

118 Democracy Activists inside Vietnam – Manifesto 2006 on Freedom and Democracy for Vietnam

Dear Compatriots inside and outside of Vietnam,

We, the undersigned, representing hundreds of Vietnamese democracy activists inside Vietnam and all those Vietnamese citizens yearning for True Democracy for Vietnam, hereby unanimously proclaim the following:

I. The Current Realities of Vietnam

1. In the August 1945 Revolution, the entire Vietnamese nation made a choice for national independence and not socialism. Vietnam's Declaration of Independence on September 2, 1945 did not contain a single word about socialism or communism. The two mainsprings behind the success of that Revolution were the Vietnamese people's aspiration for national independence and also the desire to fill the power vacuum that existed after the Japanese surrender on August 15, 1945, following their overthrow of the French colonial administration on March 9, 1945.

It is thus clear that the Vietnamese communists had abandoned the main objective of the August Revolution. As a result, the Vietnamese peoples' aspiration for self-determination was disregarded. There have been two occasions, one in 1954 in North Vietnam and the other in 1975 in all of Vietnam, when there were good opportunities for the Vietnamese nation to set a new course towards a true democracy. Sadly, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), failed to take advantage of those opportunities. This failure is due to the well-known fact, as propounded by Lenin, that once a dictatorship of the proletariat has been installed, its very first function is to foster violence and repressive terror!

2. On September 2, 1945 in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, President of the Interim Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, solemnly declared to the [Vietnamese] nation and the world that: "All men are created equal, endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, among them the Right to

Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," undying words taken from the U.S. Declaration of Independence of 1776. Interpreted broadly, this sentence can mean that all nations are created equal and that they are entitled to Life, Freedom and Happiness. The 1791 French Declaration on Human and Civil Rights also proclaims: "All people are born free and have equal rights, and they must remain free and equal in all rights." These are undeniable truths... (This quote is taken directly from the September 2, 1945 Vietnamese Declaration of Independence) Nevertheless, the communist government of Vietnam began to trample upon these sacred rights the moment they came to power.

3. By February 1951, the Vietnam Workers Party (VWP, now re-christened the CPV) proclaimed in a Manifesto at its Second Party Congress that: "The ideology of the VWP is Marxism-Leninism." This was something that was even more clearly expressed in the Party Bylaws, under the rubric of "Goal and Leading Principles": "The Vietnam Workers Party takes the ideology of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin and the thought of Mao Zedong in combination with the revolutionary realities of Vietnam to be its ideological foundation and compass for all Party activities."

Since then, especially in the North after 1954, and in the entire country after April 30, 1975, the specter of Communism has been imposed on the Vietnamese nation. For all practical purposes, this specter has been used to deprive the Vietnamese people of all their human rights. And even today, its overwhelming influence is evident in the spiritual as well as the material spheres of the Vietnamese nation.

II. Universal Laws Affecting All Societies

1. History has demonstrated that under every totalitarian regime, whether communist or non-communist, all democratic rights and freedoms are mercilessly repressed, the difference being only in the degree of repression. Unfortunately, to this day the Vietnamese nation is

still one of the few that is under the rule of a totalitarian communist regime. This fact is unabashedly declared in Article 4 of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) Constitution, which says: "The CPV... follows Marxism-Leninism and the thought of Ho Chi Minh, and it is the leading force of the state and society." It is on the basis of this article that democratic rights and freedoms of the Vietnamese people have been extremely curtailed.

2. The power structure in Vietnam rejects competition and totally minimizes the possibility of its replacement by something else. This record has helped accelerate the degeneration of government, and its transformation from what it started out to be. Because there are no rules and principles regarding fair competition in the current political culture of the country, election after election, people have not been allowed to choose the most deserving individuals and political parties to represent them. For that reason the leadership, management and operational set-ups become ever more corrupt, and can now be compared to a creaky piece of equipment from the center down to the localities. As a result, Vietnam is now a nation that has fallen way behind other nations in the region and in the world. In the prevailing environment, this shameful national performance and other nation-wide problems are beyond correction. The problem of all problems, the source of all evils, resides in the fact that the CPV is now the one and only political force leading Vietnam! The realities of history have shown that any country, once it has fallen into the orbit of communism, ends up in ruin and misery. The Soviet Union itself, the very cradle of world communism, has, together with other former Eastern European countries valiantly overcome its own weaknesses to rediscover the correct path leading them forward.

3. We all understand that no one can remake history, but it is possible to redirect its course. What is even more important is that through history's lessons, one can find the correct orientation for the nation's future. The path chosen by the CPV for the Vietnamese nation was designed in haste, and thoughtlessly imposed. That is why today, it is necessary to choose once again a new path for our nation. And a path chosen by the entire nation must necessarily be better than the one chosen by just one person or one group of persons. Given that the CPV is, after all, only one component of the nation, it should not claim to speak on behalf of the entire nation! Considering that for

almost half a century, from 1954 to 2006, the ruling party in Vietnam has usurped the voice of the nation, it is by no means a legitimate government! Why? Because there had simply not been a single free election during all that time in Vietnam.

On the basis of the above realities and the stated universal laws, being fully conscious of our responsibilities as citizens, and faced with the nation's fate, we would like to declare the following to our Compatriots both inside and outside of Vietnam:

III. Objective, Methods and Significance of Our Struggle

1. The highest objective in the struggle to fight for freedom and democracy for the Vietnamese nation today is to make sure that the present political regime in Vietnam is changed in a fundamental way, not through incremental "renovation" steps or, even worse, through insignificant touch-ups here and there. Concretely speaking, it must be a change from the monolithic, one-party, non-competitive regime that we have at the present time to a pluralistic and multiparty system; one in which there is healthy competition, in accordance with the legitimate requirements of the nation, including at least a clear separation of powers among the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of government. This would be in tune with international criteria and the experiences and lessons Mankind has learned from highly respected and successful democracies.

The concrete objective is to re-establish the following fundamental rights of the people:

- The Freedom of Information and Opinion as defined in the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified on December 16, 1966, and endorsed by Vietnam on September 24, 1982, Article 19.2: "Everyone shall have the right to freedom of opinion; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice." This means that political parties, organizations and individuals all have the freedom to express their opinions through the printed media, radio, television and any other mass media without having to wait for prior approval by the government.

- The Freedom of to Assemble, form Associations, Political Parties, Vote and Stand for Elected Offices as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25: "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity (a) to take part in the

conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) to vote and to be elected in genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors.” This means that political parties of every orientation are allowed to fairly compete in a genuine pluralistic and multiparty democracy.

- The Freedom to participate in Independent Labor Unions and the Right to Legitimate Strikes in accordance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ratified by the United Nations on December 16, 1966, Articles 7 and 8: “The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favorable conditions of work..., the right of everyone to form trade unions and join the trade union of his choice, subjects only to the rules of the organization concerned, for the promotion and protection of his economic and social interests... [including] the right to strike...” These Labor unions must be independent of, and in practice, not subservient to the state.

- The Freedom of Religion as defined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to have or adopt a Religion or Belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.” These religions must also operate independently; they cannot be made the instruments of the state.

2. The method of this struggle must be peaceful and non-violent. The Vietnamese nation must itself be actively engaged in it. Of course, we are extremely thankful for the warm and ever more effective support of all our friends in the world. Using modern information media and through ever larger international exchanges, we will seek in every way to help our compatriots to fully understand the issues involved. Once this has been achieved, they surely will know how to act appropriately and effectively.

3. This struggle is meant to make the Right Cause triumph over the Bad Cause, and, Progress over Backwardness. There are popular movements that are currently trying to use the laws of life and the tendencies of our time in order to defeat those evil forces that are trying to go against these tendencies

and laws. Whether the CPV marches hand-in-hand with the Nation or not will depend on whether it is objective, fair, enlightened and modest enough to accept the principle of equality in a fair competition. The one-party political regime must be once and for all buried in the dustbin of history. From such a departing point, the Vietnamese nation will be able to find its best citizens and the most capable political organizations after each election to lead it. The “total triumph of the right cause” principle will be established, and one’s individual life will become better, our society more humane, and our Compatriots will live together on more friendly terms.

We hope that this Manifesto would foster the positive contributions of our compatriots living outside of Vietnam and the support of our international friends. We are sincerely grateful and call on the United Nations, national parliaments, governments, international organizations and our friends all over the world to continue supporting enthusiastically and effectively this fully legitimate struggle. This will soon help bring our Fatherland, Vietnam, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with civilized, moral, prosperous and free countries in today’s community of Mankind.

Unanimously declared in Vietnam on 8 April 2006

1. Dr. Nguyen Xuan An, Hue
2. Teacher Dang Hoai Anh, Hue
3. Teacher Dang Van Anh, Hue
4. Dr. Le Hoai Anh, Nha Trang
5. Prof. Nguyen Kim Anh, Hue
6. Prof. Nguyen Ngoc Anh, Da Namg
7. Writer Trinh Canh, Vung Tau
8. Rev. F.X. Le Van Cao, Hue
9. Teacher Le Can, Hue
10. Rev. Giuse Hoang Can, Hue
11. Teacher Tran Thi Minh Cam, Hue
12. Rev Giuse Nguyen Van Chanh, Hue
13. Teacher Nguyen Thi Linh Chi, Can Tho
14. Prof. Hoang Minh Chinh, Hanoi
15. Teacher Nguyen Viet Cu, Quang Ngai
16. Dang Quoc Cuong, MA, Hue
17. Writer Nguyen Dac Cuong, Phan Thiet
18. Businessman Ho Ngoc Diep, Da Nang
19. Teacher Tran Doan, Quang Ngai
20. Ms. Le Thi Phu Dung, Saigon
21. Teacher Ho Anh Dung, Hue
22. Prof. Truong Quang Dung, Hue
23. Dr. Ha Xuan Duong, Hue

24. Ex-Col. Pham Que Duong, Hanoi
25. Attorney Nguyen Van Dai, Hanoi
26. Kt (Architect?) Tran Van Don, Phan Thiet
27. Dr. Ho Dong, Vinh Long
28. Rev. Phero Nguyen Huu Giai, Hue
29. Businessman Tran Van Ha, Da Nang
30. Teacher Le Thi Bich Ha, Can Tho
31. Dr. Le Thi Ngan Ha, Hue
32. Teacher Le Nguyen Xuan Ha, Hue
33. (Mrs.) Vu Thuy Ha, Hanoi
34. Eng. Do Nam Hai, Saigon
35. Teacher Tran Thach Hai, Haiphong
36. Kt (Architect?) Tran Viet Hai, Vung Tau
37. Eng. Doan Thi Dieu Hanh, Vung Tau
38. Businesswoman Nguyen Thi Hanh, DaNang
39. Teacher Phan Thi Minh Hanh, Hue
40. Prof. Dang Minh Hao, Hue
41. Writer Tran Hao, Vung Tau
42. Writer Tran Manh Hao, Saigon
43. Teacher Le Le Hang, Hue
44. Rev. Giuse Nguyen Duc Hieu, Bac Ninh
45. Nurse Che Minh Hoang, Nha Trang
46. Teacher Van Dinh Hoang, Hue
47. Teacher Le Thu Minh Hung, Saigon
48. Prof. Nguyen Minh Hung, Hue
49. Rev Gk Nguyen Van Hung, Hue
50. Teacher Phan Ngoc Huy, Hue
51. Teacher Le Thi Thanh Huyenh, Hue
52. Teacher Do Thi Minh Huong, Hue
53. Mai Thu Huong, MA, Haiphong
54. Nurse Tran Thu Huong, Da Nang
55. Candidate Nguyen Ngoc Ke, Hue
56. Prof. Nguyen Chinh Ket, Saigon
57. Nguyen Quoc Khanh, MA, Hue
58. Teacher Nguyen Dang Khoa, Hue
59. Prof. Tran Khue, Saigon
60. Ex-Major Vu Kinh, Hanoi
61. Writer Bui Lang, Phan Thiet
62. Teacher Ton That Hoang Lan, Saigon
63. Mr. Le Quang Liem, Head,
Traditional Hoa Hao Buddhist Church, Saigon
64. Dr. Vu Thi Hoa Linh, Saigon
65. Rev. G.B. Nguyen Cao Loc, Hue
66. Rev. Phero Phan Van Loi, Hue
67. Teacher Ma Van Luu, Haiphong
68. Teacher Nguyen Van Ly, Haiphong
69. Rev. Tadeo Nguyen Van Ly, Hue
70. Teacher Cai Thi Mai, Haiphong
71. Teacher Cao Thi Xuan Mai, Hue
72. Teacher Nguyen Van Mai, Saigon
73. Writer Ha Van Mau, Can Tho
74. Teacher Phan Van Mau, Hue
75. Writer Le Thi Thu Minh, Can Tho
76. Teacher Ma Van Minh, Hue
77. Teacher Nguyen Anh Minh, Saigon
78. Dr. Huyen Ton Nu Phuong Nhien, Da Nang
79. (Mrs.) Bui Kim Ngan, Hanoi
80. Dang Hoai Ngan, MA, Hue
81. Rev. G.B. Le Van Nghiem, Hue
82. Teacher Le Hong Phuc, Haiphong
83. Rev. Dominic Phan Phuoc, Hue
84. Eng. Vo Lam Phuoc, Saigon
85. Rev. Giuse Cai Hong Phuong, Hue
86. Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, Saigon
87. Eng. Ta Minh Quan, Can Tho
88. Rev. Augustino Ho Van Quy, Hue
89. Rev. Giuse Tran Van Quy, Hue
90. Dr. Vo Van Quyen, Vinh Long
91. Dr. Tran Thi Sen, Nha Trang
92. Hoa Hao Lay preacher Le Van Soc, Vinh Long
93. Eng. Hoang Son, Haiphong
94. Rev. Phao Lo Ngo Thanh Son, Hue
95. Prof. Nguyen Anh Tai, Da Nang
96. Eng. Do Hong Tam, Haiphong
97. Dr. Ta Minh Tam, Can Tho
98. Prof. Nguyen Thanh Tam, Hue
99. Pastor Pham Ngoc Thach, Saigon
100. Teacher Nguyen binh Thanh, Hue
101. Teacher Van Ba Thanh, Hue
102. Hoa Hao Lay preacher
Nguyen Van Tho, Dong Thap
103. Tran Manh Thu, MA, Haiphong
104. Prof. Dr. Tran Hong Thu, Saigon
105. Writer Hoang Tien, Hanoi
106. Ex-Officer Tran Dung Tien, Hanoi
107. Rev. Tephano Chan Tin, Saigon
108. Teacher Nguyen Khac Toan, Hanoi
109. Writer Ton Nu Minh Trang, Phan Thiet
110. Teacher Che Thi Hong Trinh, Hue
111. Dr. Nguyen Anh Tu, Da Nang
112. Dr. Doan Minh Tuan, Saigon
113. Teacher Le Tri Tue, Haiphong
114. Nurse Tran Thi Hoai Van, Nha Trang
115. Teacher Ngo Thi Tuong Vi, Quang Ngai
116. Teacher Nguyen Le Xuan Vinh, Can Tho
117. Ho Ngoc Vinh, MA, Da Nang
118. Eng. Lam Dinh Vinh, Saigon

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