

**LETTER TO THE YOUTH OF THE 1970'S GENERATION
AN EXPERIENCE FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

(Translated from original text in Vietnamese: "*MỘT KINH NGHIỆM CẦN SUY NGẪM -
Thư gửi các Thanh niên Thiếu nữ Thế hệ 1970's*")

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TÔN THẮT THIỆN

My dear nephews and nieces,

First of all, I must say that I ought to have addressed you as "young ladies", "young gentlemen" but to avoid superfluous repetitions, I would like to ask for your permission to address you as nieces and nephews and to consider myself as your parents' younger brother. Moreover, since I am getting on with age, this mode of address may not be considered as disrespectful.

I will share with you the following thoughts for your consideration. For a long time since 1990 I myself have thought about these issues. And now, through seeing what has happened to our country since 1975, and especially daily witnessing the upheavals and turmoils, I have distilled my thoughts to such a level that I think what I'm going to say to you now accurately nails the issues.

People like myself, belonging to the generation of the 1920s (born between World War I and World War II, i.e. between 1918 and 1945), were the less fortunate people who did not know what real happiness was, because right from our birth we had lived without any of the many conditions necessary for happiness: no independence, no freedom, no well-being, lack of education, absence of peace. My generation was a generation that lived through the time of foreign domination and wars.

Living under foreign domination (French), the whole population did not have independence and the majority of the people lived in poverty, without freedom, especially freedom of education. But that was also a period of peace, and a small number of us were able to have the opportunity to acquire some knowledge and technological skills, though within certain limits. Under those conditions, all Vietnamese people wanted independence so that the way could be open for the progress of the nation and advancement for the individuals. Therefore, in 1945 the whole population wholeheartedly supported the fight for independence, and very few of us gave further thought to the future.

We must emphasize that the enthusiastic support was from the whole NATION and not only from the Communist Party of Vietnam. At the time this party only had a membership of 5000 people. With such a small membership, there was not a faint hope that the Communist Party of

Vietnam could win independence for the country. This we must bear in mind in order to properly evaluate the boastful claim by the Communist Party of Vietnam that the independence of Vietnam was due to their action and, because of their significant contribution, they are entitled to govern Vietnam irrespective of conditions.

Taking advantage of the enthusiastic and selfless support of the majority of the people of Vietnam, the Communist Party of Vietnam, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, had slowly turned the struggle of the whole nation into their own struggle to achieve the specific GOALS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY especially of the COMINTERN/INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT.

Their intention was to carry out in Vietnam a CLASS STRUGGLE revolution with a view to impose on the people of Vietnam a DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT. In principle, this revolution is based on the leadership of the peasants and the workers but in reality the real power is in the hands of the Communist Party of Vietnam, particularly under the control of a small group of about 13 to 15 persons known as the General Bureau (presently called Politburo). The head of the Bureau, who holds absolute power, was Ho Chi Minh.

Ho Chi Minh was a “Cominternchik” - a high ranking, loyal, competent agent with the backing and trust of the Comintern leadership, i.e. Stalin. Ho Chi Minh won their trust and support because of his constant and faithful adherence to the policy of the Comintern, and his steadfast dedication to the realization of the objectives determined by Moscow. Therefore both Moscow and the Communist Party of Vietnam always praised Ho Chi Minh as an outstanding combatant for Comintern.

Of course, in this capacity Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam had to resort to all tricks to turn the struggle of the Vietnamese people into a struggle for international revolution which, in reality, was the struggle for hegemony between the Soviet Union and United States. At the same time, it was also a struggle of the Comintern to eliminate the world capitalist system because, as Lenin had taught Ho Chi Minh, and the latter in turn taught his disciples, capitalism was the root cause of colonialism. This teaching is now recognized as wrong, even by the communists. For instance China had labeled the Soviet Union as ‘socialist imperialist’, the Vietnamese Communist Party referred to Communist China as a hegemon, and the Cambodian Communists called the Vietnam communists “colonialist”. But this subject cannot be discussed in details in this letter.

The main issue we have to discuss is the accountability of Ho Chi Minh and the Communist Party of Vietnam in hijacking the independence struggle of the people of Vietnam, guided it in a different direction at the expense of the lives and properties of the people of Vietnam, to obtain objectives entirely different from those of the people of Vietnam. Because of this, they

have divided the people of Vietnam and turned the struggle for independence into a civil war as well as a power struggle between Russia and the United States, using Vietnam as the battlefield. The consequence was an unavoidable devastating, destructive, long lasting war that could have been drawn out for many more years had Russia and the United States not changed their policy from confrontation to conciliation and international cooperation.

The tragedy for my generation, those who were around the age of 20's in 1945, which is the age of the majority of you today, was that we had been engulfed into those two wars.

The consequences of those two devastating wars, "all-out people's wars", "perpetual holy wars" (as in the communist leaders used to boast) were what happened to the people of Vietnam in the years from 1954 to 1975 and since 1975 until now. Many people lost their lives on the battlefield; those who did not became disabled, traumatized, or suffered from hunger; their families broken and their future totally lost. Now they are the most destitute, desperate people in Vietnamese society. As to the country, more than 30 years of war had destroyed the land, had wiped out almost all of the skills accumulated through many generations. Whatever remained of these was finally liquidated through the waves of socialist reform (1956 – 58 and 1976 – 78) in the communists' attempted "fast and furious rush to socialism."

But the most terrible thing that people of my generation felt was that when we look back to try to learn from the past we found that our generation had been separated into two sides – one side is "the Revolution", "the North", and "socialism" - which the South labeled as "communism"; the other side is "nationalism", "the South", "the free world"- which the North labeled as "Vietnamese traitors", "puppet", "imperialist henchmen". People on the side of the "revolution" tried their best to do everything possible to hasten and finally annihilate the 'puppet' side. They rejoiced whenever they learned that "the revolution" had exterminated a large number of enemies, bombarded the "enemy camps"; and, in general, whenever they learned that, due to one thing or another, especially due to their sabotage activities (which they called "creative initiatives") the enemies had weakened. On the other hand, people on the nationalist side also expressed joy upon learning of similar actions against the other side.

What both sides did not realize at the time, but which is now increasingly clearer, is that if we combined the works of both sides, it turned out that the people of that generation had done their utmost to slaughter each other and to destroy their own country. Each side did its part. All the bombs, bullets, rockets - American as well as Russian – FELL ON THE TERRITORY OF VIETNAM. Most of the people killed were VIETNAMESE YOUTH! The properties destroyed were VIETNAMESE PROPERTIES! The skills annihilated were SKILLS NOW MOST NECESSARY FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE COUNTRY.

This is a situation which any thoughtful person would realize that it is genocidal self-destruction.

If this situation is repeated again especially on the same scale as in the years 1954 – 1975, our people will again fall into the same tragic situation; but this time THE VICTIMS WILL BE YOU. The people dragged into this new internecine war would be the youth of your age group, because the people of the generation of the 1920's and 1930's are now too old to fight, even had they wanted to.

How to avoid that tragic situation?

The only way is to eliminate the current communist regime but at the same time avoid a new armed conflict. That approach is to make the communist system self-destruct. But only the people living in Vietnam can do this. Therefore, you have to find every means possible to connect with the youth in the country, convince them to cooperate with youth outside the country to carry out a two-pronged approach, destroy from the inside and harass from the outside, exerting ever increasing pressure until the communist system finally disintegrates.

One thing that you can do right now is to connect with the youth of the same age group as yours who have been sent to Eastern Europe as export labor. Through these youths you can sooner or later connect with youth within the country and start the campaign mentioned earlier everywhere.

Naturally, the youth on the other side will only agree to cooperate with you if they are assured that with the fall of the communist system and the establishment of the democratic system they will enjoy all the rights and privileges of a citizen in the new country and the new society that replaces the communist society. At this point please do not forget that communism still appeals to some members of the society because of their [artful] lip service to social equality. Therefore, a task related to the above campaign is to advocate for a truly pluralistic and socially equitable, democratic society.

If you cannot do the above-mentioned task, then one day – probably not very far – you will be the victims of your time just like we had been victims of our time; your future would be just as dark as ours had been, and your true happiness will never be attained.

With my warmest regards,

Montréal Lunar New Year of the Goat 1991