and the Anti-War movement so they were very strong, Nixon did not have much power.

US Congress wanted President Nixon to sign the Paris Agreement soon, or else they would issue a law to end the war and bring back troops to exchange for prisoners. On February 2, 1973, the Democratic House of Representatives elected to cut off all aids to Indochina in exchange for prisoners in Hanoi and withdraw all troops. Six months after the Paris Agreement on January 27, 1973, Congress (Democrats) cut aids to the Republic of Vietnam by 50% each year. On August 8, 1974 Nixon resigned to avoid being impeached by Congress over the Watergate affair. By the end of April 1975, the ARVN troops had nothing left to continue the war. In 1975 the US abandoned Indochina and then there was nothing left to throw away. When he abandoned the Chinese Kuomintang in 1949, President Truman did not think of its devastating consequences that immediately followed and continued to this day.

The Communist Party of Vietnam won the 1975 Nationalist-Communist battle to unify the country thanks to China's all-round support. The Việt Minh defeated France at Điện Biên Phủ in 1954 to end French sovereignty, nullifying the Treaty of Tianjin on June 9, 1885, in which China recognized France's domination of Vietnam. Since then, China has demanded to re-affirm its influence through "self-righteousness to consider Vietnam as a vassal state" despite stating the principle of equality of "brothers and comrades". In addition, in the document "Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party" written in 1939 by Mao Zedong, there is a passage: "*The imperialist countries, after defeating China, occupied China's dependent countries ...France occupied Annam*". This has been shown through the binding data between the two Communist parties of Vietnam and China in paying the debt of assistance since 1950 and resolving conflicting tensions after the 1978-1979 war on the interests on the politics, economy and land of Vietnam through the 1990 Chengdu Secret Agreement.

Meanwhile, the DRV, with continuous aid from the Soviet Union and China, invaded South VN in order to expand its power and spread communist coverage over the whole of Vietnam. South Vietnam was weak, perhaps waiting to die, had to ask the US for help to defend itself. The two sides had two different ways of giving aid: the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the dictatorship of China, the secret aid without the need to go through the National Assembly, and aid to the DRV from the beginning to the end of the war (1975). The US is a democratic country, changing policies depending on the Congress in opposition to the President for 4 years in aid to the NVN, so it has to be public according to the majority of voters and the radical movement of the independent media; and in 1972, the US Congress ordered the reduction and cessation of aid.

The unification goal is still unfinished after 9 years of resistance against the French and American intervention. DRV recognized this war as a war against foreign aggression, feudalism, against the "new colonialism" imposed by the US in South Vietnam. From the DRV's point of view, they are the only legal polity with sovereignty over all of Vietnam since 1945 and lead the two resistance regions, while the Republic of South Vietnam (formerly known as the NLF/VC within the Fatherland Front) is an organization representing the people of South Vietnam to wage a resistance war against the American plan to divide Vietnam. For them, the Vietnamese people's resistance against the US to save the country is a just war to protect the results of the August Revolution and unify the country. The Vietnamese people in this resistance war received great help and support from peace-loving peoples around the world, regardless of ideology and political regime, including the American people. Therefore, this is not a war for ideology but a war to liberate and reunify the country. In terms of international law, the Vietnamese people's resistance war against the US and national salvation has further clarified the nation's right to self-determination. If the right of peoples to self-determination in international law previously only referred to the right to self-determination on political regimes, the right to decide on economic institutions, etc., with the Paris Agreement, it was also the right of "unification and territorial integrity."

According to the DRV, on the side of the Saigon government, President Ngô Đình Diệm and later leaders wanted to permanently divide Vietnam, turning the South into a separate country. President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu once considered South Vietnam to be a separate country, unrelated to the North, and affirmed that he would not form a three-part coalition government for the General Election to unify the two regions. This is completely contrary to the provisions of the Paris Agreement of 1973 and the Geneva Agreement of 1954. The US participation in the plot to assassinate President Ngô Đình Diệm, who did not want the US Army present in Vietnam. In order to build up a new regime not through elections but through a coup and supporting the presence of the US Army in Vietnam has shown that the nature of the US sending troops to Vietnam is an act of aggression according to some leftist historians. Therefore, the essence of the Resistance War against the US to save the country is a war against aggression with the support of native treasonous forces conducted by foreign powers.

For most Vietnamese, according to some scholars, after 2,000 years of fighting against foreign forces, the Americans are simply the latest foreign presence in Vietnam. They see the war against the US as the latest phase of the long struggle for independence since the late 19th century. These people have given strength to the fierce nationalist movement led by Hồ Chí Minh. The movement led by the Vietnam Labor Party, with the prestige among the people gained from organizing the Việt Minh Front for the country's independence and persistently fighting against the French colonialists and the organization founded by this party is the NLF/VC which pioneered and gained widespread support from the people.

Meanwhile, the Republic of Vietnam was increasingly dependent on the US and could not maintain its independent role in the eyes of the people (especially after President Ngô Đình Diệm was murdered in a coup allegedly approved by the US), especially when most of their leaders were people in the government of Trần Trọng Kim, formed under the protection of the Japanese fascist regime, or have worked for the Nation of Vietnam, a polity that was considered by the Communists as a minion of France.

The predecessor of ARVN is the National Army of Vietnam which was also established based on a treaty between the Nation of Vietnam and France, then reorganized in the American style. In the view of many historians, this war, therefore, was highly nationalistic: the aspiration for independence and unification of the country. The support of the majority of the people became the decisive factor for the victory of the Communists despite being the much weaker side in terms of military equipment. The US failed to realize it was a "people's war" and the Vietnamese were attached to the revolution because they saw it as a war to protect their families, land, and fatherland.

In the international arena, this is a "hot war" in the heart of the Cold War that is taking place fiercely in the world. There is a view that this is a proxy war between the US on one side, the Soviet Union and China on the other. However, according to the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, the decisive factor to their victory is knowing how to take advantage of the people's hearts, patriotism, and stubborn will. General Võ Nguyên Giáp once declared to Soviet Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin that Vietnam would fight the US according to Vietnam's way, not according to the direction of the Soviet Union. General Secretary Lê Duẩn is ready to refuse China's aid when it intends to impose its will on the DRV. The fact that the Soviet Union, China, and other socialist countries support the DRV-Republic of South Vietnam/VC, although many people consider it important, is not decisive. Therefore, this war for the Vietnamese people is a war of national liberation between the Vietnamese people on the one hand, the invading army and the indigenous henchmen on the other. This war is only a proxy war for the US and its henchman, the Republic of Vietnam. In the book *"Soviet Union and the Vietnam War. People's Public Security Publishing House 1998. Chapter XI: The Only Winner"* author Ilya V. Gaiduk wrote: "Intelligently manipulated between China and the Soviet Union, Hanoi has retained its independent position in the political goals... American leaders could not understand why the Soviet Union, which had provided all kinds of economic and military aid to the Democratic



*Republic of Vietnam, could not use this as an impetus to persuade Hanoi to abandon its plans for the South and then agree to a deal.”*

The two sides of North and South Vietnam fought with foreign weapons, so the people on both sides died. Southerners fought to protect their independence and freedom, avoiding the communist disaster that they more or less witnessed. Northerners fought because they were told that they wanted to liberate their homeland from American aggression. Hundreds of thousands of young people on both sides have died, but the meaning is different: Hundreds of thousands of North Vietnamese youths sacrificed during the invasion of South VN because of their ambition to expand international communism and the power dream of the DRV leaders in the form of the Liberation Army. Hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese youths sacrificed themselves for the cause of freedom and democracy, defended the independence and survival of the South Vietnamese region, and protected the traditional national culture still preserved in South VN but abandoned for the benefits of the US. Young Chinese people die because of the conspiracy of Beijing Communists, but their number is insignificant. A few Soviet officers died in the North Vietnamese battlefield when they joined the Chinese army to help defend the North so that all the armed forces of the DRV went to the South to fight in the expansion of the Communist International. Over 58,000 young Americans who died in Vietnam were benefactors of the South VN for defending the freedom of the South VN and at the same time with the mission to prevent the communists from spilling over into Southeast Asia, but their sacrifice was not adequately compensated.

Through 20 years of war with the dishonest and deceptive propaganda of the leaders of the two sides, the common people endured the calamities of the war on themselves and their families during "Nationalist during the day and Communist at night". They peacefully accepted their fate in front of the guns of both sides. People who only need jobs and food for their family. They can't understand the South's accusations against the North:

- *Bringing international communism to Vietnam, following Russia and China.*
- *Taking advantage of patriotism to deceive people, using national cards to liberate the country from French colonialism, Japanese fascists and American imperialists to expand international Communism.*
- *cause unnecessary war so that millions of Vietnamese people died, the country was devastated and the nation divided. After World War II, all the colonial countries of France, Britain and the US were in turn given the right to self-determination according to the progressive movement in the world, from "paying too much" (Lê Duẩn).*
- *fool the world that the army of the North DRV (People's Army) fights in the South under the banner of the Liberation Army of the NLF/VC under the Vietnamese Communist Party's Fatherland Front to invade the South*
- *killed thousands of Northerners in Agricultural Reforms and Cultural campaigns and denounced dissenters*

And vice versa, the North accused the South

- *lack of legitimacy and does not implement the Geneva agreement*
- *Follow the French and then henchmen, puppets of the invading US*
- *nepotism and militarism*
- *killed thousands of patriots*

*-corruption, social disparity between rich and poor and social morals in decline, the population is starving; Marxist theorists often compare the poor but good people in the North with the South to argue that the southern people are rich in material things, not poor and ragged like the North people, thanks to aid, they are raised by the US excess butter and milk scum, no happiness, just vanity, false prosperity.*

Ngô Đình Diệm's government from the beginning prevented American troops from pouring into Vietnam, to do so would lose the cause of the South Vietnamese government, a country that was independent and began to prosper. That's why he didn't want to see foreign troops. The government of President Nguyễn Văn Thiệu wanted to keep American troops in order to prevent the communists from invading the South, but ultimately failed. President Thiệu's approach is not much different from that of Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore when he wanted the British army to prolong its presence in the island nation of Singapore because it both helped Singapore protect its independence and saved Singapore's money that has to be spent on the military, and the British military's spending also helps stimulate the economy.

Particularly for the leaders of the North, they have the ambition to invade the South because simply by dividing the North and the South, in the long run, the North will definitely become an exhausted and poor country, like North Korea today, and the South will prosper like South Korea. At that time, the military balance would shift to the South and the North would be in danger of being defeated. Why is that? The first is in terms of natural resources, the most fertile lands, the most beautiful beaches, the places with the most oil reserves, all belong to the South. The longer the war goes on, the more miserable the North will be in terms of food. And second, the North at that time was exhausted in terms of food. The socialist economic model that had been practiced in the North for 20 years from 1954 to 1975 was basically bankrupt. In just 10 years from 1975 to 1986, the socialist economic model brought the whole of Vietnam to the end of danger, let alone the application of this economy in the North for 20 years. So, without the food aid of the Soviet Union and China, the North would have collapsed due to starvation a long time ago. The leaders of the North saw the reality that their fate would be very dangerous once they lost their aid, so they swung the diplomatic rope between China and the Soviet Union for a long time in search of aid. But they knew that the situation might not last long, so they advanced at all costs to rob the South. Lê Duẩn, who had been in the South for a long time and seen the prosperity of the South, was therefore the most enthusiastic advocate for the advance.

In the end, the Vietnamese on both sides received enough foreign bombs. Vietnam was severely damaged. Almost all weapons and military equipment used for the Vietnam War of both sides were provided by outside aid: guns and ammunition were provided by foreigners, and gunmen were Vietnamese so that brothers and sisters could kill each other for their own ideology. Both sides, South and North Vietnam, were influenced by foreign powers using aid to follow foreign interests. This is a painful and memorable experience for Vietnamese people on both sides, who cannot trust any foreign country, whether communist or capitalist.

Why is Vietnam a constitutional country following the Party's Platform through the Constitution "the Party writes the National Assembly passes" but only one Article 4 has been put into effect? Why love the country is love the Communist Party? Why patriotism is love socialism? Why, according to the first word "all people are equal" of the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam, let the Party members rule and the peasants are persecuted and robbed of their land? Meanwhile, demanding human rights, freedom and democracy is betraying the nation? Is there a nation in the world that has to sacrifice generations to fight for liberation in order for its descendants to "gain" and lose all human freedoms like the Vietnamese people? Why banning press freedom and freedom of speech is just?

Why do generations of young people have to be born in the North and die in the South? Why is it righteous to follow Russia and follow China? Why worship the Soviet Union as the second homeland of Vietnamese communists? Why is class struggle, killing bourgeois and patriotic intellectuals justifiable? Why are there so many examples of talented intellectuals of the country from France, in the South and the North, giving up all the comforts of life to become soldiers protecting the country when the country needs them and then when the country is independent? To establish unity, to realize the wrongness of their own decisions, should they be quiet?

Is the progress that the free world has brought to South Vietnam even in a short time, along with the human values of the world's sustainable democracy, contrary to the values and interests of the people of the world? Communists? How many millions of Vietnamese people have, are and plan to leave their beloved land, where they are buried and cut their navel to find freedom, a place worth living and opportunities for advancement for themselves and their families? How many talents are revealed overseas after leaving the country? Should the influence of the US and other liberal democracies be maintained and developed in order to harmonize China's pressures and threats and protect national independence?

Senior Lieutenant General Trần Văn Trà, Chairman of the Saigon - Gia Định Military Administration Committee in a meeting with former President of the Saigon government Dương Văn Minh and his cabinet before releasing them, on May 2, 1975, said that : *"Between us and you, there is no winner or loser, only the Vietnamese people are the*

*winner.*" How to explain the anti-reconciliation policies of re-education, of abolishing the southern culture and restricting the minimum freedoms of the 1946 constitution, while continuing to harbor hatred, self-pride, "intellectual pinnacle", "victory of holy war" and "invincible victory". As well as explaining how millions of people had to leave the country despite sacrificing their lives while there was no more gunfire in the country. Why not let southern experts and intellectuals join hands in the reconstruction of the country, but send them to "social labor" in the deep forests of poisonous water and slow death. Economist Milton Friedman, Nobel prize for Economics in 1976, stated: *"Look at how many people from communist countries have risked their lives to cross the border, cross the sea to the free capitalist countries, that is enough for us to know how humanity has chosen.*

Explain how Chinese military advisors and soldiers were present at Điện Biên Phủ battlefield, explain how Soviet military advisors were present before each campaign, explain how the cemetery of North Korean pilots on the North soil... !? Explain how the Vietnam People's Army "completely left the North land empty and assigned the Chinese troops to protect and rushed to the South" "bringing the war outside Vietnam to do international missions" in Cambodia, "liberating" the Cambodian people from the "genocide". So, what if the explanation is that the US military participated in the war "on international duty" in Vietnam in order to "liberate" the Vietnamese people from the "scourge" of the Communists? Because Communism is a "disaster", never a "blessing", not only in Vietnam, but also around the world because today's world situation in 2020 has proved it.

Many occasions to stop the war and negotiate for peace (the 1954 Geneva Agreement and the 1973 Paris Agreement) aroused many dreams in the hearts of the Vietnamese people. The aspiration of freedom, democracy, human rights, no hatred, no class struggle in a prosperous Vietnam is understood through the explanation of the achievements of



Đặng tiểu Bình



Lý quang Diệu



Võ văn Kiệt

Singaporeans by Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew (1923-2015) with General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997) during his first visit in 1978 to Singapore: *"Communism can only succeed if you believe that all people sacrifice themselves for their fellow human beings, not for my family or myself. As for me, I operate on the basis that people, boys and girls alike, work first for themselves and their families, and only on that basis do they share part of the fruits of their labor with others fellow citizens who are less fortunate. That is the foundation of my activity."* Then Deng Xiaoping changed mainland China.

Through the Vietnam war with Vietnamese blood to satisfy Mao's hatred of America, Lee Kwan Yew once declared: *"The Vietnam War has given Southeast Asian countries more time to improve their living standards, because if no Vietnam war, Southeast Asia would have definitely fallen into the hands of the Communists."* Lee Kwan Yew went to Vietnam many times at the invitation of the Vietnamese government. He sincerely commented and shared his experiences with former Prime Minister Võ Văn Kiệt (1922-2008) on national

reconstruction, eradicating corruption, curbing inflation, economic globalization ... He told Singapore's The Straits Times, when asked about Vietnam, he shook his head: *"Forget it, I've already told them all, no use!"* "Today, despite heavy pressure from China in all aspects including expansion intentions, Vietnam's electronic information and communication technology, diplomacy, foreign trade, tourism, and national development have favorable changes when cooperating with the US, the West and neighboring free countries.

The situation after World War II was different, the "De-Realization" movement exploded and flourished on all continents, Colonialism changed from "Old Colonialism" - military conquest of colonies, to "New Colonial" -using Capitalism, Globalization and Economic, Political, Cultural tools ... to control another country. The US has established military bases and military presence in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand..., but can only establish alliances to maintain the balance of forces with the Communists. But the US has never had the intention to invade other countries for long because of the laws of the US and international law as the communists have long propagated. After surrendering to the US and Allied armies, the US helped rebuild Germany, Japan, and South Korea into economic dragons. After the Soviet communist empire collapsed, the US became greedy and enabled China to become an economic red empire with an influence around the world on par with or possibly surpassing the US.

### **The "Fake" of the US-Russia-China in the Vietnam War**

The Vietnam War was one of the most expensive wars in human history during the national liberation movement and the ideological cold war. The leading powers are: the US, the Soviet Union, and China, due to many different goals and calculations of each period, aided the parties in the Vietnam War in all aspects of economy and military, culture, science and technology, training, education... with all different levels. In general, aid increased with the size of the war. This is a proxy war between the US on one side and the Soviet Union and China on the other in the heart of the Cold War. However, according to the DRV and the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, the decisive factor to their victory is the people's love, patriotism, and the people's unyielding will to build socialism under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam with many flowery words. On the one hand, the US supported the concept of the right to self-determination of peoples, on the other hand, it also had close relations with its imperial European allies over their colonies. The Cold War only complicated America's position in favor of decolonization as opposed to the spread of international communism and the Soviet strategic ambitions in Europe. This war was to keep South Vietnam and Southeast Asia from the communists.

Foreign aid has had a great influence on people's lives, social morality of the two regions of Vietnam and the war situation, not only material aid but also human, experts and sending troops into battle. Foreign aid changes from time to time and has a decisive influence on wars, war forms, economic construction and development of the two regions. The US aided the Republic of Vietnam as well as directly planned strategies, directed tactics, even brought regular troops to Vietnam to fight directly. The US joined to support the Republic

of Vietnam just because it wanted to prevent the wave of communism from covering Southeast Asian countries.

Meanwhile, the DRV received military assistance from China and the Soviet Union through consulting missions in northern logistics and material from the bloc of socialist countries. China supports the North because it does not want the presence of American troops at its feet. China's eastern exit is blocked by Japan and Taiwan, both of which are US allies. And if the southern exit is controlled by the US in the south, China is considered isolated. That is also the reason that China has at all costs militarized and controlled Vietnam's East Sea in order to control its exit to the Pacific. That is also the reason that China hastily seized the Paracel in 1974 from the Republic of Vietnam when knowing that the US had abandoned Vietnam and did not intervene. The Soviet Union, in particular, wanted more communist allies because in the competition between the Soviet Union and the West, the side with more flanks would prevail.

Father Cao Văn Luận, former President of Huế University, once told Dr. Nguyen Khắc Viện, a member of the French and Vietnamese communists (quoted from the Historical Society 1940-1965): *"Bảo Đại was supported by the French, Hồ Chí Minh is supported by Russia and China. If I have to compare the choices between China, France, the US, I think the US is not as dangerous as China and France... With the US, the old colonial regime has ended. America won over Japan, then helped Japan to have a strong economic revival. America entered Europe, and then helped Europe. America's pressure, if it followed Diem's footsteps into Vietnam, was just economic pressure. On your side, the road is much more dangerous because behind you is China. For the sake of China, Mao Zedong will have to annex Southeast Asia."*

As for "the RVN regime", the South Vietnamese government headed by President Ngô Đình Diệm was established based on the "public referendum" that deposed National Head Bảo Đại in 1955 (with fraud or not, as political maneuvers, is another matter.) So, nominally, this is still a "legitimate" government. Only after the coup d'état of 1963, ending the First Republic, did American combat troops officially present in the South. South Vietnam which lost the "national justice" since then, and the North Vietnamese had a "national justice of anti-invasion" also since then ... "Justice", after all, is just a "political trick".

If the "General Election for the Unification of South and North Vietnam" could not be realized, the two regimes would blame each other, as is often the case in political disputes. But it is also possible to see the violation of the North in that it did not gather all its officers and soldiers to the other side of the 17th parallel, but still left them "in the area", preventing the people of the North from migrating to the South according to the 1954 Geneva Accords, will seek to control the electoral votes by means lacking transparency ... Just as after the 1973 Paris Agreement, both sides blamed each other for violating the ceasefire, but then in

the end the North "liberated" the South with guns in 1975, with the glee of "who wins who": *"If we fight the US, we will fight for the Soviet Union and fight for China. We have succeeded in planting the international Marxist-Leninist flag all over Vietnam"* (Lê Duẩn),

To put it more objectively: the US military presence in Vietnam is not to invade Vietnam, nor to protect Vietnam, but to a higher purpose, globally, through South Vietnam to join the war against Communism represented by China, through North Vietnam, in order to create a balance of power in a bipolar world confronting the two factions of Capitalism and Communism. After being separated by the Communists (between the Soviet Union and China), and "neutralizing" China through President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger's visit to China and the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, then South Vietnam is no longer valuable as an important link in the defensive belt, does not need to be maintained at all costs, has been "sacrificed" by the US because of a market that is too small in comparison with China...

China supported North Vietnam, as well as once supported North Korea (by sending "volunteer army" to fight), to create a buffer zone, a protective barrier for China against capitalism. And when it has fallen to the US, the danger is no longer there, China also "sacrifices" the "fence" that is North Vietnam ... In addition, China, like North Korea, does not want Vietnam at all unified, strong, freed from the Chinese yoke, so they proposed to help President Dương Văn Minh of the Republic of Vietnam to retain the South in the last days of April 1975 ... The Russian Communists supported North Vietnam as to find a gateway to the eastern Pacific Ocean that was blocked by China. When it was impossible to establish a naval base in Cam Ranh Bay, and when the Soviet Union collapsed, Russia also abandoned Vietnam to save itself...

After World War II, the major powers were "tired", so they all had to consider when launching a war: Russia and the Communists did not support North Korea fighting South Korea because it was afraid to collide with the US, and the US did not want to fight to the border between China and Korea for fear of colliding with China ... The US jumped into South Vietnam only to prevent the "Red Wave" ambition from China, willing to defend South Vietnam through the establishment of the McNamara electronic fence, did not intend to invade North Vietnam because of fear of collision with China ... If the Vietnamese people were wise enough to know the situation, they would have accepted the division like South - North Korea. Today how far South Vietnam would have developed in the international arena!

It is undeniable that the French and Americans have turned Vietnam into the center of Indochina, a strategic focus in the Asia-Pacific region, and turned Saigon into the "Pearl of the Far East". If the Vietnamese people had the wisdom and patience not to be entangled in constant wars, the position of the intermediate port for international goods and services might be located in Saigon, not in Singapore, because Saigon also has a large domestic

market. In addition, Vietnam also has Cam Ranh port for strategic defense, Hai Phong port for the northern market...

## USA

The US military presence openly in South Vietnam was the pretext for North Vietnam to change its name from "ideological war", "who wins over whom", "civil war" ..., to "war against the enemy", "war for national liberation" ..., and of course North Vietnam must limit and keep secret the presence of other countries' armies in the North in order to keep the "just cause" and "anti-aggression America" for itself. If the North Vietnamese wanted to launch any campaign, they had to "ask for permission" from the "elders" in the Socialist faction; if the "seniors", for their own sake, did not "allow" then there would be no military aid.

The US sent troops to fight in Vietnam, as well as fought in Korea (1950-1953), to establish the Asia-Pacific defense belt, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines, Thailand ... to prevent the "Red Wave" from spreading from Russia, Eastern Europe, through China (East Asia) to Vietnam (Southeast Asia). We can see it as a strategy of "defending the Free World", "protecting America from afar", "bringing the war beyond the US borders" ... And Vietnam and North Korea have become the battlefields ... ! But why can the Korean people stop fighting after 3 years, but not the Vietnamese people?

Cold war rivalry with the Soviet Union was the greatest foreign policy concern of the US during the 1940s and 1950s, and the Truman and Eisenhower governments became increasingly concerned that as the European powers lost their colonies, communist parties backed by the Soviet Union would gain power in the new countries. This could shift the international balance of power in favor of the Soviet Union and remove access to economic resources from the US ally. Events such as Indonesia's struggle for independence (1945-1950), Vietnam's war against France (1945-1954) and the overtly nationalist socialism of Egypt (1952) and Iran (1951) ) made the US worried that newly independent countries would support the Soviet Union, even if the new government did not directly contact the Soviet Union. As a result, the US used relief programs, technical assistance, and sometimes even direct military intervention to support pro-Western anti-Communist forces in newly independent countries in the third world.

Since 1943, Washington has been fighting Japanese troops stationed in Southeast Asia. Hồ Chí Minh realized that the US was wanting to play a bigger role in the Pacific region, he did everything to establish relations with the US by rescuing pilots who crashed during the war with Japan, provided intelligence to the US, and performed propaganda against Japan. In return, the US intelligence agency OSS (US Office of Strategic Services) provided medical assistance, weapons, communication facilities, advice and training for small-scale troops for the Việt Minh. On February 28, 1946, President Hồ Chí Minh sent a letter to US President Harry Truman calling on the US to intervene urgently to support the



nascent independence of Vietnam, but was not answered because the US viewed Hồ Chí Minh as a "servant of the Communist International", so he ignored calls to support Vietnam's independence. At the end of September 1946, the US withdrew all intelligence officers in Vietnam, ending contact with Hồ Chí Minh's government.

In May 1950, when France was defeated by the Việt Minh, the opportunity for American intervention really came. The US wanted to take advantage of France to consume the surplus weapons because of America's weapons production capacity after World War II as well as to avoid the loss of American lives. Supporting the French in Indochina and the Marshall Plan in France were also the way the US drew France into a comprehensive alliance led by the US under the Domino theory. The US supported its allies in Southeast Asia to combat movements they saw as "communist forces that want to dominate Asia under the guise of nationalism". When the Franco-Việt Minh war ended in 1954, the US paid 78% of the war costs to France, even American pilots fought with the French in the battle of Điện Biên Phủ. However, the formula "American aid, French expedition, indigenous army" still failed to save the defeat. During the first three years of the war, the US maintained a "neutral" attitude but clearly supported France. The US did not want to put itself in the awkward position of openly supporting colonialism, but it also did not want to offend France, a key European ally. As a result, the Truman administration secretly gave France many financial and military aids.

When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, the US responded to the call of the United Nations, sending troops to help South Korea fight North Korea. The US helped the Republic of Vietnam to resist the invasion of the North Vietnamese, especially the expansion of China. However, the tragic end of the Republic of Vietnam in 1975 raised a question: Did the US sincerely help the Republic of Vietnam defend itself and fight communism? The important point is that when coming to Vietnam, the US only acts according to US policy guidelines, US views, for US interests. The US paid little attention to the proposals, aspirations and interests of the Republic of Vietnam. US advisers train the ARVN military according to US war theory, based on advanced and abundant firepower, not on the conditions of Vietnam, or that the US did not find countermeasures against guerrillas. The US also rejected the proposals of the South Vietnamese generals to advance to the north to stop communist guerrillas in North VN; and the US obstructed the plan of the Republic of Vietnam to produce ammunition so that the Republic of Vietnam could supply its own war needs...

The policy of the US during the war in North VN was a limited war, not attacking and pouring troops into Vietnam to avoid Chinese intervention like in South Korea. In addition to the policy of limited war, the US imposed within the U.S. military rules of engagement that one American author observed: "These rules ensure that our military [the US] can't win and the communists can't lose." (Steve Farrell, *Why We Lost in Vietnam - The Untold Story*, University of Toronto, School of Continuing Studies, *The Moral Liberal*.) Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, called this "**no win policy**". Before sending infantry

into NVN, on April 30, 1964, US Secretary of State Dean Rusk asked J. Blair Seaborn, the head of the Canadian delegation in the International Control Commission, to inform Hanoi of its policy and asked Hanoi to stop supporting the South Vietnamese Communists in exchange for aid. Seaborn presented it to Phạm Văn Đồng on June 18, 1964, but DRV did not accept it.

Meanwhile, at first, the US and the Republic of Vietnam did not sign a military treaty. In addition, when bringing infantry into South Vietnam in 1965, the US ambassador to the Republic of Vietnam Maxwell Taylor lobbied with Prime Minister Phan Huy Quát and the generals, and the two sides "agreed by word of mouth" (did not sign the document) to let the US Marines land in Đà Nẵng on March 8, 1965. Then, when it wants to withdraw its troops, the US automatically withdraws its troops, and only informs the President of the Republic of Vietnam. Is this a sign that the US is not determined to help the Republic of Vietnam against the Communists like the US has helped South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, even though at that time the Republic of Vietnam was known as an "anti-communist outpost"? Does the US just want to combine with the Republic of Vietnam into an unwritten alliance, without being closely tied to the Republic of Vietnam, so that the US can widen its way of action and manage when confronting China while the world situation is changing? In the US, after winning the election and becoming president on January 20, 1969, Richard Nixon continued to practice the plan "Vietnamization of the war", transferring the military burden to the Republic of Vietnam, and withdraw US troops home. In February 1972, Richard Nixon visited China, opening a new era in US-China relations. To shake hands with China, the VN chess pieces were no longer needed, so the US abandoned the Republic of Vietnam.

The US became an atomic power in 1945, leading the capitalist bloc after the Second World War, came to help South VN because: 1) Wanted to build South VN into an anti-communist outpost, protecting the US from afar. 2) Anti-Soviet and stopped the expansion of communism. 3) Surrounded China, prevented China from going to Southeast Asia. However, due to pragmatism, radicalism, willingness to change for progress and development, after contacting and compromising with China, the US abandoned the South VN and withdrew its troops back home. Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew recently commented: *"I also feel very sorry that the balance of power shift is taking place because I consider the US to be a peaceful power. They are aggressive and they have no intention of taking new territory. They sent troops to Vietnam not because they wanted to take Vietnam. They sent troops to the Korean peninsula not because they wanted to occupy North or South Korea. The goal of those wars was to fight communism. They wanted to stop communism from spreading in the world. If the Americans hadn't intervened and fought in Vietnam for as long as they did, the Anti-communist sentiment in other Southeast Asian countries must have waned, and Southeast Asia may have collapsed like a red-wave domino game. Nixon gave South Vietnam time to build up its forces. South Vietnam did not succeed, but that increased time allowed Southeast Asia to act together and lay the foundation for the growth of ASEAN"*. Singapore's economy also benefitted from the sale of necessities, fuel, weapons and war vehicles to the American expeditionary force in Vietnam. As for petrol and fuel,

Singapore sold \$600 million worth of goods to the US every month; this income from logistics jobs for the US military was the initial source to help Singapore build the country's economy.

In addition, South Korea sent about 320,000 soldiers to fight with the US in the Vietnam War in exchange for US aid. About 5,000 South Korean soldiers died and about 11,000 more were seriously injured. Thanks to American aid and wages paid to Korean soldiers who fought in the war, the Korean economy developed rapidly. The US government also had a series of orders with Japanese companies for equipment and other military items for the war in Vietnam, which provided much-needed revenue for the Japanese economy to rebuild and thrive.

### **Soviet Union**

Russia, changed from the Republic of the Soviet Union on December 30, 1922, propagated communism and developed the Third Communist International in order to export the revolution, expand its influence abroad, and advance to the world. to form a bloc of communist states led by the Soviet Union, which competed with the Western European empires. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union encouraged the colonized countries, i.e., colonies of Western countries, to rise up against the imperialists, liberate their nation, gain independence, and then join the Soviet bloc. In other words, the Communist Third International was a tool for the expansion of the new Soviet communist empire including communist countries under the control of the Soviet Union.

The Third Comintern trained Hồ Chí Minh to become a spy for this Soviet scheme. The Soviet Union was far from Vietnam, had little interest in East Asia, and helped the DRV because: 1) using Hồ Chí Minh to import communism into Vietnam and to implement the policy of the Communist Party's expansion into Southeast Asia, 2) drawing DRV towards its side because of a dispute with China 3) Helped DRV fight the US, the enemy of the Soviet Union since 1945.

The first Vietnamese from the Eastern Communist University of Labor in Moscow, sent by the Communist International to China for espionage in 1924 was Nguyễn Ái Quốc (NAQ). Along the way, NAQ changed his name many times. In 1942, NAQ appropriated the name Hồ Chí Minh (HCM) of Hồ Học Lãm, a pure nationalist revolutionary who was reputable in the anti-French revolutionary circles. Although he was trained by the Communist Party of Vietnam and when Hồ Chí Minh and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) seized power in Hanoi in 1945, the Soviet Union still did not help, for two reasons: 1) Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator, was inherently suspicious and distrustful of communist countries not established by the Soviet Union. Moreover, Hồ Chí Minh used to cooperate with the US intelligence agency OSS (Office of Strategic Services), so Stalin suspected that Hồ Chí Minh was not loyal to communism. 2) Vietnam is too far from the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union has no interest in Southeast Asia.

In 1950, when Hồ Chí Minh went to the Soviet Union to ask for help, Stalin authorized China to help Hồ Chí Minh fight the French and then the Soviet Union to provide heavy weapons to the DRV via China, because at that time the Vietnamese Communists did not have any territory. In the first stage, the Soviet Union formed a comprehensive political relationship with the DRV supporting the policy and line of restoring and building North Vietnam. On November 4, 1954, the Soviet Union just sent Lavrashev, the first ambassador of the Soviet Union to Hanoi.

The Geneva Agreement of 1954 divided Vietnam into two countries. The Soviet Union only paid attention to Vietnam War when the Russo-Chinese dispute occurred due to Nikita Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence" between countries that did not share the same political regime in 1956. Soviet aid for the DRV was to pull the DRV towards the Soviet Union since 1965. Because General Giáp and General Secretary Lê Duẩn had disagreements on the policies of Khrushchev or Mao and the 1968 Tết Offensive, which led to the event of "Revision against the Party" by uncovering insiders with ties to Soviet intelligence. By the 1990s, documents discovered by historian Ilya V. Gaiduk in secret Soviet archives showed that during this period, employees of the Soviet Embassy in Hanoi (possibly including some intelligence officers) did indeed contact a small group of disgruntled DRV figures who had been demoted years earlier. This group of disgruntled people asked the Soviet Union to intervene in the internal situation of the DRV.

Henry Kissinger's visit to China in 1971 made Hanoi feel that "they had not been consulted and betrayed." The Cultural Revolution in China helped North Vietnam decide more clearly to choose Moscow. Before that, Lê Duẩn had shown a tactical leaning towards Beijing. The Hanoi leadership was concerned that the radical movement (of Cultural Revolution) stirred up upheaval among the large Chinese population in North Vietnam. In terms of status, Hanoi also wanted to rise to play a leading role in the socialist revolution at least in Southeast Asia, and did not want to accept the role of Beijing's underling.

After the Paris Agreement (January 27, 1973), the US did not bomb Vietnam, so the Soviet Union easily provided direct aid to North VN, and quadrupled the amount of aid for the DRV to attack the South VN. The Soviet Union's assistance to Vietnam in two main areas, economic aid, and military aid from 1954 to 1975. The Soviet Union from being an "observer", an outsider, indirectly affected the situation in Vietnam during the years 1954-1964, then openly and directly aided Vietnam from 1965 onward. Brezhnev provided heavy weapons to shoot down American planes. Mao tried hard to advise the Communist Party of Vietnam to refuse aid from the Soviet Union but failed, so he had to increase the number of advisers and soldiers to help the North Vietnamese so that the entire army of the People's Army of Vietnam went to the South to fight.

In 'Why Were the Russians in Vietnam?' in the New York Times (March 27, 2018), Professor Sergey Radchenko re-evaluated the Soviet decision in the Vietnam War, based on



documents in Russian during the Soviet era. Mr. Radchenko said that during his visit to Moscow in December 1971, General Võ Nguyên Giáp brought the message that North Vietnam wanted to completely lean towards the Soviet Union when preparing for the Winter-Spring campaign to hit the final blow to South Vietnam. Giáp also promised to give the Soviet navy the right to use Cam Ranh Bay, then still controlled by the US.

But more importantly, during his 1973 summer visit to the Soviet Union, Lê Duẩn clearly expressed concern about China because Mao was prepared to invade all of Indochina and Southeast Asia. Leonid Brezhnev promised to help defend Vietnam against China. The reason, according to Professor Radchenko, was not because the new Communist Party chief of the Soviet Union and his number one partner, Prime Minister Andrei Kosygin, suddenly fell in love with the Vietnamese, but because the Vietnam war helped them gain an 'equal level' status with America'. Still, the article by Sergei Radchenko said that right from that year Brezhnev promised Lê Duẩn and Phạm Văn Đồng that the Soviet Union would aid Vietnam after the war to industrialize the economy. Brezhnev's aim was to let the whole Southeast Asia see the benefits of following the socialist path. The leader of the Soviet Union not only agreed to write off Vietnam's debt but also lent and gave a lot of aid. Sergei Radchenko said that by 1990, Vietnam received more than 11 billion USD in aid, and most of this amount they never repaid. In the 1980s, aid to Vietnam "became a burden on the Soviet economy, contributing to the Soviet Union's to default on its debt," Radchenko said. The Soviet Union under Brezhnev wanted to gain a great power position with the US, so it raised the socialist flag in Southeast Asia. Concluding the article, this author believed that the victory in the Vietnam War was just a Pyrrhic victory, at least for Moscow.

In about 20 years, from July 1955 to the end of 1975, the Soviet Government signed with the Government of Vietnam 19 Agreements, 1 Treaty and 1 Protocol. Of which more than 50% were the agreements on the Soviet Union's assistance to Vietnam in most fields, especially in the fields of economy, culture, science and technology... Thoughts on Soviet economic, cultural, military art and science were also introduced into Vietnam, contributing to the formation of new cadres in all fields and increasing the attractiveness of the "Soviet way", as well as "the Soviet model" in Vietnam.

Along with economic and technical aid, the Soviet Government also provided Vietnam with strategic military items, helping Vietnam strengthen its defense potential. These agreements, treaties and decrees were the legal basis for the Government of the Soviet Union to promote aid activities and help Vietnam implement plans for economic recovery, cultural development, and potential enhancement of the national defense force, to step up the resistance war against the US. However, starting with the motto of self-reliance,

President Hồ Chí Minh advised the revolutionary forces of Vietnam: "Absolutely do not give birth to dependence because our friends help a lot".

After the Gulf of Tonkin incident in August 1964 and when the Soviet-Chinese disagreement was openly revealed, the principle of "joint assistance" between the Soviet Union and China with Vietnam was no longer valid, the transit of goods of Soviet aid through China was difficult. Most of the technical and military equipment and other supplies and goods that the Soviet Union gave to Vietnam were transported directly to Vietnam by Soviet fleets, despite all dangers of the strict blockade and very fierce raiding by the US Air Force over the waters of North Vietnam. A number of Soviet ships such as Polock, Turkestan... were bombarded by American aircraft while on international missions in northern Vietnam's seaports.

In addition, according to the agreement between the two states, the Soviet Government sent many military experts to work in Vietnam. The number of Soviet military experts to Vietnam increased as the US escalated the war, using air and naval forces to raid the North. According to a document from the Soviet Union, only from July 11, 1965 to December 31, 1974, the Soviet Union sent 10,859 tours by military experts, from soldiers to generals to help Vietnam build up its air defense force and air force, against America's bombing war. During their work in Vietnam, 13 of them died (4 people died in battle).

In the military field, like during the resistance war against the French colonialists, the Soviet military aid to Vietnam during the anti-American era was not very much, accounting for only 26% of the overall aid of the socialist countries - China, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the GDR, the People's Republic of Korea and Cuba. But the important thing was that the military items that the Soviet Union aided to Vietnam at that time were mostly strategic weapons and equipment, with field characteristics, strategic attack, and strong power, such as rocket artillery, tanks, armored vehicles... especially warships, aircraft, missiles, and many other materials and equipment contributed to supporting the Soviet Union's military aid. Soviet military assisted Vietnam to strengthen the defense and combat capabilities of the people's armed forces, to effectively respond to the US air and naval raids in the waters and airspace of the North. In the period 1953-1991, the Soviet Union provided Vietnam with 2000 tanks and armored vehicles, 1700 artillery and mortars, more than 5000 anti-aircraft guns, 158 anti-aircraft missiles, more than 700 combat aircraft, 120 aircraft helicopters, more than 100 warships, deployed 117 military facilities. During that time, there were 6,000 Soviet soldiers and experts working in North Vietnam.

Since the end of the Cold War, news or history has begun to appear about the presence of Soviet troops in North Vietnam. In 2008, on the occasion of Senator John McCain's running for president of the US, Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported that a former Soviet pilot, Yury Trushvekin, said he was the one who shot down McCain's plane over

Hanoi in 1967. But the Russian news agency also said the presence of Soviet troops in North Vietnam at that time "never been officially recognized" even after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Former soldiers in "Warriors from Vietnam" had still an unofficial celebration. It seems that unlike the Chinese, Soviet officers and soldiers fought with their Vietnamese comrades, as recounted by Trushvekin in a recent article on topwar.ru in Russian that several Vietnamese networks translated. Another former Russian officer confirmed that he fought and lived with the Vietnamese army. Nicolai Kolesnhik, a Russian veteran in Vietnam, replied to the Russian website, said that since 1965, he and his colleagues engaged in the defense of North Vietnam with missiles against the US air force. Kolesnhik also talked about the Soviet military help was very large "about two million dollars a day during all the war years" and in which weapons and equipment accounted for large numbers.

According to Nikolay Koliesnik, former head of the Soviet expert delegation in Vietnam, Chairman of the Association of Russian Veterans in the Vietnam War, the Soviet Union provided the most modern fighter jets MiG-21 and the Dvina surface-to-air missiles - weapons, which, according to the Americans themselves, at that time were the most fearsome on the planet. According to Soviet statistics, from July 11, 1965 to December 31 1974, the number of Soviet soldiers who went to Vietnam to help the Vietnamese army train in the use of weapons, build constructions... were 6,359 generals and officers and more than 4,500 non-commissioned officers and soldiers. By the end of 1975, the Soviet Union had trained 13,500 Vietnamese soldiers in Soviet military schools.

## **China**

Anti-US is China's policy since World War II because China has clashed with the US many times in many places. During the Nationalist-Communist war in China, the US aided the Republic of China led by Chiang Kai-shek. The US hostility in Mao's heart began during Mao's time in Yan'an when the remnants of Mao's army were surrounded by Chiang Kai-shek's troops and the US openly declared its support for Chiang's faction. When the Republic of China failed and moved to Taiwan, the US helped the Republic of China maintain China's representative seat in the United Nations, although Taiwan is very small, with a small population compared to China.

In 1949, the Communist Party succeeded in China. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC), commonly known as China. During this period, China carried out a "one border" foreign policy, fell to the socialist side led by the Soviet Union, directly confronting the US, considering the US as the most dangerous enemy. Animosity arose after the Taiwan Strait conflict, and more seriously, after the 1950-1953 Korean War in which nearly 400,000 Chinese troops were killed, among them Mao's son Anying. He was Mao's oldest and closest son. For Mao the number one enemy was America.

Because he was not able to directly confront the US, Mao advocated making it difficult for the US, China's main enemy in the period from 1949 to 1972, through revolutionary war in any country the US has an interest or is able to exert influence. Therefore, China actively supported and helped the DRV to fight against France and the US. China was the most active donor to the DRV at that time. Mao tried to find ways to control the Communist Party of Vietnam in all aspects from education, propaganda, policy, economy, culture and society. From the very beginning of the war, many millions of Vietnamese people unjustly shed their blood for the communist ideology and Chinese hegemony.

In early 1950, Hồ Chí Minh, the president of the DRV, rushed to Beijing to seek help. At that time, Mao Zedong and Chou Enlai were not in Beijing and were visiting the Soviet Union. After Beijing, Hồ Chí Minh arrived in Moscow on the evening of February 6, 1950. Maybe before that, Stalin and Mao Zedong had agreed to divide the sphere of influence, so when receiving Hồ Chí Minh, Stalin said: *"The Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the people of the Soviet Union completely aided your comrades' struggle against the French.. However, we have discussed with Chinese comrades, it is more appropriate that Vietnam's aid to the war against the French is mainly the charge of China..."* (Memoirs of insiders, Facts about the Chinese military advisory group's aid to Vietnam against the French, article by Trương Quảng Hoa, Beijing: Publishing House History of the Communist Party of China, 2002, Trần Hữu Nghĩa, Dương Danh Dy translated. Montreal: Media Magazine Issues 32 and 33, Summer-Fall 2009, p. 45.)

In Beijing, a mutual defense treaty between the DRV and the PRC was signed, under which the two sides cooperate to eliminate bandits. (Bernard Fall, *Le Việt-Minh*, Paris: Max Leclerc et Compagnie, 1960, p. 119.) Thieves here refer to French commandos and remnants of the Chinese Nationalist Army, which fled to the Sino-Vietnamese border after Chiang Kai-shek failed. Since then, China has given maximum aid to the Communists of Vietnam, not only because of its socialist sentiments, but also because China asked the Communists of Vietnam to protect the security of China's southern border as well as to find a way to the Southern Sea to manifest itself in later decades.

During the two years 1951-1952, aid from socialist countries, including China, was maintained regularly. The Soviet Union helped equipment and weapons, China took care of technical staff and training. In addition to armament, training assistance, and food aid, China also sent a 79-member South China delegation led by Vi Quốc Thanh. In addition to the military advisory delegation, China also sent Trần Canh (former Deputy Commander of the Southwest Wing, Commander of the Yunnan Military Region) and a number of military officers to directly serve as advisors in the Autumn-Winter Border campaign in 1950. Before leaving, Chairman Mao Zedong warned : *"Comrades must consider the cause of liberation of the Vietnamese people as your own."*



At the time of the Geneva conference, France agreed to lose North Vietnam only after the battle of Điện Biên Phủ and had the support of the US. Moscow immediately supported to win the French against the rearmament of Germany. China supported Russia in this and jointly pressured Hanoi to accept a compromise. Before signing the Geneva Agreement, Chou En Lai and Hồ Chí Minh held a meeting in Liuzhou, Guangxi Province (Kwangsi) in China, from 3 to 5-7-1954, to discuss the signing of the agreement.

In addition, Chou En Lai gave Hồ Chí Minh two plans: 1) Before withdrawing troops from South VN to the North, the Communists buried their weapons and planted people in South VN to prepare for the next war 2) Using the guise of "anti-US to save the country", i.e., anti-US to incite the army and attract the masses. The Geneva Agreement of July 20, 1954 divided Vietnam into two at the 17th parallel. Moreover, China opposed a unified Indochina under the auspices of Hanoi according to the policy of the Third International. The relationship between Cambodia and China is very close to this day. Therefore, Hanoi believes that China has betrayed them. (Bernard K. Gordon in *The Third Indochina Conflict*). After the Geneva Accords 1954 to 1964, China was the sole source of supply for the North Vietnamese communists, not only from the rice bowl but also from the theoretical and ideological aspects. In general, the material and spiritual life of the Communist Party of Vietnam is deeply dependent on the CCP. Throughout the North, from work to home, Mao's image is placed on a sacred level.

Since 1956, the Sino-Soviet relationship was fractured because China opposed the policy of "peaceful coexistence" proposed by Khrushchev. The Soviet Union surrounded China to the north and west. To the southwest, India blocked China. To the east is the Pacific Ocean with three allies of the US: South Korea, Japan, and the Republic of China. Surrounded on almost three sides, China is very afraid of being isolated and especially afraid of being blocked by the US in the south, so China does its best to help the DRV.

On September 4, 1958, the State Council of China (the government) issued a proclamation on China's maritime boundary of 12 nautical miles from the coast, which applies to the entire Chinese territory, including the islands that China has claimed to be China's, in which China includes Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa in the East Sea. This statement is not sent specifically to any country and does not require a reply, but to please China to seek aid from China, Phạm Văn Đồng, DRV Prime Minister, with the consent of Hồ Chí Minh and the Politburo of the Labor Party, signed *the letter of credentials on September 14, 1958, endorsing the declaration of China on September 4, 1958, that is, implicitly recognizing the two archipelagos of Hoàng Sa and Trường Sa belonging to China*. A year later, Phạm Văn Đồng went to Beijing in October 1959 to ask for help. In response, in November 1959, China sent a delegation to DRV for two months, to study all the needs of DRV. In May 1960, the leaders of Vietnam and China convened successively in Hanoi and Beijing to discuss strategies to attack the South VN. (Qiang Zhai, *China & the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975*, The University of Carolina Press, 2000, pp. 82-83.).



With the promised aid by China in 1960 in Hanoi, the third congress of the Labor Party from September 5 to September 10, 1960 gave two major goals: building socialism in North Vietnam and liberating the South VN by force, that is, mobilizing troops to attack the South VN, i.e., the DRV openly violated the Geneva accords of 1954.

At the end of 1964, Hồ Chí Minh advocated balancing the influence between the Soviet Union and China, hoping to receive aid from both to pursue the goal of communism for the whole of Vietnam. This worried Mao. Deng Xiaoping, then General Secretary of the CCP, secretly visited Hanoi and promised to aid Hanoi one billion yuan if Hanoi refused Soviet aid. In addition, Mao was also adamant against any initiative to end the Vietnam War by means of negotiations. Mao directly told Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, during his visit to Beijing on February 11, 1965, “*The Soviet Union must not use Vietnam to bargain with the US.*” Mao also rejected the Soviet Union’s proposal for a summit between the three communist parties to discuss the course of the Vietnam war.

Hồ Chí Minh, Lê Duẩn, Văn Tiến Dũng constantly went to China to meet and negotiate with Chinese leaders. As the Vietnam War intensified, Lê Duẩn, the head of the delegation representing the Communist Party of Vietnam, during his visit to China in April 1965, officially requested Mao to send troops to Vietnam. Responding to Lê Duẩn's request, Mao increased a series of military aid to the North Vietnamese Communists. In June 1965, divisions of the People's Liberation Army entered North Vietnam. In addition to military aid, from June 1965 to March 1968, China sent 320,000 troops to Vietnam, stationed in the provinces and cities north of Hanoi, operating anti-aircraft guns, repairing roads, bridges, railway lines, protecting the northern provinces, in order to help the NVA pull all its forces down to attack the South VN. (Qiang Zhai, p. 135).



Lê Duẩn-Hồ Chí Minh-Mao Trạch Đông

However, according to Henry Kissinger, China only sent 100,000 troops (On China, Toronto: Penguin Group, Canada, 2011, p. 342). Bob Seals in an article on Military History in 2008 cited many Chinese authors whose books have been published in the West, such as Qiang Zhai and Li Xiaobing, that China's military involvement during the US-Vietnam War was different from that of the French-Vietnamese war, in the presence of tens of thousands of Chinese troops in North Vietnam, mainly in the engineering and air defense services. CIA documents recorded seven large units of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in North Vietnam, including the 67th Air Defense Division, and an estimated 25,000 to 45,000 Chinese combat troops in all. In addition to air defense, the PLA also provided missiles, artillery, logistics, railroads, mine-clearing vehicles, and engineering units to repair infrastructure destroyed by US air strikes. The peak

of China's involvement in the Vietnam war was in 1967, when the total number of air defense forces reached 17 divisions, with 150,000 troops.

General Secretary Lê Duẩn, when he was in power, was famous in always watching out for the intentions of the Chinese, but he clearly distinguished between the "Chinese people" on the one hand, and the reactionary Chinese on the other. He did not blame the entire Chinese nation for the aggressive policies of its leaders: *"We just mean they are a group. We are not talking about their homeland. We don't say the Chinese are bad to us. We say it's the Beijing reactionary group"* and more: *"As long as I sit here, I won't let anyone think in his head that his can rob this Vietnamese land"*.

The Hanoi-Beijing-Washington relationship went from the summer of 1968, when Beijing vehemently opposed the North Vietnamese negotiating with the Americans, to the summer of 1972 when the leaders of the DRV demanded that Mao should not receive President of the US in Beijing (and this request was denied) and after Mao began to urge his Vietnamese comrades to accept President Thiệu of South Vietnam as a partner in the coalition government to facilitate the withdrawal of the Americans from Indochina.

China's relations with North Vietnam deteriorated during the summer of 1968, but without Mao Zedong's consent, the North Vietnamese government announced the beginning of negotiations with the US and took a big turn for the worse after the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia on August 20, an event that shocked Chinese leaders. On August 23, Zhou Enlai publicly accused the Soviet Union for the first time of becoming a "socialist imperialist" and at the same time, the Chinese media made a cynical denunciation of the events in Czechoslovakia. Although the Brezhnev doctrine of "limited sovereignty" took a few months to come to fruition, its implications for China seemed all too clear to its leaders: the Soviet Union was now an even greater threat to China's security than the US (Mao's China and the Cold War by Chen Jian and China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975 by Qiang Zhai)

As North Vietnam increased its support for the Soviet action, so too did China intensify its attacks, both against the Soviet Union and those who "incubated the illusion of Soviet revisionism and US imperialism." Zhou Enlai's accusation (in the same speech) on September 2, 1968, was that "it's time to wake up!". On October 17, 1968, the meeting between Mao and Phạm Văn Đồng's delegation consisting of two Southern comrades, Nguyễn Văn Linh (Mười Cúc) and Lê Đức Anh was an important event to report to Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin Biao, and other Chinese leaders on the situation in the South to ensure that they would not follow the Soviet "revisionism". Mao told the Vietnamese delegation: *"We agree with your slogan of fighting and talking at the same time. There are some comrades who worry that the US will deceive you. But I told them nothing to worry about. Negotiating is like fighting."* Mao knew the pro-Soviet tendency in the ruling Communist Party of Vietnam and hoped that the Vietnamese communists in the South or

from the South would have a different tendency. After the Shanghai Communiqué, Mao sought to exploit and court these ranks. Mao's flirtatious intentions towards the NLF/VC continued to dominate Vietnamese politics. Mao received Nguyễn Thị Bình in Beijing on February 29, 1972, Nguyễn Hữu Thọ and the NLF/VC delegation visited Beijing in November 1973. After 1975 these naive elements gathered in the form of the Old Resistance Club.

In March 1969, there were major armed clashes between Chinese and Soviet forces at Zhenbao Island on the Ussuri River, the river that partially marks the border between the two countries. Although the violence occurred because China first declared war, the strength of the Soviet response caught the Chinese leadership by surprise. At the 9th Congress of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in April of that year, the country declared the Soviet Union to be as much of a threat to national security as the US. Furthermore, more serious armed conflict occurred along China's northwestern border in August.

On the one hand, China wanted to achieve strategic cooperation with the US, on the other hand, it tried to dispel Hanoi's fear of abandonment and prevent Hanoi from being dragged into the Soviet orbit. As revealed by Chinese sources, the general trend of Chinese aid to North Vietnam was to decrease in the period 1968-70, then increase in 1971 and 1972, then decrease again after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973. This trend continued until after 1975 and then dropped sharply in November 1975 when Beijing decided to cut aid to Hanoi to negligible levels.

When the actual reduction in aid did occur, Hanoi attributed Beijing's reduction in aid to North Vietnam to China's deliberate intention to keep Vietnam in a weak position. Hanoi's reaction to China's change in aid policy to Vietnam after the US and China drew closer in February 1972 was largely attributed to Beijing's perception that the threat from the U.S. presence in Indochina had decreased, the security threat from the Soviet Union in the North increased, the ability of Chinese aid to pull Hanoi away from Moscow decreased, and the economic impact was adverse from Mao's Cultural Revolution of 1966-69.

However, while the leadership of Beijing wanted to reduce the aid burden for the DRV, the US bombing of Hanoi and the laying of mines at the port of Hai Phong in late spring 1972 gave Hanoi another opportunity to exploit Beijing's guilt in reconciling with Washington to get new military aid commitments to Vietnam. For the Hanoi leadership, Chairman Mao's handshake with President Nixon was clearly a betrayal of the basic principles of the "comrade and brother" relationship between Vietnam and China but Hanoi's leaders have also shown their adept at using Beijing's sensitivity to accusations of Vietnamese treason as leverage to not only solicit more sophisticated military aid but much more aid.

To ease China's aid burden for Vietnam, Beijing urged Hanoi to diversify its economic relations with capitalist countries, mainly Japan, while advising Hanoi's leaders to request Soviet aid in larger quantities. In early 1972, China offered to provide free storage and transportation of goods in transit from the Soviet Union to Vietnam. Just a few months after Japan and China normalized relations in January-February 1973, the Chinese leadership began to encourage Hanoi to establish trade relations with Japan. Although Hanoi still had doubts about Japan's political motives at this point, it is starting to see Japan as an important economic partner for Vietnam.

China gradually reduced economic aid for the war efforts and economic recovery of the DRV and its impact on Vietnam-China relations from 1972 to 1975. While the Chinese cutbacks aid to the DRV during this period was mainly due to the reduced importance of North Vietnam in China's security strategy coupled with China's economic difficulties mainly due to the catastrophic Cultural Revolution during the period 1966-1969, Hanoi's reactions and retaliatory policies stemmed from Hanoi's deep-rooted awareness of Beijing's insincerity and implied desire to keep Vietnam in a weak position.

Conflicts between Vietnam and China arising after 1975 were inevitable. Hanoi's leaders put forth diplomatic efforts to improve economic relations with Beijing in 1975 because they recognized the importance of economic aid and preferential trade agreements of Beijing for the First Five-Year Plan (1976-80). However, Beijing's unchanging stance, its hasty decision to cut off all aid, and introduce economic sanctions were detrimental to Vietnam's first five-year plan at the end of 1975. and increased military aid to Democratic Kampuchea, all of which pushed Hanoi inward toward Moscow.

But even though Sino-Vietnamese relations had tended to deteriorate since 1970 due to disagreements over the Paris Peace Talks, Hồ Chí Minh asked Mao Zedong for military assistance. In addition, Sino-Vietnamese relations were also affected by the bad Sino-Soviet relations, with Beijing's approach to Washington, and China began to gradually withdraw their troops back home. However, Beijing strongly supplied Hanoi after the Spring-Summer 1972 Red Fire campaign, when the communist forces in the North suffered heavy losses, losing up to 450 tanks and about 100,000 troops. The North Vietnamese offensive in the South with 20 divisions, outnumbering the troops General Patton commanded during World War II in Europe, had to pay a terrible price, according to the US assessment. But since 1973, China had provided Vietnam with weapons and tanks enough to restore 18 divisions, contributing to the final attack, bringing victory to Hanoi in April 1975.

According to the article Reassessment of Beijing's economic and military aid to Hanoi's War, 1964-75 by Shao Xiao & Xiaoming Zhang just published in the academic journal Cold War History in April 2019 China's aid changed during the war, peaking in 1965, 1967, 1972, and 1974. After viewing the Soviet Union as a major threat, Mao Zedong sought to make peace with the US, much to Hanoi's anxiety. China sometimes increased its aid to

Hanoi but also decreased it to express discontent, as when Hanoi negotiated peace with the US in 1968 and 1969. China provided aid to serve its own interests. Thus, the change in aid made Hanoi question Beijing's true intentions. The two authors say: *"No evidence exists that Chinese aid influences Hanoi's war decisions and conduct. Hanoi manipulates its relationship with Beijing to obtain aid significantly,"* the two authors wrote.

Before 1973, Beijing's aid to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam was always handled by Hanoi. But since 1973, Beijing had treated this aid as separate, not to be controlled by Hanoi. But Hanoi opposed this, forcing Beijing to then change it back, leaving Hanoi in control. After the 1973 Paris Agreement, China considered the Vietnam war to be over, and therefore needed to reduce military aid to Hanoi.

In 1974, Beijing now considered the Republic of Vietnam to be a separate entity. Because they still wanted to grasp the issue of Vietnam to create an advantage in relations with the US and avoid the Soviet Union jumping in to fill the void, creating a new threat after the US withdrawal. China continued to provide military aid to Vietnam, although the amount had decreased compared to previous periods. The issues of border and territory and a number of other issues have been deliberately mitigated in the condition that Vietnam was taking advantage of aid and devoting all its strength to the struggle for national liberation.

After the People's Liberation Army and the NLF/VC attacked and controlled the whole of South Vietnam, reunifying the two regions in 1975, Sino-Vietnamese relations became increasingly tense. On the one hand, because the Soviet Union - China relationship was still in a hostile state, Vietnam had signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. China fully supported the Khmer Rouge government in Cambodia. Khmer Rouge harassed the southern border of Vietnam. When the Vietnamese army overthrew the Khmer Rouge government, China became even more hostile towards Vietnam. After 1975, Hanoi no longer had to conceal its suspicion of China, which led to a brief war in 1979. The two authors concluded that, in retrospect, it turns out that China's support for Vietnam can be viewed as China's "biggest diplomatic failure" during the Cold War.

The Vietnam-China border war that occurred in February 1979 was the culmination of tense relations between Vietnam and China. During that time, Vietnam called China "reactionary", "expansionist", "hegemonic". At the same time, China also called Vietnam "little lord". Vietnam also often criticized China for following the "inter-American versus Vietnamese" strategy and considered it a national policy at that time, especially after Vietnam learned of secret conversations between Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger.

The Vietnam-China border war in 1979 occurred, lasting for more than 10 years, leaving many consequences for the Vietnamese side. The Chinese side said that the 1979 war was mainly to "teach Vietnam a lesson for invading Cambodia", which was then an ally of China. According to Major General Nguyễn Trọng Vĩnh, China hit Vietnam *"Another way is to avenge Pol Pot. At the same time, Mr. Deng Xiaoping also wanted relations with the US, so he beat us to show the US that between China and Vietnam is not an ally, not together Communism. China wants the US believes to develop relations with China. Since China at that time wants to develop relations with the US defeating Vietnam is a gift to America."*

In 1988, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy of China sent troops to occupy Colin Rock, Len Dao Rock and Gạc Ma Reef in the Spratly Islands. Because these three rocks did not have a garrison, the Vietnamese people had to send their troops to defend, fight back and the war broke out on March 14, 1988. The Vietnamese side lost 3 transport ships of the Vietnamese navy, 64 Vietnamese soldiers died. China suffered damaged warships, with 24 sailors lost. Since then, China has occupied Gạc Ma Reef and the two countries have deployed their navy to defend a number of other reefs that both sides claim sovereignty. In 1989, with the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, Vietnam-China relations had a basis for normalization. The Chengdu Secret Covenant Conference on September 3-4, 1990 was a turning point in Sino-Vietnamese relations signed by General Secretary Nguyễn Văn Linh, Prime Minister Đỗ Mười and Advisor Phạm Văn Đồng. In an opinion poll by Pew Research based in the US, in Vietnam more than 60% of respondents said they were 'extremely concerned' about sovereignty disputes with China while 56% of those surveyed in the Philippines also answered similar judgment. Quoting from Thanh Phong (Vietnamese citizen): *"It feels like there is a grudge against the Chinese. In recent years, the Chinese have come to Vietnam to work, they have very strange attitudes. So now the Vietnamese don't like the Chinese very much anymore. Now it's going downhill, down to a very low level. In the past, it wasn't so much that people discriminated against China, but in the last few years, the problems have been. From food to the risk of invasion, people are increasingly discriminating against the Chinese. People are both afraid and discriminate against."*

On September 30, 2018, Ms. Đoàn Hải Hồng, Chargé d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Vietnam, led a delegation of the Chinese Embassy to visit 49 Chinese martyrs buried at Gia Lâm cemetery, Hanoi. More than 60 years ago, at the request of the Party and Government of Vietnam, the Chinese Government in turn sent 320,000 Chinese volunteers to help and fight in Vietnam. More than 1,400 Chinese officers and soldiers died in Vietnam. Of these, 49 are buried at Gia Lâm Cemetery (Hanoi).



Talking about China's help to the Vietnamese revolution from 1945 to the present, Nguyễn Tường Thụy, a veteran in Hanoi, found that the Vietnam War (1955-1975) was essentially an ideological war, because at that time Vietnam identified

itself as a socialist outpost. Therefore, the communist government had received the support of the socialist countries; without this support, Vietnam could not win. During the Vietnam War, the ideological war of Communism, China only spent guns and bullets on the Vietnamese communist party (1.2 million soldiers died in this ideological war) Nguyễn Tường Thụy also said: *"All the North Vietnamese soldiers who went to the South at that time, all equipment from head to toe, military equipment was all from China, while the Soviet Union provided heavy weapons. I think that if we owe China, the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam owes China, but the Vietnamese people do not owe China."*

Expansion is the inherent nature of Chinese leaders. Modern times, combined with the belligerence and violence of Chinese communism, greatly contributed to the success of the Vietnamese Communists in both the 1946-1954 and 1954-1975 wars. Advisor Ngô Đình Nhu, who was once the "brain" of the government of the First Republic, foretold in the "Vietnamese Topic" drafted from 1957-1960, and certainly has been cherished for a while long time ago *"Northern leaders, when they put themselves under Chinese domination, put us in front of a terrible prospect of slavery. Their actions, if effective, will not only destroy all opportunities for our development, but also threaten the existence of the nation. The reason why until now, China's domination of Vietnam has not yet formed, is because of the world political situation not yet allowed, and the existence of South Vietnam under Western influence is a political and military obstacle to that domination. Suppose that South Vietnam was annexed by North Vietnam, China would annex Vietnam. The South is only a matter of time. In the current circumstances, the existence of the South is both a guarantee for the nation to escape Chinese domination and a guarantee of escape for its leaders, when they were aware of the danger they were creating for the nation. But today they continue to intend to invade the South, they are still under the influence of the Chinese policy of war of aggression. Therefore, the loss of the South, today, becomes again an event that determines the future loss of the nation. Therefore, all our efforts in this period must be focused on the defense of freedom and independence, and the development of the South in order to maintain a way out for the North, and to save the nation from domination once again"*.

Commenting on China's domestic and foreign policy and strategy, researcher Nguyễn Khắc Mai, former director of the Research Department under the Central Committee for Mass Mobilization, said: *"What China is doing now is one unknown. It is clear that they are expanding spheres of influence of Great Han, and the only way and methods are still Imperialism. Using violence for expanding borders, expanding spheres of influence and expanding new geopolitics by such a way."* Political tactics using money that the whole world knows to expand influence on the politics of countries with money from official officials, buying land to buy ports, above all spending money on the media system, research institutes or famous universities to buy or steal initiatives, even using international students, overseas Chinese or beauties as spies.

China is rising to compete for the number one position in the world with the US, even though 60 years ago China was among the world's poorest countries. Do not look at the



Chinese population, but look at how China learns and steals technology products from the world's leading firms. Beijing grasps the greedy mentality of the Western oligarchs and imposes conditions for technology transfer before being allowed to exploit the Chinese market. Gradually, Beijing has built a strong economy, rapidly developing military force, and courteous foreign policy has become a "wolf warrior " publicizing the "People's Republic of China" under the absolute monopoly of the Communist Party.

Western countries have pointed out the relationship between the political intrigues of the Chinese Communist Party carried out through Chinese enterprises, therefore, there is a danger of China using enterprises to acquire and dominate the important resources of the US, Russia, Germany, France, ... even Vietnam. But the Vietnamese people, because of their patriotism, know very well that the danger to the entire nation of Vietnam is the malice of "silkworms eating mulberry leaves" that has expanded due to corruption of "Việt interest groups" and especially with its ambition to monopolize the East Sea, it is increasingly difficult for the Communist Party of Vietnam to escape China's control.

## **Part 14. Summary instead of Conclusions**

From the day of reunification after the Trịnh-Nguyễn-Tây Sơn war, the first 50 years of the Nguyễn Dynasty adopted the Confucian lessons to learn xenophobia and conformed themselves to Chinese society (the Qing Dynasty) so that they had to fail in all aspects and could not keep up with world evolution, especially in terms of military, economy and diplomacy. Following the patriotic tradition from thousands of generations, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, before the invasion and domination of the French colonialists, patriotism re-emerged into a new wave. That wave was not simply armed uprisings against the French, it was also a collection of poems, different political ideologies, and different national saving trends. Although most of the trends have disbanded, all have left an indelible mark on Vietnamese history. That is a valuable lesson that has been deeply applied by Vietnamese revolutionaries in the struggle for national liberation, turning Vietnamese history to a new page: Patriotism is associated with the goal of national independence.

Until the French plotted to annex Vietnam, the court and the military were not strong enough to support and protect the country. The radical Confucianists sensed renewal through hearings "both modernist and anti-French", but the court, consisting of a majority of conservative pro-China factions, did not want to change, so the result had to be dominated by colonial rule by means of military force. The path of innovation in accordance with the times was adapted by the Confucianists of the revolution in a far-sighted perspective due to the influence of the radical ideas of Khang Hữu Vi, Lương Khải Siêu, JJ Rousseau, Montesquieu... Chinese-language books and articles illegally imported from merchant ships traveling to and from trading ports or concessions. Japan, China, and Thailand have timely reformed and escaped from the colonial rule of the Western empires.

The Nguyễn Dynasty kings from Gia Long to Minh Mạng showed conservatism, stagnation, confusion, passivity, lack of full awareness of the times and unwillingness to carry out reforms to the end because of lack of proper awareness of the regional and international situations. For thirty-six years, 1848-1883, the reign of Tự Đức was a period when the country experienced many great changes. In the country, the economy was stagnant, the army was backward, the people were hungry, there were constant crop failures and uprisings emerged everywhere. The Nguyễn dynasty's kings and officials did not have a visionary leader, wandering around the country with poetic literature, considering Confucius as the "Master of the Universe" of the clichéd, mechanical, conservative Confucian education that missed Buddhist education combining openness, democracy and practicality. In 1865, the court of Tự Đức held the first exam to select Martial Doctorates in the Nguyễn Dynasty. Although Đại Nam at that time had no shortage of talented generals, but the times were different, but still used swords and spears while the French colonialists had advanced guns. The main cause was the difference in French-Vietnamese weapons and the continuation of Chinese-style Confucianism (Tống Nho) that Kings Gia Long and Minh Mạng lacked preparation and improved in all aspects during their 50-year reign for the unlucky Tự Đức to confront the invaders with many internal difficulties, a tight budget and outdated weapons with a half-baked renovation plan, creating an irreparable weakness.

After the French ships threatened Đà Nẵng, invaded Gia Định and three eastern provinces, forcing the great minister Phan Thanh Giản to sign a temporary treaty of Nhâm Tuất in 1862 to accept freedom of religion. The political and military situation was getting darker and darker, the country was more and more occupied by the French army, the spirit of King Tự Đức was always bewildered, leading to an incurable illness. To the French invasion, the Nguyễn dynasty responded with a more powerful closed door and forbidden religion while Vietnam was not a military rival to France.

When the three remaining western provinces of Cochinchina were occupied in July 1867 and Phan Thanh Giản died, King Tự Đức issued a decree "repent" from October 9, 1867, with the passage " I ... *physically sick, mentally dark... I'm not yet 40 years old, but my hair is already gray like an old man*" as well as having it engraved on the stone stele "Khiêm Cung Ký" (1875): "*Day and night, I can't eat or sleep like a fool, am fearful up to now still not at peace, So heartbroken and miserable, night and day at times like a madman.*"

The intellectual elites have many different positions: Confucian conservatives or conservatives in general rely on China, do not accept Western culture and do not want to change society, but gradually become violent extremists as opposing factions. Patriotism, courage and indomitable spirit cannot compensate for the backward Song-Confucian thought. Some courtiers sent to foreign envoys such as Phan Thanh Giản, Phạm Phú Thứ, Đặng Huy Trứ, Bùi Viện ... were aware of the weakness and backwardness of the feudal system. When they returned, they offered to ask for reform and opening up. Especially,

Nguyễn Trường Tô went abroad to the West and Italy, so he grasped the current world situation.

When he returned to the country, Nguyễn Trường Tô immediately requested the king to urgently reform lest he lose the country. The reformist faction has persistently sent several times to the king through Trần Tiễn Thành the "reports" explaining more than really how our country can be renewed to keep up with European countries. But at court, the conservative forces were too great, overwhelming all the trendy voices of the reform faction led by the first mandarin Trần Tiễn Thành from 1862 campaigning alone in the Conclave after Phan Thanh Gian died in 1867 and Phạm Phú Thứ as a distant official. In addition, Trần Tiễn Thành fully supported Nguyễn Trường Tô's "heart and mind" so he was accused as being pacifist and friendly to the French. At that time, the thought of "renovating to preserve the country" before the fire of Western weapons had just flared up, it was extinguished, and was falsely accused for more than a hundred years by the history of fighting against foreign invaders. Unfortunately, the officials prevented him from speaking out, but the king's character lacked determination and then did not enact the necessary reforms.

In a quarter of a century from the day the French invasion began in 1858 to the peace accord of Harmand on August 25, 1883, if the King and the Huế court were determined and smart to renew the country, it only took a decade, knowing how to expand trade with the West and listening to Trần Tiễn Thành and the reformist faction of intellectuals or mandarins such as Phạm Phú Thứ, Đặng Huy Trứ, Nguyễn Trường Tô, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch,... the country could maintain its independence and autonomy like Japan and Thailand at that time. These nations knew how to open up and innovate to bring their country to richness and maintain national independence. They had directly or indirectly, more or less, contact with Western civilization, with the outside world. Although there are many limitations, but they are the people who, through exchanges with the outside world, have understanding and can compare the situation of Vietnam with the region and the world, in line with actual reality. King Tự Đức was stuck in the times. King Tự Đức was smart, educated, and took care of the country. During his reign, in the imperial court, the conservative faction was stronger than the reformist one. At first, Phan Thanh Giản was overwhelmed by Nguyễn Tri Phương, later on, Trần Tiễn Thành was overwhelmed and killed by Tôn Thất Thuyết. Since the French attacked Cochinchina, King Tự Đức began to lean towards reform. The king paid more and more attention to the opinions of Nguyễn Trường Tô, perhaps due to the changing times as predicted by Nguyễn Trường Tô, and also because of the enthusiastic recommendations of Trần Tiễn Thành. After receiving and discussing deeply with Nguyễn Trường Tô, the king supported Tô's proposals. However, Tô's ideas were stunned by the Privy Council that either rejected or delayed them. After Tô's death, King Tự Đức asked Trần Tiễn Thành to collect all of Nguyễn Trường Tô's works for posterity to read, perhaps understanding and finding something good. Before his death, King Tự Đức appointed Trần Tiễn Thành as the First Regent for King Dục Đức, who grew up preferring Western studies to Confucianism. This shows that the king had the will to renew until his death.

The most common thing among Vietnamese reformers in this second half of the 19th century is that they were all from academic families, inherited Confucian education and belonged to the upper classes of society. Thanks to their educational attainment and passing the exam, most of them therefore held a certain position in the mandarin apparatus of the Nguyễn court. Regardless of their position in that apparatus, all of them show that they are mandarins who are not greedy for fame, are passionate about the nation's destiny, and want the country to prosper by the path of innovation.

In their proposals, Vietnamese innovators from Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Phạm Phú Thứ to Đặng Huy Trứ all pointed out the inadequacy and obsolescence of Vietnamese education under the Nguyễn dynasty and proposed measures to correct these weaknesses. When discussing the importance of education, Nguyễn Trường Tộ emphasized that *"education reform is the great root of the country"*, Đặng Huy Trứ emphasized the importance of the natural sciences that education: *"We don't know astronomy and mathematics, so how can we understand the heavens to take care of the people soon... Only through experience did we know that our academic talents are shallow. Literature can never withstand the storm."* Stronger and more decisive, Nguyễn Trường Tộ criticized the way of learning one thing, doing another: *"When I was a child, I learned literature, words, poetry, when I grew up and worked, I changed to law, calendar, army" or "the impractical learning"*.

Most reformers expressed concern about the situation in the country, about the indifference and delay of the court. According to them, they should have immediately taken measures to renew and revive the country, and should set out appropriate domestic and foreign policies, and could not wait any longer. Stemming from the awareness of the times, the 19th century Vietnamese reformers all aimed at short-term and long-term goals for a comprehensive reform program. The immediate urgent purpose, according to reformers, was to create a balance for the country to be able to resist the invasion of the French colonialists, and to save the nation from enslavement. Not only were they limited by short-term goals to resist French aggression, the reformers also recognized and set out long-term goals that these plans had to achieve. That is to bring the country to comprehensive development in all aspects from economy, politics, military, culture and education, in order to keep up with, even surpass other countries in the region and the world, because according to Đặng Huy Trứ *"in the world, there is no humiliation equal to the humiliation of not being equal to others"*.

In the immediate future, reformers had agreed on a plan to implement a series of immediate measures with a focus on reforming the army, such as learning martial arts in combination with the use and manufacture of weapons, strengthening military discipline, have appropriate incentives for the army, build a strong militia force... In the long term, according to reformists, the court must carry out profound and comprehensive reforms in all

fields from politics, economy, diplomacy, society, culture and education to make the country more developed than other contemporaries.

Thus, in Vietnam in the second half of the 19th century, only a reformation trend appeared among a very few people in the class of Confucianists and mandarins, but it did not create a movement or a deep reform wave in society. The reform movement in Vietnam was not supported by the Nguyễn Dynasty, even there was a contradiction in the reformer's ideology. In addition, another fundamental feature of reform thought in Vietnam is that reform proposals are biased towards external influences, lack of material facilities for internal reception, and do not mention the interests of peasants and also carry a heavy feudal ideology. The second difference is that the factor combining education reform must be associated with opening up, exchanging and contacting with the outside world, with foreign experts, and sending people to study abroad, but taking place at home at very limited level, almost insignificant.

The renovation work was not successful because King Tự Đức was too conservative, cautious and indecisive in recognizing the truth about the weakness of the national defense and economic system to reform the country and raise people's intellectual level to keep the country. It was not because King Tự Đức did not want to reform the country, but because of the general situation at that time, Đại Nam mandarins and Confucian scholars were not aware of the urgency of reform and lacked understanding of the nature of the war of aggression of the Western countries, so the king did not have the determination to carry out important reforms that led to the loss of the country. It was not until 1878 that the court began to carry out the initial renovation, but it was too late. The policy of seclusion made our country an oasis of backwardness to the outside world.

In a private letter sent to Lý Hồng Chương (Li Hongzhang), the Prime Minister of the Qing Dynasty on January 26, 1883, Emperor Tự Đức praised China's reformist policy of opening up to foreign trade, encouraging research and studying the new technology of Western industry, and at the same time called on China to help Vietnam defeat the French with a list of requests for aid. This is the lesson of renewal at the last moment of his life that for many years, King Tự Đức tried to refuse or not to insist on implementing the proposed strategies of the reformist faction. When the king realized the need for real change in his country and clearly saw the true heart of France, it was too late, he could only rely on the Chinese crown.

Prior to that, in August 1882, Tự Đức had penned criticism of "**language too high**" in the letter Nguyễn Lộ Trạch sent to Trần Tiễn Thành, discussing studying abroad in Western technology and expanding diplomacy with Germany and Great Britain to be strong enough against the French. Since then, the reformist faction has had to be silent for a long time. King Tự Đức and his courtier Trần Tiễn Thành shared the same opinion before the remaining days of their unfinished career with the country's renovation in the king's birthday wishes on November 20, 1882.

It can be said that King Tự Đức was good at literature but had little military knowledge, making his life as a king a personal tragedy and also a tragedy of the country's history. In the last years of his reign, because of the difficult war situation, King Tự Đức suffered from a mental crisis and his courtier Trần Tiễn Thành became old and weak and asked for retirement. Right at that time Tôn Thất Thuyết was hastily brought to the position of minister of military affairs by the king in 1882. Thuyết was nominated by Trần Tiễn Thành, and sent to the Imperial Privy Council (Cabinet) from June 1882 at the request of Phạm Thân Duật and the war faction that proposed a final solution based entirely on the direct military confrontation with France. However, Thuyết increasingly revealed his militaristic nature and ambition for power. Tự Đức had comments about Thuyết "*uneducated*", "*avoiding responsibility*" and having "*a temper tantrum*". Due to the lack of thoroughness as instructed by King Tự Đức in 1865: "**do not commit crimes to not betray the country**", but in only 4 years 1881-1885, how many historical events happened when Thuyết held all military powers in his hands.

King Tự Đức was difficult to raise at birth, so he grew up thin and weak in health. He married early, had many wives and concubines (over 100) but had no heirs, so he had to set up a heir prince right from 1865 when the king was only 35 years old, a mature age because he knew he was childless. When writing the will, King Tự Đức was in severe pain, so he lacked wisdom in decisions related to the survival of the nation. King Tự Đức clearly wrote in his will that his successor "*could not be able to handle a big job*". This may have shown the king's lack of determination and lack of confidence, doubting his decision. That warning of the king was the death sentence for his adopted children and also from that action, the king led the country to Tứ Nguyệt Tam Vương (Three Emperors in Four Months) by Nguyễn Văn Tường and Tôn Thất Thuyết. Indeed, Emperor Tự Đức made a huge mistake in terms of politics as a leader of the country in the hot situation. In the context of the Huế court right before and after Tự Đức's death, there was a clear division into two factions: war and militarists asked for Chinese help to fight the invaders and the pacifists to get along with the French. The country was weak and many royal princes were pacifists under the influence of the clergy (like Emperor Gia Long's scheme when he founded his dynasty with Bishop Pigneau de Béhaine) to preserve the kingdom.

The Huế court became derelict after Tự Đức's death due to a political mistake of the Emperor, despite Tôn Thất Thuyết and Nguyễn Văn Tường's abuses of power to overthrow the emperors Dục Đức, Hiệp Hòa, and Kiến Phúc and Hàm Nghi, directed a turbulent situation within four months to quickly lose all autonomy and independence of the country to the French through the Protection Treaty of Quý Mùi August 25, 1883 Harmand and finally the Treaty of Domination of Giáp Thân 6-6-1884 Patenotre. The violence killed two Emperors, 40 princes, the First Regent, many mandarins and several Christian villages by Thuyết as well as the political intrigues and tricks of Regent Tường. These created an irreparable division between the courtiers, while the Christians and non-Christians killed each other, the ranks of Confucianists disintegrated, lost the support of all social classes, and

spoiled the country's great causes. The nation's loss of self-control and independence took place in the context of France's occupation and deep intervention in the Nguyễn Dynasty.

Also due to this "incompetence" of Thuyết, the fall of the capital on 5-7-1885 occurred when De Courbet challenged and provoked Thuyết directly. On the other hand, Thuyết had the illusion of Chinese military strength and did not see the dark plot of the Qing Dynasty when in 1882 he nominated Phạm Thân Duật (1825-1885) to be an ambassador, and again in 1885 he still sent Nguyễn Quang Bích (1832-1890) to China asking for help. When he personally fled to China in 1887, Thuyết did not know that the host's situation was bad because China was torn by Western powers and Thuyết did not understand that the Tianjin peace treaty of 9-6-1885 that forced the Qing to pledge not to get involved in Vietnam. Tôn Thất Thuyết deserves to be a criminal of the Nguyễn Dynasty because the two years of turmoil after Emperor Tự Đức died were caused by him and Tường. **The two Tường - Thuyết must be directly responsible for bringing the country into foreign slavery.** The crime of losing the country must be charged with the heaviest possible crime against the fatherland and history of Vietnam. In order to cover up the merits of the resistance war, lacking strength, lacking talent, lacking virtues and hopeless, they failed through clumsy calculations and took advantage of the Emperor Hàm Nghi who was still a teenager and the patriotism of scholars.

The Nguyễn Dynasty after Tự Đức's reign was only in name, the Emperor was only a puppet, in fact, the country was lost to the French. Trần Trọng Kim commented: *"Our strength was not enough to keep the country, but they kept doing cruel things. They did not allow foreigners to enter and do business, and they sinned against those who preached. That's why France and Spain used these excuses to attack our country."* The Western colonial government and the puppet court accused him of deporting the Emperors who had progressive ideas of reform and self-reliance: Thành Thái-Duy Tân succeeded his father's wish, Dục Đức, so that the Confucianist movement would realize its responsibility before the nation's future to expel the colonialists. Those were also the first steps of the people to stand up for themselves and take the initiative in expelling the French colonialists to regain the sovereignty to protect the country after the continuous defeats of the Emperors and mandarins of the Nguyễn Dynasty.

After a long time, there was still a trend of more practical innovation, of which Nguyễn Lộ Trạch was one of the typical faces, depending on the immediate situation of 1892, to suggest measures to timely respond to prevent a visible collapse. Trạch advocated *"rescuing after the incident" rather than "procrastinating and fearing"*. For the first time in 1877, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, Trần Tiễn Thành's confidant son-in-law, exposed the hypocrisy and pretension to be benevolent of the French, and at the same time proposed the policy of self-reliance as a wake-up call, especially after the six provinces of Cochinchina fell into French hands with the peace treaty of Giáp Tuất (1874). In 1882 Trạch asked the court via Thành to study abroad and reminded the court to communicate secretly with the hostile powers of France such as Britain and Germany for restraining France. Tự Đức personally considered

and refused the requested travel. In the second time of the same year, after the French occupied Hanoi, he proposed more urgent plans to save the country, including many points. The Emperor and the court still wanted to make concessions to the French and at the same time asked China for help, not knowing that China was being torn to pieces by the European and Japanese powers. Finally, in 1892, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch discussed for the last time the position of the Asian countries in the face of the threat of imperial aggression with China and Asia both under the control of the Western powers.

Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's essays were received and praised by a large number of scholars nationwide with innovative ideas. Through the works "Current Times-First Document", "Current Times- Second Document", "Commentary on the Current Situation of the World", he showed a novel way of thinking, clear and far-sighted vision and patriotic enthusiasm. But he himself was also losing hope when he realized that: *"Today's world is not the same as it was in the past. In the past, you could do it but don't do it, but today you want to do it but you don't have time and you can't do it in time"* because Tự Đức was too hesitant to accept all reforms without implementing the suggestions of Phạm Phú Thứ and Nguyễn Trường Tộ. The reform proposals of 19th-century reformers in general have shown a new mindset to meet the historical requirements posed to the nation in this period: "Renovation" to protect the nation sovereignty and development. However, all the progressive reform ideas of this period shared the same fate as they were not carried out to their full extent, of an exploratory nature, not even brought up for discussion and rejected. The court ignored them because the Nguyễn Emperors and officials were too hesitant about all reforms. During this time, there were some acquisitions and innovations from the court, but those beginning from 1878 were only exploratory, dealing with the times, without a long-term strategic direction.

The essay "Current situation of the world" has made a great and profound influence on Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's longtime friends as well as later scholars who continued the path of self-reliance improvement to repel foreign invaders. After a long time, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch and Trương Gia Mô found a way to study abroad and campaigned for diplomacy according to Trần Tiễn Thành's plan but failed. Since then, through Nguyễn Thượng Hiền, Phan Bội Châu from 1897, Phan Châu Trinh and Huỳnh Thúc Kháng since 1903 have pondered and accepted the contemporary thought of Nguyễn Lộ Trạch. Phan Bội Châu, after reading this essay, wrote in Poetry of Phan Bội Châu (Chương Thâu-1985): *"begins to understand more or less the seeds of modern thought"*. Huỳnh evaluated this essay as having a profound influence on the Confucianists at that time: *"all of them awakened and opened their eyes to the ideas that paved the way for the renovation movement in the early 20th century"* (Tiếng Dân Newspaper, No. 424 of October 3, 1931).

The sense of responsibility to fight against the French for independence must now belong to the entire people before an elite army with strong firepower. It was a completely new era of national salvation against foreign invaders for the entire Vietnamese people. Đại Việt lost its sovereignty from here, but the Vietnamese people did not accept foreign



domination even though the armed resistance had failed (1896). Many scholars began to abandon the concept of the central army to find other strategies and ideas to liberate the nation and regain independence and reunification for the country. The Nguyễn Dynasty had to take responsibility for not being able to defend the country against foreign invaders, but the entire militia, full of patriotism, was aware of its duty to improve society, politics, military, economy, education, and communication to mobilize sacrifice to gain independence and build a strong country in order to preserve the territory against a powerful empire. Obviously, facing that hot situation, they were also somewhat aware of the situation.

**Following the patriotic tradition from thousands of generations, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, before the invasion and domination of the French colonialists, patriotism re-emerged into a new wave. That wave was not simply armed uprisings against the French, it was also a collection of poems, different political ideologies, and different national saving trends. Although most of the trends have disbanded, all have left an indelible mark on Vietnamese history. That is a valuable lesson that has been deeply applied by Vietnamese revolutionaries in the struggle for national liberation, turning Vietnamese history to a new page: Patriotism is associated with the goal of national independence.**

These conceptions marked the renewal of our nation's thinking at the end of the 19th century. It can be said that the trend of social reform is the inevitable trend set for the Vietnamese people in this period. Thinkers, such as Đặng Huy Trứ, Phạm Phú Thứ, Nguyễn Trường Tộ, Nguyễn Lộ Trạch... have grasped that trend and initially created a shift in political ideology, from monarchy to democracy, from kingship to civil rights. The content of democratic thought of the thinkers has made an important change on the ideological level: from the emergence of innovative ideas within the framework of feudal ideology to liberal democratic thought and move closer to Marxist-Leninist socialism.

In general, the emergence of the national renewal movement at this stage shows that it is the "remedy" of a critical period in the nation's history at the end of the nineteenth century. The reform proposals of this period were heavy on the formality of the "scholarship" class but lacked the "agricultural and commercial" masses in a concentric society. Few people think that it is necessary to have social support as the basis for reform programs to be implemented successfully. The renovation work in the second half of the nineteenth century in Vietnam was limited to a few people, a small part of it, just a new trend in the patriotic movement in general at that time. It was because of the need for urgent renovation to save the country's independence, but when the country lost its independence, the reform movement also ended its existence.

Following that momentum of development, entering the early years of the twentieth century, under different historical conditions, the renewal requirements of Vietnamese society became more and more urgent and reflected in two trends. Violence and reform coexist and develop together. But it is also necessary to wait for the 1905 renovation campaign to progress to the anti-tax struggles in 1908 with the large participation of the

peasants in the Central region - or to a lesser extent Đông Kinh Nghĩa Thục in the North - then it has really become a renewal movement with a worthy position and great influence in the history of the nation's long and heroic liberation struggle.

However, it can be said that the transition of Vietnamese political thought at the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century was a fundamental, long-term, difficult and extremely complicated transition of thinkers. Political thought focuses on the important content of national self-reliance, raising the people's intellectual level, fostering the people's strength, and spreading the ideology of democracy and civil rights, but only national independence is the ultimate goal for the spirit of the people. This political thought is the absorption of values and quintessence of the East and the West, especially the Western progressive and democratic thought. Although there were new, revolutionary and progressive contents, showing passionate patriotism and high hatred for the enemy, due to the conditions and circumstances at that time, there were some expression fluctuating, ambiguous, sometimes even coming to compromise with the colonists. For example, Phan Châu Trinh advocated relying on France to implement democracy, while Phan Bội Châu advocated relying on Japan for help... Although these policies were only temporary, it also caused reliance on foreign help that affects the revolutionary tendency of the nation. The cause of these mistakes is that there is no scientific theory to guide the way, so they do not fully realize the nature of colonialism and imperialism. Not only that, the democratic categories that they mentioned are still influenced by Confucian thought to a certain extent.

Absorbing the ideas of late nineteenth century innovators, some early twentieth century thinkers, such as Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Huỳnh Thúc Kháng, Nguyễn An Ninh, etc., continued to develop that thought by action. They gradually abandoned the Song Confucian system, boldly searching for new ideas and strategies for the nation. From the criticism of feudalism, thinkers have absorbed the ideas of civil rights and separation of Montesquieu (1689-1775) and J.J. Rousseau (1712-1778). It is thanks to reading the "new literature", the intellectual Confucianists suddenly awakened, enlightened as if stepping out of the darkness into light. The biggest change was that they realized the backwardness of Confucianism, had to shake it off to absorb a different ideology that Tân Thư (New Literature) introduced to start building national salvation categories such as self-determination of the nation, capitalist freedom, socialism of the proletariat to launch revolutionary movements of the people's struggle for the whole country, to regain the independence and drive away the French colonialists, but in general it entered a circle of tragic influence depending on opposing powers (the US, Russia and China) in the free or communist world to this day.

Phan Bội Châu and his comrades at first believed in Japan and asked it for help. He fell in love, but later woke up, and Phan Châu Trinh was fascinated until the end of his life when he wanted to rely on the French to advance, "rely on the French for progress", to carry out a civilized revolution, but against the corrupt monarchy. It can be said that the two Phans who lived at the same time understood each other's policies, argued, but were still friendly

and respectful of each other. They were the agents that created two mainstreams in the patriotic movement of intellectuals in the early 20th century: Violence and moderation related to the two revolutionary tasks of national independence and social progress. The difference in policies (violent and peaceful) has led to severe conflicts, divisions to the point of criticism, condemnation, discrimination and even more extreme contradictions to eliminate the opposition. The two different policies (violence or non-violence, and monarchy or democracy) of these two elders dominated most of modernist thought in the country at the beginning of the 20th century, but patriotic scholars still "keep" a narrow worldview, not properly aware of the nature of capitalism in general and French colonialism in particular.

Thus, patriotism at the end of the 19th century, when independence was threatened, only the neo-reformists could keep their independence. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the development was strong, rich, diverse and unique even though the country was lost. Phan Bội Châu continued to pursue violence for another 20 years, making the lesson even more expensive. There is only a way to innovate, but it must be completely different from before: aiming at the intellectuals and the people. All patriotic movements have failed because they have not fully identified the causes of the loss of the country, have not found the right way to save the country, and have not built up a core force among the majority of the population to liberate the nation. The irony is that they both love each other, but cannot accept each other, do not distinguish friends and enemies, and kill each other for political reasons.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Vietnamese revolutionaries have found their way abroad to mobilize the world to find a way to liberate the country due to the influence of Trần Tiền Thành-Nguyễn Lộ Trạch's plan to go abroad. The Đông Du (Go East) Movement selects elite youths to send to Japan for training. Some young people find their way to France, such as "two uncle and nephew" Phan Châu Trinh first and Nguyễn Tất Thành following. The young elite youth of the 1910, 1920, and 1930 generations had to face a world filled with currents of philosophical thought with a new political and social model from Sun Yat-sen (Tôn Văn) Tân Hợi revolution of 1911, to the Russian revolution of 1917, the revolt of the Nazi party in Germany in 1919, along with the legacy of the American democratic revolution of 1776 and the French revolution of 1789.

Heroes of Văn Thân and Cần Vương movements and the generation of Western-educated scholars only know how to uphold the example of self-sacrifice and indomitable fight against foreign invaders of revolutionary activists to gain autonomy. Western-educated scholars, especially French international students, who followed the Confucianists, tried to constantly guide the people against the French to gain independence in many different ways. At the beginning of the struggle in the form of mass mobilization movements through cultural activities and media were openly non-violent, peaceful and cooperated in Paris or in the country with the French colonial government. But later, because of the eagerness to save the country, revolutionary activities became radicalized and armed with violence at home and abroad, especially in the south of China.

Colonial policy only aimed at exploiting resources and human resources for the military budget and Western industry, especially in the period of world economic crisis 1929-1930 with high taxes, even promotions of opium and alcohol (allowed since 1887). The old agricultural economy still existed in the retail trade, but many new industries appeared according to the development needs, so the petty bourgeois merchants increased in number. The development of rubber plantations and processing industries in the South changed the economy and politics through a repressed labor force "planters" recruited from North and Central Vietnam. Many peasants left the countryside to urban areas to find work and became workers. Strikes and demonstrations of peasants and workers occurred continuously everywhere.

Many important events caused by France's strong suppression of all uprisings or oppositions affected the patriotic souls of all social sectors, prompting everyone to participate in revolutionary activities throughout the country to rise up against the French: the uprisings of Trương Định in Gò Công; by Nguyễn Trung Trực in Rạch Giá, Hà Tiên; then Tôn Thất Thuyết's Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) movement; Ba Đình uprising in Thanh Hóa; Bãi Sậy uprising in Hưng Yên; Hương Khê uprising by Phan Đình Phùng. Entering the late 19th century, the armed struggle movement under the command of patriotic writers against the French had failed. They committed themselves to the revolutionary resistance against the French in the coming decades in many forms with all their faith in the anti-French armed groups that fought against the French in the name of the nation to gain independence for the country regardless of the disinformation, slander, or had been deceived by conspiracy for decades.

But the one who fell had someone following in his footsteps. Hoàng Hoa Thám led the peasant uprising of Yên Thế - Bắc Giang (1887-1913), causing the enemy to lose his mind. Then the uprising of Trịnh Văn Căn in Thái Nguyên, of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party led by Nguyễn Thái Học and Nguyễn Khắc Nhu... initiated in Yên Bái. Emperor Duy Tân uprising 1916, Thái Nguyên uprising 1917, Phạm Hồng Thái attempted to assassinate Governor General M. Merlin 1924, the movement to demand amnesty for Phan Bội Châu 1925, funeral of Phan Châu Trinh 1926, Nguyễn An Ninh was exiled in 1928, the failed Yên Bái uprising in 1930, the strikes against the Nghệ-Tĩnh movement 1930-1931, the failed uprising of the Southern Communists in 1940...

When the Vietnam Nationalist Party was disbanded after the failed uprising in 1930, the Indochinese Communist Party applied Marxism-Leninism to quietly build up its forces, cleverly concealing its operational purpose through the organization "Việt Minh" in the infrastructure, eliminating dissidents. Therefore, Nguyễn Ái Quốc and the Communist movement, even though it was an international movement that denied the indigenous national revolution, inherited all the spiritual values of national and democratic revolution of Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, and Hồ Học Lãm. Thanks to this national banner that patriotic intellectuals, writers and artists have thoroughly participated in the Việt Minh

movement (Nguyễn Mạnh Tường 1904-1988, Văn Cao 1923-1995, Xuân Diệu 1916-1985, Huy Cận 1919-2005, Đào Duy Anh 1904-1988, Chế Lan Viên 1920-1989).

Since then, the purpose and leadership role of the anti-French movement had changed from the "central patriotic" monarchy helping the Emperor to save the country by the Confucianists to the democratic "self-determined and independent nation" of Western intellectuals in meeting with leftist associations or parties at home or abroad that know how to put the interests of the country first. Due to the instruction of Đông Phương Bộ under the Third International, Nguyễn Ái Quốc founded **the Communist Party of Vietnam on February 3, 1930** in Hong Kong (later changed its name many times according to international and domestic situations: The Indochina Communist Party, the Association for the Study of Marxism in Indochina, the Labor Party of Vietnam, the People's Revolutionary Party of the South) were based on the working class under the Việt Minh Movement for People's Liberation. The resistance war against the French was not only against the French but also a whole system of government led by the Vietnamese as henchmen from the South to the North. Especially, under the protection regime in Central and Tonkin, the French colonialists had more government apparatus from the central to local levels of the Huế court as an assistant. Until the early 20th century, the French rulers had used Vietnamese families who were loyal to the colonial regime for many generations and made the foundation of colonial rule more solid. Therefore, the resistance war became more and more arduous in the country, so the revolutionary magistrates had to gather and start in France and South China.

The communication through literature, poetry and press in the national language has played an important part in expanding people's knowledge about literature, society and later on politics. The level of political understanding was thus slowly civilized enough to start paying attention to the difference between nationalism and international communism so that young people in the South and the masses soon became aware of Communist threat to the country when the censorship of the national language press was abolished in 1935. The confrontation between the two ideologies of Communist and Nationalism began to take place semi-publicly and then openly, sometimes forming an anti-French anti-Japanese alliance.

During World War II, the Japanese through a coup d'état disarmed the French army on March 9, 1945, and returned independence to the Huế imperial court with the Declaration of Independence of Vietnam ending dependence on France and joining the Great East Asia bloc. The government of Trần Trọng Kim was established, but after 4 months, it disbanded when Japan surrendered to the Allies on August 14, 1945. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, the people rose up to fight against the French colonialists and the Japanese occupiers under the guise of the Việt Minh to gain national independence and liberation, and carried out the General uprising in August 1945. The "**August Revolution**" of the Việt Minh Headquarters and the Communist Party of Vietnam succeeded so that on September 2, 1945, Hồ Chí Minh declared the Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of

**Vietnam (DRV).** After that, the first Vietnamese Constitution respecting human rights and civil rights was born. But the US rejected this revolutionary government seeking the right to self-determination and denied the Vietnamese people the right to independence because Hồ Chí Minh was an international communist cadre (OSS Report 1944).

But the influence of Phan Bội Châu, Phan Châu Trinh, Phạm Hồng Thái and Nguyễn Thái Học made enthusiastic young people with national democratic tendencies who continued the revolution by establishing many national political parties. Because they clearly understood that under the communist regime, the nation was only the form and content of the revolution as international communism, they both fought against the "communist Việt Minh" and against foreign invaders to gain independence and freedom, while at the same time fighting against foreign invaders. However, lack of integration and lack of experience in propagandizing in public infrastructure left them in a weak position.

The form of violent revolutionary parties using foreign-supplied weapons, with organization and political purposes have all become tools for great powers, especially China's long-term direct influence. It was an ideological dispute between two armed revolutionary factions arising from the opposition to a colonial government with a brutal colonial policy of exploitation by force of arms. The issue of Vietnam was internationalized when the great powers divided the world into two blocs: Liberal Capitalism and Socialist Communism vying for political influence, economic interests and emulation of arms power after World War 2. This is the historical period that marks the beginning of a turning point both against the foreign colonialists and the national-communist struggle in collusion with many foreign countries opposing and killing each other. Foreign influence through political, religious, cultural, economic and military ideas upsets social, family and individual morality. Vietnamese society has become accustomed to being bullied, indoctrinated, mistreated to the point of fear, but with the well-being of those who are ruled as well as the indifference to ask for peace or doubt about the times of many classes of people who are subject to "foolishness" by policies imposed by privileged beneficiaries.

The "cold war" that began in 1946 between capitalism and communism brought out the difference between private property rights and civil rights. The Cold War (1946-1991) sparked conflicts in countries as proxy wars. This was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc and the US and its Western allies after World War II.

In 1946, under pressure from Chiang Kai-shek's army to disarm the Japanese in Hanoi, a coalition government of the Nationalist-Communist resistance led by Hồ Chí Minh accepted a free Vietnam within the French Union with a constitution that gave birth to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which respects human rights and civil rights. When the French showed their intentions to re-establish the colonial regime with financial support

from the US, Hồ Chí Minh ordered the whole country to fight for independence on December 19, 1946 in the name of the Việt Minh.

In 1948 with the campaign of former emperor Bảo Đại after refusing to cooperate with the national revolutionary parties (Nguyễn Tường Tam, Vũ Hồng Khanh ...), the Provisional Central Government of Prime Minister Nguyễn Văn Xuân including the ruling elites in the three regions and the political groups was established to discuss the reunification of the country including the three regions through the French-Vietnamese Agreement Hạ Long 5-6-1948 and the Elysee Agreement 8-3- 1949. It was the "Bảo Đại solution" with the former emperor, the former Nguyen mandarins and non-communist pro-French parties so that the French could officially cancel the 1862, 1874 and 1884 land concession agreements and return the independence of the three regions to the Vietnamese nationalist faction but accepted to be in the French Union. A new regime was formed: the State of Vietnam with the Head of State Bảo Đại joined forces with the French against the Việt Minh.

The young **nation of Vietnam**, with a newly born army and administration, had to face the invasion and intervention plots of France and the US, and had to wage a protracted war for national liberation for the next 30 years. First of all, the return of French aggression caused a 9-year resistance war (1945-1954) of the Việt Minh, which ended with the victory of Điện Biên Phủ. The Vietnamese people under the guise of Việt Minh national liberation with aid from Russia, the Soviet Union and China, which were abundant in human and material resources, subjectively implemented President Hồ Chí Minh's words "*There is nothing more precious than independence and freedom*" for the country, which has stood firm and won many victories in both the South and the North. In 1954 the French surrendered to the Việt Minh at Điện Biên Phủ. The 1954 Geneva Agreement divided Vietnam into two, taking the 17th parallel as the boundary. Thereby, the victory of the Vietnamese People's Army in the Điện Biên Phủ Campaign is also considered a milestone marking the complete defeat of France in its efforts to rebuild the Indochina colony in particular and their colonial empire. In general, after the Second World War France was forced to withdraw from Indochina.

**Under this Agreement**, the country was temporarily divided into two territories, the North and the South, taking the 17th parallel as the demarcation line and would be unified two years later (1956) through a general election. North Vietnam at this period was named Democratic Republic of Vietnam, under the leadership of the pro-Russian-Chinese Labor Party with Hanoi as the capital. The North determined to dye Vietnam red, so it turned into a logistics base for the invasion war of the South.

The South named after the Republic of Vietnam was under the administration of a pro-French government, then a pro-American located in Saigon. The Saigon government used all means to prevent the general election, suppressed and eliminated the old resistance, so there was a movement to fight for peace and unify the country. Martin Luther King said:

*“To keep the South in America's orbit, we support Diem, one of the worst dictators, our chosen one. The people of the South had to live 9 years under Diem's brutal rule. When Diem was overthrown, they could have lived happily ever after, but... we sent more troops to support the horrible, lost, unpopular corrupt governments.”* The Saigon government was unable to stop the people's desire to unify the country, especially since the day the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam or the VC was founded by the Vietnam Labor Party, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1960.

At first, the Labor Party did not think that it could easily occupy the South as it did on April 30, 1975, with the policy of “silkworms eating berries leaves”, the so-called NLF/VC and the provisional government of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC, were erected, mainly by communist party members from the North and some in the area (Võ Chí Công, Nguyễn Văn Linh, Phạm Hùng, Trần Bạch Đằng, Trần Bửu Kiếm, Nguyễn Thị Định, Huỳnh Tấn Phát, Võ Văn Kiệt ...) In order to deceive international public opinion, they lured disaffected urban intellectuals in the South into the above organizations with the Third Force. The presence of a number of leftist intellectuals from the South (Trịnh Đình Thảo, Trương Như Tảng, Dương Quỳnh Hoa, Lữ Phương, Venerable Đôn Hậu, ...) in the so-called NLF/VC helped communist propaganda that the South revolted against the US imperialists and their henchmen, at first in secret, but gradually became public. Southern authorities knew very well this intention, the policy of denunciation since the mid-1950s was to dispel the conspiracy.

The US intervened in Vietnam since the 1940s, but this intervention only became active starting in the 1950s. After World War 2 ended and the world political situation was clearly formed with two blocs, the Free World and the Communists fought each other in a pattern known as the Cold War, when in the US, President D. Eisenhower declared that the Indochina war was no longer a colonial war but a war between the Communists and the Free World. Since then, the US had resorted to more and more support for France and Indochina to fight against the VC with the Liberation Army and the North Vietnamese Army in order to prevent the expansion of the Communist faction led by the Soviet Union and China.

Through a short period of 20 years of two republican regimes with a bloody military coup, despite many shortcomings and self-defense fighting within the framework, Southern society has also tasted the atmosphere of democracy activities are relatively open to many dissident parties, but they allow communist cadres inside the country to exploit them to destabilize political disturbances in the government and society to be attacked internally. The communist-nationalist war as a consequence of the Cold War after World War II brought many painful tragedies for the entire Vietnamese nation: many general attacks, many massacres of civilians, fleeing the enemy, and displaced people, evacuation and refugee migration, tragic birth and death, separation over many decades. The large presence of American soldiers in Vietnam makes people think of an invading army, especially when this army enters Vietnam without the consent of the South Vietnamese people. The US



continuously changed the leadership level in the South between 1964-1965 to find someone who agreed to let the US pour troops into the South.

Ngô Đình Diệm's government from the beginning prevented American troops from pouring into Vietnam, to do so would lose the cause of his government, because he wanted to build an independent and prosperous country. That's why he didn't want to see foreign troops present. The government of President Thiệu wanted to keep American troops "uninvited" to stay to prevent the communists from invading the South, but ultimately failed. The approach of President Thiệu is not much different from that of Prime Minister Lee Kwan Yew of Singapore when he wanted the British army to prolong its presence in the island nation of Singapore because it both helped Singapore defend its independence and saved money for the country. Singapore's money has to be spent on the military, and the British military's spending also helps stimulate the economy.

After the 1954 Geneva Accords, the US turned the South into an anti-Communist outpost. When the US needed to bomb North Vietnam, they created the Maddox incident. Starting in August 1964, the DRV had to deal with fierce air warfare by the US Air Force and Navy. However, with the rain of bombs in the North and very large-scale search and destroy campaigns in the South, the US still failed to achieve its goal and got bogged down. The number of American soldiers killed in the South was increasing and the number of planes shot down in the North was also increasing.

Although the friendship was close, but when it came time to take charge of the war on its own, the US did not hesitate to remove President Ngô Đình Diệm to be free to bring troops into Vietnam and Americanize the war. On March 8, 1965 US Marines landed in Đà Nẵng without any prior agreement with the Saigon government. The number of American troops participating in the war in Vietnam increased over time and sometimes reached half a million troops. The American military gradually directly fought on behalf of the Republic of Vietnam and the ARVN army gradually was reduced to only secondary forces, mainly to keep security in the controlled areas.

**In April 1965, the DRV Government signed an agreement with China to send a part of the Chinese army into North Vietnam at the official request of General Secretary Lê Duẩn (*this action was not different from that of Nguyễn Ánh and Tôn Thất Thuyết*). The total number of Chinese troops present in the North from June 1965 to March 1973 was nearly 320,000, of which about 1000 soldiers died. Lưu Đoàn Huỳnh, a diplomatic adviser to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, explained that the Chinese troops went to Vietnam because they were afraid that the US might send troops to North Vietnam. Barry Zorthian, a spokesman for the US embassy in Saigon, said the US did not expand the war to North Vietnam for fear that China would join the war.**

In addition, there were Soviet soldiers and officers directly engaged in combat, led by the GRU task force under the General Department of Military Intelligence of the Soviet Union to train Vietnamese special forces and participate in the implementation of special operations and training Vietnamese soldiers. By 1965, the air defense forces in the North had some fairly modern equipment provided by the Soviet Union, including many anti-aircraft artillery regiments of different calibers (of different types of radar control), radar warning and guidance system for the air force, anti-aircraft missile system and fighter air force. The air defense forces of the Vietnam People's Army caused significant damage to the US Air Force and Navy.

During the Cold War after World War II, the Soviet Union extended its influence into Central Asia and Eastern Europe. When Mao Zedong took over mainland China, the Communists took over almost half of the world. The Communist Empire was determined to bury the free world. The Korean War was a test of fire for China and the Vietnam War became a war between the free world and communist factions. In that historical context, the South Vietnamese government from the Huế court mandarins and officials serving the French colonial regime became the leaders of an independent Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Agreement. In addition to billions of dollars in US military and economic aid along with millions of allied soldiers with strategies and tactics about the "*no Win situation*" of the US government (*No Win situation and not being allowed to march to the North, only defending the whole South*) that are unrealistic in geopolitics and the battlefield, the leaders of the South still could not have the capability and the vision to lead the defense of the South against the invasion of the North Vietnamese Communists.

The US military presence openly in South Vietnam was an excuse for North Vietnam to change its name from "ideological war", "civil war" to "war against aggression", "war for people's liberation" ..., and, of course North Vietnam must limit and keep secret the presence of Russian-Chinese armies in the North in order to keep the "justice" of "anti-American aggression" for themselves. Singapore's Prime Minister, Lee Kwan Yew, recently commented: "*The US is a peaceful power. They sent troops to Vietnam not because they wanted to occupy Vietnam. They sent troops to the Korean peninsula not because they wanted to take north or south of Korea. The goal of those wars was against communism. They wanted to stop communism from spreading in the world.*"

Although it is due to the sincerity of the US, the "American imperialist aggression" of the NLF/VC and the DRV government propaganda through the American left-wing media and the communist world cannot be disputed. The South just did not know how to seize the opportunity because of the lack of talented political and military leaders to protect the free South. Instead, they attached great importance to the interests of religion, family, factions, and power struggles, fostering corruption and suppressing nationalist opposition.

Most Communist offensive campaigns are planned to always begin to coincide with the US Presidential elections every 4 years: Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford in the hope that hostilities will escalate to causing higher mortality in the US that the media outlets are free to report daily, creating strong pressure on the people in the US to demand peace and an end to the war. The change in the presidency with promises to appeal to the American electorate who wanted peace as well as the unpredictability of long-term disastrous consequences of communism played a major role in the failure of US policy in Vietnam and the world.

The year 1967 was an important decisive moment for the Vietnam War. Lê Duẩn promoted armed reunification because the South had many resources while the North was too poor and exhausted after applying the communist regime since 1945. In the communist world, Lê Duẩn was said to follow the expansionist policy of the Communist International through the two wars of 1968 and 1975, and Hồ Chí Minh was an "Eastern Tito", so he had disagreements with the case of "anti-party review".

While President Johnson saw costs and numbers of soldiers rising without progress and for the first time a majority of voters believed that intervention in Vietnam was a mistake. By the end of 1967, the US was in turmoil, riots and division because of the Vietnam War. Famous figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr., boxing champion Muhammad Ali... participated in the anti-war movement. The US one-way communication system through newspapers, radio, and television has abetted the international Communist propaganda machine to deliberately misrepresent and distort all relations with the causes and developments, and the aftermath of the Vietnam War. Moreover, the textbooks in American universities always tend to distort the historical facts about the war between the two Vietnams, sowing in the mind of young students false prejudices against the Republic of Vietnam, the ARVN and the American expeditionary forces, undermining the support of the US government and people in the Vietnam war to help the South defend freedom for a "noble cause" (President Reagan-1980) against a hostile invasion from the North in order to dye the South red.

After President L Johnson decided to start "Vietnamizing" the war followed by President Nixon, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) in turn replaced the US military in important operational tasks. The victory of the Tết Offensive (1968) broke General Võ Nguyên Giáp's general offensive plan with the North Vietnamese Army and shattered the legend of the "invincible victory" of the NVA. But the 1968 Tết offensive brought an unexpected truth to the US political world, as Deputy Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach warned: " Did the *turtle of progress in Vietnam chase the anti-war rabbit at home?* ". Of course, the US was forced to negotiate with North Vietnam. On June 6, 1969, the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC was established in time to serve the diplomatic struggle on the four-way negotiating table with the third party, leading to the signing of the Paris Agreement on January 27, 1973. Signing the Paris Agreement, the US Government must commit to respect the independence,

sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam, the right of self-determination of the people of the South, withdraw troops to the country, and recognize the real situation. In the South, there were two governments, two armies, and three political forces.

After the victory of the Tết Offensive, the ARVN assumed the responsibility of combat so that American troops could withdraw from the country. The fast march into Cambodia to hunt down the VC and the North Vietnamese Army together to rescue Lon Nol, the Lam Son 719 campaign to cut off the Communist supply lines in Laos, the An Lộc death defense was likened to the French battle of Verdun against the German army during World War I, the recapture of the ancient citadel of Quảng Trị when ARVN competed with North Vietnamese communist soldiers for every inch of land, eloquently demonstrating the combat ability and bravery of the South Vietnamese army that have now been forgotten.

In the 1970s, both the free world and Communist sides began to become more interested in looking to create more stable and predictable international relations, inaugurating a period of détente including the "Strategic Arms Limitation Negotiations" and the US' open relationship with the People's Republic of China as a counterweight strategy to the USSR. As a result of the Sino-Soviet split, tensions along the China-Soviet border reached a peak in 1969, and US President Richard Nixon decided to take advantage of the conflict between the two socialist countries to change the balance of power in favor of the West. China also wanted to improve relations with the Americans with the intention of cooperating to destroy the Soviet Union.

The program of Vietnamization of the War was entering a successful stage when in the world there was a conflict between Russia and China, causing this program to be interrupted and **the victory of the Republic of Vietnam missed**. On February 28, 1972, the Shanghai Joint Communiqué was issued between the US and China. President Nixon announced the one China policy with Beijing's assurances of an honorable peaceful resolution with a "decent interval". With the "Vietnamization of the war", the US withdrew its troops from the South in "honor" due to pressure from the media, public opinion and the US Congress against the war with the Paris Agreement January 27, 1973. Since 1972, Kissinger has boasted: "*I am reunifying Vietnam*". Nixon and Kissinger in declaring "peace with honor" deceived the American people, because documents show that at the time of the signing of the peace treaty, Nixon and Kissinger knew well that North Vietnam would return to war and that the US would have to intervene to support South Vietnam as promised. The changes of the situation did not go as Nixon predicted. Apart from the withdrawal of American troops and the return of American prisoners of war, other key provisions of the Paris peace accord were not implemented. Over the next two years, the US Congress slowly reduced military aid to the Republic of Vietnam while the International Communist Bloc doubled for the North, so the balance of forces between the two factions was skewed in favor of the Communists.

Although the Republic of Vietnam regime was not perfect, it was much better than the current communist regime in all aspects (cultural, political, legal, ...). The war that was said to liberate the South really opened the eyes of the people and party members of the North. Although the South Vietnamese government tried everything to limit the opposition press, Saigon before April 30 1975 was still a place with laws to serve the right to freedom of expression. The collapse of the Republic of Vietnam was not due to a lack of foresight, advocating anti-communism since the mid-1950s as a strategic decision. But unfortunately, Southern society was gradually corrupted by ideology, because even in the ranks of the nation there were active politicians who contributed to the corruption of the regime, plus the misfortune of encountering an unreliable ally. The Southern regime was often controlled, voices were not heard as shown in secret documents (Dossier of the Independence Palace, When allies fled, Nguyễn Tiến Hưng) to see the ultimate suffering of an inferior country. On the contrary, due to the settlement of international forces, the Saigon government collapsed, so it was no longer possible to establish a coalition government consisting of "three components" as stipulated in the Paris Agreement and as the DRV as well as the Provisional Revolutionary Government had expected.

Despite its reputation as a superpower, the US was always outsmarted by the VC, in fact, Henri Kissinger was far behind Lê Đức Thọ's strategy. From the role of protecting and supporting the South against the invaders of the North, the US accepted to sit on an equal footing with them, i.e., admitting that it was an aggressor, and as a result, the invaders had to withdraw. The legitimate regime of the Republic of Vietnam was forced to accept sitting on an equal footing with the insurgents of the Republic of South Vietnam/VC. Since then, the US and the North Vietnamese Communists have even been able to sneak past the South Vietnamese, sometimes giving their opinions and not getting much attention. The discussion about the shape of the table (which lasted for nearly 3 months) also showed that the VC were superior to the US. Following the progress of official negotiations and secret talks that lasted for more than 4 years (1969-1973), the US made concessions after concessions to finally abandon Vietnam mercilessly, ran away after heavy losses in life (close to 60,000 dead, over 300,000 wounded, of which about one-third were invalids) and war expenses (estimated at \$140 billion in 1974 dollars), while the army North Vietnam was free to stay in the South, then openly massively brought troops from the North to occupy the whole South in the face of the indifference of the world, that is, tore up the so-called Paris International Agreement committed by the parties (including France, Great Britain, China and countries in the International Commission for Armistice Control in the presence of the Secretary-General of the United Nations).

In the 20-year war, Phước Long was the first province to be lost on January 6, 1975, opening the Spring 1975 general offensive of the North Vietnamese army. There were many factors that led to the collapse, but in all the events that followed Phước Long - Ban Mê Thuôt, Pleiku, Huế, Đà Nẵng - were derived from two main factors: the shortcomings of Vietnamization and the aid cutting by US Congress. ARVN collapsed too quickly because morale began to decline in August 1974 when the author of Vietnamization, President

Richard Nixon resigned (August 8, 1974) and only three days later (August 11, 1974) Congress cut off military aid to the Republic of Vietnam.

On July 2, 1976, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was renamed the **Socialist Republic of Vietnam** with the territory including the South and the North. In 1977, Vietnam became a member of the United Nations. After years of prolonged war, the country was devastated. From 1975 to 1986, Vietnam had to deal with numerous difficulties. Consequences of a subsidized economy and centralized control of the means of production and distribution, corruption and social evils left behind by wars, refugee emigration, and war on the southwestern border against the Khmer Rouge genocide, the war on the northern border against China, the siege and embargo of the US and Western countries, in addition to the consecutive natural disasters... had placed Vietnam one of the five poorest countries in the world (GDP per capita 1986 :100 US\$).

Trapped by the US, the Vietnamese Communists tore up the Paris Agreement to invade the South (to avoid paying war reparations) and then was lured by China to Cambodia and got bogged down there. The result of these decisions was an exhausted and lagging Vietnam, committed to being a vassal at once to two hostile forces. Cut the land to offer China to maintain political life and embrace the US to avoid sanctions by exchanging re-education political prisoners. There has never been such a dark period in the nation's history. The absurdity of the Vietnamese boat people tragedy was even more striking because the Vietnamese refugees had to leave their homeland in search of the right to life and freedom while the gunfire was no longer in the country. At that time, when the aspiration for peace that every Vietnamese people cherished in their hearts for so many years just dawned, the whole nation could have joined hands to build a country together that suffered so much and lost in nearly half a century of constant smoke and fire by the generosity of the victorious side.

Moreover, the difficulties are aggravated due to subjective reasons, haste and only the will to rebuild the country quickly without taking into account specific conditions. In the early 1980s, the socio-economic crisis in Vietnam became acute, the inflation rate reached 774% in 1986. Since 1986, Vietnam began to carry out the comprehensive *Đổi Mới* (Renovation) process to overcoming difficulties, entering the development path of a market economy, loosening private commerce, using the system of State corporations to gradually integrate into the region and the world, but still within the framework of the "socialist orientation" (GDP per capita 1990: 200 US\$ and 2010 :1200 US\$ ) with around 6-7% annual growth and <11% inflation.

After hundreds of years of independence, that history poured into the 20th century with a ruined country, a scattered people. History always repeats itself: foreign invasions "Chinese and French" and civil war "Inner Vietnam" and "North-South" in just a short time. From the period of Gia Long unification of the country, the country was colonized by the

French, the resistance war against the French, the Cần Vương (Support the Emperor) movement, the formation of revolutionary parties, to the period of independence, nationalist-communist conflict . A country lost its sovereignty to the French. A dying Nguyen court in the great decline of the Vietnamese nation. An independent Vietnam was born among international powers. Patriotism, the spirit of slavery, the sense of independence, the national spirit, Marxism-Leninism, the proletarian revolution, international obligations, political dictatorship, totalitarianism brought about the aspiration for independence, freedom and democracy, paradoxically intertwined to create a 20th century Vietnam.

In the end, the Nguyễn Dynasty lost its kingdom because it refused to open the doors to diplomatic relations, allowing evangelization and delay in modernizing the country. Emperor Bảo Đại once again lost the opportunity to re-establish the official independence and autonomy. Nationalist parties that lack unity have little popular support. Despite the newly formed weakness and not yet perfecting the military-administrative organization of the Vietnamese nation, the South Vietnamese government with many difficulties under the auspices of the US was born on April 30, 1955, the Republic of Vietnam (the first establishment date: October 26, 1955) with Ngô Đình Diệm (1901-1963) and the Second one, November 1, 1963 with Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (1923-2001) upheld freedom, democracy, and the rule of law called the "Free World Outpost" with a humane and scientific upbringing. Ngô Đình Diệm lost the opportunity to develop freedom and democracy in the South.

Hồ Chí Minh brought Marxism-Leninism into Vietnam to succeed in regaining independence and unification for Vietnam under the socialist regime. The South lost the battle not because of incompetence, lack of fighting spirit, but because the Americans had betrayed, pulled out half way, and cut off aid. In the spring of 1975, the Communist armed forces of both regions of Vietnam, the VC or the Liberation Army, and the North Vietnamese Army or the People's Army of Vietnam under the command of the Vietnam Labor Party, carried out a general offensive to liberate the country to dye the South red, and unify the country.

Since the founding of the country, America really lost its honor in 1975 with 3 million veterans in the Vietnam war and 3,000 soldiers still missing. American society was severely divided with blaming each other. The American military fought, sacrificed, and abandoned its allies while the antiwar Americans cheered for their enemies, stabbed family and friends in the back, and mistreated their own warriors? The American people, including their loved ones, received these veterans with disdain, causing so much humiliation to fall on the head of the losers. That's why the soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam on temporary land never touched the pain of their American combat comrades who did their best. The US had to sacrifice 58,000 people, spent 300 billion USD and has to feed millions of American veterans whose lives are ruined by crises or failures because they cannot rebuild their lives.

The word "Abandoned" was used by the BBC and RFI news agencies to ease the resentment of the Vietnamese people after the US cut off the blood transfusion tube for the Republic of Vietnam. "Abandoning Allies" is different from "Betraying Allies". Abandoning means I like it, I help, when I'm too tired, I don't help anymore. And Betrayal is deception, fraud. That's why Americans want to admit that they Abandon the Republic of Vietnam rather than accept Betrayal of the Republic of Vietnam. In the conclusion, author Nguyễn Phương compared the *pack of wolves to trying to eat up a small country called South Vietnam, after the US destroyed it and threw it away. But America is great because it is good. Does the US enforce the following saying: **We must destroy it in order to save it?*** For the US, abandoning South Vietnam in the international battle to defeat the Soviet Union and disintegrate the Communist bloc was a strategic issue. Conducting a campaign to free Vietnamese "re-education" prisoners so that they can live and reunite in the US is a matter of conscience. From the point of view of the interests of the US, in both these actions the US was wise and victorious and did not have to pay reparations. Today the US has returned to Vietnam since 1995.



US Presidents: Eisenhower-Kennedy-Johnson-Nixon-Ford during Vietnam War

Hanoi won through the 1973 Paris Agreement and the 55-day offensive in 1975. The US missed the opportunity to establish democracy in Vietnam when the Soviet communist bloc collapsed. So far, through 7 presidents after the Vietnam War (Carter, Reagan, George Bush, Clinton, W. Bush, Obama, Trump) the US is still confused about a Vietnam policy against China.

For the Vietnamese, both the South and the North, the biggest loss now is trust in the leadership and the party. Ordinary people have had many hopes and disappointments, so the most difficult thing in Vietnamese society today is how to overcome people's hearts when it comes to social morality, patriotism and sacrifice for the country through the mental breakdown after years of war, after many mistakes.

After World War II, the colonial countries were granted their independence, ending the colonial regime without paying too high a price like Vietnam. Typically, the French African countries, British Asian countries, and Spanish countries in Latin America were respectively returned with sovereignty. Thus, it shows two bloody wars created by Communist North Vietnam by **General Secretary Lê Duẩn under the guise of national liberation and nationalist-communist war are unnecessary**, not except for the purpose of spreading communism in South Asia as a henchman for the Russian-Chinese Communist International. Lê Duẩn once stated : *We fight the US, we fight for the Soviet Union, we fight for China.* Of course, countries after receiving sovereignty have lived in peace and



prosperity like those in South Asia thanks to South Vietnam or the Republic of Vietnam to prevent the red wave.

The war between the US and the Soviet Union or the South-North in political, military, economic, or all-round links between the US and Russia lasted until 1975 when the North won to completely reunify the country, but it is dependent and controlled by China. The Russian communist ideology of violence, which had failed during the cold war, gave the direction to communist China to expand economically and commercially as an equal rival but created by the US. The "naive" American leaders did not see the consequences of the abandonment of Chiang Kai-shek and the Korean and Vietnamese wars in the belief that China would transform itself to freedom and democracy once its economy was highly developed. The US has made China rich and strong and it has become a great threat to the US and the world to this day. The bottomless greed of capitalists, American investors and presidents who advocated détente with China has continued to contribute to China's transformation from a poor communist country with a GDP of only 218 billion dollars in January 1979 when President Jimmy Carter established complete diplomatic relations with China, into a totalitarian dictatorship with GDP 14.363 trillion dollars in 2019. The US presidents did not see the malicious plots of communists, especially China.

US President Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 marked a change in the world situation, turned the historic handshake between the leaders of the two countries across the Pacific Ocean into reality and marked the beginning of a new era. The détente collapsed in the late 1970s with the start of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979. The US had increased economic, diplomatic, and military pressure on the Soviet Union, at a time when the Soviet Union was in economic stagnation. In the mid-1980s, new leader Mikhail Gorbachev introduced reforms that liberalized perestroika (1987) (reforms within the Soviet Communist Party) and glasnost (openness, 1985) and ended military involvement of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. In 1980, US President Ronald Reagan reversed his policy of "De-escalation" with the Soviet Union, drastically increasing military spending and determined to eliminate Soviet influence in every corner of the world. Reagan called the Soviet Union an "evil empire" and declared that communism would soon fall and would be left in "the ashes of history". British Prime Minister Thatcher also strongly condemned the Soviet Union and denounced the Soviet government "the plot to rule the world".

China depends on the US to get rich, but the US also depends on China to satisfy its consumption needs. But despite China's rapid economic development, that development has not been synchronized with political and cultural developments to create a harmonious, prosperous society. China's economic achievements have been exchanged for the suffering, sacrifice, sweat and blood of many other peoples and ethnicities, even in China hundreds of millions of minorities still have to continue to live in corruption, dictatorship, poverty, injustice, mistreatment. In addition, China spends money to influence international politics to gain the reputation of "Great Khan". China's invasions and subversions into the political, economic, scientific, cultural, and media systems in Western countries can be viewed as

invasions of a new cold war with money as the main vehicle. Many in the Western intelligentsia naively underestimate or dismiss China's threat to Western democracy.

In terms of socio-economic, as history has proven, the development of the middle class is the driving force of the democratic revolution because it is the educated class that has the means and many material needs as well as the spirit of freedom needs to be satisfied. 20 years ago, this Chinese middle class did not exist, but today it is a large and growing force. The middle class makes up 14 percent of the urban population. In China, it is estimated at over 400 million people. With that direction of social development, according to Professor David Shambaugh, director of the China Policy Program at George Washington University, the decline of the China Communist Party (CCP) is underway.

In addition, world history shows that Marxism-Leninism has only brought backward poverty and hunger to the Russian people, which has occurred continuously since 1920, so it was eliminated in the Soviet Union when Mikhail Gorbachev "opened his political governance and economic reform" from March 1985. In the 1920s, the Soviet Representative in Beijing, Grigorij Voitinski, failed to convince Phan Bội Châu to follow the "communist beliefs" (according to TỰ PHÁN). Since the 1920s, the two Phans have clearly understood the essence of Marxism-Leninism when the Third International was just formed. As a result of Nguyễn Ái Quốc's joining the Communist International with the policy of revolutionary violence, there was a division in the ranks of the struggle for independence at home or abroad, so nationalist elements had to gather in self-defense with the establishment of rival political parties that caused turmoil and division within the Vietnamese.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, the Federal Republic of Germany unified West Germany with East Germany without a drop of blood, without hatred and united to build the country into a European power. At the Malta Conference between George HW Bush and Mikhail Gorbachev in early December 1989, the two leaders informally declared an end to the Cold War. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union when the member republics of the Soviet Union declared their independence. The communist vassal states of Eastern Europe also competed to dissolve the communist regime in the 1990s. From here on, only four countries in the world: China, Vietnam, North Korea and Cuba remained communist. Communities of communist refugees from Eastern European, Asian and South American countries, especially Cuban and Vietnamese ethnic groups, have not ceased to speak the truth about the atrocities they have seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears what happened to themselves and their families living under the communist regime that American activists and politicians either want to forget about the past, or don't have the courage to speak out.

**If the communist regime were good for the welfare of the people, there would not have been a million people in the North who migrated to the South after the 1954 Geneva Accords, or when the North Vietnamese army attacked Quảng Trị, many**

people abandoned everything and ran into Huế. When the North Vietnamese army attacked Huế, many people left their homes to flee to Đà Nẵng, sometimes the number of people who fled to Đà Nẵng as refugees from the communists reached millions. When the ARVN army "tactically evacuated" from Kontum, Pleiku, most people left the cities to go to non-communist areas. Knowing that the road was arduous, but still going, because the people did not want to be liberated. Nor would there be the tragic and painful border crossings of millions of boat people who risked their lives at sea to leave their homeland in search of freedom after the South fell to communists in 1975.

Since April 1975, throughout Vietnam, "Re-Education Camps" are in fact just forced labor camps that have sprung up like mushrooms. The "students" in those camps lived like animals, writhing with hunger and full of diseases. They were forced to work to the point of exhaustion, under terror and constant stress. Hundreds of thousands of ARVN soldiers, intellectuals or professionals, died in these re-education prisons.

Ideologies have spanned decades from feudalism-civil rights, abolitionists-radicals, pacifists-warlords, violent-moderates, bourgeois-proletarians, individual-collectivists to the end of one-party rule. -multiparty in the communist-nationalist world. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Vietnam returned to normalization with China, so it became more and more dependent on the Communist Party of China with the motto "*it is better to lose the country than to lose the party*".

The 40th former US President Ronald Reagan said: "*The end of the Vietnam War is not ended with the US withdrawal, but the Vietnamese people must pay the price for that kind of peace, which is a thousand years of darkness for the next generation born in Vietnam later.*"

Former General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Nobel Peace Prize 1990, Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev: "*I have given up half of my life for communist ideals. Today I have to say with sadness: the communist party only knows propaganda and lies.*"

The late Russian President Boris Nicholalevich Yeltsin : "*Communism cannot be repaired but must be eliminated* " .

German Chancellor Angela Merkel : "*I grew up in communism in East Germany and I know them well : communism is the most deceitful and barbaric of mankind ! Communism is a stain on humanity and the civilized world!*"

45<sup>th</sup> US President Donald Trump said: "*Communism has ravaged all the countries that have adopted it. Wherever socialism or communism is really applied, it brings only pain, destruction and defeat.* "

The Dalai Lama: "*Communism is born of poverty and ignorance, grows up with lies and violence, and will die in the contempt and curse of mankind*"

Overall, the whole life of the South, including cultural and literary life, over the past 45 years has gradually "liberated" the people of the North from the big prison in which people are forced to live, must fake, "stretching" or be deceived, but blindly obeyed in wartime and followed "socialist orientation". Up to now, the South continues to contribute to the country's arduous "democratization" process! The South brings wealth and prosperity in terms of natural resources, talents, and intellectuals to the North and the country. Surely one day, the country will witness a cultural and literary renaissance, following the path that Southern culture and literature have gone. The road to FREEDOM, HUMANITY, INTERNATIONAL INTEGRATION.

From the victories won in the 20th century through "traveling: between the two elder Russian-Chinese comrades, and especially since the birth of the DRV State, has transformed our country from a semi-feudal colony becoming a unified independent country, developing along the socialist path with the goal of building an ideal Vietnam full of temptations "Rich people, strong country, fair society, democracy, freedom, civilized". Vietnam currently enjoys wide international relations and plays an increasingly important position in the region and in the world through its experience in neutralizing the pressures of the two great powers, the US and China. Currently, Vietnam has set up more than 80 diplomatic missions abroad, has diplomatic relations with 176 countries, economic and trade relations with more than 200 countries.

Entering the 21st century, Vietnam began to rebuild and develop the country to keep up with its neighbors. Vietnam entered the 21st century with the bleeding hearts of many generations longing for a renaissance and prosperous Vietnam full of self-determination and humanist values. But "horses change riders". Those who follow the "socialist orientation" have won the war of "fighting against the French and the USA" but witnessed the cultural and literary life of the South "lost the battle" to gradually become aware of freedom and humanity based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and integration into the world community and "escapes China" in accordance with the people's aspirations. Karl Marx argued that the degree of socialization of an economy contributed by the middle class is the decisive factor leading to the change of political mechanism due to the constant transformation of human society.

After the monarchy-colonial-dictatorship, the Vietnamese people have been exposed to and understood a little of the basic democratic and liberal activities of the West: gathering, expressing political opinions, fighting for demands, asking for legal justice, compassion, private property ... with the formation of the Nation of Vietnam - the Republic of Vietnam and especially the relatives of more than a million overseas Vietnamese who crossed the border to seek freedom and more than 3 million Vietnamese living in Western democracies after 1975. The Tiananmen lesson of 4-6-1989 told the leaders of China-Vietnam that the top risk is still the human aspiration for freedom. Like thousands of young East Germans

shouting the slogan "Long live freedom" on the Berlin Wall on the evening of November 9, 1989. Especially the event that Vietnamese Boat People after 1975 said that democracy is the direction of the times. In 1901 the beginning of the 20th century in the world only 12 percent of humanity lived in political institutions called democracy. At the beginning of the 21st century, 120 of the 192 internationally recognized countries were led by elected governments. The vitality of the country is due to the constant transformation of results of social movements.

For a conclusion, the great lesson is never to get into the sphere of influence of any foreign country, whether it's an ally or a "good comrade and brother", on the world "chessboard" where big countries like "chess players", small countries are just like "pawns". When needed, in order to gain advantage, or ultimately win for the "chess player", the "pawns" can be "sacrificed". Vietnamese people need to get out of this "pawn" status. How many opportunities have passed because of the communist "arrogance", "lie", "warlike", "thugs" and lack of humanity. During the revolutionary leadership, Hồ Chí Minh paid special attention to the issue of solidarity because solidarity is the key to victory and draws a great lesson as well as a vital rule of the Vietnamese nation: *"Our history teaches us this lesson: **When our people unite as one, our country will be independent and free. On the contrary, when our people do not unite, they will be invaded by foreign countries.**"* According to Facebook Nguyễn Đình Bin, former Deputy Foreign Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam : *" Almost half a century has passed, but we have not really reconciled and harmonized with each other, how can we work together to build a fatherland that is prosperous and firmly defends the integrity of national sovereignty, when the East Sea has been seriously violated and many threats and dangers are still lurking..., "*

Today, the situation has been arranged. It is difficult to change, yet another one-party system is not elected by the people, is corrupt, lacks justice, and because party members have no or lack of revolutionary achievements, more and more depending on China; we can't find a correct philosophy to guide us in planning a consistent and stable sustainable development strategy for a long time, creating people's trust... If nothing changes, Vietnam can only stand still and look at other countries in the region and the world, having less advantages but cleverly choosing its political stance and alliance relationship, taking the opportunity to develop. We are living in an era where all forms of Culture, Society, Economy, Politics, Military ... of a country or territory have close relationships with other countries or other territories, forming alliances to balance the balance of power. Therefore, no country or territory can be "Independent" in the literal sense of "Standing Alone", and choosing a political stance is an important decision for survival and development. The game of "swinging" between Russia and China was successful with the Nationalist-Communist war, now being applied between the US and China in the hope of survival and escaping from China. Before the changing security environment of Pacific Ocean with the rise of China, Vietnam strengthens defense and economic ties with the US, Japan, India and Australia as well as ASEAN countries.

The history and evolution of society leave many lessons for those who love their country, but the reconciliation of foreign influences must be based on the supremacy of the people's hearts: the spirit of Diên Hồng and the aspiration for democracy and freedom. After the Second World War with the decolonization movement launched from Asia to Africa, the empires had to return sovereignty to the ruled colonies without having to use the ideological "request for independence" "protection of freedom". Starting from the day of declaring independence on September 2, 1945, the Vietnamese people had to fight with blood to reunify the country, it was not necessary but required the chivalry of a victorious northern compatriot. **Former President Dương Văn Minh once declared: “ *The people have suffered to the limit. Thus, ideological warfare has lost all meaning. The urgent issue is no longer the triumph of this political position or that ideology but the survival of the nation.*”** If everyone in the North and the South are taught to yield to each other, do not listen to the French-American-Russian-Chinese neighbors inciting them with opposing ideologies but still maintain the traditional patriotism, carry out the 1956 general election and the country following the United Nations' movement of national self-determination, then Vietnam would now also be prosperous compared to other countries in the five continents without having to sacrifice tens of millions of lives and generations of descendants, even in the form of any political mechanism under a newly elected constitution by the whole people to rebuild the country together.

At present, although Marxism-Leninism is still highly praised in theory, but in practice, the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam has had to apply necessary adjustment measures for the country's development for several decades, in which the most basic is to open up a more "breathable" social space for the people with a plan to innovate "capitalism" of commerce, social activities, culture, and political thinking. In terms of foreign affairs, under pressure from China, the Hanoi government opened the door to international integration, strengthened relations with the US and EU, and actively participated in the activities of the ASEAN bloc towards capitalist countries.

The beautiful tradition of the patriotic Vietnamese who love the people is to build a country and defend it with the national policy of self-determination, self-reliance, overcoming ideological conflicts, factional interests, bringing prosperity, creating adequate human rights for the people and ensuring the interests of the country: **The people are rich, the country is strong based on the strength of national unity.** It is a law for a livable country, full of the right to life and the right to pursue happiness of a person and family in a country. The heroic predecessors of history have proven that point and the Vietnamese people are still alive. We borrow a verse of poet Bằng Bá Lân (1912-1988) to end this history book:

*Our nation is still our nation,*

*No matter how far North from South we are still brothers!*



**Dr. TRẦN TIẾN SUM**

**CALIFORNIA, 2020 COVID-19 SEASON.**

**English translation by Trần Tiến Khanh, September 2022**

**END OF VOLUME III**

## Part 15. APPENDIX

### a/ Letter Wishing Longevity on the 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Trần Tiễn Thành from Emperor Tự Đức

Source: Genealogy of the Trần Tiễn from Minh Hương Village

From ancient times till now, age is respected; even though human life is restricted to be one hundred years, since Middle Ages not many have a long life or know how to prolong life like the ancient sages. There is a saying: to live for seventy years is already rare and precious. However, in real life, there are not too many who achieve both longevity and fame. Within four classes of citizens (i.e., scholars, farmers, workers and merchants), rich or poor, some may live long but are unknown and they are no different than grasses and trees. There is no comparison if they are not in the famed elite. Let's examine the examples in the Chinese classics: Tắt-công achieved fame by serving four kings; Phạm-Võ-Tử served 5 kings as prime ministers; the Tang dynasty had Bùi-Tấn-Công, the Song had Văn- Lộ-Công who served four emperors with fame reaching foreign lands; some took care of State affairs for over 30 years, some carried both civil and military duties for over 50 years; all achieved both morality and fame. Thus, they were recorded in historical books to serve as examples for thousands future generations. In contemporary times, Thái-sư Càn-chánh-điện Đại-học-sỹ (First Column of the Empire) Tuy-Thịnh Quận-Công (Duke) TRƯỜNG- VĂN-LƯƠNG and Thái-bảo Đông-các Đại-học-sỹ (Fourth Column of the Empire) VÕ-VĂN-ĐOAN were fully respected for their age and virtues and they are not much less worthy than the ancients. In life, if there are virtues then there are blessings, if there are blessings then there is longevity; Heaven's retribution is always just and applicable to all. Then, at the present time, is there anybody else? Văn-minh-điện Đại-học-sỹ (Second Column of the Empire) TRẦN-KHANH is expected to be one such person.

You came from a well-educated family, passed early the exams and served under three Emperors; in the Capital or in other provinces, you had served well; are you not one of those old and virtuous sages? You and me were not acquainted before. When I ascended to the throne, you were just a low mandarin. However, when I first saw you, I felt that we were well acquainted before and I preferred to use you before all others. Successively, you entered the Cabinet and the National Security Council, served as Prime Minister and served me for over 30 years. My trust in you is growing every day. It is like fish meeting water, glue mixed in paint, no appointed union.

The Emperor and his mandarin are in concord and this is very rare from ancient times till now. It now becomes easy because you and I have fully understood each other, together we worry and together we suffer, so naturally it becomes like clouds following the dragons, winds following the tigers.

You have been skinny before. Previously, in Đà-nẵng and Gia-định there were dangers and people were scared; it was difficult to choose someone who could defend the important



seaport Thuận-an which is the gate to the Capital. The great mandarins have recommended you. As a Vice Minister of Military Affairs, you have taken this important task with enthusiasm, and I have complete confidence in you. You have used all your talents, made quick and complete plans for a good defense, both on land and in water, that nobody can complain. For several years, you have stayed there to take care of everything, made great efforts to complete this difficult task, constantly worried day and night, and often forgot food and sleep. In addition, that was an unhealthy place, highly humid, with hot days and cold nights and it is easy for outsiders to get sick. Yet you look strong and healthy, different than before such that your colleagues cannot recognize. It is extraordinary. Since then, you get even stronger and healthier and now even with your advanced age, your energies have only diminished a little and your mind is still clear and solid like when you were 60 years old. It is difficult to guess how long you would live. It is said that difficulties make one better and happier every day, and an easier life is only temporary.

Your initial name was MÃN. Duke Tùng-Thiện Công often told me: most people today are not named following the names of ancient traitors, especially those in the Cabinet (you were then in the Cabinet). When reading the Vietnamese History, I have found a great mandarin under the Lý dynasty, Tô-Hiến-Thành, who obeyed the royal wills to assist the young emperor with absolute loyalty. Throughout his life, nobody could foul him with flattery or material possessions; such character is really praiseworthy. I gave you the name TIÊN-THÀNH with the sole hope that you will follow the example of the ancient sage, and there is no other meaning. At that time, I was still young and strong, you were a lower mandarin and nobody could predict what happens today. Time flies, life is difficult, it is a surprise that it has become reality and that is very extraordinary. Nobody knows the reasons that even you could not understand. Now we have no reservation about speaking out. Now you are old and I am weak; no one knows who will get the royal wills, and if there is no such opportunity, then it just remains a dream. The future is very hard to predict; it is hard now and harder still in old times. Suddenly, I remember some phrases in a poem from Du Fu (famous Chinese poet in the Tang dynasty, 712-770): “Next year in the reunion who still remains healthy? Who still enjoys looking at the peach branch?” I then dried my tears and laughed out loud, just to bring a little joy to your birthday party.

In life, everyone likes to have a high position, prosperity, longevity and fame but not many have obtained them all. You have attained a high position, your age is advanced, your family is prosperous, your descendants are plenty. I do not know what else to wish for you. I am just afraid that my wishes will not be fulfilled and that will make future generations laughing at me.

Advanced age and physical weakness usually bring laziness and it is difficult for people in high positions to fulfill official duties. If official duties are unfulfilled then there will be complaints. I am very shameful. Mundane complaints are very scary. I always hope that your name will be preserved.

Among the mandarins, I have complete confidence in you. The previous old mandarins, i.e. Trương-văn-Lương, Nguyễn-tri-Phương and Phan-thanh-Giản, said that you are fully

capable of taking care of the Nation's affairs. Talented people know the talent of others. You all are generally similar, and it is not quite an error to say so. You are carrying the important and difficult duties just like them before. Do you remember the day of his retirement, Trương-văn-Lương thanked the Emperor, then held your hands, cried and wished you well? And whenever you recall the hardships of Phan-thanh-Giản you are moved to tears and unable to speak. As time goes by, why have you not making any progress? You are more worried and sadder every day. Why are you in such state? It is a serious error to deny your responsibility, depending everything on Heaven and not working hard. The ancient sages considered national affairs as their own duties and valued a yes more than a thousand taels of gold. They were not discouraged because of difficulties and disappointed their soul mates even if nobody knew their conscience. Especially now, my trust and treatment of you are so deep and special that they can not be forgotten. Thus, you could not refuse and assign the official duties to others. There is a paragraph in the commentary of Tô-Đông-Pha (Sudongpo, another famous Chinese poet, 1037-1101) on the character of Quản-Trọng (Guanzhong, prime minister of Qi (Tề), 725 BC-645 BC): "Even death will not stop him from fulfilling his duties, not doing them carelessly; even in old age, time still remains, just hope to have a strong will like the old horse Kỳ-ký, the usefulness of the tang-du tree. It does not matter the ornaments and precious possessions. Just be afraid of laziness and negligence.

Please think again: the longevity of your body is not equaled to that of your name, the longevity of your name is not equaled to that of your teachers and friends, the longevity of your teachers and friends is not equaled to that of your country or the citizens which exists forever and will be never lost. I hereby express my sincere feelings and advice as wishes on your birthday.

There was also a meaningful poem by the Emperor:

*Ba mươi năm lễ cảm ân-sâu – Deep gratitude for thirty years*

*Một tâm lòng son vẹn trước sau – A solid mind as always*

*Nợ nước phải lo đền giả sạch – Worry to pay the debt to country*

*Phận tôi chớ quản nhọc-nhần lâu – As a subject do not mind the hardship.*

**November 20 Tỵ-Đức Year 35 (1882)**

**EMPEROR TỤ-ĐỨC**

## REFERENCES

### b/ Private Documents

- 1/Thư Chúc thọ của vua Tự Đức nhân Trần Tiễn Thành bảy mươi tuổi, (Ngự bút 20-11-1882), bản dịch của Trần Thước . Xem phụ lục.
- 2/ (NBVNC): Trần tiễn Hối, Niên biểu Văn Nghị Công, Quyển 5-6, link:Hán tự : Trần Tiễn Hối.1894 .Dịch và chú thích: Vũ bạch Ngô .Vi tính: Trần Tiễn Tiến  
<http://www.khoahoc.net/baivo/trantiensum/210110-trantienthanhhamoan-10.htm>
- 3/ Trần Tiễn Sum. Bài học lịch sử: Trần Tiễn Thành, người khởi đầu phong trào duy tân đất nước., link: <http://www.khoahoc.net/baivo/trantiensum/130809-trantienthanh.htm>
- 4 /Trần Tiễn Sum .Tâm bệnh của vua Tự Đức và thảm kịch vua ba ngày Dục Đức. Khoa hoc .net
- 5/ Trần tiễn Sum: Hàm oan của Phụ Chánh TRẦN TIỄN THÀNH:  
“Miệng thế gian lắm lời cũng thật đáng sợ” bởi Vua Tự Đức.  
<http://www.khoahoc.net/baivo/trantiensum/191109-trantienthanhhamoan-1.htm>
- 6/ Trần Tiễn Sum/NHỮNG TRANG SỬ BI HÙNG CỦA CON ĐƯỜNG CHỐNG NGOẠI XÂM TỬ CUỐI THẾ KỶ  
19. Khoahot.net
- 7/ Trần Tiễn Sum. Tiếng chuông Thiên Mụ hay tiếng chuông Trần Vũ Khoa hoc.net
- 8/ Niên biểu Văn nghị công. Hán tự : Trần Tiễn Hối.1894. Dịch và chú thích: Vũ bạch Ngô.Vi tính: Trần Tiễn Tiến  
(<http://www.khoahoc.net/baivo/trantiensum/261109>)

### c/ History Books:

- 1- Phạm văn Sơn.Việt sử tân biên.Q5-6 Saigon 1962
- 2- Trần Trọng Kim .Việt Nam Sử Lược. Tái bản lần 2
- 3- Đại Nam Thực lục, Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn, Tập 7,8,9. Bản dịch Viện Sử học, 2007
- 4- Vũ ngọc Chiêu, Các vua cuối nhà Nguyễn, Tập 1- Hoa Ky 1999
- 5- Hoàng cơ Thụy , Việt sử khảo luận, Tập 6-8 Paris 1990
- 6- Đại Nam Liệt Truyện Chính Biên.Tập 4.Muc22.Quốc sử quán triều Nguyễn.Bản dịch Viện Sử học .
- 7-:Bulletin des Amis du Vieux Hué (Tạp chí Hué thành hiệu cổ) số 1941-1943
- 8- Trần gia Phụng, Việt sử đại cương, Quyển 3-4 Hoa Ky 2007
- 9- Phạm Văn Sơn.Việt sử toàn thư. 1883
- 10-Đình Xuân Lâm (chủ biên), Đại cương Lịch sử Việt Nam tập II, Nxb. Giáo dục, H. 2000.
- 11-Phan Khoang , Việt Nam Pháp Thuộc Sử
- 12-Phan Bội Châu , Việt-Nam Vong Quốc Sử , Tập San Đại Học Văn Khoa , niên khoá 1959-1960
- 13.Thượng Thư Tiểu Cao Nguyễn văn Mại., Lô Giang tiểu sử

## d/History Documents

- 1/Yoshiharu Tsuboi.Nước Đại Nam đối diện với Pháp-Trung hoa 1999
- 3/ Nguyễn xuân Thọ, Bước mở đầu của sự thiết lập hệ thống thuộc địa Pháp ở Vietnam, 1995
- 4/William J Duiker .Độc sách “Hồ Chí Minh”của: nghi vấn và sự thật, 2000
- 5/ Nguyên Hương Nguyễn Cúc. Tiếng Sông Hương Dallas,Texas 2004-2005
- 6/ Tôn Thất Hứa .Quan sự kiện Tôn Thất Thuyết. Tuyển tập nhớ Huế .1993.California
- 7/ Tôn Thất Hứa.Vài dữ kiện về Nguyễn văn Tường.Tuyển tập nhớ Huế 1994.California
- 8/ Hương Thủy. Bốn anh hùng nước Nam. Đặc san QH-ĐK/Nam Cali 1996
- 9/ Nguyễn Lý Tường . Thương về Quảng Trị. : Từ ngôi mộ lương hổ châu đến chiến khu Tân Sở đời vua Hàm Nghi (1885).California
- 10/ 1998 Trung tâm Unesco thông tin tư liệu.Hanoi. Danh tướng yêu nước: Tôn thất Thuyết.
- 11/ Bửu Kế. Nguyễn Triều cổ sự 1996
- 12/ HKHLSVN, Hà nội Phạm thân Duật, Sự nghiệp văn hóa, Sứ mệnh Cần vương.1997.
- 13/ Nguyễn Văn Chùng et al,. Trương Đăng Quế, Cuộc đời & Sự nghiệp, nxb Văn học, 2008.
- 14/ Nguyễn đắc Xuân. Phụ chánh đại thần Trần tiến Thành, Tái bản 2010.
- 15/ Chính Đạo. Hồ Chí Minh : con người và huyền thoại, Houston 1991
- 16/ Mai văn Tạo. Những vấn đề lịch sử về triều đại cuối cùng ở VN:Trương gia Mô nhà nho khí tiết. 2002
- 17/ Mai cao Chương-Đoàn lê Giang. Nguyễn Lộ Trạch, điều trần và thư văn,
- 18/ John D Wong. Improvising protocols: Two enterprising Chinese migrant families and the resourceful Nguyen court
- 19/ Nghiên cứu Huế, Tập 1.xuất bản tại Huế
- 20/Nguyễn văn Xuân. Phong trào duy tân,, 2000
  
- 21/ Lữ Phương.Từ Nguyễn Tất Thành đến Hồ Chí Minh,
- 22/ Trần dân Tiên.Những mẫu chuyện về đời hoạt động của Hồ Chủ tịch,
- 23/ Ngô Minh. Nguyễn Ái Quốc và Phan Bội Châu: Tình nhà, nghĩa nước.
- 24/ Ngô dân Dụng. Bi kịch lịch sử: Phan thanh Giản,
- 25/ HCM: The missing years 1919-1941, Sophie Quinn Judge Hoai An
- 26/ Ngô Văn. Viet nam 1920-1945.2000
- 27/ Nhóm nghiên cứu Santa Clara,CaVietnam .Cuộc chiến tranh quốc gia –cộng san.
- 28/ Nguyễn xuân Phước . Những nghịch lý lịch sử của thế kỷ 20 và hành trình đi tìm tính chính thống lịch sử ở thế kỷ 21. 2011
- 29/ Albert Parry Soviet Aid to Vietnam. The Reporter. Jan-1967
- 30/ Phạm cao Dương Về một tập tài liệu liên hệ tới các cố vấn Tàu ở Việt Nam..8-2011.
- 31/ Nguyễn Hiến Lê .Cổ vấn Trung Quốc.(1965), nxb Xuan Thu tái bản
  
- 32/ Viện khoa học xã hội Trung Quốc. Lịch sử văn học Trung Quốc.1988.Tập một.Bản dịch , nxb Giao duc Hanoi 1998
- 33/ Nguyễn Đắc Xuân . Vua Hàm Nghi một tâm hồn việt ở chốn lưu đày . Lịch Sử Việt Nam 02/2016
- 34/ Hoàng Hưng.VỀ LỐI SỐNG CỦA NGƯỜI MIỀN NAM TRƯỚC 1975 VÀ ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA NÓ SAU 1975
- 35/ Nguyễn Quang Trung Tiến. Vấn đề canh tân đất nước dưới Triều Nguyễn nửa sau thế kỷ XIX. Khoa Lịch sử, Đại học Khoa học Huế 2008

- 36/ Phạm Thị Thanh Huyền MỘT SỐ ĐÓNG GÓP CỦA THIÊN CHÚA GIÁO ĐỐI VỚI VĂN HOÁ VIỆT NAM (THẾ KỶ XVII – ĐẦU THẾ KỶ XX) .Khoa Lịch sử, trường Đại học Sư phạm Hà Nội
- 37/ BUI VĂN TIẾNG. Phong trào Duy tân - sự tiếp biến văn hóa phương Tây đầu thế kỷ XX 03/2016
- 38/ Trương Bá Cẩn. Nguyễn Trường Tộ con người và di thảo. Nxb TP. Hồ Chí Minh, 2002
- 39/ Nhóm Trà Lĩnh. Đặng Huy Trứ – con người và tác phẩm. Nxb TP. Hồ Chí Minh, 1990
- 40/ Phan Bội Châu. Toàn tập. Nxb Thuận Hoá, Huế, 1990,
- 41/ Nguyễn Văn Dương. Tuyển tập Phan Châu Trinh. Nxb Đà Nẵng, 1995
- 42/ Nguyễn An Tịnh. Nguyễn An Ninh. Nxb Trẻ, 1996
- 43/ Đỗ Bang. Tư tưởng canh tân đất nước dưới triều Nguyễn. NXB Thuận Hóa, 1999
- 44/ Dương Kinh Quốc, “Việt Nam những sự kiện lịch sử 1858 – 1918”, nxb Giáo dục, 2006.
- 45/ Thu Nhuận (tổng hợp).Nhà Nguyễn và những tháng 7 biến động. Bảo tàng Lịch sử quốc gia
- 46/ Phương Anh (tổng hợp).Mặt trận Việt Minh với cách mạng Việt Nam. Bảo tàng Lịch sử quốc gia
- 47/ Trần Đức Anh Sơn (Tu liệu thuyết minh du lịch) TỨ NGUYỆT TAM VƯƠNG, TRIỆU BÁT TUỜNG
- 48/ Lê Quang Thái. BÀI HỌC LỊCH SỬ QUÝ GIÁ TỪ VỀ THẤT THỦ KINH ĐÔ Tạp chí sông Hương số 255-5/2010.
- 49/ Hồ Bạch Thảo . Tìm Hiểu Về Con Người Vua Tự Đức 10.2011
- 50/ Lê Ngọc Trác. Những Người Lãnh Đạo Phong Trào Duy Tân ở Quảng Ngãi 04.2009
- 51/ Lê Minh Quốc, “Từ Dũ - Bà mẹ nghiêm khắc lấy lòng nhân dạy con”, Các vị nữ danh nhân Việt Nam, Tp. Hồ Chí Minh: Nxb Trẻ, 2009, tr. 86-96.
- 52/ Thơm Quang. Hoàng Thái hậu Từ Dũ – người phụ nữ quyền lực của triều Nguyễn 05-2020
- 53/ Đinh Xuân Lâm. Triều Nguyễn sai gì trong xu hướng đổi mới cuối TK XIX? Lịch sử Việt Nam .Hội Sử học Việt Nam 01-2013
- 54/ VŨ HOÀNG 1863 Sứ bộ Phan Thanh Giản đi Pháp và Tây Ban Nha. (Miền Nam VN trước 1975)
- 55/ Châu bản triều Nguyễn về lễ tế đàn âm hồn tại Huế. Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia
- 56/ Bản tấu của Bộ Lễ ngày 10 tháng 5 năm Thành Thái thứ 6 (1894) về việc lập đàn và các nghi thức của lễ tế đàn Âm Hồn: Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia I/Châu bản triều Nguyễn (trích 2 trang đầu)
- 57/ Lê Xuân Khoa. Việt Nam 1945-1995, Tập I. Bethesda, MD: Tiên Rồng, 2004.
- 58/ Đỗ Bang (chủ biên), Nguyễn Văn Tường, cuộc đời và lời giải. Nhà xuất bản Văn hóa Thông tin, 2007.
- 59/ Ngọc Nhân – Thu Hường . Bản dịch: Cuộc tấn công cửa Thuận An ngày 16.8.1883. Từ Le Temps (Thời đại) của Pháp số ra ngày 29.9.1883 trích đăng bản báo cáo của Đô đốc Pháp Amédée Courbet, chỉ huy lực lượng hải quân Pháp ở Bắc kỳ về cuộc tấn công cửa biển Thuận An ngày 16.8.1883. Bài báo hiện đang được bảo quản tại Lưu trữ lịch sử của Bộ quốc phòng Pháp.
- 60/ Dương Thủy. Thầy giáo của nhiều vị vua. Bảo tàng PNVN 11/2008
- 61/ Thành Nhân. Thất thủ Kinh đô Huế qua những điệu về
- 62/ Lê Văn Chương. Theo dòng lịch sử nghe về ‘Thất thủ Kinh đô’ . Seashelloc. Tháng Tám 16, 2017
- 63 /Võ Hương An. MÁY LẦN THẤT THỦ KINH ĐÔ 2005
- 65/THÁI VŨ. Nhân có bài viết về nhân vật Tôn Thất Thuyết trong “Huế 1885” (SH22/12-86)

- 66/ Trần Anh Đức. Một góc nhìn khác về Tôn Thất Thuyết. QUYỀN THẦN HAY ANH HÙNG. April 9, 2016
- 67/ Nguyễn Quốc Trị. Nguyễn Văn Tường và cuộc chiến chống đô hộ Pháp của triều Nguyễn. Chương bốn. 2013. Maryland. Hoa ky
- 68/ Bùi Thị Thu Phương Đền thờ và lăng mộ Kỳ vĩ Quận công Nguyễn Văn Tường (Quảng Trị) 12/11/2019
- 69/ Ngọc Anh (phòng GD,CC). Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh với Bản Tuyên ngôn Độc lập – Những giá trị lịch sử còn mãi với thời gian /09/2019
- 70/ Nguyễn Tuấn Hùng. Phan Bội Châu- Phan Châu Trinh và khuynh hướng cứu nước đầu TK XX 30-3- 2020, Lịch sử Việt Nam
- 71/ Thu Nhuận. Những cải cách về khoa học và công nghệ của Phạm Phú Thứ. 05/07/2018
- 72/ Ngọc Nhân - Trung tâm Lưu trữ quốc gia Phan Bội Châu qua tài liệu lưu trữ Pháp .Kỳ 1-5 ./2019
- 73/ Phạm Xanh. Phan Bội Châu và Phan Châu Trinh: Cặp bài trùng trong lịch sử cận đại Việt Nam. Bảo tàng Lịch sử quốc gia. 2017
- 74/ Thạch Thiết Hà. Nguyễn Tư Giản với tư tưởng canh tân đất nước. Cuộc đời và thơ văn.
- 75/ Nguyễn Minh Tường. Thăng Long-Hà Nội dưới Triều Nguyễn với cuộc cải cách hành chính, chống tham nhũng để canh tân đất nước. Viện Sử học Việt Nam. 9/2010
- 76/ ĐỖ QUANG HÙNG. Nguyễn Trường Tộ và khát vọng canh tân đất nước. 02/2018 . Viện Hàn lâm KHXH Việt Nam
- 77/ Đỗ Thị Hải. Tư tưởng canh tân trong lĩnh vực kinh tế ở Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ XIX
- 78/ Bùi Kha. NGUYỄN TRƯỜNG TỘ VÀ VẤN ĐỀ CANH TÂN Giao Điểm, 2003
- 79/ Nguyễn Văn Mại , Lô Giang Tiểu Sử, Nguyễn Hy Xước dịch (1947). In Ronéo
- 80/ Bửu Kế, Kể chuyện triều Nguyễn, Nhà xuất bản Thuận Hóa, Huế, 1990
- 81/ Hồ Bạch Thảo. Cường quốc Châu Âu tranh giành quyền lợi tại Trung Quốc ( nhà Thanh) 2-2014
- 82/ Phạm thận Duật, Sự nghiệp văn hóa, Sứ mệnh Cần vương, HKHLSVN, Hà nội 1997.
- 83/ Thạch Thiết Hà . Nguyễn Tư Giản với tư tưởng canh tân đất nước 09/2017
- 84/ Nguyen Anh Tuan . NGUỒN GỐC CỦA NHỮNG THẢM HỌA
- 85/ Lê Văn Thi . SỰ KIẾN THẤT THU KINH DO TRONG HÀNH THỰC CA CỦA NGUYEN THI BICH  
Truong Dai hoc Khoa hoc - Dai hoc Hue
- 86/ Nguyễn Ngọc Lanh. MỘT SỨ MỆNH TRAO LẠI
- 87/ NGUYỄN KIM SƠN . Nho học Việt Nam nửa cuối thế kỷ 18 và nửa đầu thế kỷ 19 . Hà Nội, 2017
- 88/ Minh Vương . Nguyễn Trường Tộ và khát vọng canh tân đất nước ( 09/02/2018)
- 89/ Hồ Bạch Thảo. Cường quốc Châu Âu tranh giành quyền lợi tại Trung Quốc ( nhà Thanh)
- 90/ Mai Thị Huyền. Vua Tự Đức với việc bảo vệ an ninh biên giới phía Bắc (1848- 1878)
- 91/ Bob Bergin. The OSS Role in Ho Chi Minh's Rise to Political Power . 6-2018
- 92/ Hoang van Chí. Từ thực dân đến cộng sản
- 93/ Vũ Ngự Chiêu, SỰ HÌNH THÀNH PHONG TRÀO QUỐC GIA MỚI: TỪ “TRUNG QUÂN” SANG “ÁI QUỐC
- 94/ Võ Phiến. Bắt trẻ đồng xanh. 1968
- 95/ Vũ Ngự Chiêu. Sự hình thành quốc gia mới từ trung quan sang ái quốc. 2009
- 96/ Phạm Đình Trọng, Về Với Dân, phần 3: Khắc khoải xuân Mậu Thân 1968, <https://nhatbaovanhoa.com/.../tet-mauthan-1968-nhin-tu-mot-nha-van-dang-vien-co>
- 97/ **Lâm Vĩnh Thế** . Biến động miền Trung năm 1966 (cựu SV ĐHSPSG, ban Sử Địa, 1960-1963)

- 98/ Bùi Diễm, Gọng kìm lịch sử (Paris, 2000),
- 99/ Lâm Vĩnh Thế, Việt Nam Cộng Hòa, 1963-1967 : những năm xáo trộn.
- 100./ Vương Mộng Long . Đà-Nẵng 1966 .Hồi ký - Seattle, U.S.A tháng 11 năm 2018
- 101/ George C. Herring, "[The Road to Tet](#)", New York Times, 27/01/2017. , Giáo sư Danh dự ngành Lịch sử tại Đại học Kentucky, là tác giả cuốn sách "America's Longest War: The US and Vietnam, 1950-1975." Biên dịch: Nguyễn Thị Kim Phụng
- 102/ QĐND Online - Báo điện tử "Hoa Hạ kinh vĩ"(Trung Quốc), ngày 7-4-2007 truy nhập Hồi ức của ba tác giả: Trương Đức Duy, Nguyên Đại sứ Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam; Văn Trang, Nguyên cán bộ Đoàn Công nhân Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam; Vương Đức Luân, Nguyên cán bộ Đoàn Công nhân Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam công bố nhân dịp 50 năm (7/5/1954-7/5/2004) Chiến thắng Điện Biên Phủ. VŨ PHONG TẠO dịch theo Hồi ức của Trương Đức Duy, Văn Trang, Vương Đức Luân (Trung Quốc
- 103) BAN TUYÊN GIÁO TRUNG ƯƠNG Nguồn tin: tuyengiao.vn Đề cương tuyên truyền 90 năm ngày thành lập Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam Thứ hai - 16/12/2019 04:46
- 104/ Tú Hoa, "Đánh tư sản" ở miền nam sau 1975
- 105/ Tiến sĩ Nguyễn Liên Hằng. Đường dẫn tới Cuộc chiến Đông Dương lần Ba BBC
- 106/ Cheunboran Chanborey.40 năm sau: Làm sao để VN-Campuchia chung sống hòa bình hết ngõ vực .BBC News Tiếng Việt 25 tháng 12 2018
- 107/ Tiền Kỳ Tham, Ngoại giao thập kỷ,<sup>[1]</sup> Thế giới tri thức xuất bản xã, 2004. Hội nghị Paris về vấn đề Campuchia.  
Biên dịch: Dương Quốc Anh
- 108/ Giải cứu Huế Tết Mậu Thân (14) \* Triệu Phong chuyển ngữ. POSTED BY [SEASHELLOC](#) . THÁNG HAI 7, 2020
- 109/ Nguyễn Quốc Trị, "Nguyễn Văn Tường (1824-1886) và cuộc chiến chống đô hộ Pháp của nhà Nguyễn" 2013
- 110/ Tiến sỹ Phạm Đỗ Chí,Florida. : Kinh tế VN từ 1975 đến đổi mới nhu cầu cải cách sắp tới .BBC News
- 111/ [Huỳnh Tấn Bửu](#) The Third Indochina Conflict, By Bernard K. Gordon. Foreign Affair. Nguồn gốc của cuộc chiến biên giới Tây Nam giữa Việt Nam và Campuchia. 7 Tháng Một, 2019
- 112/ Ngô Thế Vinh Phỏng vấn 96 phút với Thượng Tọa Thích Trí Quang [05.05.1966] Bìa báo SVYK Tình Thương số 29 phát hành tháng 5 - 1966.
- 113/ Tài Liệu Lịch Sử: Hồ sơ Tòa Bạch Ốc thời tổng thống Rerald Ford về biến cố tháng 4 năm 1975 [By thoisu 02](#) , April 21, 2021 [0 Comments](#)(Sự sụp đổ của Việt Nam Cộng Hòa) Ngô Bắc dịch
- 114/ Kính Hòa, phóng viên RFA 2015-04-20 Thành phần thứ ba là ai trong chiến tranh Việt nam?
- 115/ *hang thuy Thử nhìn lại cái gọi là thành phần thứ ba Posted on: 3 October 2015*
- 116/ *Elizabeth Becker The Secrets and Lies of the Vietnam War, Exposed in One Epic Document Fri, June 11, 2021(Mike Lien/The New York Times)*
- 117/: Thông cáo Thượng Hải (27-02-1972) Posted by bvnpost trên 30/04/2010 Ngọc Thu dịch
- 118/ TRẦN ANH TUẤN Về quyền thông sử A Story of Viet Nam của giáo sư Trương Bửu Lâm

## e/ Online Documents on Internet-Websites

1/Wikipedia: Cac vua quan, hoàng thân quốc thích và anh hùng kháng chiến chống Pháp đề được tra cứu ở : [http:// vi.wikipedia.org](http://vi.wikipedia.org)

- 2/Trang thơ Ngô Thì Nhậm, <http://www.thivien.net/viewauthor.php?ID=228>
- 3/Trần Huyền : Tứ nguyệt tam vương  
<http://www.covathue.com/cac%20bai%20viet/Tunguyettamvuong.htm>
- 4/Khiêm cung ký, vua Tự Đức: <http://hoinhavanvietnam.vn/Details/vanvnnet-gioi-thieu/khiem-cung-ky/32/0/2369.star>
- 5/Liễu Quán Huê : Kỷ niệm 124 năm Thất thủ kinh đô  
<http://www.lieuquanhue.com.vn/index.php/60/3253.html>
- 6/Hoàng trọng Thục : Bốn anh hùng:  
[http://www.cadaotucngu.com/diendan/topic.asp?TOPIC\\_ID=6](http://www.cadaotucngu.com/diendan/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=6)
- 7/Ngô Tuệ: Kinh Đô thất thủ và kết cục buồn của vua Hàm Nghi  
<http://baothuathienhue.vn/?gd=6&cn=5&id=492&newsid=20100702172847>
- 8/Trịnh Nguyễn Đàm Giang. Thơ chữ Hán Nguyễn Du – Bắc Hành tạp lục, phần I., 2003,  
link: [http://www.vphausa.org/vphavn/vanhoc/TNDG\\_bhtl\\_Part1\\_1114031.pdf](http://www.vphausa.org/vphavn/vanhoc/TNDG_bhtl_Part1_1114031.pdf)
- 9/Thái sư, Tuy Thanh quận công Trương Đăng Quế. Trương Quang Cầm, 2009,  
link:[http://www.vanchuongviet.org/vietnamese/vanhoc\\_tacpham.asp?TPID=12710&LOAIID=32&LOAIREF=1&TGID=1872](http://www.vanchuongviet.org/vietnamese/vanhoc_tacpham.asp?TPID=12710&LOAIID=32&LOAIREF=1&TGID=1872)
- 10/Vũ quốc Thúc. Gió đưa cành trúc la đà <http://www.nguoi-viet.com/absolutenm/anmviewer.asp?a=104598>
- 11/Nhóm chủ biên gia đình cà bằng hữu .Tuyển tập Nguyễn Xuân Phước. Trang 52-112  
<http://www.trantrungdao.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Tuyen-Tap-Nguyen-Xuan-Phuoc.pdf>
- 12/Doãn Chính & Phạm Đào Thịnh.Nội dung và đặc điểm tư tưởng chính trị Việt Nam cuối thế kỷ XIX - đầu thế kỷ XX qua các nhà tư tưởng tiêu biểu  
Tạp chí Triết học, số 3 (202), tháng 3 – 2008 <http://philosophy.vass.gov.vn>
- 13/NBV . CHỦ NGHĨA YÊU NƯỚC VIỆT NAM NỬA CUỐI THẾ KỶ XIX ĐẦU THẾ KỶ XX (nét độc đáo trong sự biến đổi của văn hóa Việt Nam)  
<http://luutruvn.com/index.php/2015/10/23/tieu-luan-cao-hoc-chu-nghia-yeu-nuoc-vietnam-nua-cuoi-the-ky-xix-dau-the-ky-xx-net-doc-dao-trong-su-bien-doi-van-hoa-viet-nam/>
- 14.Về câu ca «Nước Nam có bốn anh hùng».Trần Ngọc, Ngũ Hành Sơn, Đà Nẵng 06/2016 .  
<https://baodanang.vn/channel/6059/201606/ve-cau-ca-nuoc-nam-co-bon-anh-hung-2491969/index.htm>
15. Lịch sử Việt Nam on Facebook .(Nước nam có bốn anh hùng,...” 07-2016  
<https://www.facebook.com/lichsunuocvietnam/posts/1029054590536011/>
16. Phan Khôi.Tại sao tôi mật sát ông Tôn Thất Thuyết.Tràng An, Huế, s. 46 (6 Aout 1935), tr. 1).<https://nghienquulichsu.com/2019/03/21/tai-sao-toi-mat-sat-ong-ton-that-thuyet/>
17. TÂN VIỆT. Lại Nguyên Ân 2006. Tình cờ ta gặp nhau đây .Thần chung, Sài Gòn, s.272 (15 và 16.12.1929) [http:// lainguyenan.free.fr/pk1929cauchuyen/tinhco.html](http://lainguyenan.free.fr/pk1929cauchuyen/tinhco.html)
18. Phan Thượng Hải. NGUYỄN VĂN TƯỜNG VÀ TÔN THẤT THUYẾT  
<http://phanthuanghai.com/Documents/tho%20va%20su/8%20phap%20thuoc%20the%20ky%2019/7%20nguyen%20van%20tuong%20va%20ton%20that%20thuyet.pdf>
19. Phan Khôi. Cải chánh một điều lầm trong bài Dật sự Ông Ích Khiêm đăng kỳ trước (1931)  
Trung lập, Sài Gòn, số 6590 (Phụ trương văn chương số 29, thứ bảy 14.11.1931)  
[https://vi.wikisource.org/wiki/Cải\\_chánh\\_một\\_điều\\_lầm\\_trong\\_bài\\_Dật\\_sự\\_Ông\\_Ích\\_Khiêm\\_đăng\\_kỳ\\_trước](https://vi.wikisource.org/wiki/Cải_chánh_một_điều_lầm_trong_bài_Dật_sự_Ông_Ích_Khiêm_đăng_kỳ_trước)
20. Sử Talk NGUYỄN TRƯỜNG TỘ, TỰ ĐỨC VÀ VẤN ĐỀ CANH TÂN. .  
(<https://www.facebook.com/centronic.vo>) 10-2018



21. Lê Tâm .NHỮNG NGƯỜI THẦY ĐẾN TỪ THẾ KỶ 19 P.1 - Cụ TIÊU CAO NGUYỄN VĂN MẠI Tháng Sáu  
2018 <http://nguoiviendong.net/post/2018/06/12/nh-ng-ng-i-thay-d-n-t-th-k-19-p-1-c-ti-u-cao-nguy-n-van-m-i>
22. TRẦN ĐÌNH TÀI . HIỆP BIỆN ĐẠI HỌC SĨ TRẦN ĐÌNH TỨC 4-2013  
<http://nonnuocbinhkhe.blogspot.com/2013/04/hiep-bien-ai-hoc-si-tran-inh-tuc.html>
23. Nguyễn Văn Thương . Vua Duy Tân và cuộc khởi nghĩa bất thành năm 1916 của Việt Nam Quang Phục Hội tại Trung Kỳ 08/2016  
<http://www.sugia.vn/portfolio/detail/1647/vua-duy-tan-va-cuoc-khoi-nghia-bat-thanh-nam-1916-cua-viet-nam-quangphuc-hoi-tai-trung-ky.html>
24. Hồ Chí Minh. Bách khoa toàn thư mở Wikipedia
25. Bob Bergin ..The OSS Role in Ho Chi Minh's Rise to Political Power  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/csi-studies/studies/vol-62-no-2/pdfs/oss-and-rise-of-ho-chi-minh.pdf>  
Studies in Intelligence Vol. 62, No. 2 (Extracts, June 2018)
26. Hải Sơn biên dịch (<https://goo.gl/t2pnDB>). Ý nghĩa niên hiệu của 12 vị vua triều Nguyễn Việt Nam
27. Vinh Sinh Thử nhìn lại vị trí của Phan Bội Châu và Phan Châu Trinh trong hành trình dân tộc vào thế kỷ XX. [http://www.erct.com/2-ThoVan/VinhSinh/13-Thu\\_nhin\\_lai-4.htm](http://www.erct.com/2-ThoVan/VinhSinh/13-Thu_nhin_lai-4.htm)
28. V. Suryanarayan. Vietnam's Love-Hate Relationship with China-A Historical Explanation. Paper No. 6130 Dated 20-June-2016. <http://southasiaanalysis.org/node/2008>
29. Trần Viết Nghĩa\* Vấn đề trao quyền độc lập và sự thất bại của thực dân Pháp ở Việt Nam . Tạp chí Khoa học ĐHQGHN: Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn, Tập 31, Số 3 (2015) 37-47
30. Nguyễn Đình Lê, Sự kiện di cư 1954-1955 trong lịch sử Việt Nam và thế giới, <https://nghiencuulichsu.com/2014/05/10/su-kien-di-cu-1954-1955-trong-lich-su-viet-nam-va-the-gioi/>
31. Phong trao can vương, Wikipedia
32. Hoang hoa Tham. Wikipedia
33. Vietnam's Forgotten Army: Heroism and Betrayal in the ARVN, New York University Press, December 2007. Winner of the Society for Military History
34. "The Economic Factor in the Sino-Vietnamese Split, 1972-75: An Analysis of Vietnamese Archival Sources, Cold War History, 11:4, 519-555. Kosal Path (2011)
35. Hoàng Phủ Ngọc Tường  
<http://openvault.wgbh.org/catalog/org.wgbh.mla:e67ef62e29a364dbb7faeb55837714f9163fe9ec>
36. SỐ PHẬN KHO BÁU TRIỀU NGUYỄN SAU BIẾN ĐỘNG NGÀY 5.7.1885  
<https://thanhnien.vn/van-hoa/khobau-tren-duong-di-tan-1402852.html>  
<https://thanhnien.vn/van-hoa/kho-bau-trieu-nguyen-o-kinh-do-paris-1403066.html>