

# Giới thiệu bản dịch tiếng Anh cuốn Tổ Quốc Ăn Năn của Nguyễn Gia Kiểng

## TÔN THẮT THIÊN

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Dear ...

I am writing this letter so that you will not be surprised when you receive a book from Australia from someone named Nguyen Ngoc Phach. I have suggested that he send a copy of it to you for your assessment.

The book bears the title "Whence... Whither... Vietnam?" It is the English translation of a book written in Vietnamese by Nguyen Gia Kieng.

Kieng is an engineer from a French "Grande Ecole," living in Paris. He is a political activist, well-known among the Vietnamese diaspora as a founder of the magazine "Thong Luan," a high brow magazine, and leader of the "Rally for Pluralist Democracy," also a well known organization among the Vietnamese diaspora, and considered a great trouble maker by the CPV leaders in Hanoi because it appeals to a growing number of dissidents of the Party.

Nguyen Ngoc Phach is Nguyen Ngoc Linh's brother. You probably don't know him, but you surely know his brother Nguyen Ngoc Linh, who used to be General Ky's press secretary and was well known among press circles in Saigon. Phach has undertaken to translate the book — for no charge — because he feels that the book should be read by English speaking people, especially by non-Vietnamese speaking Americans of Vietnamese origin, to have a better understanding of

Vietnam's problems, especially of Vietnam's sorry state.

The original title of the book in Vietnamese is "To Quoc An Nan," meaning literally "Remorseful/Repenting Fatherland." A rather odd title. But it conveys the author's view that Vietnam is mired in the present calamitous situation, because the Vietnamese, in particular its elite "the intellectuals" do not love their country. And this because they have no Fatherland to love. When they turn to what is supposed to be their Fatherland, they get only oppression, poverty, neglect. The intellectuals are only concerned about their personal advance, work hard only to pass examinations and get good positions, abjectly submit to authority, do not fight injustices, do not concern themselves with matters of public interest. They look upon others as rivals to be kept back by all means fair and foul, instead of considering them as team mates with whom to work for the progress of society, etc...

Kieng defines "love of Fatherland" as caring for the land and the people, instead of neglecting them and wantonly destroying them by war and stupid policies.

Kieng advocates a thorough and cold revision of Vietnam's entire history, in particular its cultural heritage, and has come to the conclusion that Vietnam's ills stemmed from the Vietnamese's obstinate adherence to "traditional values," which were Confucianist. They were thus predisposed psychologically to accept Communism, which is but Confucianism under a new garb.

I myself had come to this view long ago. I had even written an article in International Affairs (Chatham House) in 1968, in July, if my memory is correct. But I have not seen clearly the connec-



tions of Vietnam's cultural heritage and its problems with the particular ease with which Communism has conquered Vietnam, and the persistent inability of Vietnam to become a free society and achieve economic development. It was the reading of Kieng's book, especially the English version of it, that I have become convinced that my views are correct. The weight of Vietnam's heritage is very heavy and inhibitive, and an effective reconstruction of Vietnam must begin with a full reassessment of its cultural values leading to changes of certain of them to allow Vietnamese society to modernize itself in order to achieve freedom and prosperity. This has become very clear to me after reading the book.

In the process of elaborating on his main thesis, Kieng has been led to discuss the major problems of Vietnam - lack of freedom and democracy as well as economic development -, against the cultural background of Vietnamese society, and the various options available in the world at present.

I think that, as someone steeped in philosophy, as well as in sociology and psychology, you will find the book interesting. I hope you will find the time to read it, in particular the pages in which Kieng discussed at length the inhibitive effects of Confucianist culture on Vietnamese society. And, if you find that for those interested in Vietnam, in Asia, and especially in Africa, from the point of view of the blocking and dragging down effect of the cultural heritages of the countries of those regions, this book would be useful and deserves mention in the Book Review section of "The Economist," that would be wonderful.

In any case, I would like to know what you think of it, in particular of the approach adopted by Kieng, which I personally find very novel and very productive, as far as seeking realist and effective solutions to Vietnam's problems is concerned.

Best regards,  
Thien

TRẦN YÊN HÒA

## Những Ngày Hạ Đổ

*Có thể buổi sáng nay  
Thành phố nóng hơn ngày thường  
Vì có anh ở cạnh em.*

*Anh mang hơi hướm của người trở về  
từ một nơi xa thăm  
Có thể em không nhìn ra anh  
Anh của những ngày tháng cũ.*

*Anh đã đến  
Rời đi  
Anh bất tận  
Mãi miết giữa cuộc đời em  
Em vẫy tay  
Em vẫy gọi  
Em kêu gào riết róng  
Chỉ có bóng nắng  
Và lời thất thanh  
Bay trong bụi mù khói tỏa của tiếng xe qua  
Hạ đổ, hạ đổ*

*Sân trường không có bông hoa phượng nào  
nở cả  
Chỉ có Phượng của anh  
Em ở phía ngoài  
Em ở phía trong  
Trong vô thức  
Đã đánh chiếm, tấn công, thắng trận  
Đã ngự trị, hành hạ, thỏa thuê  
Rồi cất nụ cười tình rất nhẹ  
Anh làm kẻ kiệt sức giữa cuộc đời em  
Non choẹt*

*Ở đây cái gì cũng đỏ  
Đỏ như những giòng kinh nguyệt  
Chảy trong châu thân  
Em ngày tháng*

*Ở đây cái gì cũng nóng sốt  
Mùa hạ nóng  
Khẩu hiệu nóng  
Hoan hô đã đảo nóng  
Anh cũng nóng lên vì em khỏa thân  
Cặp đùi trần cong cớn*

*Chỉ có em là lạnh  
Giữa những ngày hạ đỏ  
Giữa anh và Sài Gòn.*